

My Notes...

NATIONAL

SC ALLOWS PASSIVE EUTHANASIA

The Supreme Court on 9 March 2018 gave legal sanction to passive euthanasia and execution of a living will of persons suffering from chronic terminal diseases and likely to go into a permanent vegetative state. In a unanimous judgment by a constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, the Supreme Court accorded primacy to the constitutional values of liberty, dignity, autonomy and privacy as it laid down procedural guidelines governing the advance directive of a living will. The guidelines will operate till legislation is put in place.

What

1. The directive should clearly indicate the decision relating to the circumstances in which withholding or withdrawal of medical treatment can be resorted to.

2. It should be in specific terms and the instructions must be absolutely clear and unambiguous

and mention that the executor may revoke the instructions/authority at any time.

3. It should disclose that the executor has understood the consequences

of executing such a document and specify the name of a guardian or close relative who, in the event of the executor becoming incapable of taking decision at the relevant time, will be authorised to give consent to refuse or withdraw medical treatment in a manner consistent with the advance directive.

4. In the event that there is more than one valid advance directive, none of which have been revoked, the most recently signed advance directive will be considered as **the last expression of the patient's wishes and will be given effect to.**

Who

1. The advance directive can be executed only by an adult who is of a sound and healthy state of mind and in a position to communicate, relate and comprehend the purpose and consequences of executing the document.

2. It must be voluntarily executed and without any coercion or inducement or compulsion and after having full knowledge or information.

3. It should have characteristics of an informed consent given without any undue influence or constraint.

4. It shall be in writing clearly stating as to when medical treatment may be withdrawn or no specific medical treatment shall be given which will only have the effect of delaying the process of death that may otherwise cause him/her pain, anguish and suffering and further put him/her in a state of indignity.

Sense of an ending

While recognising passive euthanasia, the SC has allowed advance directive, or living will, by which patients can spell out whether treatment can be withdrawn if they fall terminally ill or are incompetent to express their opinion

WHO, WHAT AND HOW OF A LIVING WILL

<p>WHO CAN MAKE IT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An adult with a sound and healthy mind ▪ It should be voluntarily executed, based on informed consent ▪ It should be expressed in "clear and unambiguous" terms 	<p>CONTENTS OF WILL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Circumstances in which treatment should be withheld or withdrawn ▪ Specify that the will can be revoked any time ▪ Name of the "guardian or close relative" who will give the go-ahead for starting passive euthanasia 	<p>HOW TO PRESERVE IT?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The will shall be attested by two witnesses and preferably 	<p>counter-signed by a first class judicial magistrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The magistrate shall preserve one hard copy and one soft copy each and forward it to the district court registry ▪ Copy will be given to a local govt. official, who shall nominate a custodian for the will
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How

1. The document should be signed by the executor in the presence of two attesting witnesses, preferably independent, and countersigned by the jurisdictional Judicial Magistrate of First Class (JMFC) so designated by the concerned District Judge.
2. The witnesses and the jurisdictional JMFC shall record their satisfaction that the document has been executed voluntarily and without any coercion or inducement or compulsion and with full understanding of all the relevant information and consequences.
3. The Magistrate shall preserve a copy in his office besides one in digital format and forward one copy of the document to the Registry of the jurisdictional District Court, which would preserve the same. Additionally, the Registry of the District Judge shall retain the document in digital format.
4. The Magistrate shall cause to inform the immediate family members of the executor, if not present at the time of execution, and make them aware about it.
5. The Magistrate shall also cause to handover copy of the advance directive to the family physician, if any.

Flashback

1. The court also settled any ambiguity on allowing passive euthanasia as it cited the landmark Aruna Shanbaug case on 11 March 2011, which held that a specific category of relatives could seek permission from the court to opt for passive euthanasia on behalf of the person in cases of a terminally-ill patient as **being** “internally inconsistent and having relied on an erroneous premise.
2. It was also seen to have adopted a misconstrued construction of the decision of the 1998 Gian Kaur case where a constitutional bench had held that the right to life did not include the right to die.
3. Further the Aruna Shanbaug ruling accepted that euthanasia could be made lawful only through legislation, yet the court accepted the permissibility of passive euthanasia and laid down the procedure for it.
4. **The court’s ruling was pronounced on a** 2005 plea filed by Prashant Bhushan on behalf of NGO Common Cause that sought recognition of a living will so that an individual could exercise the right to refuse medical treatment at a terminally-ill stage of life.
5. Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the NGO, had said that under Article 21 (right to life) a person had the right to die peacefully without any suffering and must be allowed to create a living will for a time when he cannot recover from an illness.
6. The 241st report of the Law Commission states that passive euthanasia should be allowed with certain safeguards and there is a proposed law—Medical Treatment of Terminally Ill Patient (Protection of Patients and Medical Practitioners) Bill, 2006 in this regard.
7. Passive euthanasia entails a patient being allowed to die by limiting medical intervention, not escalating already aggressive treatment, withholding or withdrawing artificial life support in cases that are judged to be medically futile.

DELHI AGENDA ADOPTED

As many as 62 member nations of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) on 11 March 2018 committed that they will increase share of solar power in their energy mix to deal with climate change and provide energy to underprivileged in the society. The Delhi Solar Agenda was launched in New Delhi at founding summit of ISA. Under the ISA framework as many as 32 countries have ratified the agreement, while 30 have joined

the group of nations, which aim to promote solar energy as means of development particularly in developing nations.

What

1. These countries will pursue an increased share of solar energy in the final energy consumption in their respective national energy mix, as a means of tackling global challenges of climate change and as a cost effective solution by supporting and implementing policy initiatives and participation of all relevant stakeholders.
2. They will also facilitate affordable finance, access to appropriate, clean and environment friendly technology and undertake capacity building, including forging mutually beneficial partnerships with reputable international institutions and reputable financial institutions for the benefit of developing countries.
3. They committed that they would explore innovative financing mechanisms that can generate a sustainable market for the deployment of cost effective solar technologies, coupled with constructive policy initiatives to catalyse public and private investments to reduce the cost of solar projects in developing countries.
4. **These nations will also facilitate joint ‘research and development’ efforts among member states and other stakeholders to develop appropriate business models, cost effective standards, innovative technical applications, equipments and storage designs to suit members’ climatic conditions and to realise clean and low cost operations under the agenda.**
5. As per the agenda they will also consider off-grid solar applications to cater to the energy requirements of poorer and/or remote communities and also facilitate awareness and skills enhancement of local communities in the monitoring and maintenance of solar technologies in the member countries.
6. They have also decided to leverage and emphasise the key characteristics and strengths of solar energy in their national energy plans and strategies and to assist through the implementation of solar strategies.
7. India said that it has set up a project preparation facility (PPF) to assist its development partner countries towards preparation of viable projects that can be considered for concessions financing under lines of credit. The PPF fills the capacity gap in identifying a need, conceiving a project and preparing a proper proposal.
8. The PPF will provide consultancy support on grant basis to requesting governments for project formulation. It is a demand-responsive mechanism and a quick access facility to address priority needs of requesting governments.
9. The selected firm would then be quickly deployed to undertake the requested activity. At present as many as 13 projects worth \$143 million are financed under the line of credit provided by India.

