

# My Notes...

## NATIONAL

### CRIMINAL LAW (AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE, 2018 APPROVED

The Union Cabinet Chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given approval to the promulgation of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 for effective deterrence against the commission of rape. The changes made to the present rape law in place under the criminal law including the IPC, Criminal Procedure Code (CrPc), Evidence Act and POCSO:

What does the amended Criminal Law state?

1. Minimum punishment in case of rape of women has been increased from rigorous imprisonment of 7 years to 10 years, extendable to life imprisonment.
2. In case of rape of a girl under 16 years, minimum punishment has been increased from 10 years to 20 years, extendable to imprisonment for rest of life, which shall mean imprisonment till that person's natural life.
3. The punishment for gang rape of a girl under 16 years of age will invariably be imprisonment for rest of life of the convict.
4. Stringent punishment for rape of a girl under 12 years has been provided – minimum 20 years' imprisonment or imprisonment for rest of life or with death.
5. In case of gang rape of a girl below 12 years, punishment will be imprisonment for rest of life or death sentence.

#### Key provisions in the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance

**Rape of a girl under 12 years:** 20 years in jail or life imprisonment or death

**Gang-rape of a girl under 12 years:** Imprisonment for life or death

**Rape of a girl under 16 years:** Minimum punishment increased from 10 to 20 years, extendable to imprisonment for life

**Gang-rape of a girl under 16 years:** Imprisonment for life



**Rape of women:** Minimum punishment raised from imprisonment of 7 years to 10 years, extendable to life

▪ Dedicated manpower for investigation of rape cases

▪ Probe and trial each to be completed in two months

▪ No anticipatory bail for accused in rape or gang-rape of a girl under 16 years

Speedy investigation and trial

1. Time limit for investigation of all cases of rape has been prescribed, which has to be mandatorily completed within 2 months.
2. Time limit for completion of trial of all rape cases has also been prescribed and it has to be necessarily completed in 2 months.
3. **6 months' time limit for disposal** of appeals in rape cases has also been prescribed.

Restrictions on bail

1. It has been prescribed that there will be no provision for anticipatory bail for a person accused of rape or gang rape of a girl under 16 years.
2. It has also been provided that court has to give notice of 15 days to Public Prosecutor and the representative of the victim before deciding bail applications in case of rape of a girl under 16 years of age.

Other measures

(a) Strengthening the courts and prosecution

1. New Fast Track Courts will be set up in consultation with States/UTs and High Courts.

2. Creation of new posts of public prosecutors and related infrastructure in consultation with States/UTs.
3. Special forensic kits for rape cases to all Police Stations and hospitals.
4. Dedicated manpower will be provided for investigation of rape cases in a time bound manner.
5. Setting up special forensic labs in each State/UT exclusively for rape cases.
6. These measures will form part of a new mission mode project to be launched within 3 months.

#### What is the POCSO Act?

1. Introduced in 2012, POCSO was enacted with the aim of protecting children, below the age of 18, from sexual abuse and assault. Unlike the law for rape under IPC, POCSO was enacted for all children, male and female.
2. POCSO defines in detail forms of sexual assault like, aggravated penetrative sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, penetrative sexual assault and sexual assault.
3. The maximum punishment under the Act was imprisonment extending up to life.

#### (b) National Database

1. National Crime Records Bureau will maintain a national database and profile of sexual offenders.
2. This data will be regularly shared with States/UTs for tracking, monitoring and investigation, including verification of antecedents by police.

#### Assistance to victims

1. The present scheme of One Stop Centres for assistance to victim to be extended to all districts in the country.
2. Last year, Madhya Pradesh Assembly unanimously passed a legislation to amend Section 376A (Punishment for causing death or resulting in persistent vegetative state of victim) and 376D (Gang rape) under the Indian Penal Code. Treading on the heels of MP, Rajasthan, Arunachal Pradesh and Harayana followed suit and passed the legislation as well.

## BHABHA KAVACH

The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has developed Bhabha Kavach, a next-generation bulletproof jacket that is cheaper, lightweight. It has been named after Dr. Homi J. Bhabha, father of Indian nuclear programme. The jacket was **developed at BARC's Trombay centre in Mumbai** in response to request from Ministry of Home Affairs and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

#### What

1. Bhabha Kavach is made of boron carbide and carbon nanotube polymer composite and weighs just 6.6 kg.
2. The materials used in it reduce weight by nearly 50% as compared to presently used heavy steel-armoured jackets that weigh between 10kg to 17kg.
3. It has passed over 30 tests carried out by certified agencies. These materials have been indigenously developed at BARC and are spin-off from nuclear technology
4. It is currently being tested by joint team of CRPF, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).

#### About BARC

1. The BARC is **India's premier nuclear** research facility based in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
2. It is multi-disciplinary research center with extensive infrastructure for advanced research and development.
3. Its R&D covers entire spectrum of nuclear science, engineering and related areas.
4. **BARC's core mandate is to sustain** peaceful applications of nuclear energy, primarily for power generation.

5. The northern command of Indian Army is also testing variant of jacket in Jammu & Kashmir. If jackets pass various tests, it will be manufactured by Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited, a defence public sector unit.

## FIRST INTERNATIONAL SME CONVENTION CONCLUDES

The first International SME Convention organised by Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises concluded in New Delhi on 24th April. 160 SMEs from 39 countries participated in the three day event where issues of international best practices on SME development and cooperation, global business opportunities for SMEs, problems faced by women entrepreneurs were discussed. Poland, with 15 SMEs, had the largest delegation, followed by Uzbekistan with 8 SMEs and Ghana with seven. Four hundred SMEs from India also participated.

What

1. 23 agreements were signed between SMEs of India and SMEs of UK, Russia, Uzbekistan, Poland, Bhutan, Austria, Czech Republic, Cameroon and Sri Lanka.
2. These agreements are in 12 sectors: food processing, agriculture, textiles, defence, ammunition, waste management, dairy products, coal, jewellery, health care and education. Four foreign SMEs have also signed expression of interest for entering into joint ventures with Government of India.
3. The ministry has planned to set up a Digital Trade Desk aimed at furthering more collaboration between SMEs of India and other countries and for exchange of data.

## UNNAT BHARAT ABHIYAN 2.0

Human Resource Development Ministry launches Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 in New Delhi. Shri Javadekar said that Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 is in line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision to transform India, in which students from colleges and universities will go to nearby villages to get acquainted with the life of the village people and the problems faced by them in day to day life.

What

1. This unique initiative of HRD ministry will serve as real Bharat Darshan for students and it is also an opportunity for them to learn about the basic challenges faced by rural people and to bring out practical solutions for their betterment.
2. The Minister advised students to involve local village people at every stage of problem identification and solving issues relating to health, cleanliness, waste management, plantation, financial inclusion, women and child development etc.
3. Unnat Bharat Abhiyan is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, with the intention to enrich Rural India.
4. The knowledge base and resources of the Premier Institutions of the country are to be leveraged to bring in transformational change in rural developmental process.
5. It also aims to create a vibrant relationship between the society and the higher educational institutes, with the latter providing the knowledge and technology support to improve the livelihoods in rural areas and to upgrade the capabilities of both the public and private organisations in the society.
6. Under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0, the institutions have been selected on a Challenge Mode and the scheme has been extended to 750 reputed Higher Educational Institutes (both public and private) of the country.
7. IIT Delhi has been designated to function as the National Coordinating Institute for this programme and the Ministry intends to extend the coverage to all the reputed Higher Educational Institutes, in a phased manner.

## RESTRUCTURED NBM APPROVED

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has approved Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National Bamboo Mission (NBM) under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) during remaining

period of Fourteenth Finance Commission (2018-19 & 2019-20). The Mission would ensure holistic development of the bamboo sector by addressing complete value chain and establishing effective linkage of producers (farmers) with industry.

What

1. CCEA has also approved Empowerment of Executive Committee for formulation of guidelines of the NBM and to make the changes therein, including cost norms for various interventions from time-to-time as per the felt needs and specific recommendations of States, with the approval of Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.
2. An outlay of Rs.1290 crore (with Rs. 950 crore as Central share) is provisioned for implementation of the Mission during the remaining period of 14th Finance Commission (2018-19 and 2019-20).
3. The scheme will benefit directly and indirectly the farmers as well as local artisans and associated personnels engaged in bamboo sector including associated industries.
4. Since it is proposed to bring about one lakh ha area under plantation, it is expected that about one lakh farmers would be directly benefitted in terms of plantation.
5. The Mission will focus on development of bamboo in limited States where it has social, commercial and economical advantage, particularly in the North Eastern region and States including Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
6. The Mission is expected to establish about 4000 treatment/ product development units and bring more than 100000 ha area under plantation.
7. Bamboo plantation will contribute to optimizing farm productivity and income thereby enhancing livelihood opportunities of small & marginal farmers including landless and women as well as provide quality material to industry.
8. The Mission will not only serve as a potential instrument for enhancing income of farmers but also contributing towards climate resilience and environmental benefits.
9. The Mission will also help in creating employment generation directly or indirectly in both skilled and unskilled segments.

#### Flashback

1. National Bamboo Mission (NBM) started as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme in 2006-07, was mainly emphasizing on propagation and cultivation of bamboo, with limited efforts on processing, product development and value addition. There, was weak linkage between the producers (farmers) and the industry.
2. The restructured proposal gives simultaneous emphasis to propagation of quality plantations of bamboo, product development and value addition including primary processing and treatment; micro, small & medium enterprises as well as high value products; markets and skill development, thus addressing the complete value chain for growth of the bamboo sector.
3. National Bamboo Mission (NBM) was initially started as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme in 2006-07 and was subsumed under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) during 2014-15 and continued till 2015-16.
4. Funds were released thereafter only for maintenance of bamboo plantations raised earlier under NBM, and no new work or annual action plan was initiated.
5. Since 2006-07, an area of 3.62 lakh ha covered under bamboo plantations and 39 bamboo wholesale markets, 40 bamboo bazaars and 29 retail outlets were set up.

The restructured NBM strives to -

1. To increase the area under bamboo plantation in non forest Government and private lands to supplement farm income and contribute towards resilience to climate change.
2. To improve post-harvest management through establishment of innovative primary processing units, treatment and seasoning plants, primary treatment and seasoning plants, preservation technologies and market infrastructure.
3. To promote product development at micro, small and medium levels and feed bigger industry.
4. To rejuvenate the under developed bamboo industry in India.
5. To promote skill development, capacity building, awareness generation for development of bamboo sector.

## FIRST-EVER MOCK EXERCISE ON BIO-DISASTERS

A five-day Day training programme, aimed at enhancing the preparedness of Airport Emergency Handlers (AEHs) to respond to CBRN emergencies at the airports, concluded on 27 April 2018 at the Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Airport in Patna. The training programme was conducted in collaboration with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) and Institute of Nuclear Medicine & Allied Sciences (INMAS).

What

1. CBRN emergencies pertain to threats emanating due to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear material.
2. During the training, NDMA jointly with the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) also conducted its first-ever full-scale Biological Management Emergency Exercise.
3. The exercise was based on a suspected Ebola outbreak scenario. Biological emergencies are extremely complicated to handle and require utmost expertise not only in handling the victims but also in screening them before they escape out in community.
4. The mock drills with simulated situations of biological disasters are conducted by the NDRF regularly to fine tune the response mechanism in case of threats arising out of usage of biological agents.
5. Stakeholders from several departments, including Airport Management, Health and Medical services, Customs, Immigration, Fire Services, State Disaster Management Authority and Disease Surveillance units participated in the mock exercise.