ENERGY TRANSITION INDEX

India has been ranked at 78th, lower than its emerging market peers like Brazil and China, among 114 countries on the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) energy transition index that was topped by Sweden. The report titled Fostering Effective Energy Transition, ranks countries on how well they are able to balance energy security and access with environmental sustainability and affordability. According to the report India has taken “bold measures” to improve energy access, energy efficiency, and to improve the deployment of renewable sources of energy. However, energy transition in the country will require “large investments, and an enabling environment and robust regulatory frameworks to support the transition”. “India is at the crossroads in its energy transition journey. Ranking 78th on the Energy Transition Index,” the report said.

What

1. Among its emerging market peers Brazil stood at the 38th place, Russia at 70th and China at 76th place. The overall list was topped by Sweden, followed by Norway at the 2nd position and Switzerland at the 3rd rank.
2. Other countries on the top 10 include Finland (4th), Denmark (5th), the Netherlands (6th), the UK (7th), Austria (8th), France (9th) and Iceland (10th).

3. On India, the report said, energy needs in the country are primarily met by fossil fuels with implications for environmental sustainability and increasing energy import costs.
4. Furthermore, a **considerable share of India's population still lacks access to electricity** and clean cooking fuel, it noted.
5. In the Energy Transition Index (ETI), India ranks in the third performance quartile and third readiness quartile, making it an emerging country that is approaching the leapfrog category.
6. Interestingly, between 2013 and 2018, India improved its performance score by 5.6 percentage points, mainly with improved energy access, reduced subsidies and reduced import costs.
7. India has the largest government-mandated renewable energy programme, with a target of 175GW renewable energy capacity by 2022, and it announced plans to shift completely to electric vehicles by 2030.

NOD TO NEUTRINO PROJECT

The **Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF's)** has given environmental clearance to India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO) project to be set up in Bodi West hills in Tamil Nadu. The approval was given by **MoEF's Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC)** after taking up INO project issue as special case.

What

1. The project proponents during meeting with EAC have clarified that studies showed there will be no impact of blasting on any habitation in the vicinity due to INO project.
2. The project aims at building a world-class underground laboratory with a rock cover of approximately 1200 meter.
3. Its mandate is to conduct basic research on elementary particle called neutrino.
4. It is jointly supported by Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Department of Science & Technology (DST), with DAE acting as the nodal agency.
5. The project also envisages construction of 50,000 tonne magnetised iron calorimeter detector (ICAL).
6. It will study the properties of the neutrino, in particular the mass hierarchy among different types of neutrino.

WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT 2018

Finland is the world's happiest country, according to an annual survey issued on 14 March 2018 that found Americans were getting less happy even as their country became richer. Burundi came bottom in the UN Sustainable Development Solutions **Network's (SDSN) 2018 World Happiness Report** which ranked 156 countries according to things such as GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, social freedom, generosity and absence of corruption.

What

1. Finland rose from fifth place last year to oust Norway from the top spot. The 2018 top-10, as ever dominated by the Nordics, is: Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Netherlands Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and Australia.
2. The United States came in at 18th, down from 14th place last year. Britain was 19th and the United Arab Emirates 20th.
3. One chapter of the 170-page report is dedicated to emerging health problems such as obesity, depression and the opioid crisis, particularly in the United States where the prevalence of all three has grown faster than in most other countries.
4. While US income per capita has increased markedly over the last half century, happiness has been hit by weakened social support networks, a perceived rise in corruption in government and business and declining confidence in public institutions.

5. For the first time since it was started in 2012, the report, which uses a variety of polling organisations, official figures and research methods, ranked the happiness of foreign-born immigrants in 117 countries.
6. Finland took top honours in that category too, giving the country a statistical double-gold status.
7. The foreign-born were least happy in Syria, which has been mired in civil war for seven years.
8. The most striking finding of the report is the remarkable consistency between the happiness of immigrants and the locally born.
9. Although immigrants come from countries with very different levels of happiness, their reported life evaluations converge towards those of other residents in their new countries.
10. Those who move to happier countries gain, while those who move to less happy countries lose.

NDB, ISA TIE UP

New Development Bank and International Solar Alliance have joined hands to promote solar energy across the globe. On March 10 2018, the New Development Bank (NDB) and International Solar Alliance (ISA) signed in New Delhi, India a Joint Declaration for the Promotion of Solar Energy Globally. The Declaration was signed by K V Kamath, the NDB President and Upendra Tripathy, Interim Director General of ISA.

What

1. The NDB and the ISA agreed to consider a roadmap for the mobilisation of financing to promote solar energy in countries of common interest and to explore mechanisms for supporting solar energy development.
2. **The parties will mutually support the implementation of the NDB's and ISA's plans for solar energy development and deployment through technical assistance and knowledge transfer.**
3. The NDB was established by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa to mobilise resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries.
4. International Solar Alliance (ISA) is a treaty-based international inter-governmental organisation which was launched on November 30, 2015, in Paris, France, and headquarters at Gurgaon, Haryana.

FUGITIVE ECONOMIC OFFENDERS BILL INTRODUCED

The government on 12 March 2018 introduced the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill 2018 in the Lok Sabha seeking to tighten the noose around individuals who are wanted by local courts for offences under various Acts, including the Reserve Bank of India Act, Securities Exchange Board of India Act, insolvency and bankruptcy Act, central goods and services tax Act, prevention of money laundering Act, companies Act and foreign black money Act.

What

1. The Bill 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.
2. 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.
3. It is expected that the special forum to be created for expeditious confiscation of the proceeds of crime, in India or abroad, would coerce the fugitive to return to India to submit to the jurisdiction of Courts in India to face the law in respect of scheduled offences.
4. If at any point of time in the course of the proceeding prior to the declaration, however, the alleged Fugitive Economic Offender returns to India and submits to

the appropriate jurisdictional Court, proceedings under the proposed Act would cease by law.

5. All necessary constitutional safeguards in terms of providing hearing to the person through counsel, allowing him time to file a reply, serving notice of summons to him, whether in India or abroad and appeal to the High Court have been provided for.
6. Further, provision has been made for appointment of an Administrator to manage and dispose of the property in compliance with the provisions of law.

Salient features of the Bill

1. Application before the Special Court for a declaration that an individual is a fugitive economic offender;
2. Attachment of the property of a fugitive economic offender;
3. Issue of a notice by the Special Court to the individual alleged to be a fugitive economic offender;
4. Confiscation of the property of an individual declared as a fugitive economic offender resulting from the proceeds of crime;
5. Confiscation of other property belonging to such offender in India and abroad, including benami property;
6. Disentitlement of the fugitive economic offender from defending any civil claim; and
7. An Administrator will be appointed to manage and dispose of the confiscated property under the Act.

BBBP EXPANDS TO PAN INDIA

The Union Government has expanded Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) programme from 161 districts to all 640 districts of the country. The initial focus of BBBP was limited to districts which were

Flashback

1. There have been several instances of economic offenders fleeing the jurisdiction of Indian courts, anticipating the commencement, or during the pendency, of criminal proceedings.
2. The absence of such offenders from Indian courts has several deleterious consequences - first, it hampers investigation in criminal cases; second, it wastes precious time of courts of law, third, it undermines the rule of law in India.
3. Further, most such cases of economic offences involve non-repayment of bank loans thereby worsening the financial health of the banking sector in India.
4. The existing civil and criminal provisions in law are not entirely adequate to deal with the severity of the problem. It is, therefore, felt necessary to provide an effective, expeditious and constitutionally permissible deterrent to ensure that such actions are curbed.

About BBBP

1. The scheme was launched by Prime Minister in January 2015 at Panipat, Haryana as comprehensive programme to address declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of women over life-cycle continuum.
2. The specific objectives of scheme are preventing gender biased sex selective elimination, ensuring survival and protection of the girl child and ensuring education and participation of the girl child.
3. Its focus is on awareness and advocacy campaign, multi-**sectoral action enabling girls'** education and effective enforcement of Pre-Conception & Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC&PNDT) Act.
4. The scheme is being implemented as a tri-ministerial, convergent effort of Union Ministries of Women and Child Development (WCD), Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Human Resource Development (HRD).
5. The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) is nodal ministry for programme at central level.

either below national average or were worse in their own states in terms of absolute values of Child Sex Ratio (CSR).

What

1. As per data available in Health Management Information System (HMIS), there has been improvement in sex ratio at birth (SRB).
2. The SRB which was 918 in 2014-15 has improved to 926 in 2016-17 as per HMIS data. The successful implementation of BBBP programme in states and districts has led government to decide to go Pan-India and expand the programme to all districts.

INDIA TO BECOME EBRD'S MEMBER

India has got the go-ahead to join the London-based European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), after its shareholders agreed to make the country its 69th member, enabling Indian companies to undertake joint investments in regions in which the EBRD operates. This is an important step in the relationship between the EBRD and India, allowing us to build further on already very close ties, said **the organisation's president Suma Chakrabarti**.

What

1. Set up in London 1991, based on a proposal by former French President Francois Mitterand, **the bank's initial focus was to help** Central and Eastern European nations reconstruct their economies in the post-Cold War era.
2. Other members who receive investments include Mongolia, Turkey, Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, and Lebanon, among a total of 38 of the member states.
3. Others including China, Russia, the US, UK, and France, are stakeholders, whose companies are able to invest in EBRD projects but do not receive financing for domestic projects.
4. The EBRD works with the private sector, and also local governments in the provision of services and infrastructure across 38 nations – with projects ranging from transport provision to agri-business, heating, waste management, to renewable energy.
5. In 2017, the EBRD signed an accord with the International Solar Alliance, which was launched in 2015 in Paris, and which will hold its first summit in New Delhi this month.

DRUG QOL-2C DEVELOPED

Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), an autonomous body under the Ministry of AYUSH has undertaken development of a coded drug AYUSH QOL-2C for improving the quality of life in cancer patients.

What

1. **The clinical studies were conducted at St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru and AIIMS, New Delhi** in breast cancer patients and at Bhagwan Mahaveer Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, Jaipur in lung cancer patients.
2. It is not possible to compare the expenditure on research on cancer in Ayurveda viz-à-viz Allopathy as it depends upon variables like methodology, parameters etc. adopted for research.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING BILL CLEARED

The Union Cabinet cleared an anti-trafficking bill which provides for stringent **punishment ranging from 10 years' rigorous imprisonment to life imprisonment** and a fine of at **least Rs 1 lakh in cases of "aggravated" crimes** while earmarking the National investigation Agency (NIA) to perform the task of anti-trafficking bureau. The Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018 proposes decentralised rehabilitation and investigation framework down to the district level.

What

1. The draft bill divides **various offences into “trafficking” and “aggravated trafficking”**. The former category of crimes would carry a jail term of seven to 10 years.
2. **Aggravated offences will invite punishment ranging from 10 years’ rigorous imprisonment to life sentence.**
3. The aggravated crime will include trafficking for the purpose of forced labour, begging, trafficking by administering chemical substance or hormones on a person for the purpose of early sexual maturity, trafficking of a woman or child for the purpose of marriage or under the pretext of marriage or after marriage.
4. The new law also seeks to make way for punishment of three years for a person found to be promoting or facilitating trafficking.
5. In order to break the nexus, both at the national and international levels, the bill provides for attachment and forfeiture of property and also proceeds from the crime.
6. It looks as though we have just got the freedom and hence are now creating the constitution, the policy framework for range issues across.
7. The national anti-trafficking bureau under NIA will perform the functions of international coordination with authorities in foreign countries.
8. Minister for Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi said that the NIA Act will be amended to enable it to perform the task anti-trafficking bureau.
9. She hoped that the bill and amendment to the NIA Act would be presented in Parliament simultaneously.

NATIONAL NUTRITION MISSION LAUNCHED

On the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 2018, the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, launched the National Nutrition Mission, and expansion of the coverage of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao programme, at Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan. The Prime Minister interacted with District Magistrates of aspirational districts. He also interacted with beneficiary mothers and girl children of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao programme.

What

1. The Prime Minister awarded certificates to the best performing districts under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao programme.
2. The Prime Minister said that through the power of technology, the entire nation is connected with Jhunjhunu. He appreciated Jhunjhunu district for furthering the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao movement. He said there is no question of discrimination based on gender.
3. The Prime Minister stressed on the importance of girls getting access to quality education, just like boys.
4. Emphasizing that a daughter is not a burden, he said girls are bringing pride and glory for our nation, and excelling in several fields.
5. The Prime Minister also spoke of the importance of providing proper nutrition to children. He said Mission Indradhanush has brought an extremely positive change in the lives of women and children.

MILES-18

First-ever multi-nation naval exercise at sea, The MILES-18 was held at the Andaman Sea. The three days exercise was conducted as part of 10th edition of MILAN 2018. It is a multi-national mega event was organised by Andaman Nicobar naval command **with theme ‘Friendship across the Seas’ to expand regional cooperation and combat unlawful activities in critical sea lanes.**

What

1. 11 naval ships of 8 countries (Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand) and nine Indian ships had participated in MILES-18.
2. It was aimed to enhance inter-operability between participating countries.
3. It had enabled honing of search and rescue operations procedures, maritime interdiction operations, core operational skills and exercise and variety of maritime security scenarios.

Background

1. Milan exercise was first held in 1995 with participation of just five navies.
2. Its aim was to have effective forum to discuss common concerns in Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and forge deeper cooperation among friendly navies.
3. The exercise is being hosted biennially by Indian Navy under the aegis of Andaman and Nicobar Command.

INDIA'S FIRST COASTAL POLICING ACADEMY

Nearly a decade after threats to coastal security was magnified during the 26/11 terror attacks, the country's first national academy to train police forces in effectively safeguarding the Indian shoreline will start functioning from the next month along the Gujarat seafont. The Union home ministry recently sanctioned the launch of the National Academy of Coastal Policing (NACP) from a campus of Gujarat's Fisheries Research Centre located in coastal Okha in the newly created Devbhoomi Dwarka district.