### About NDMA

1. It is statutory body under aegis of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
2. Its provisions are envisaged in Disaster Management Act, 2005.
3. It was established in 2009. Its mandate is to coordinate response to natural or man-made disasters and capacity-building in case of disaster resiliency and crisis response.
4. It is governed by a 9 member board chaired by the Prime Minister of India.
5. At present for its smooth functioning it consists of ten battalions of Central Armed Police Forces, including three each of Border Security force (BSF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), and two each of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).

## GOBAR-DHAN LAUNCHED

Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation, Sushri Uma Bharti launched the GOBAR (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources - DHAN scheme at the National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) Auditorium, Karnal. The scheme aims to positively impact village cleanliness and generate wealth and energy from cattle and organic waste. The scheme also aims at creating new rural livelihood opportunities and enhancing income for farmers and other rural people.

#### What

1. The Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) comprises two main components for creating clean villages – creating open defecation free (ODF) villages and managing solid and liquid waste in villages.
2. With over 3.5 lakh villages, 374 districts and 16 States/UTs of the country being declared ODF, the stage is set for ODF-plus activities, including measures to enhance solid and liquid waste management.
3. The GOBAR-DHAN scheme, with its focus on keeping villages clean, increasing the income of rural households, and generation of energy from cattle waste, is an important element of this ODF-plus strategy. The scheme envisages the implementation of 700 bio-gas units in different states of the country in 2018-19.
4. Under Gobar-Dhan, cooking gas would be provided to rural habitations and technical support would ensure that the schemes functioned on a sustainable basis.
5. The guidelines of GOBAR-DHAN scheme were also launched which details of the scheme, implementation arrangements, financing provisions and roles and responsibilities of the Centre, State governments, districts and other stakeholders involved in implementation of the scheme.
6. The IEC strategy for GOBAR-DHAN and successful case studies were also presented and field visits to bio-gas plants were also conducted after the launch.
7. The launch was attended by sarpanches from the project villages, implementing agencies, officers from 14 states and district officers.

#### NEW DRAFT OF CRZ

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has framed a new draft Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018. The draft notification has **been uploaded on the Ministry's website on April 18, 2018.**

The salient features of the draft CRZ Notification, 2018

1. The High Tide Line (HTL) has been demarcated by the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) and shall be reckoned as a universal standard for the HTL for all regulatory purposes under the CRZ Notification, 2018.
2. Hazard line mapping has also been carried out by Survey of India. The Hazard Line has, however, been delinked from the CRZ regulatory regime and shall be used only as a tool for Disaster Management and planning of adaptive and mitigation measures.
3. CRZ limits on land along the tidal influenced water bodies has been proposed to be reduced from 100 meters or the width of the creek, whichever is less, to 50 meters or the width of the creek, whichever is less.
4. A No Development Zone (NDZ) of 20 meters has been proposed to be stipulated for all Islands close to the main land coast and for all Backwater Islands in the main land.
5. The procedure for CRZ clearances has been simplified and delegations have been made at various levels for recommending/according CRZ clearances to the projects/activities. Only such projects/activities, which are located in the CRZ-I & IV areas, shall be dealt with for CRZ clearance by the MoEF&CC. For all other project activities located in CRZ-II/III areas, CRZ clearance shall be considered at the level of the CZMA.
6. As per CRZ, 2011 Notification, for CRZ-II areas, Floor Space Index (FSI) or the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) had been frozen at 1991 Development Control Regulation (DCR) levels. In the Draft CRZ, 2018 Notification, it has been proposed to de-freeze the same and permit FSI for construction projects, as prevailing on the date of the new Notification.
7. Temporary tourism facilities such as shacks, toilet blocks, change rooms, drinking water facilities etc. have been proposed in Beaches. Such temporary tourism facilities are also proposed to be permissible in the No Development Zone (NDZ) of the CRZ-III areas.

8. Wherever there is a National or State Level Highway passing through the NDZ in CRZ-III areas, temporary tourism facilities have been proposed to be taken up on the seaward side of the roads. On the landward side of such roads in the NDZ, Resorts/Hotels and other tourism facilities have also been proposed to be permitted subject to the extant regulations of the concerned State.
9. Regulated limestone mining is proposed to be permitted, subject to strict Environmental safeguards, in areas adequately above the height of HTL, based on recommendations of reputed National Institutes in the Mining field.
10. The relaxations/amendment proposed in the CRZ Notification, 2018 shall, however, come into force only after the respective Coastal Zone Management Programme (CZMP) framed to the CRZ Notification, 2011 have been revised/updated by the States/UTs, as per the provisions of the CRZ, 2018 Notification and approved by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.
11. The Ministry had constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Shailesh Nayak to examine the various issues and concerns of Coastal States/UTs and various other stakeholders and to recommend appropriate changes in the CRZ Notification, 2011. The report submitted by Dr. Shailesh Nayak has been examined in the Ministry and consultations have been held with various stakeholders in this regard.
12. The MoEF&CC had received representations from various coastal states/UTs, besides other stakeholders, for a comprehensive review of the provisions of the CRZ Notification, 2011, particularly related to the management and conservation of marine and coastal eco-systems, development in coastal areas, eco-tourism, livelihood option and sustainable development of coastal communities etc.
13. The Coastal Regulation Zone Notification was last reviewed and issued in 2011, with periodic amendments to some clauses.

#### For CRZ-III areas

1. CRZ-III A – Densely populated rural areas with a population density of 2161 per square kilometre as per 2011 Census. Such areas shall have an NDZ of 50 meters from the HTL as against 200 meters from the HTL stipulated in the CRZ Notification, 2011.
2. CRZ-III B – Rural areas with population density of below 2161 per square kilometre as per 2011 Census. Such areas shall continue to have an NDZ of 200 meters from the HTL.

## RESTRUCTURED OF RGSA APPROVED

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi gave its approval for restructured Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA). The Scheme will be implemented during the period from 01.04.2018 to 31.03.2022 at the total cost of Rs. 7255.50 crore with the Central Share of Rs. 4500 crore and that of State Share of Rs. 2755.50 crore.

What

1. This scheme will extend to all States and UTs of the Country and will also include institutions of rural local government in non-Part IX areas, where Panchayats do not exist,
2. The scheme will have both Central Component - National Level activities including "National Plan of Technical Assistance", "Mission Mode project on e-Panchayat", "Incentivization of Panchayats" and State component - Capacity Building of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs),
3. The Central Component will be fully funded by the Government of India. However, Centre:State funding pattern for State Component will be 60:40 for all States, except North East and Hill States where Centre:State funding pattern will be 90:10. For all Union Territories (UTs) (with and without legislatures), the Central share will be 100%.

4. The implementation and monitoring of the activities of the scheme will broadly be aligned for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with main thrust on Panchayats identified under Mission Antyodaya and 115 Aspirational districts as identified by NITI Aayog.
5. The Scheme will converge capacity building initiatives of other Ministries with particular focus on those Ministries which will be impacted substantially by this Scheme,
6. Sunset date for RGSA will be 31.03.2030.

#### Background

1. The Finance Minister, in his budget speech for 2016-17, announced the launch of new restructured scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), for developing governance capabilities of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. A Committee under the Chairmanship of the Vice Chairman-NITI Aayog was constituted to restructure the existing scheme of this Ministry as Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan.
3. The Committee held several meetings, consultations etc. with various stakeholders and submitted its report with set of recommendations which were accepted by Government and formed the basis for the formulation of this scheme.
4. In his Budget Speech for 2017-18, the Finance Minister announced to undertake a Mission Antyodaya to bring one crore households out of poverty to make 50,000 Gram Panchayats poverty free. Accordingly, convergent action with Mission Antyodaya has been integrated into this scheme.

#### Implementation strategy and targets:

1. The Central Government and the State Governments will take action for performing and completing the activities approved for their respective roles.
2. The State Government will formulate their Annual Action Plans for seeking assistance from the Central Government as per their priorities and requirement. The scheme will be implemented in a demand driven mode.

#### AFSPA REMOVED FROM MEGHALAYA

The Union Home Ministry on 23 April 2018 completely revoked the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act from Meghalaya while diluting it in other regions of Arunachal Pradesh. Till September 2017, 40 per cent of Meghalaya was under AFSPA. However, after recent review in consultations with the state government, AFSPA was removed completely from Meghalaya, a MHA statement said.

#### What

1. Similarly, AFSPA is now applicable only in 8 police stations in Arunachal, down from 16 police stations in 2017.
2. In another decision, the Home Ministry enhanced the aid under the surrender-cum-rehabilitation policy for militants in northeast from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 4 lakh. The policy will be applicable from April 1, 2018.
3. The government also relaxed the restricted area permit and protected area permit for foreigners visiting Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. Restrictions, however, will **remain for "countries of concern", which include Pakistan, Afghanistan and China.**
4. In the last 4 years, there has been a decline of 63 per cent in insurgency-related incidents in the region, while there have been a reduction of 83 per cent in civilian deaths and 40 per cent in casualties of security forces in 2017, said a statement from the Home Ministry.



## VISTARA JOINS IATA

Tata-SIA joint venture airline Vistara has joined the 280-members global **airlines' body IATA** ahead of its plans to launch international operations by the second half of this year. Till now, only two Indian carriers - Air India and Jet Airways - were part of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), which has 280 airlines as its members, representing as much as 83 per cent of the total air traffic across 120 countries.

What

1. The membership will enable Vistara to collaborate with other international member airlines for code-share and interline agreements, and provide a seamless travel through an extended global network to the passengers to and from India.
2. The Delhi-headquartered carrier had earlier in September last year completed the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA), a pre-requisite for an IATA membership.
3. Vistara currently operates over 730 flights a week to 22 destinations with a fleet of 20 Airbus A320 aircraft.

## TEJAS CARRIES OUT SUCCESSFUL TEST FIRING OF BVR MISSILE

In a major milestone, indigenously developed Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas has successfully fired an air-to-air beyond visual (BVR) range missile, demonstrating its overall capability as an effective combat jet, and inched closer to receive final operational clearance. Test firing of the missile from a Tejas jet was carried out off the Goa coast and it met all operational requirements. Earlier, Tejas was given clearance for deployment of armaments and other missiles.

What

1. The Indian Air Force (IAF) had ordered 40 Tejas Mark-1 version and a request for proposal (RFP) was issued to HAL by the IAF in December for procurement of another batch of 83 Tejas at a cost of around Rs 50,000 crore.
2. The successful launch of the BVR missile will expedite issuance of the Final Operational Clearance (FOC) to the aircraft developed by state-run aerospace behemoth Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
3. The Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) successfully fired Derby air-to-air BVR Range missile to expand the firing envelope as well as to demonstrate safe operation of the aircraft.
4. The aircraft was tracked by two other Tejas aircraft in close formation to capture the firing event in the specially instrumented high speed cameras for detailed analysis of the test launch of the missile.
5. The entire planning, practice sorties and final firing was carried out by ADA and its National Flight Test Centre (NFTC).