What

1. The first-of-its-kind institution of the country will be created and run by a multi-agency team of paramilitary and defence forces and sharpens the response and skills of the marine forces of multiple states which have sea lines.
2. As per the order, while the Union home ministry's policing think tank -- the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) -- will pilot the establishment and running of the academy, the Border Security Force (BSF), that guards the Indian frontier in Gujarat with Pakistan, the navy and the Coast Guard will form the core to run the academy.
3. The BSF will also provide security to the campus which on the Arabian Sea coast and is at a flying distance from the Pakistan coast.
4. There is no institute in the country that trains marine or coastal police forces in these subjects in a professional manner.
5. That is why the academy will be first-ever and the best practises of various agencies like the navy, the BSF and the Coast Guard will be borrowed by it for teaching purposes.
6. This was specially required since India faced its major sea-borne terror attack in November 2008 in Mumbai.
7. The academy will run temporarily for about three years from the fisheries department campus at Okha. In the meantime, a new permanent campus will be created for the academy in Devbhoomi Dwarka district.

WEP LAUNCHED

NITI Aayog launched the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP), on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 2018. The initiative is aimed at building an ecosystem for women across India to realize their entrepreneurial aspirations, scale-up innovative initiatives and chalk-out sustainable, long-term strategies for their businesses.

What

1. **The WEP theme song "Naari Shakti"** composed and sung by Shri Kailash Kher was released on this occasion.

2. Nominations for the Women Transforming India Awards, 2018 were also opened by Amitabh Kant and Yuri Afanasiev.
3. WEP was envisaged by the CEO NITI Aayog during Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) last year in Hyderabad. It aims to power a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem through an enabling network of industry collaborations, partnerships, mentors and peer-to-peer connect.
4. Established under the leadership of Ms Anna Roy, Adviser (Industry) of NITI Aayog, the platform aspires to substantially increase the number of women entrepreneurs who will create and empower a dynamic New India.
5. These aspirations are manifest in the three pillars on which WEP is built: Ichha Shakti (motivating aspiring entrepreneurs to start their enterprise), Gyaan Shakti (providing knowledge and ecosystem support to women entrepreneurs to help them foster entrepreneurship) & Karma Shakti (providing hands-on support to entrepreneurs in setting-up and scaling up businesses).
6. WEP is to operate within a broader framework of industry collaborations and partnerships, which cut across sectors in the economy.

SAMVEDNA 2018

The first multilateral Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise of Indian Air Force (IAF) Samvedna 2018 in association with South Asian Region nations was held off the coast of Kerala. The multilateral exercise was spearheaded by IAF and conducted by Southern Air Command (SAC) and involved representatives from air forces of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and UAE.

What

1. **Samvedna means ‘Empathy’ focused on practising Air Force-centric** HADR solutions in Multi-national cooperative Disaster Management environment.
2. The objective of exercise was to galvanise all stakeholders in synergising unified HADR efforts.
3. It will also ensure better understanding and sharing of response procedures between numbers of friendly neighbouring nations.
4. The entire settings of exercise was based on scenario of tsunami in western coast of India originating from earthquake in Makran subduction zone (along northeastern margin of Gulf of Oman adjacent to southwestern coast of Balochistan of Pakistan) and resulting in post-tsunami disaster management along western coast and western islands of India.
5. The exercise will provide clear understanding of scope, role and task, including challenges in air operations and ensuring better understanding and sharing of response procedures among nations.
6. The broad format of exercise will include ground training and flying exercise.
7. This exercise will help in putting in place basic framework for conduct of Joint Air HADR operations in the region, which will be further refined during subsequent exercises.
8. It is also expected to lead to more coordinated and efficient HADR Air operations in entire South Asian region when need arises.

UDYAM SAKHI PORTAL LAUNCHED

On the occasion of International Women’s Day, March 8, the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) launched a portal for women entrepreneurs of India: www.udyamsakhi.org. The portal was unveiled by the Minister of State (Independent Charge) of MSME, Giriraj Singh, in a program at the Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi. The Minister said that India has around 8 million women who have started and are running their own businesses and the Ministry of MSME believes that the women in India can play a vital role in the growth of the Indian economy.

What

1. The portal is a network for nurturing entrepreneurship and creating business models for low cost products and services in order to empower women and make them self-reliant and self-sufficient.
2. The portal provides assistance through its platform for entrepreneurship learning tools, incubation facility, training programs for fund raising, providing mentors, one-on-one investor meet, provide market survey facility and technical assistance.
3. The women entrepreneurs attending the program and informed them that the Ministry is on the path of creating a vibrant MSME sector by promoting growth and development of this sector including Khadi, Village and Coir industries, in cooperation with the concerned ministries and departments, state governments and other stake holders.

SETTING UP OF NFRA APPROVED

The Cabinet on 1 March 2018 approved setting up of the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA), which will be an independent regulator for the auditing profession. The decision comes against the backdrop of various auditing lapses in the banking sector, including the Rs 114 billion fraud at Punjab National Bank. The NFRA will act as an independent regulator for the auditing profession which was one of the key changes brought in by the Companies Act, 2013.

What

1. The jurisdiction of the NFRA - which would be an oversight body for auditors -- would extend to all listed companies as well as large unlisted public companies.
2. The regulator would have a chairperson and three full-time members. Besides, there would be a secretary.
3. NFRA would help in improving foreign and domestic investments as well as support globalization of business by meeting international practices.

FIRST EVER 'CRIME-FREE ZONE' LAUNCHED

In a first for both countries, the director generals of the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) declared an 8.3 km stretch of the Indo-Bangladesh border as a 'crime-free zone' on 9 March 2018. Both border guarding forces with the help of the civil administrations of the two countries, NGOs and the local populace will help in ensuring that no crime takes place along the stretch that covers the Gunarmath and Kalyani Border Out Posts (BOPs) in India and the Puthkhali and Daulatpur BOPs across the border.

What

1. This will add a new dimension to border management with all countries in the world concerned about terrorism and crimes such as smuggling of drugs and human trafficking.
2. Both the forces will work together to ensure that no crime or anti-social activity occurs along this stretch. We know that the border populations on both sides have relatives across the border.
3. They will certainly want peace and security along the border and we seek their help. Just as the BSF has helped in developing economic activity on the Indian side, we shall also do the same in Bangladesh. Other enforcement agencies will also help us. This will be an example for the whole world.
4. This decision was taken during the DG level talks in New Delhi in October 2017. While the BSF has brought in more manpower and equipment to secure this stretch, we shall also expect help from people's representatives, NGOs, the local administration and the local people.
5. This stretch is one of the most vulnerable with cattle smuggling and other criminal activities prevalent. The idea is to target the more difficult areas along the 913 km of Indo-Bangladesh border under the BSF's South Bengal Frontier.

XPL-18 CONCLUDES

The Western Naval Command of the Indian Navy concluded a large scale operational exercise in the Arabian Sea. The three week long exercise termed Exercise **'Paschim Leher' (XPL)**, tested the operational readiness of the Western Naval Command and the execution of its operational plans. Over 40 naval assets including the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, frontline ships of the Western Fleet and Eastern Fleet (including the newly inducted Kolkata class), submarines, potent missile vessels of the 22nd Killer Squadron, Patrol vessels and craft of the Local Flotilla and Indian Coast Guard participated in the exercise.

What

1. In addition, the exercise also witnessed intense flying activity by the carrier borne Mig 29 Ks, P-8Is, IL-38SDs, Dorniers as well as Remotely Piloted Aircraft.
2. This exercise also saw enhanced participation by the aircraft of the Indian Air Force; with coordinated flying missions with the IN air assets.
3. Maritime role Jaguars, Su-30 MKI, AWACS, Flight Refuellers participated in large numbers from different airfields in Gujarat, Maharashtra and North India.
4. An amphibious landing was also conducted, which included the participation of the 91 Inf Bde of the Indian Army.
5. The XPL 2018 enabled testing and revalidation of operational plans and manoeuvres in a hostile maritime scenario on India's Western Seaboard.

MOU BETWEEN UPSC AND PSC OF MAURITIUS

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and Public Service Commission of Mauritius. The MoU will strengthen the existing relationship between UPSC and Public Service Commission of Mauritius. It will facilitate sharing of experience and expertise of both the parties in the area of recruitment. The MoU will develop institutionalized linkage between the Public Service **Commission's of two countries.** It defines the scope of cooperation between the PSC, Mauritius and the UPSC and sets out the areas of cooperation and obligations of the Parties.

The areas of co-operation include the following-

1. Exchange of experience on modern approach to public service recruitment and selection, particularly the functions of the UPSC and the PSC;
2. Exchange of information and expertise including books, manuals and other documents which are not of a confidential nature;
3. Sharing of expertise in the use of Information Technology (IT) in the preparation of written examinations and holding of Computer Based Recruitment Tests and Online Examinations;
4. Sharing of experience in Single Window System for expeditious scrutiny and speedy disposal of applications;

Background:

1. In the past, UPSC had signed MoU with Public Service Commission of Canada and Bhutan.
2. The MoU with Canada was in existence during 15.03.2011 to 14.03.2014.
3. The MoU with the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC), Bhutan was signed by UPSC on 10th November, 2005 for a period of three years.
4. It was renewed on 9th September, 2011 for a period of three years which expired by 8th September, 2014.
5. In pursuance of these MoUs, UPSC had conducted attachments and training programmes for the officers of RCSC, Bhutan.
6. Recently, an MoU was signed between UPSC and RCSC, Bhutan for the third time on 29.05.2017 valid for a period of 3 years.

5. Sharing of experience and expertise on the various processes involved in the examination system which are routine in nature;
6. Organizing training sessions for officials, including through short attachments to the Parties secretariat/headquarters on air matters concerned by the respective mandate of the Parties.
7. Sharing of experience on the modalities adopted on audit of processes and procedures followed by various Government Agencies in recruitment of posts under the delegated powers.

KUSUM Scheme

The Government of India is in **the process of formulating a Scheme 'Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (KUSUM)' which, inter alia, provides for:**

1. Installation of grid-connected solar power plants each of capacity up to 2 MW in the rural areas;
2. Installation of standalone off-grid solar water pumps to fulfill irrigation needs of farmers not connected to grid;
3. Solarization of existing grid-connected agriculture pumps to make farmers independent of grid supply and also enable them to sell surplus solar power generated to DISCOM and get extra income; and
4. Solarization of tube-wells and lift irrigation projects of Government sector.

4 CITIES SHORTLISTED FOR IDY

The Centre has shortlisted four cities -- Jaipur, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, and Mysore -- for holding the main function of International Yoga Day this year. These four names will now be sent to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) which will select one city and then finalise the venue of the main function of IDY to be held on June 21. The main function of International Yoga Day (IYD) will be held outside Delhi.

What

1. According to the official, several states were consulted and based on their responses the four cities were shortlisted.
2. In the lead-up to the main event, an international yoga festival would be held in March end, which will be followed by 10 state-level fests to be held in different parts of the country.
3. The aim is to build an atmosphere of Yoga in the lead-up to the main event and sensitise the masses about the grand function on June 21.
4. Besides, the government will soon declare 100 parks especially dedicated to yoga activities across the country to promote this traditional practice.
5. The United Nations General Assembly, heeding to a call by Prime Minister Modi, had made a declaration in December 2014 to observe June 21 every year as IDY.
6. Last year, the main event of the IDY was held in Lucknow in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated.
7. The first IDY celebration was organised at Rajpath in New Delhi on June 21, 2015, in which representatives of 191 countries took part. In 2016, the main function was held in Chandigarh.

WTO MINI-MINISTERIAL IN DELHI

As many as two dozen countries have agreed to send their political representatives to participate in the informal Ministerial meeting of select World Trade Organisation (WTO) countries in New Delhi this month. While many of the political representatives are not Trade Ministers, Commerce Ministry officials said it would not hamper the talks as the participants were all dealing with WTO affairs. The members that have confirmed participation include China, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Brazil, Uruguay, Uganda, the EU, Canada, the US and Turkey, said JS Deepak, India's permanent representative to the WTO.

What

1. The countries that have expressed inability to send representatives include Jamaica, Mali and Vietnam. Pakistan is among the 10 countries that have not yet responded.
2. There will not be a fixed agenda of the meeting and countries would be free to discuss whatever they wished. However, **there would be a Chair's statement by Suresh Prabhu**, Commerce and Industry Minister, at the end of the conference on March 20.
3. The idea is to provide a platform in which countries can sit in a relaxed way and discuss how to deal with the current impasse. It is more of an ice-breaker.
4. The WTO Ministerial meet at Buenos Aires in December 2017 failed to deliver in most areas as the US mostly kept away from the talks and many developed countries were more interested in pushing new issues such as e-commerce and investment facilitation rather than negotiate on the Doha issues (issues flowing from the yet-to-be-completed Doha development round).

INTERNATIONAL

INDIA, JORDAN INK 12 PACTS

India and Jordan on 1 March 2018 inked 12 pacts after Prime Minister Narendra Modi held parleys for King Abdullah II the ruler of the West Asian nation. The pacts included a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote defence cooperation between India and Jordan. The MoU provides for cooperation between India and Jordan in areas like training, defence industry, counter-terrorism, military studies, cyber security, military medical services and peacekeeping.

What

1. The other pacts included an agreement for visa waiver for diplomatic and official passport holders, a cultural exchange programme, a manpower cooperation agreement, an MoU for - cooperation in the field of health and medicine between India and Jordan, setting up of the next generation Centre of Excellence (COE) in Jordan, long-term supply of rock phosphate and fertilizer and an agreement for mutual customs cooperation.
2. It also included an MoU for cooperation between Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) and Jordan Media Institute (JMI), an MoU between Prasar Bharati and Jordan TV, a twining agreement between Agra and Petra (Jordan) and an MoU between University of Jordan (UJ) ICCR regarding setting up of a Hindi Chair at the University.