## INDIA WINS UN SUBSIDIARY BODIES

India has won an election to a crucial non-governmental organisation committee in the UN after garnering the highest number of votes besides getting elected by acclamation to other subsidiary bodies in five separate polls. **The UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** held elections to a number of its subsidiary bodies. The ECOSOC focusses on advancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

What

1. Following the elections, **India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin** told that the "results reflect, yet again, the broad support and many friends India has amongst UN members".
2. India topped the election to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. In one round of secret balloting, the Council elected Bahrain, China, India and Pakistan in the Asia-Pacific States category and Brazil, Cuba, Mexico and

- Nicaragua (Latin American and Caribbean States) to serve a four-year term beginning on January 1, 2019.
3. India got the highest number of votes at 46, followed by Pakistan (43), Bahrain (40) and China 39. Iran lost the elections, having got only 27 votes. The Council elected by acclamation 11 other nations to serve the same four-year term.
  4. The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations is a standing committee of ECOSOC and its main tasks include consideration of applications for consultative status and requests for reclassification submitted by NGOs and consideration of quadrennial reports submitted by NGOs in General and Special categories.
  5. India was also elected by acclamation to the Commission on Population and Development for a term beginning April 16, 2018 and expiring in 2021. Under its terms of reference the Commission is to assist the Council by arranging for studies and advising the Council on population issues and trends, integrating population and development strategies and population and related development policies and programmes.
  6. India was among the 17 members elected by acclamation to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The elected members, to serve a three-year term beginning on January 1, 2019 and expiring on December 31, 2021 include Algeria, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Swaziland, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Thailand, Belarus, Brazil, Cuba, Mexico Austria, France, Turkey and the United States.
  7. The Commission acts as the principal policymaking body of the UN in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. Its mandate includes improving international action to combat national and transnational crime and the efficiency and fairness of criminal justice administration systems.
  8. India was among 14 nations elected by acclamation by the Council to the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The elected members will serve three-year terms beginning January, 2019.

## SAGAR KAVACH

Two-day coastal security exercise '**Sagar Kavach**' to strengthen and assess the loopholes in the coastal security mechanism was held along Kerala coast. The exercise saw participation of Indian Coast Guard (ICG), Indian Navy, Coastal Police and Marine Enforcement wing and various other security stakeholders. It saw participation of three ships of India Navy, 10 of ICG, four fishing boats, besides 20 coastal police stations from Vizhinjam to Kasaragod.

What

1. The objective of the exercise was to provide seamless seaward cover along coast by all concerned security agencies from coastal belt area to limit of territorial waters i.e. 12 nautical miles.
2. **The exercise assessed effectiveness of coastal fishing community in serving as 'eye and ears' for early warnings of a seaward threat.**
3. It tested intelligence and infiltration alertness and preparedness of stakeholders, including people.
4. It provided all concerned stakeholders an opportunity to fine tune standard operating procedures and test new operation concepts for coastal security.

## GI TAG FOR TELANGANA'S ADILABAD DOKRA

Chennai based Geographical Indication Registry has awarded Geographical Indication (GI) Tag to two more craft forms from Telangana viz. Adilabad dokra and Warangal Dhurries. Adilabad Dokra is an ancient bell metal craft and Warangal Dhurries is a popular traditional cotton rug.

What

1. Adilabad Dokra is form of ancient bell metal craft practiced by Woj community native to Adilabad district of Telangana.
2. They use ancient casting technique called cire perdue (lost wax casting technique), a technique wherein duplicate metal sculpture is cast from an original sculpture.
3. The 100-odd families are currently, involved in creation of a hereditary crafts.
4. The craftsmen mostly indulge in creation of metal casting products like idols of local deities, dancing figures, bells, jewellery, statues and many other decorative items.
5. Apart from these, they also makes figures of animals and birds, and jewels.
6. Dhurries is popular traditional thick cotton rug in which weavers create beautiful patterns and dye them using vegetable colours, which are washed in flowing water after the printing process.
7. Currently, there are more than 2000 weaving community members present in Kothawada, Warangal in spinning Dhurrie.
8. The products are exported mainly to UK, Germany along with few other European and African countries.

#### Geographical Indication (GI)

1. GI tag is name or sign used on certain products which correspond to specific geographical location or origin.
2. The registration of a GI is valid for 10 years after which it needs to be renewed.
3. Violation of GI tags is punishable offence under law.
4. GI is covered as element of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under Paris Convention for Protection of Industrial Property.
5. **At international level, GI is governed by WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).**
6. In India, GI tag Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection Act), 1999 governs it.
7. This Act is administered by Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks, who is also Registrar of Geographical Indications.

### RASHTRIYA GRAMIN SWARAJ ABHIYAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 24 April 2018 launched a scheme that seeks to strengthen the country's panchayati raj system and address critical gaps that hinder its success. He launched the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan at Ramnagar in this tribal-dominated district of Madhya Pradesh on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day.

What

1. The Central government scheme aims at making rural local bodies self-sustainable, financially stable and more efficient.
2. The programme seeks to address critical gaps that hinder the success of panchayats by enhancing their capacities and effectiveness, and promote devolution of powers and responsibilities.
3. On the occasion, Modi unveiled a roadmap for development of tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh over the next five years. Under the plan, Rs 2 lakh crore will be spent for development of areas under tribal panchayats.
4. The Prime Minister also laid the foundation stone for a liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) bottling plant at Maneri in the district.

5. Modi also honoured panchayats for their achievements in implementing the government's e-governance scheme, making villages under their jurisdiction open defecation-free (ODF) and also smokeless by switching from conventional fuel to LPG.

## VAN DHAN SCHEME LAUNCHED

The Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi launched the Van Dhan Scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs and TRIFED on 14th April, 2018 during the celebrations of Ambedkar Jayanti at Bijapur, Chattisgarh. Emphasizing the important role of value addition in increasing tribal incomes, he stated that Van Dhan, Jan Dhan and Gobar-Dhan Schemes had the potential to change the tribal-rural economic system.

What

1. All these three schemes in tandem need to be promoted for this purpose by the State Governments.
2. **The establishment of “Van Dhan Vikas Kendra” is for providing skill upgradation and capacity building training and setting up of primary processing and value addition facility.**
3. This first model Van DhanVikas Kendra in Bijapuris being implemented for training of 300 training beneficiaries with a total outlay of Rs.43.38 lakhs for training, providing equipments & tools for primary level processing and infrastructure & building for housing the Kendra.
4. This Kendra to start with will have processing facility for Tamarind brick making, Mahua flower storage facility and chironjee cleaning and packaging.
5. Under Van Dhan, 10 Self Help Groups of 30 Tribal gatherers is constituted. They are then trained and provided with working capital to add value to the products, which they collect from the jungle.

## UK JOINS INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE

The United Kingdom joined the India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA) ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's four-day visit to Britain. At an event held at the London Stock Exchange as part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2018 (CHOGM), Britain formally announced its membership of the alliance, which aims to raise \$1 trillion of private and public finance to provide affordable and sustainable energy for all by 2030.

What

1. **The UK's partnership will involve providing expertise and advice to the alliance, but no monetary contributions.**
2. The Department for International Development (DfID) said its partnership of ISA, **which it described as Modi's flagship climate treaty, is aimed at giving over 1 billion of the world's poorest people access to cheap, clean, and renewable energy.**
3. **The DfID minister championed the UK's world-leading innovation and expertise—including from the City of London, the leading global centre for green investment finance—that will enable the alliance to deliver more effective programmes and help more of the world's vulnerable people.**
4. DfID highlighted that ISA has already brought together over 60 countries who have pledged to increase solar power that will ensure homes remain lit, children can be educated in schools, health facilities can provide life-saving treatment, and businesses have access to vital mobile and internet services.
5. The signing of this treaty is a momentous occasion for the UK and demonstrates our continued commitment to providing the very best of British expertise to the renewable energy sector.
6. The new collaboration means ISA will be able to make solar power cheaper by helping countries join forces to procure solar energy systems.
7. Currently, 12 ISA countries, including Commonwealth countries Bangladesh and Malawi, want to purchase over 720,000 solar pumps through ISA.

8. The joint purchase will see a significant reduction in solar pump costs for each of the participating countries and up to 5 million people in developing countries will benefit from this collective purchase.
9. The UK becomes the 62nd country to join ISA, which includes countries like France, Australia, Bangladesh, Tuvalu, Benin, UAE, Brazil, Vanuatu, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda.
10. **Britain's traditional financial aid programme to India ended in 2015**, with the country now focussed on providing India with "world-leading expertise" and private investment to boost prosperity, create jobs and open up markets.
11. The new ISA partnership is part of this wider engagement with India. ISA is an inter-governmental treaty-based organisation that aims to mobilise \$1 trillion in funds for future solar generation, storage and technology across the world. It was launched by Modi in 2015 and formalised at a founding conference in New Delhi last month.

## AIRPORT CARGO GETS WHO CERTIFICATION

The cargo terminal of GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd has been certified with the **World Health Organisation's Good Storage and Distribution Practices (WHO-GSDP)**. Awarded by SGS India, a leader in certifications in Pharmaceutical sector, the WHO-GSDP certificate **underscores Hyderabad Airport's commitment to and compliance** with Quality management standards and International requirements throughout the pharma supply chain.

What

1. In 2010, Hyderabad International Airport operationalized **India's first Airport-based dedicated Pharmaceutical handling facility (Pharma Zone)**, to handle the export of pharmaceutical products.
2. Hyderabad being the Pharma hub of India, **Hyderabad Airport's 60 per cent cargo exports** are comprised of pharma products. Hyderabad Airport Pharma Cargo has witnessed CAGR of 10 per cent for the last 5 years.

## FIRST EVER JOINT ARMY EXERCISE ON MALAYSIAN SOIL

Exercise Harimau Shakti 2018, between the Indian Army and the Malaysian Army commenced on 30 April at Wardieburn Camp, Kuala Lumpur with a brief and impressive **handing over of troop's ceremony**. Lt Col Irwan Ibrahim, Commanding officer of the 1st Royal Ranger Regiment of Malaysian Army welcomed the Indian contingent and wished the Indian and Malaysian troops for a successful and mutually beneficial joint exercise.

What

1. First phase of the two week long joint military exercise begin with the formal handing over of the Regimental Flag to the Malaysian Army signifying merging of the two contingents under one Commander.
2. First day also saw briefings to the joint contingent on Malaysian country brief, exercise settings and security aspects.
3. The day ended with a keenly contested friendly Volley Ball match, which the visitors could finally snatch after a tiff competition. Both armies stand to hone their tactical and technical skills in counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations under the UN mandate. Due emphasis will be laid on increasing interoperability between forces which is crucial for success of any joint operation.
4. Exercise Harimau Shakti is a positive step in the bilateral relations between the two nations. The conduct of such exercises in future will enable mutual capacity enhancement and assist in building strong bonds of friendship and cooperation between India and Malaysia.

## MOU IN THE FIELD OF TRADITIONAL SYSTEMS OF MEDICINE APPROVED

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its ex-post facto approval for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Sao Tome and Principe for Cooperation in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy. The MoU was signed in March, 2018.

What

1. The MoU, will enhance bilateral cooperation between the two countries in the areas of Traditional Systems of Medicine.
2. This will be of immense importance to both countries considering their shared cultural heritage.
3. The activities between the two sides will start after the receipt of copy of the signed MoU. The initiatives taken between the two countries will be as per the terms of reference of the MoU signed and will be a continuing process till the MoU remains in operation.

### Flashback

1. India is blessed with well- developed systems of traditional medicine including medicinal plants, which hold tremendous potential in the global health scenario.
2. The Ministry of AYUSH of the Republic of India having the mandate to promote, propagate and globalize the Traditional Systems of Medicine including Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy has taken effective steps by entering into MoU with the Government of Malaysia, Government of Trinidad & Tobago, Government of Hungary, Government of Bangladesh, Government of Nepal, Government of Mauritius, Government of Mongolia, Government of Iran for Cooperation in Traditional Medicine. Another MoU is proposed to be signed with the Government of Sri Lanka.

## NITI AAYOG, ITC TIE UP FOR 25 ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS

NITI Aayog and ITC Ltd will collaborate in the agriculture and allied sectors in order to strengthen farming systems across 25 aspirational districts. Launched by the Prime Minister in January, the **'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' programme** aims to improve performance of these districts.

What

1. A Letter of Intent (LoI) for the partnership was signed by Yaduvendra Mathur, Additional Secretary, NITI Aayog, and Anil Rajput, Senior Vice-President – Corporate Affairs, ITC Ltd. Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog, was present on the occasion.
2. The 25 aspirational districts covers States of Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Jharkhand.
3. ITC will promote best practices and technologies, set-up demonstration farms and also create master trainers from government extension workers.
4. Master trainers will be created at the block level. The company will also work out the logistics to ensure the farmers are trained even at the gram panchayat level.
5. NITI Aayog will work in close collaboration with the district administrations and ITC to build capacities, the FMCG major said in a release.
6. In order to ensure implementation, performance review and problem-solving, a Project Management Committee (PMC) at the district level will be set up.
7. It is expected that over 2 lakh lead farmers (LF) in 25 districts will be trained as a part of the partnership.

## ATAL NEW INDIA CHALLENGES

The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) of the NITI Aayog on 26 April 2018 announced to launch the Atal New India Challenges, which came into being following Prime Minister's clarion call to bring innovations and technologies relevant to the people.

What

1. Applicants showing capability, intent, and potential to productize technologies will be awarded grants up to Rs. One crore.
2. This grant support will be supplemented by mentoring, handholding, incubation and other support as needed at various stages of commercialisation while generating wider deployment.
3. Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog, Dr Rajiv Kumar highlighted the need to ensure inclusive and innovative solutions.
4. India has accelerated its growth potential by leveraging technology in various spheres.
5. This initiative will focus our efforts towards solving problems in core areas, which would have a direct impact on improving lives of our citizens and will also **generate employment. The topics placed in different phases are aligned with India's needs and through the support of innovation, we are ready to make a giant leap towards a New India.**
6. Partnering with the Ministries of Road Transport and Highways, Housing and Urban Affairs, Agriculture and Family Welfare, Drinking Water & Sanitation and the **Railway Board, AIM will attempt to harness the potential of India's innovators.**
7. Under the Atal New India Challenge, which shall be run in collaboration with five ministries, AIM will invite prospective innovators/MSMEs/start-ups to design market-ready products, using cutting edge technologies or prototypes across 17 identified focus areas.
8. The programme is open to Indian companies registered under the Companies Act 1956/2013, primarily a Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) as defined in the MSMED Act, 2006.
9. It is also open to Start-Ups, as defined by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Government or private R&D organizations (other than a Railway R&D organization), academic institutions, academicians, or even individual innovators are encouraged to apply, provided they partner with entities with appropriate manufacturing capabilities.
10. Grants shall be awarded in up to 3 tranches within 12 – 18 months, contingent on achieving milestones and up to a total of 50 grants in fiscal year 2018 – 19 may be given out. The grants will not be mutually exclusive - several grants may be given in a focus area.

17 identified focus areas	
1.	Climate-smart agriculture
2.	Fog vision system for road and rail
3.	Prevention of Rail failure using emerging technologies
4.	Predictive maintenance of Rolling Stock
5.	Alternate fuel based transportation
6.	Smart Mobility
7.	Electric Mobility
8.	Safe transport
9.	Instant Portable Water Quality Testing
10.	Affordable Desalination / Recycling Technology
11.	Waste management recycling / reuse
12.	Garbage composition devices
13.	Quality of compost
14.	Decentralized composting
15.	Mixing blades for composting
16.	Waste in public spaces
17.	Dissuading public littering

## FIRST LICENSE FOR LIQUID CHLORINE

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) granted First Licence to M/s Gujarat Alkalies and Chemicals Ltd for Liquid Chlorine on All India basis. Ahmedabad Branch Office (AHBO) under the jurisdiction of Western Regional Office has granted BIS Certification Marks Licence CM/L-7200117899 to M/s Gujarat Alkalies and Chemicals Ltd, PO Petrochemicals, Ranoli, Vadodara, Gujarat-391346 for the product Liquid Chlorine, Technical as per IS 646:1986.

What

1. This is the First Licence granted on All India basis. The licence has been made operative with effect from 12th April, 2018 for a period of one year.
2. This product is in liquid form and stored in metal containers. It is usually used as a gas obtained by evaporating the liquid from the metal container.
3. It is used mainly in paper, pulp, textile bleaching, water sterilization and manufacture of chemicals.
4. The Indian Standard 646:1986 for Liquid Chlorine, Technical, prescribes the requirements and the methods of sampling and test for liquid chlorine, technical.
5. The move will facilitate industry to get a quality Liquid Chlorine with Standard Mark under BIS Certification Marks scheme.

## INTERNATIONAL

### FIRST INDIA-NORDIC SUMMIT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with his counterparts from Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland and Denmark vowed to deepen cooperation between India and the Nordic countries, as the leaders deliberated on key issues of security, economic growth and climate change. Modi and the leaders of the five Nordic countries participated in the first India-Nordic Summit co-hosted by India and Sweden in Stockholm.

What

1. The Prime Ministers pledged to deepen cooperation between India and the Nordic countries and focused their discussions on key issues related to global security, economic growth, innovation and climate change.
2. They acknowledged that innovation and digital transformation drive growth in an interconnected world, which underpin a growing engagement between India and the Nordic countries.
3. The leaders reaffirmed the importance of free trade as a catalyst for achieving inclusive growth and realising the Sustainable Development Goals.
4. They acknowledged that innovation and digital transformation drive growth in an interconnected world, and underpin a growing engagement between the Nordic countries and India.
5. The role of the Nordic countries as global innovation leaders was underlined. The Nordic approach to innovation systems, characterised by a strong collaboration between public sector, private sector and academia, was discussed, and synergies **were identified with India's rich pool of talent and skills.**
6. **The summit emphasised the Indian government's strong commitment to innovation** and digital initiatives as key to prosperity and sustainable development, with national flagship programmes such as Make in India, Startup India, Digital India and Clean India.
7. Nordic solutions in clean technologies, maritime solutions, port modernisation, food processing, health, life-sciences and agriculture were also discussed.
8. The leaders noted that the unique strengths of India and the Nordic countries offer immense opportunities for trade and investment diversification and mutually beneficial collaboration.
9. India and the Nordic nations also reaffirmed their support for the UN and the Secretary-**General's reform** efforts to ensure a UN fit to support member states to



- deliver on Agenda 2030 and took note of his proposals to strengthen the UN, including in the areas of development, peace operations, peacebuilding and conflict prevention.
10. The Nordic nations agreed that India is a strong candidate for a permanent seat in a reformed UN Security Council expanded with both permanent and non-permanent members.
  11. The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development as well as the ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement.
  12. They agreed that a strong partnership can help spur innovations, economic growth, sustainable solutions and mutually beneficial trade and investments.
  13. Five MoUs were signed on the occasion with the Nordic countries. These include on cooperation in the field of sustainable and smart urban development, animal husbandry and dairying, food safety cooperation, and agricultural research and education with Denmark, and on the establishment of an ICCR Chair for Hindi Language with Iceland.

## INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST CONFERENCE

International Buddhist Conference was held in Lumbini, Nepal on 29 and 30 April 2018 to commemorate 2562nd Buddha Jayanti. The theme of the conference was 'Lumbini Nepal: The birthplace of Lord Buddha and the fountain of Buddhism and world **peace**'. Lord Buddha was born in sacred garden of Lumbini during 6th century BC and had attained enlightenment in Bodh Gaya, (now in Bihar, India) and gave his first sermon in Sarnath and died in Kushinagar.

What

1. The basic objective of conference was to disseminate teachings of Buddha and spread messages of nonviolence, brotherhood, co-existence, love and peace to international community.
2. It also aimed to help to propagate and enhance the importance and the glory of Lumbini in the international arena.
3. Representatives from 16 countries including US, Japan, India, China, Indonesia and Sri Lanka attended the conference.
4. At end of the conference, 10 point Lumbini Declaration was adopted. It includes issues such as interfaith dialogue, infrastructure development, connecting Buddhist attractions in Nepal and India, and implementing Greater Lumbini Area Master Plan.

## COMMONWEALTH CYBER DECLARATION ADOPTED

The Commonwealth countries at the end of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London have adopted Commonwealth Cyber Declaration to take action on cybersecurity by 2020. The declaration is considered as **world's largest and most geographically diverse inter-governmental** commitment on cybersecurity cooperation.

What

1. Under this declaration leaders of 53 commonwealth countries agreed to work closely to evaluate and strengthen their cybersecurity frameworks and response mechanisms.
2. It also aims to tackle criminal groups and hostile state actors who pose a global threat to cybersecurity.
3. The declaration sets out common vision for ensuring internet remains free and open across Commonwealth.
4. It commits members to raise national levels of cyber security and increased cooperation to counter those who seek to undermine our values, security, even integrity of elections.

5. The funding under it will support Commonwealth partners to prevent and respond to cyber security risks affecting governments, businesses and citizens.
6. It will enable low and middle income Commonwealth members to carry out national cyber security capacity reviews before next CHOGM in 2020.
7. It will underpin projects across Commonwealth to provide technical assistance, training and advice to address wide range of cyber security and cybercrime threats.

## INDIA-CHINA INFORMAL SUMMIT

Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi and President of People's Republic of China Mr. Xi Jinping held their first Informal Summit in Wuhan on April 27-28, 2018, to exchange views on overarching issues of bilateral and global importance, and to elaborate their respective visions and priorities for national development in the context of the current and future international situation. They believe that the simultaneous emergence of India and China as two large economies and major powers with strategic and decisional autonomy has implications of regional and global significance.