MERKEL ELECT FOURTH TERM

German lawmakers voted to re-elect Angela Merkel as chancellor for a fourth, and likely final, term that may prove her most challenging yet as she takes charge of a fragile coalition with her personal standing diminished. Lawmakers voted by 364 to 315, with nine abstentions, in favour of re-electing Merkel, a humbling start as the coalition of her conservatives and the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) has 399 votes in the Bundestag lower house of parliament.

What

1. In office since 2005, she has dominated Germany's political landscape and steered the European Union through economic crisis.
2. But her authority was dented by her decision in 2015 to commit Germany to an open-door policy on migration, resulting in an influx of more than one million people.
3. Merkel was due to meet President Frank-Walter Steinmeier before returning to the Bundestag to be sworn in. Ministers will then be sworn in later in the day - almost six months after last September's national election in which both coalition partners lost support to the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

NEPAL PRESIDENT ELECTED

Nepal's first woman president Bidya Devi Bhandari was on 13 March 2018 re-elected for a second term in office. Incumbent President Bhandari defeated Nepali Congress leader Kumari Laxmi Rai with an overwhelming majority in the presidential election. Bhandari, 56, won since her nomination was backed by the ruling Left alliance of the CPN-UML and CPN (Maoist Centre), the Sanghiya Samajbadi Forum-Nepal and other fringe parties.

What

1. **She became Nepal's first woman president in 2015.** With 148 lawmakers in the Federal Parliament and 243 in Provincial Assemblies, the CPN-UML commands a total vote of 23,356.
2. CPN (Maoist Centre) has 65 lawmakers in parliament and 108 in provincial assemblies, which account for 10,319 votes.
3. The Nepali Congress, which has 76 seats in parliament and 113 in provincial assemblies, has a total vote of 11,428.
4. As Sanghiya Samajbadi Forum-Nepal and other fringe parties also deciding to support Bhandari, she could easily garner 26,921 votes for her re-election.
5. An electoral college, including members of parliament and provincial assemblies, will vote in the election.

INDIA, FRANCE INKED 14 AGREEMENTS

India and France on 2018 has inked key pacts in the strategic areas of security and nuclear energy as well as protection of classified information after extensive talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron. Agreements in the field of education, environment, urban development and railways were also signed in the presence of the two leaders.

What

1. India and France have decided to work together to deal with threats of terrorism and radicalisation.
2. Defence cooperation between the two countries now has a new significance, the French President said.
3. Both the leaders also talked about cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.
4. Another chapter in the glorious book of our friendship! PM Narendra Modi welcomes President of France Emmanuel Macron at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi ahead of the bilateral talks.
5. Macron is in India on a four-day visit. He was received at the airport by Prime Minister Modi, in a special gesture.

PLANNED INDIAN MILITARY BASE STIRS

Even as **India's plan to build a military base on an outlying Seychelles island** has gained favour among the nation's politicians, it faces some hostility from its people. The military base that is likely to come up on Assumption Island is to be funded by India and **shared by the two countries' militaries**. The deal to build a military base was struck in principle in 2015 during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Seychelles, but progress since has been slow. The Seychelles government, which is based in Victoria on Mahe Island 1,135 kilometres (705 miles) northeast of Assumption the military base will help coastguards to patrol its 1.3 million square kilometre (500,000 square mile) exclusive economic zone for illegal fishing, drug trafficking and piracy.

What

1. As of now, the remote island has a small post office, an air strip with almost no people. **It's less than seven kilometres long**, and has a high point just 30 metres (100 feet) above sea level.
2. Its important to note that the location lends it strategic importance for monitoring shipping in the Mozambique Channel.

3. India plans to invest \$550 million dollars (446 million euros) in building the base to help it ensure the safety of its vessels in the southern Indian Ocean. It also says the base will be a resource for other shipping nations.
4. **India's Ambassador Ausaf Sayeed as saying:** "Assumption is very close to the Mozambique Channel where much of the international trade is transiting, and not just for India but for other countries as well, and our interest is that our trading **vessels are safe.**"
5. India has had a military cooperation agreement with the Seychelles since 2003 and the deal would give it use of the Assumption base for up to 30 years.
6. Indian soldiers would be deployed on the island **and help train Seychelles' troops.** But ratification of the 2015 agreement has been slow with a new, amended pact only signed between the two countries on January 27.

INDIA, VIETNAM INK THREE MOUS

India and Vietnam on 3 March 2018 inked three Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs), including on cooperation between the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership, India (GCNEP) and the Vietnam Atomic Energy Institute (VINATOM), after talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang. The purpose of the MoU is to strengthen the technical cooperation in the field of atomic energy for peaceful purposes. Besides this, the two countries signed an MoU on economic and trade cooperation aimed at establishing a framework for enhancing economic and trade promotion.

What

1. A work plan for the years 2018-2022 between the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam was also signed between the two nations.
2. The purpose of this work plan is to promote cooperation in the transfer of technology and exchange of visits of technical experts in the fields of agriculture and allied.
3. Vietnam is an important partner in Southeast Asia under New **Delhi's Act East** Policy and is currently the country coordinator for India with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) regional bloc, a role that will be handed over to Thailand later this year.
4. India-Vietnam trade stood at \$6.24 billion in fiscal 2016-17 and the two sides have agreed to raise this to \$15 billion by 2020.

IMF OPPOSES TRUMP'S IMPORT DUTY PROPOSAL

The IMF has warned that the plans of US President Donald Trump to impose heavy tariffs on import of steel and aluminium would cause damage not only outside the US, but also impact the American economy. Trump said that he would impose a 25 per cent import tariff on steel and 10 per cent on aluminium to protect US producers. The import restrictions announced by the US President are likely to cause damage not only outside the US, but also to the US economy itself, including to its manufacturing and construction sectors, which are major users of aluminium and steel, a day after Trump made an announcement in this regard.

What

1. IMF, he said, is concerned that the measures proposed by the US will, de facto, expand the circumstances where countries use the national-security rationale to justify broad-based import restrictions.
2. The tariffs -- 25 per cent on steel and 10 percent on aluminium -- cover two materials that are the lifeline of the construction and manufacturing sectors in the US.
3. The announcement angered key US allies -- Canada, the EU, Australia, Mexico and China.
4. European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker vowed the bloc "will react firmly" to defend its interests. Canada and Germany both termed the tariffs "unacceptable".

5. Trump has defended his decision, saying “trade wars are good”.
6. U.S was “losing billions of dollars on trade” and would find a trade war “easy to win”.
7. US must “protect our country and our workers” and that the trade deficit left him with no choice on tariffs.

ECONOMY

26TH GST COUNCIL MEETING

The existing system of filing GST returns has been extended by another three months, finance Minister Arun Jaitley said on 10 March 2018 after the 26th GST council meeting held in Delhi. The council could not decide on a simplified GST return form and entrusted the Group of Ministers (GoM) under Sushil Modi to chalk out a single-page form which is simpler and evasion-proof. The council felt that there should be single return every month, it should be simple, not prone to evasion and there was a need to discuss how to simplify it further.