What

1. They shared the view that peaceful, stable and balanced relations between India and China will be a positive factor for stability amidst current global uncertainties.
2. They also agreed that proper management of the bilateral relationship will be conducive for the development and prosperity of the region, and will create the conditions for the Asian Century.
3. They decided to strengthen the Closer Development Partnership in a mutually beneficial and sustainable manner, in pursuit of national modernization and greater prosperity for their peoples.
4. Reviewed developments in India-China relations from the strategic and long-term perspective.
5. Agreed to significantly enhance efforts to build on the convergences through the established mechanisms in order to create the broadest possible platform for the future relationship.
6. Agreed that both sides have the maturity and wisdom to handle the differences through peaceful discussion within the context of the overall relationship, bearing in mind the importance of respecting each other's sensitivities, concerns and aspirations.
7. Expressed their support for the work of the Special Representatives on the India China Boundary Question and urged them to intensify their efforts to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement.
8. Underscored the importance of maintaining peace and tranquility in all areas of the India-China border region in the larger interest of the overall development of bilateral relations.
9. They issued strategic guidance to their respective militaries to strengthen communication in order to build trust and mutual understanding and enhance predictability and effectiveness in the management of border affairs.
10. The two leaders further directed their militaries to earnestly implement various confidence building measures agreed upon between the two sides, including the principle of mutual and equal security, and strengthen existing institutional arrangements and information sharing mechanisms to prevent incidents in border regions.
11. Agreed to push forward bilateral trade and investment in a balanced and sustainable manner by taking advantage of complementarities between their two economies. They also discussed ways to promote greater cultural and people-to-people exchanges and agreed to explore establishing new mechanisms in this direction.
12. The two leaders agreed that India and China have separately made major contributions to global peace and prosperity through their respective growth and economic development, and would continue to act as engines for global growth in the future.
13. They reiterated the importance of building an open, multipolar, pluralist and participatory global economic order which will enable all countries to pursue their

- development and contribute to the elimination of poverty and inequality in all regions of the world. They spoke of their respective efforts to contribute to the regional and global economic development.
14. The two leaders also shared views on their respective foreign policy visions of achieving global prosperity and security.
  15. They agreed to jointly contribute in a positive and constructive way in facilitating sustainable solutions for global challenges including climate change, sustainable development, food security etc.
  16. They underscored the importance of reform of multilateral financial and political institutions to make them representative and responsive to the needs of developing countries.
  17. The two leaders agreed that as two major countries and emerging economies, India and China, given their vast developmental experiences and national capacities, should join hands to take lead in offering innovative and sustainable solutions to challenges faced by humankind in the 21st century.
  18. These include combating diseases, coordinating action for disaster risk reduction and mitigation, addressing climate change and ushering digital empowerment.
  19. They agreed to pool together their expertise and resources in these areas and create a global network dedicated to these challenges for the larger benefit of humanity.
  20. Prime Minister Modi and President Xi recognized the common threat posed by terrorism, and reiterated their strong condemnation of and resolute opposition to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. They committed themselves to cooperate on counter-terrorism.
  21. The two leaders highly assessed the opportunity for direct, free and candid exchange of views offered by the Informal Summit and agreed on the utility of holding more such dialogues in the future.
  22. The forward-looking dialogue raised the level of strategic communication about the perspective, priorities and vision that guide their respective policy choices domestically, regionally and globally.
  23. It also helped them in forging a common understanding of the future direction of India-China relations built upon mutual respect for each other's developmental aspirations and prudent management of differences with mutual sensitivity.

#### ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL WORKSHOP OF UNCCD

The Asia Pacific Regional Workshop of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), jointly hosted by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and UNCCD was held in New Delhi. The four day workshop aimed at building capacity of Asia-Pacific Region to monitor and report on land degradation. It was attended by delegates from about 40 Asia Pacific countries, as well as representatives from 12 Indian states affected by land degradation, researchers and scientists from scientific institutions of national importance.

##### About UNCCD

1. UNCCD was adopted in 1994 and entered into force 1996.
2. It is only legally binding international agreement to address problem of desertification and other land issues.
3. It promotes good land stewardship and its end goal is to protect land from over-use and drought, so it can continue to provide food, water and energy.
4. The Convention addresses desertification and land issues specifically arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as drylands.
5. **India's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** is the nodal Ministry for this Convention, as well as other two Rio Conventions -United Nations Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Convention on Biological Diversity, having their genesis in Earth Summit in 1992 in Rio De Janerio, Brazil

What

1. The workshop provided UNCCD member countries platform to submit their national report in time and in particular for Target 15.3 on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN).
2. It provided diverse and multi-disciplinary knowledge sharing platform addressing desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) issues.
3. It also provided opportunity to bring all key stakeholders from Asia to India and discuss key aspects of Reporting, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN).

## NORTH, SOUTH KOREA AGREE TO END WAR

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in agreed on 27 April 2018 to finally end a seven-decade war this year, and pursue the **“complete denuclearization” of the Korean Peninsula. The two leaders embraced after signing the deal during a historic meeting on their shared border, the first time a North Korean leader has set foot on the southern side. They announced plans to formally declare a resolution to the war and replace 1953 armistice that ended open hostilities into a peace treaty by year’s end.**

What

1. We have agreed to share a firm determination to open a new era in which all Korean people enjoy prosperity and happiness **on a peaceful land without wars,” Kim** said, in his first remarks in front of the global press since taking power in 2011.
2. **The two sides** “confirmed the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.”
3. **“South** and North Korea agreed to actively seek the support and cooperation of the **international community for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” according to the statement. It didn’t elaborate on what that would entail.**
4. The agreement follows a rapid thaw of tensions on the peninsula after a flurry of North Korean missile tests and a hydrogen bomb detonation last year. Kim plans to meet US President Donald Trump soon, which would be the first summit between a North Korean leader and a sitting American president.
5. **Kim’s official Korean Central News Agency issued a tersely worded commentary after the announcement urging the US to respond “with sincerity.” “What is needed for the US is to learn how to observe good manners and how to respect the party concerned, not resorting to high-handed practices and arrogance,” the piece said.**
6. **Much of the agreement mirrors previous deals between North Korea and Moon’s liberal predecessors. It appeared aimed at restoring cooperation that had deteriorated over the past decade.**

## SIX COUNTRIES SUSPEND IN UNASUR

A South American bloc created a decade ago to counter US influence in the region has temporarily lost half its members after six countries suspended their memberships amid differences over who should lead the group. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru had decided to temporarily leave the Union of South American Nations, or UNASUR, given differences over choosing the secretary general of the group.

What

1. Six countries will not participate in UNASUR meetings for a period of one year until the leadership issue is resolved, Huanacuni said by telephone from Ecuador to state television Boliviavt.
2. **Paraguay’s foreign ministry said in a statement that the impossibility of electing a general secretary for UNASUR affects the bloc and that the six countries that will remain outside it until they see “concrete results that guarantee its operation.”** Huanacuni announced a meeting in May to discuss the matter.

- UNASUR was promoted by late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Bolivia, Ecuador, Guyana, Surinam, Uruguay and Venezuela remain in the bloc.

## ECONOMY

### FUGITIVE ECONOMIC OFFENDERS ORDINANCE GETS NOD

The Union Cabinet on on 21 April 2018 gave its nod for a Finance Ministry proposal to promulgate the 'Fugitive Economic Offenders Ordinance, 2018'. This Ordinance will lay down the measures to empower Indian authorities to attach and confiscate proceeds of crime associated with economic offenders and the properties of the economic offenders.

What

- This is expected to deter economic offenders from evading the process of Indian law by remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts.
- The Ordinance is expected to re-establish the rule of law with respect to the fugitive economic offenders as they would be forced to return to India to face trial for scheduled offences.
- This would also help the banks and other financial institutions to achieve higher recovery from financial defaults committed by such fugitive economic offenders, improving the financial health of such institutions.
- The Ordinance makes provision for a Court (special court under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002) to declare a person as a Fugitive economic offender.
- A fugitive economic offender is a person against whom an arrest warrant has been issued in respect of scheduled offences and who has left India so as to avoid criminal prosecution, or being abroad, refuses to return to India to face criminal prosecution.
- Scheduled offences refer to a list of economic offences contained in the schedule to this Ordinance.
- To ensure that Courts are not over burdened with such cases, only those cases where the total value involved in such offences is Rs 100 crore or more is within the purview of this Ordinance.
- The Ordinance among other things provides for making an application before the Special Court for declaration that an individual is a fugitive economic offender.
- It provides for attachment of the property of a fugitive economic offender and proceeds of crime. Also, the property of an individual declared as a fugitive economic offender can now be confiscated. The fugitive economic offender will be disentitled from defending any civil claim.
- Also, an administrator could be appointed to manage and dispose of the confiscated property under the Act.

### 4 RRBS IDENTIFIED FOR IPOS

The government has identified 4 Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) for listing on stock exchanges in line with the Union Budget 2018-19. Guidelines for the listing are almost ready, and entail details like quantum of stake dilution, instrument to be floated and category of possible investors in the public issue. The four RRBs are eligible to come out with initial public offerings (IPOs) and they may hit the capital markets this year. It is proposed to allow strong RRBs to raise capital from the market to enable them increase their credit to rural economy, finance minister Arun Jaitley had said in his Budget speech earlier this year.

What

- In a bid to make RRBs eligible and successfully raise capital from the market, a slew of reforms have been implemented including compliance with corporate governance, technology upgradation and capacity building.

2. There are 56 RRBs in the country with a combined balance sheet size of Rs4.7 trillion. Of these, 50 are in profit, according to financial statements of RRBs for March 2017, released by National Bank For Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard).
3. RRBs operating through about 21,200 branches witnessed 17% rise in net profit to Rs2,950 crore in 2016-17. Their loans and advances outstanding under various schemes rose 15% to Rs3.5 trillion as of March 2017.
4. These banks were formed under the RRB Act, 1976 with an objective to provide credit and other facilities to small farmers, agricultural labourers and artisans in rural areas. The Act was amended in 2015 whereby such banks were permitted to raise capital from sources other than Centre, states and sponsor banks.
5. Currently, the Centre holds 50% in RRBs, while 35% and 15% are with concerned sponsor banks and state governments, respectively.
6. Even after stake dilution, the shareholding of the Centre and the sponsor public sector banks together cannot come below 51% as per the amended Act. As a result, the ownership and control would remain with the government.
7. In order to improve the financial health of RRBs, the government initiated consolidation of RRBs in a phased manner in 2005.
8. The number of RRBs came down to 133 in 2006 from 196 at the end of March 2005. It further came down to 105 and subsequently to 82 at the end of March 2012 and subsequently to 56.

## SPECIAL 301 REPORT

The Office of United States (US) Trade Representative (USTR) has once again placed **India on 'Priority Watch List' in its annual Special 301 Report** on the state of intellectual property protection. In 2018 Special 301 Report, the USTR has placed 12 countries on its Priority Watch List.

What

1. Special 301 Report identifies US trading partners that do not adequately or effectively protect and enforce IP rights or deny market access to its innovators and creators that rely on protection of their IP rights.
2. Other countries on list are Algeria, Argentina, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Indonesia, Kuwait, Russia, Ukraine, and Venezuela. IP issues in these countries will be subject of intense bilateral engagement during coming year.
3. India remains the list for its long-standing challenges in its IP framework and lack of sufficient measurable improvements, particularly with respect to patents, copyrights, trade secrets, and enforcement, as well as for new issues that have negatively affected US right holders over the past year.
4. **India remains one of world's most challenging major economies** with respect to protection and enforcement of intellectual property.
5. **India's enforcement action and policies are insufficient to curb problem**, copyright policies that do not properly incentivise creation and commercialisation of content and outdated and insufficient trade secrets legal framework.

## BRAND TRUST REPORT 2018

Samsung is the most trusted brand in India followed by Sony and LG, the TRAs Brand Trust Report 2018 said. Patanjali topped among the fast moving capital goods (FMCG) companies. Samsung leads the list second year in a row to become India's most trusted brand. Sony and LG follow to retain pole positions as India's second and third most trusted brands, the report said.

What

1. While Patanjali topped among the FMCG brands, it ranked 13th in the overall rankings, according to the report.

2. The report also said that Tata rose a position higher and was ranked fourth among the brands while Apple slipped one position to the fifth position.
3. Honda topped in the auto sector, while lost a position in the overall list to rank seventh this year.
4. Google ranked 18th this year improving from the 40th rank it held in 2017. Public sector lender State Bank of India was 21st in the list of most trusted brands in the country, but the most trusted in banking and financial service institutions.
5. The study covered 2,488 consumer-influencers across 16 cities in India.

## FIRST FROM RBI'S DIRTY DOZEN TO EXIT BANKRUPTCY

Electrosteel Steels Ltd became the first of the 12 large loan defaulters identified by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to win court approval to exit bankruptcy. The Kolkata bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on 17 April 2018 cleared **Vedanta Ltd's Rs5,320 crore resolution** plan for Electrosteel, rejecting objections of an unsuccessful bidder, which had challenged the decision of the lenders on the ground that Vedanta was ineligible to bid for stressed assets under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

What

1. RBI had ordered lenders to refer Electrosteel to a bankruptcy court in June 2017, along with 11 other companies. Electrosteel, which is setting up a 2.5 million tonne steel plant near Bokaro, owes lenders Rs13,395 crore.
2. The NCLT approved resolution plan for Electrosteel entails a more than 50% haircut for lenders.
3. **The bench's verdict should send a message to delinquent promoters that their companies could be taken away**, said Rishav Banerjee, an insolvency practitioner and a lawyer who had moved the petition for State Bank of India (SBI), one of the biggest lenders to Electrosteel.
4. **However, a consultant who had advised SBI earlier on Electrosteel said "this is the best that lenders could have got from the derailed project"**.
5. One of the bidders, Renaissance Steel India Pvt. Ltd had contended that one of **Vedanta's affiliates**—a unit of its UK-based parent Vedanta Resources Plc—had been found guilty of criminal misconduct punishable with two or more years in jail. But based on semantics, the bench ruled that Vedanta was eligible to bid.
6. Apart from Vedanta and Renaissance Steel, Tata Steel Ltd had also bid for **Electrosteel Steels. Tata Steel's bid was the second highest. In a separate petition**, Renaissance Steel had alleged that Tata Steel, too, was ineligible to bid for stressed assets under IBC because its UK subsidiary was held guilty of criminal misconduct.

## WTO SETS UP KEY PANEL

The ongoing trade spat between India and the US has intensified after the World Trade Organization (WTO) **set up a compliance panel following India's** request on the non-**implementation of the appellate body's ruling against** countervailing duties (CVD) imposed by the US on Indian hot-rolled carbon steel products. Confirming the move, a commerce ministry official speaking under condition of anonymity said the compliance panel was set up after a meeting of the dispute settlement body, despite the US opposing the move.

What

1. The case pertains to India filing a WTO complaint in 2012 against the US CVD **on India's exports of hot-rolled carbon steel flat products**.
2. The dispute settlement panel gave a mixed verdict in July, 2014 which was further challenged by both countries before an appellate panel, the highest adjudicating body at the WTO.
3. India achieved a significant victory as the appellate body in its report in December 2014 ruled that the CVD imposed by the US is inconsistent with various provisions of the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (ASCM).

4. The appellate body asked the US to amend the US Code which mandates cumulating subsidized imports and dumped imports to arrive at the injury margin. India had particularly challenged this measure as it has been affecting the CVD investigations by the US, leading to exorbitant duties against India.
5. However, India complained to WTO in June 2017 that even after the due period, US has not amended its domestic laws to make them compliant with the WTO rules.
6. Both sides went through a consultation period but failed to resolve the matter. India finally requested setting up a panel to examine the US compliance in this matter which was accepted by the dispute settlement body.

## GLOBAL FINDEX DATABASE RELEASED

India has 19 crore adults without a bank account despite the success of the ambitious Jan Dhan Yojana, making it the world's second largest unbanked population after that of China, the World Bank said on 19 April 2018. Besides, almost half of the bank accounts remained inactive in the past year, the multilateral financial institution said in a report, even as it lauded the Indian government's financial inclusion scheme, the Jan Dhan Yojana, for bringing in additional 31 crore Indians into formal banking system by March 2018. It also said the country's adult population with a bank account has more than doubled to 80 per cent since 2011. The Jan Dhan Yojana was launched by the Modi government in 2014.

What

1. According to the latest Global Findex Database released by the World Bank on the sidelines of the annual Spring meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, 11 per cent of the world's unbanked adults are in India.
2. Globally, 69 per cent of adults - 3.8 billion people - now have an account at a bank or mobile money provider, a crucial step in escaping poverty.
3. This is up from 62 per cent in 2014 and just 51 per cent in 2011. From 2014 to 2017, 515 million adults obtained an account, and 1.2 billion have done so since 2011, according to the Global Findex database.
4. The bank said China and India, despite having relatively high account ownership, claim large shares of the global unbanked population because of their sheer size.
5. Home to 225 million adults without an account, China has the world's largest unbanked population, followed by India (190 million or 19 crore), Pakistan (100 million), and Indonesia (95 million).
6. The Modi government's massive push in 2014 to increase account ownership through biometric identification cards has benefited traditionally excluded groups, the World Bank said, but expressed concern that almost half of account owners have an account that remained inactive in the past year.
7. Part of the explanation might be India's Jan-Dhan Yojana scheme, developed by the government to increase account ownership, brought an additional 310 million Indians into the formal banking system by March 2018, many of whom might not yet have had an opportunity to use their new account, it said.
8. In India, the share of adults with an account has more than doubled since 2011, to 80 per cent, the World Bank said, adding that an important factor driving this increase was a government policy launched in 2014 to boost account ownership among unbanked adults through biometric identification cards.
9. Globally, 1.7 billion adults remain unbanked, yet two-thirds of them own a mobile phone that could help them access financial services.
10. In South Asia, the share of adults with an account rose by 23 percentage points, to 70 per cent.

## FITCH RETAINS INDIA **RATING AT 'BBB'**

**Global credit rating agency Fitch on 27 April 2018 affirmed India's sovereign rating at 'BBB-' with 'stable' outlook**, saying that the country's medium-term growth



potential is strong. ‘BBB-’ rating indicates lowest investment grade. **India’s rating balances** a strong medium-term growth outlook and favourable external balances with weak fiscal finances and some lagging structural factors, including governance standards and a still-difficult, but improving, business environment.

What

1. **It projected India’s growth at 7.3 per cent in current the fiscal** and further to 7.5 per cent in 2019-20.
2. Growth is projected to be 6.7 per cent in the last fiscal, ended March 31. The **Stable Outlook reflects Fitch’s assessment that upside and downside risks to the ratings are broadly balanced.**
3. The Fitch review for annual sovereign rating **follows India’s rating upgrade by Moody’s after a gap of 14 years.** S&P had retained the earlier rating.
4. **Fitch said India’s fiscal finances are weak but current account deficit position is favourable.**
5. **Per capita GDP is the lowest among ‘BBB’ range peers** and continued structural reform implementation should enhance productivity. **“India has the highest medium-term growth potential among the largest emerging markets.**
6. **Fitch has kept rating unchanged at ‘BBB-’ the lowest investment grade, with stable outlook.** The rating was assigned to the country 11 years ago.
7. Fitch had last upgraded the rating from **‘BB+’ to ‘BBB-’ with stable outlook on August 1, 2006.** Later, it changed the outlook to negative in 2012 and then again to stable in the following year, though it kept the rating unchanged at the lowest investment grade.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### WORLD’S LARGEST SUPERCONDUCTING CAMERA

**Scientists have developed the world’s largest superconducting camera** that can spot planets around stars near our solar system. **Distinguishing that planet’s light from its star can be problematic,** researchers said. The team from California Institute of Technology and Jet Propulsion Laboratory in the US created a device named DARKNESS (the DARK-speckle Near-infrared Energy-resolved Superconducting Spectrophotometer), the first 10,000-pixel integral field spectrograph designed to overcome the limitations of traditional semiconductor detectors.

What

1. It employs Microwave Kinetic Inductance Detectors that, in conjunction with a large telescope and an adaptive optics system, enable direct imaging of planets around nearby stars.
2. Taking a picture of an exoplanet is extremely challenging because the star is much **brighter than the planet, and the planet is very close to the star,”** said Benjamin Mazin, from University of California, Santa Barbara in the US.
3. DARKNESS is an attempt to overcome some of the technical barriers to detecting planets. It can take the equivalent of thousands of frames per second without any read noise or dark current, which are among the primary sources of error in other instruments.
4. It also has the ability to determine the wavelength and arrival time of every photon. This time domain information is important for distinguishing a planet from scattered or refracted light called speckles.
5. This technology will lower the contrast floor so that we can detect fainter planets.
6. Designed for the 200-inch Hale telescope at the Palomar Observatory near San Diego, California, DARKNESS acts as both the science camera and a focal-plane

wave-front sensor, quickly measuring the light and then sending a signal back to a rubber mirror that can form into a new shape 2,000 times a second.

7. This process cleans up the atmospheric distortion that causes stars to twinkle by suppressing the starlight and enabling higher contrast ratios between the star and the planet.

## DARPAN-PLI APP LAUNCHED

**Hon'ble Minister of Communications Shri Manoj Sinha** launched the DARPAN-PLI App, which will help in collection of premium for PLI and RPLI policies at Branch Post Offices anywhere in India, with online updation of the policies. Further, with launch of this App, indexing of maturity claims in respect of PLI and RPLI policies can be done at Branch Post Office itself, upon which the insurant will immediately be provided with the request number for further references.

What

1. These two initiatives will help Department of Posts in providing better after-sales service to customers of PLI and RPLI, particularly those living in rural areas of the country.
2. Shri Sinha said, with a view to achieve total digitisation of postal operations in the country, under the IT Modernisation Plan, Department of Posts has launched DIGITAL ADVANCEMENT OF RURAL POST OFFICE FOR A NEW INDIA (DARPAN) Project, which aims at connecting all 1.29 lakh Rural Branch Post Offices in the country to enable them to do online Postal and Financial Transactions.
3. Hand held devices with SIM connectivity and solar power backup are being installed in all Branch Post Offices in the Country. The total Project cost is more than Rs.1300 crores. 61,941 Branch Post Offices have been rolled out under DARPAN Project as on 11th April 2018.
4. The Hand-held devices installed under DARPAN Project will ensure improvement in the quality of Postal services being offered in remote rural areas.
5. Customers in these areas can now avail the facility of online Core Banking, booking of Registered and Speed Post articles, booking of Money Orders, deposit of Postal Life Insurance / Rural Postal Life Insurance premium and indexing of PLI / RPLI maturity claims through hand-held devices being used at branch post offices.

## FIRST SMART CITY BECOMES FULLY RENEWABLE ENERGY

Diu Smart City has become the first city in India, that runs on 100% renewable energy during daytime setting a new benchmark for other cities to become clean and green. Diu had been importing 73% of its power from Gujarat until last year. It has now adopted a two-pronged approach whereby a 9 MW solar park spread over 50 hectares rocky barren land has been developed besides installing solar panels on the roof tops on 79 government buildings thereby generating 1.3 MW annually.