What

1. The council also announced dates of e-way bill rollout, the other major topic on the meeting's agenda.
2. E-way bill will be implemented from April 1 for inter-state movement of goods.
3. Intra-state e-way bill, on the other hand, will be rolled out from April 15 in a staggered manner and the entire country will be covered by June 1.
4. The first group of states to roll out the intra-state e-way bill will be selected on April 7. All the states will have the system in place by June 1.
5. The e-way bill, which would be required to be presented to a GST inspector if asked for, is being touted as an anti-evasion measure and would help boost tax collections by clamping down on trade that currently happens on cash basis.
6. In another announcement, the finance minister said that tax exemption for exporters has been extended by six months.
7. In October, the council had decided that exporters will pay a nominal Integrated GST (IGST) rate of 0.1 per cent on merchant exports till March 31.
8. The council also suspended till June 30 the provision for deduction of TDS and collection of TCS, as well as implementation of the reverse charge mechanism.
9. Besides, the GST implementation committee has been tasked with the work of redressing grievances caused to taxpayers arising out of IT glitches.

WORLD'S FIRST BRASS FUTURES CONTRACT

MCX, the country's largest commodity exchange, will launch futures trading in brass for first time in the world at an event on March 21, and will go live on trading from March 26. Brass would be first non-ferrous contract with compulsory delivery options – the IS-319 grade brass ingots and billets can be delivered at Jamnagar in Gujarat. Initially, three contracts ending in April, May and June will be available for trading, and the lot size would be 1 tonne, valued at 3.55 lakh.

What

1. Out of the 5,000 small and medium units producing brass, about 3,000 are located at Jamnagar, and they account for 80 per cent of the brass sold in India. The rest of units are spread across Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh and Jagadhari in Haryana.
2. Handling of brass delivery should not be an issue due to the concentration of trade in Gujarat and other delivery centres would be considered as trade matures.
3. Brass, an alloy, usually contains 60 per cent zinc and the rest is copper. It finds varied industrial use in electrical appliance, switch gears, sanitary ware, automobiles and defence sectors. The conversion cost from scrap to billets and ingots varies between 14-18 per kg depending on the efficiency of the plant.

4. With the launch of a transparent brass futures contract, MCX will emerge as the benchmark price as volume picks up in two months time.

IBBI, RBI SIGN MOU

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for enhancing cooperation between the two regulators to ensure better implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). According to the MoU, RBI and IBBI will share data and resources with each other to the extent allowed by law and hold frequent discussions to overcome regulatory bottlenecks with respect to implementation of IBC. While RBI is the banking regulator, the IBBI regulates insolvency professionals, insolvency professional agencies and information utilities. The IBBI writes and enforces rules for processes like corporate insolvency resolution, corporate liquidation, individual insolvency resolution and individual bankruptcy under IBC.

What

1. The two entities will also undertake joint efforts for capacity building of insolvency professionals and financial creditors.
2. Apart from data and resources sharing, the MoU **provides for “periodic meetings to discuss matters of mutual interest, including regulatory requirements that impact each party’s responsibilities, enforcement cases, research and data analysis, information technology and data sharing, or any other matter that the parties believe would be of interest to each other in fulfilling their respective statutory obligations; cross-training of staff in order to enhance each party’s understanding of the other’s mission for effective utilisation of collective resources.**
3. Both the RBI and the IBBI are interested in the effective implementation of the code and its allied rules and regulations, through a quick and efficient resolution process.
4. RBI and IBBI will also be working together to raise awareness among financial creditors about the necessity of swift resolution of firms in distress.

SEPARATE LIMIT IN IRF

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) created a separate Rs 50 billion limit for foreign investors in the interest rate futures (IRF) segment. At present, the IRF limit is clubbed with the investment limit in government bonds.

What

1. After the utilisation limit in government bonds reaches 90 per cent, as is the current situation, FPIs are not allowed to take position in IRFs.
2. To facilitate further market development and ensure that access of FPIs to IRFs remains uninterrupted.
3. It has been decided to allocate FPIs a separate limit of Rs 50 billion for long position in IRFs.
4. The limits prescribed for investment by FPIs in G-secs (currently Rs 3.015 trillion) will be exclusively available for investment in G-secs.

What is IRF?

1. An Interest Rate Futures contract is "an agreement to buy or sell a debt instrument at a specified future date at a price that is fixed today."
2. The underlying security for Interest Rate Futures is either Government Bond or T-Bill.
3. Exchange traded Interest Rate Futures on NSE are standardized contracts based on 6 year, 10 year and 13 year Government of India Security and 91 Dated Treasury Bills issued by the Central Government.
4. All futures contracts available for trading on NSE & BSE are cash settled.

MNC BANKS ON PSL

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has further tightened the priority sector lending (PSL) norms for foreign banks by directing them to mandatorily create sub-targets so that they lend a portion of their loans to small and marginal farmers as well as micro enterprises from April. The move, directed at foreign banks with over 20 branches will impact the likes of Standard Chartered, Citi and HSBC, which much higher branch presence, and will come into force from the next financial year.

What

1. The PSL norms mandate foreign banks to eventually lend 40% of their total loan book to the priority sector, such as agriculture, rural infra, and medium, small and micro enterprises (MSMEs) among others from April 2020.
2. In a notification, RBI has said a sub-target of 8% of net bank credit, or credit equivalent amount of off-**balance sheet exposure, whichever is higher**, “shall become applicable for foreign banks with 20 branches and above, for lending to MSMEs from **FY19.**”
3. Another sub-target of 7.50%, using the same criterion, will be applicable to these banks from FY19 for lending to micro enterprises. But in a partial relief, the apex bank removed the prior condition that only loans of up to Rs5 crore and Rs10 crore given to MSMEs would be PSL-compliant.
4. **The notification further said “all bank loans to MSMEs will now qualify under PSL without any credit cap.** According to RBI priority sector include medium enterprises, social infrastructure and renewable energy, apart from agriculture and other existing categories.

INDIAN STARTUPS RAISE FUNDS VIA BITCOINS

Initial coin offerings, or ICOs, are emerging as a new way of raising funds for startups. An ICO is based on cryptocurrencies and is, in some ways, a mix of an initial public offer (IPO) and crowdfunding. Despite no regulation around this space, startups have managed to raise as much as \$200 million in a single round of funding through ICOs. In 2017 alone, startups globally raised around \$3.7 billion, according to audit and accounting firm EY. Indian startups are also among those raising funds through ICOs in foreign markets.

What

1. An ICO is similar to an IPO. However, instead of granting shares in the company, the issuer will create crypto-tokens to give out to investors.
2. The investors, on the other hand, will invest any well known cryptocurrency (usually bitcoins or ether) into the venture in exchange for tokens.
3. Companies self-regulate and create their own rules for each fund-raise— including the duration of an ICO, the initial value of the token, and rule regarding when an investor can encash the token.
4. **In Belfrics’ case, 1 bitcoin was equal to 2,000 Belfrics tokens.** Once the company is able to raise the required funds within the stipulated period of time, they close the ICO.