What

1. To further enhance its solar capacity, Diu offers its residents a subsidy of Rs 10,000-50,000 for installing 1-5KW roof top solar panels.
2. Diu is saving about 13,000 tonnes of carbon emissions every year. Due to low-cost solar energy, power tariffs have been cut in residential category by 10% last year and 15% this year.
3. To improve traffic management in Bengaluru Smart City, a prototype of an intelligent traffic management solution is currently being tested in collaboration with the Electronics City Township Authority (ELCITA).
4. It will provide traffic information that is currently unavailable, and help improve management of commuter traffic. It involves capturing video streams from several cameras and processing them using artificial intelligence so that typical traffic management tasks such as vehicle detection, traffic density estimation and control of traffic lights can be automated for real-time performance.

5. To revitalise urban public spaces and socially activating the area besides generating economic activity, Jaipur Smart City Ltd (JSCL) has planned to develop night bazaar at Chaura Rasta, in the heart of Pink city.
6. The JSCL would register up to 700 vendors who will be allowed to set up stalls, including eateries, between 9pm and 1am. The project will provide entertainment, culture and shopping to citizens after office hours.

## NEW MATERIALS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPED

Scientists have developed novel materials that could help develop sustainable and low-cost aluminium batteries. The first is a corrosion-resistant material for the conductive parts of the battery; **the second is a novel material for the battery's positive pole** that can be adapted to a wide range of technical requirements, said scientists from ETH Zurich in Switzerland. The energy transition depends on technologies that allow the inexpensive temporary storage of electricity from renewable sources.

What

1. A promising new candidate is aluminium batteries, which are made from cheap and abundant raw materials. As the electrolyte fluid in aluminium batteries is extremely aggressive and corrodes stainless steel, and even gold and platinum, scientists are searching for corrosion-resistant materials for the conductive parts of these batteries. Researchers have found what they are looking for in titanium nitride, a ceramic material that exhibits sufficiently high conductivity.
2. This compound is made up of the highly abundant elements titanium and nitrogen, **and it's easy to manufacture," said Maksym Kovalenko, a professor at ETH Zurich.**
3. The scientists have successfully developed aluminium batteries with conductive parts made of titanium nitride in the laboratory.
4. The material can easily be produced in the form of thin films, also as a coating over other materials such as polymer foils.
5. The potential applications of titanium nitride are not limited to aluminium batteries. The material could also be used in other types of batteries; for example, in those based on magnesium or sodium, or in high-voltage lithium-ion batteries.
6. The second new material can be used for the positive electrode (pole) of aluminium batteries. Whereas the negative electrode in these batteries is made of aluminium, the positive electrode is usually made of graphite.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### 2018 PULITZER PRIZE

American daily the Washington Post bagged the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for its **investigative reporting on US Senate candidate Roy Moore's sexual misconduct**. It also shared the prize for national reporting on alleged Russian interference in the US election that witnessed Republican candidate Donald Trump being sworn in as the 45th President of the United States.

What

1. While the Roy Moore scandal led to a huge public outcry after it was revealed that the senate candidate sought sexual favour from under-**aged females, Russia's alleged** interference in the US presidential elections incensed an unprecedented political debate about a foreign power interfering in elections on US soil.
2. Popularly known as The Post, the newspaper first reported in the summer of 2016 that Russian agents have been involved in the hacking of Democratic National Committee.
3. In a 7,000-word article, drawing on months of extensive reporting and interviews with as many as three dozen officials, readers was given an inside-view into US **government's decision-making response to Russia's alleged interference.**

4. Also, the newspaper's reporter John Woodrow Cox was the 2018 Pulitzer Prize finalist for feature writing, and non-fiction book critic Carlos Lozada ended up being Pulitzer Prize finalist for criticism.

## MECCA MASJID BLAST VERDICT

The NIA Court at Nampally Court Complex on 16 April 2018 acquitted five accused in Mecca Masjid blast case of May 18, 2007. Citing lack of evidence and **prosecution's failure to prove any of the charges made by the NIA**, the Fourth Additional Metropolitan Sessions cum NIA Court acquitted five main accused.

What

1. On May 18, 2007, a bomb blast occurred at the Mecca Masjid during Friday prayers resulting in the death of 8 persons and injuries to 58, while five others were shot dead by police in subsequent rioting.
2. The NIA took over the case in April 2011. The NIA filed first supplementary charge sheet on May 16, 2011; second supplementary charge sheet on July 16, 2012; and third supplementary charge sheet on August 28, 2013.
3. On February 13, the NIA Special Court, Namapally framed charges against the accused and summons was issued to witnesses.
4. The NIA accused them of conspiracy to target Muslim places of worship to avenge bomb blasts and terror attacks against Hindus and temples by jihadi terrorists with cross-border support. The chargesheets stated that all of them planned between 2005 and 2007 to commit the acts including the bomb blast at Mecca Masjid.
5. They were charged under sections 302, 307, 326 and 324 read with 120 (B) IPC, Sections of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, and Sections of Explosive Substances Act, 1908.

## WORLD HERITAGE DAY 2018

April 18 is International Day For Monuments and Sites, also called World Heritage Day. As of 2018, India alone has 36 world heritage sites, the sixth most of any country. Italy leads with 53 sites followed by China with 52 sites. From Kaziranga in Assam, Hampi monuments in Karnataka, The Queen's step-well in Gujarat to Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks in Uttarakhand, India has a range miscellaneous range of parks, monuments, wildlife sanctuaries, religious structures and mountains in the list. 36 world heritage sites in India as designated by UNESCO:

What

1. The World Heritage Day was announced by International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in 1982.
2. It was approved by General Assembly of UNESCO in 1983, with an aim of enhancing awareness about importance of cultural heritage, monuments and to conserve them.
3. ICOMOS was established on principles set in Venice Charter, also known as 1964 International Charter on Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites.
4. There are total 36 (1 mixed, 7 Natural and 28 Cultural) UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India having special cultural or physical significance.

## MOST FILM-FRIENDLY STATE AWARD

Madhya Pradesh was selected for the Most Film Friendly State award 2017 for its efforts towards easing filming in state. MP was acknowledge for easing filming in state by offering excellent on ground support and filmic infrastructure and creating well-structured web site. Uttarakhand was given Special Mention certificate in recognition of its efforts made towards creating film friendly environment. The awards will be presented by President

Ram Nath Kovind in May 2018 during presentation of the 65th National Film Awards in New Delhi.

## MALARIA SUMMIT

The Malaria Summit was held in London, United Kingdom organisations to make game-changing commitments towards beating malaria. It was organized by non-profit organisation Malaria No More in conjunction with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and supported by British Prime Minister Theresa May.

What

1. The summit coincided with Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London, a biennial convening of 53 Commonwealth leaders, whose countries are disproportionately affected by malaria.
2. It united 14 heads of state and governments, scientists, private sector and international organisations to make game-changing commitments towards beating malaria.
3. The participants committed on high level political commitment towards malaria elimination, significant increase in investment from malaria endemic countries to leverage and complement donor funding, new innovative tools to overcome the growing threat of resistance and improved methods to track disease to enable more effective and efficient intervention and to prevent resurgence.
4. The summit pledged investment of over \$3.8 billion to pay for innovation in malaria research and treatment.
5. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria also pledged \$2 billion would be invested in 46 countries affected by malaria between 2018-20.

## CIVIL SERVICES DAY

12th edition of National Civil Services Day was observed on April 21, 2018 across India. This year observance of the day **focussed on 'Evolving Strategies for Transforming Aspirational Districts'**. On this day, function is organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions. Civil servants from various corners of country come together and **meet each other and learn from each other's experiences of working in the public domain**. On this day, the Prime Minister Award for Excellence in Public Administration is bestowed upon best civil servants

What

1. The National Civil Services Day is celebrated every year on April 21, when civil servants rededicate themselves to cause of the citizens and renew their commitment to public service.
2. This day coincides with the date on which Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel had addressed the first batch of probationers at All India Administrative Service Training School at Metcalfe House, New Delhi in 1947.
3. **In this famous speech, Sardar Patel had referred to bureaucrats as "steel frame of India".**
4. **On this day, the 'Prime Minister Award for Excellence in Public Administration'** is presented in three categories. These awards were instituted in 2006.
5. The awards have been instituted with view to acknowledge, recognise and reward the extraordinary and innovative work done by officers of Central and State Governments towards welfare of common citizen.

## CJI IMPEACHMENT MOTION JUNKED

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu on 23 April 2018 rejected the unprecedented impeachment notice given by opposition parties led by the Congress against CJI Dipak Misra, saying it lacked substantial merit and that the allegations were

neither “tenable nor admissible”. The vice-president in his order on 23 April 2018 held that that the allegations emerging from the present case have a serious tendency of “undermining” the independence of the judiciary.

What

1. Naidu based his decision on the opinion of top legal and constitutional experts, including former secretary generals of Lok Sabha and other legal luminaries with whom he held extensive consultations.
2. Seven opposition parties led by the Congress had last week moved a notice before him for impeachment of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) on five grounds of “misbehaviour”.
3. Leaders of the opposition parties had met Naidu and handed over the notice of impeachment against the CJI bearing signatures of 64 MPs and seven former members, who recently retired.
4. Naidu said he had detailed personal conversation on all aspects arising from the notice and had considered each of the allegations made in it individually as well as collectively.
5. The allegations emerging from the present case have a serious tendency of undermining the independence of judiciary which is the basic tenet of the Constitution of India.
6. In the absence of credible and verifiable information placed before me which gives an indication of ‘misbehaviour’ or ‘incapacity’, it would be inappropriate and irresponsible act to accept statement which have little imperial basis.
7. The vice president said the MPs, who have presented the petition, are themselves “unsure” of their own case as the phrases used by them indicate “a mere suspicion, a conjecture or are assumptions”.
8. The same does not constitute proof ‘beyond reasonable doubt’, which is required to **make out a case of ‘proved misbehaviour’ under Article 124 (4)**, the order said.
9. This is the first time ever that an impeachment notice has been filed against a sitting CJI.

## INDIA TOP IN REMITTANCES IN 2017

India has retained its position as the top remittances receiving country with its diaspora sending about \$69 billion back home in 2017, the World Bank said on 23 April 2018. Remittances to India picked up sharply by 9.9% to \$69 billion in 2017, reversing the previous year’s dip, but were still short of \$70.4 billion received in 2014. Payments from immigrants back to their home countries rebounded to reach a new record in 2017 but the costs of transferring funds also increased, the World Bank said in a report.

What

1. The stronger-than-expected recovery in remittances—payments that are key to supporting the economies of many poor countries—was driven by growth in Europe, Russia, and the United States.
2. The rebound in remittances, when valued in US dollars, was helped by higher oil prices and a strengthening of the euro and ruble.
3. The World Bank said remittance inflows improved in all regions and the top remittance recipients were India with \$69 billion, followed by China (\$64 billion), the Philippines (\$33 billion), Mexico (\$31 billion), Nigeria (\$22 billion), and Egypt (\$20 billion).
4. India had in 2015 received remittance of \$68.91 billion, which fell to \$62.74 billion in the following year and has now risen to \$68.96 billion in 2017.
5. The Bank estimated that officially recorded remittances to low- and middle-income countries reached \$466 billion in 2017, an increase of 8.5% over \$429 billion in 2016.
6. Global remittances, which include flows to high-income countries, grew 7% to \$613 billion in 2017, from \$573 billion in 2016.

7. Remittances are expected to continue to increase in 2018, by 4.1 per cent to reach USD 485 billion. Global remittances are expected to grow 4.6 per cent to USD 642 billion in 2018.
8. The global average cost of sending \$200 was 7.1% in the first quarter of 2018, more than twice as high as the Sustainable Development Goal target of 3%. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most expensive place to send money to, where the average cost is 9.4%. Major barriers to reducing remittance costs are de-risking by banks and exclusive partnerships between national post office systems and money transfer operators.
9. These factors constrain the introduction of more efficient technologies — such as internet and smartphone apps and the use of crypto currency and blockchain — in remittance services.

## CSIR BAGS NATIONAL IP AWARD 2018

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is awarded the National Intellectual Property (IP) Award 2018 in the category “Top R&D Institution / Organization for Patents and Commercialization”. Dr. Girish Sahni, DG, CSIR and Secretary, DSIR received the award at the hands of Mr. Suresh Prabhu, Hon’ble Minister, Commerce and Industry, Government of India, at a function organized by the Indian Intellectual Property Office and Confederation of Indian Chambers of Commerce (CII) in New Delhi, to celebrate the World IP Day.

What

1. The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) is a contemporary R&D organization.
2. It has been ranked 9th in the world amongst the 1207 government institutions, with an overall global ranking of 75 in the world, covering 5250 institutions.
3. **Pioneer of India’s intellectual property movement, CSIR today is strengthening its patent portfolio to carve out global niches in select technology domains.**
4. CSIR Laboratories have been developing and providing Technology focused at the unmet need and the cutting edge knowledgebase and human resource on the other, for socio-economic development in the Country.
5. The CSIR S&T domains range from environment to health and drinking water, from food, housing, energy to specialty chemicals & petrochemicals, glass & ceramics to mining, metals & minerals, medicinal plants, leather to machinery, instrumentation and strategic sectors including aerospace.
6. It is contributing for the Missions such as Swachh Bharat, Swasth Bharat, Samarth Bharat, Make in India, Innovate for India, Startup India and Skill India.
7. The Indian Intellectual Property Office confers National Intellectual Property (IP) Award on outstanding innovators, organizations and companies in the fields of patents, designs, trademarks and geographical indications on the occasion of World IP Day every year.

## NCLAT STAYS PENALTY ON GOOGLE

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on 27 April 2018 put a **stay on the Competition Commission of India’s (CCI) order imposing a Rs 136-crore penalty (\$20.95 billion) on Google** after it found the online search giant guilty of search bias. The NCLAT bench headed by Chairman Justice S J Mukhopadhyaya, while **admitting Google’s plea against the CCI order, directed it to deposit 10 per cent of the penalty amount within four weeks.** The matter will be next heard on May 28.

What

1. NCLAT has accepted our appeal for review of aspects of the CCI decision and its associated findings.

2. The CCI, had in February this year, ruled that Google was exploiting its dominance in online web search and online search advertising markets as it imposed a fine of Rs 136 crore on it.
3. Google was found to be indulging in practices of search bias and by doing so, it **causes harm to its competitors as well as to users,” the Indian competition watchdog** had said in its 190-page judgment.
4. The judgment came after a probe initiated in 2012 on an array of complaints filed by matchmaking website Bharat Matrimony and a not-for-profit organisation, Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS).
5. Although Google has been dragged to court earlier, however, the judgment passed by the CCI had been a huge setback for the online search giant.
6. In 2016, Google was arraigned before the European Commission, which had imposed 2.4 billion euro (\$3 billion) penalty on the company for favouring its shopping service and demoting rival offerings. Google filed an appeal against the ruling.

## EARTH DAY

Every year Earth Day is being observed on 22nd April to build support for environmental protection around world. It aims to encourage people to carry out activities that will benefit Earth, such as recycling more, using solar power or plant trees. It also aims to raise awareness that humans have a collective responsibility to promote harmony with nature and to balance the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations.

What

1. The theme **for 2018 Earth Day is ‘End Plastic Pollution’**. It is dedicated to providing information and inspiration needed to fundamentally change human attitude and behavior about plastics.
2. The concept of observing Earth Day was formally proposed by John McConnell at UNESCO conference on Environment in 1969.
3. Later in 1971, a proclamation was signed to observe international Earth Day annually on the Vernal Equinox by UN Secretary-General U Thant.
4. It was first celebrated in 1970, and since then it is celebrated every year in more than 193 countries.
5. Earth Day celebrations are coordinated globally by the Earth Day Network.
6. Earth Day celebrations are way to remind humans of environmental deterioration caused by them and advise them to turn off the electronic devices that are not in use or taking public transport to reduce the emission levels.
7. It recognises that Earth and its ecosystems provide its inhabitants with life and sustenance.

## KORN FERRY GENDER PAY INDEX

Women in India make on-average 16.1 per cent less than men, similar to the global average, as the percentage of the fairer sex in higher-paying roles is less, says a Korn Ferry report. According to the Korn Ferry Gender Pay Index, women across the globe make on-average 16.1 per cent less than men. However, the pay gap becomes much smaller while analysing same job level, same company, same function.

What

1. Globally, while considering the same level at the same company, the gap further reduced to 1.5 per cent. And when the male and female employees were at the same level and the same company and worked in the same function, the average gap amounted to 0.5 per cent.
2. In India, when evaluating the same job level, the gap is 4 per cent, and when considering the same level at the same company, the gap fell to 0.4 per cent. When male and female employees at the same level and the same company worked in the same function, the gap fell to 0.2 per cent.



3. **Researchers analysed information from Korn Ferry’s pay database to create the Korn Ferry Gender Pay Index.** The Index is an analysis of gender and pay for more than 12.3 million employees in 14,284 companies in 53 countries across the globe.
4. The gender pay-gap in India is more than China, which stood at 12.1 per cent. The pay gap in some of the representative nations like Brazil stood at 26.2 per cent, France 14.1 per cent, Germany 16.8 per cent, the UK 23.8 per cent and the US 17.6 per cent.
5. Pay parity is still a very real issue, **but it’s an issue that can be addressed if there is** an ongoing effort to enable, encourage and select talented women to take on and thrive in challenging roles.

## NATIONAL PANCHAYATI RAJ DAY

The National Panchayati Raj Diwas (Day) is celebrated every year in India on 24th April. This day marks the passing of Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 that came into force with effect from 24 April 1993. The passage of 73rd Amendment Act is hailed as defining moment in history of democratic India as it permits states to take steps to organize village panchayats and provide them with necessary powers and authority necessary to facilitate them to function as units of self-government.

What

1. The first National Panchayati Raj Day was celebrated in 2010.
2. The enactment of 73rd Amendment Act had led a defining moment in the history of India which helped in decentralization of political power to the grassroots level.
3. The 73rd Amendment 1992 added a new Part IX **to the constitution titled “The Panchayats” covering provisions from Article 243 to 243(O); and a new Eleventh Schedule** covering 29 subjects within the functions of the Panchayats.

## WORLD MALARIA DAY

The World Malaria Day (WMD) is being observed every year on 25 April across the world to recognise the global efforts to control preventable vector borne disease malaria. It also seeks to highlight the need for continued investment and sustained political commitment for elimination and control of malaria.

What

1. The theme of 2018 WMD is **“Ready to beat malaria”**.
2. The theme marks importance of collective responsibility and commitment of global community in bringing together people on working towards making world free of malaria.
3. It also puts exemplary progress achieved in tackling malaria under spotlight.
4. The World Malaria Day (WMD) was established by the 60th session of World Health Assembly, a decision-making body of World Health Organization (WHO) in May 2007.
5. It was established to provide understanding and education of malaria and also spread information on year-long intensified implementation of national malaria-control strategies.
6. It is one of eight official global public health campaigns currently marked by the WHO.

### Malaria

1. Malaria is mosquito-borne infectious disease most commonly transmitted through the bite of infected female Anopheles mosquito.
2. It caused by parasitic protozoans (a group of single-celled microorganisms) belonging to Plasmodium type.
3. After an infected mosquito bites human, **parasites begin to multiply in person’s liver.**
4. It progresses to infect and destroy red blood cells (RBCs) in the body.
5. Common symptoms of severe malaria include flu, fever and chills respiratory distress and deep breathing, abnormal bleeding, signs of anaemia and impaired consciousness.

## INDIA AND PAKISTAN TO JOIN MULTI-NATION MILITARY EXERCISE

In a first, arch rivals India and Pakistan will be part of a multi-nation counter-terror exercise in Russia in September, which will also be joined by China and several other countries. The military exercise will take place under the framework of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, a China-dominated security grouping which is increasingly seen as a counterweight to NATO, officials said. They said the military drill will be held in the Ural Mountains of Russia and almost all SCO member countries will be part of it.

What

1. The main aim of the exercise, Peace Mission, will be to enhance counter-terror cooperation among the eight SCO member countries.
2. It will be for the first time since Independence that India and Pakistan will both be part of a military exercise, though the armies of the two nations have worked together in UN peace keeping missions.
3. The SCO was founded at a summit in Shanghai in 2001 by the Presidents of Russia, China, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
4. India and Pakistan were admitted as observers of the grouping in 2005. Both the countries were admitted as full members of the bloc last year.
5. India's membership was strongly pushed by Russia while Pakistan's entry into the grouping was backed by China. With expansion of the grouping, SCO now represents over 40 per cent of humanity and nearly 20 per cent of the global GDP.
6. India feels that as an SCO member, it will be able to play a major role in addressing the threat of terrorism in the region. It is also keen on deepening its security-related cooperation with the SCO and its Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) which specifically deals with issues relating to security and defence.
7. India has been holding military exercise with China. The two countries are likely to resume their bilateral military exercise in September. Last year the drill was suspended following a tense standoff between their troops in Doklam.

## WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX 2018

World Press Freedom Index (WPFI) 2018 by Reporters Without Borders, India was placed at 138th rank out of 180 nations surveyed worldwide in terms of press freedom in 2017. It was ranked at the 135th in WPFI 2017.

What

1. Top 10 Countries: Norway (1st), Sweden (2nd), Netherlands (3rd), Finland (4th), Switzerland (5th), Jamaica (6th), Belgium (7th), New Zealand (8th), Denmark (9th) and Costa Rica (10th).
2. SAARC nations: Afghanistan (118th), Bhutan (94th), Nepal (106th), Maldives (120th), and Sri Lanka (131st), all performed better than India with Pakistan (139th) and Bangladesh (146th) performing worse.
3. WPFI 2018 reflects increasing hostility towards journalists in democratic countries. It showed that media phobia has become more pronounced.
4. It suggests scary picture especially in democratic countries where political leaders are openly threatening journalists, even incarcerating them if they refuse to offer their loyalty.

### About WPFI

1. WPFI is produced by France-based international non-governmental organization Reporters Without Borders (RWB), or Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF).
2. It ranks performance of countries according to index calculated based upon various parameters.
3. These parameters include media pluralism and independence, respect for the safety and freedom of journalists, and the legislative, institutional and infrastructural environment in which the media operate.
4. WPFI aims to promote and defends freedom of information and freedom of the press

5. **China's** ranking remained unchanged at 175th position for the second year.
6. **As per Index's definition, quality of press freedom in India is bad.**
7. India fared poorly on indicators such as hate speeches, attacks on journalists on social media, trolling them and targeting their reputation.
8. It also mentions that at least 4 journalists were gunned down in India in 2017.