BENGALURU TO GET FUND FROM NIRBHAYA FUND

A proposal for financial aid from the Centre's Nirbhaya Fund to improve surveillance at public places for safety of women in Bengaluru, establish women police outposts and create "safety islands" at vulnerable locations has got approval of a high-powered committee. The project worth Rs 667 crore was "appraised" by the empowered committee of officers under the Nirbhaya Fund for Bengaluru at its meeting. The projects, cleared by the committee under "safe city proposals" for Bengaluru, also included placement of the NGO (non-government organisation) volunteers at women's helpdesk in police stations and establishment of critical care response units at "leading hospitals."

What

1. It also includes introduction of Rani Channamma teams of women to sensitize the public," the Women and Child Development Ministry said in a statement after the meeting.
2. WCD Ministry's secretary Rakesh Srivastava chaired the meeting of the empowered committee of officers which is responsible for appraising and recommending proposals for women's safety and security.
3. During the meeting, the panel cleared proposals for the 'safe city' projects for seven other cities-Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Lucknow-for grant of financial aid under the Nirbhaya Fund.
4. Safe city proposals for the eight cities were appraised by the committee, amounting to a total of Rs. 2,919.55 crore. This is a major new initiative being taken under the Nirbhaya Fund, taking a comprehensive approach to women's safety in eight major cities of India.
5. The plans have been prepared in coordination with the municipal corporations and police commissionerates of these eight cities.
6. Besides, the panel at its meeting also approved a proposal for setting up of "a model" forensic science laboratory in Chandigarh with advanced infrastructure and equipment.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

SUKHAD YATRA APP LAUNCHED

Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping, Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Shri Nitin Gadkari has launched a mobile App and Toll-free Emergency number for Highway users in New Delhi. Sukhad Yatra mobile application has been prepared by National Highways Authority of India.

What

1. The key feature of the app includes provision for the user to enter road quality-related information or to report any accident or pothole on the highway.
2. It also provides users with real-time data related to waiting time expected at Plazas and various facilities like points of interest, highway nest/nest mini, etc., available across the highway. The app can also be used by the users to purchase the FASTag tag and further facilitate the highway user experience.
3. A toll-free number, 1033, will enable users to report an emergency condition, or highway-related feedback, across the highway.
4. The service has also integrated with various ambulance/tow away services along the road to ensure rapid response time in emergency. The service is supported by a multi-lingual support and user location tracking features to provide the user with accurate and responsive complaint resolution.
5. It also aims at inculcating the habit of road safety, like behavioral and attitudinal changes among drivers. Training course will be conducted for drivers who carry dangerous/hazardous goods.

WORLD'S LARGEST SOLAR PARK INAUGURATED

The world's largest solar park set up at an investment of Rs16, 500 crore at Pavagada in Karnataka's Tumakuru district was inaugurated by chief minister Siddaramaiah on 1 March 2018. The 2,000 MW park, named as 'Shakti Sthala', spans across 13,000 acres spread over five villages and is a benchmark in the unique people's participation in power model put on ground. The park's development is anchored by the Karnataka Solar Power Development Corp. Ltd (KSPDCL), an entity formed in March 2015 as a joint venture between Karnataka Renewable Energy Development Ltd (KREDL) and Solar Energy Corp. of India (Seci).

What

1. The project has been executed within a record time of two years, with zero land acquisition. Moreover, the farmers who have leased out their land are reaping greater

- benefits with Rs21,000 per acre being offered as rental, an amount which has the scope to grow by 5% every two years. The beneficiaries of this project were 2,300 Pavagada farmers.
2. The chief minister said Karnataka has emerged as the third largest producer of **renewable energy in the nation and was taking “bold strides” towards emerging as an energy surplus state.**
 3. The park will create employment and act as an incentive for natives and farmers to explore new opportunities of socio-economic growth in the region.
 4. This ambitious project, spanning five villages, looks at farmers as the key partners, as also beneficiaries.
 5. Shakti Sthala is creating new job opportunities and economic growth leading to the prosperity of the people of Pavagada.

SUPER-EARTH EXOPLANETS

Astronomers have discovered three super-Earth planets orbiting a star about 100 light-years away from our solar system. The three exoplanets discovered by researchers at Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics (CfA) in the US have radii of about 1.6, 1.3, and 2.1 Earth-radii respectively. All of them are categorised as super-Earths, that is, **with masses that are larger than Earth’s but less than Neptune’s.** The star named GJ9827 is one of the few known stars to have multiple transiting terrestrial-sized exoplanets that are suited for atmospheric characterisation. Its three exoplanets are particularly interesting because two of them have radii between 1.5 and 2.0 Earth-radii.

What

1. Across this range in radii, the composition of planets is expected to change from rocky to gaseous; moreover, there are relatively few such candidates for study.
2. These planets orbit very close to the star, with periods of 1.2, 3.6 and 6.2 days respectively, and at these close distances they have fairly hot temperatures, estimated at 1,172, 811 and 680 degrees kelvin.
3. Future observations will probe their atmospheres and provide a much more detailed picture of this unusual family of super-Earths.
4. Over 3,500 extra-solar planets have been confirmed to date. Most of them were discovered using the transit method, and astronomers can combine the transit light **curves with velocity wobble observations to determine the planet’s mass and radius,** and thereby constrain its interior structure.
5. The atmosphere can also be studied in a transit by using the fact that the chemical composition of the atmosphere means its opacity varies with wavelength.
6. By measuring the depth of the transit at different wavelengths, it is possible to **infer the composition and temperature of the planet’s atmosphere.**

MISCELLANEOUS

INDIAN-AMERICAN AWARDED FOR CANCER RESEARCH

An Indian-American scientist has been awarded a grant of over USD 1.1 million for his ground-breaking research on cancer. Navin Vardarajan, along with another University of Houston researcher Sanghyuk Chung, was awarded huge grants by Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT), an organisation that funds pioneering cancer research and prevention programmes in the state. Associate professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering, Navin was given USD 1,173,420 to improve effectiveness of T-cell immunotherapy, while his fellow researcher Sanghyuk Chung, associate professor of biology and biochemistry, was awarded USD 811,617 to define molecular targets for the treatment of cervical cancer.

What

1. Vardarajan will use his grant to bring consistent results to cancer patients undergoing T-cell immunotherapy by manufacturing programmed T cells to meet, recognise and destroy tumours.

2. We have to understand every single T cell and what each one is capable of, who is looking for a perfect cell composition in order to manufacture only those that cure tumours.
3. Once we know what is required to get a positive response, we can control the composition of the cells so that they all can work to fight cancer.
4. Varadarajan said studying what makes better T cells will guide the development of the next generation of genetically modified cells, and all of immunotherapy in general.
5. The big **challenge with T cells is that there isn't one single thing that can be used to define what a T cell is supposed to do.** Because it's a living cell, it's capable of so many different things but studying them at the single-cell level allows us to map all of these different things onto the same cell.

GLOBAL FIREPOWER RANKING

India's military is placed fourth on a global index that has ranked 133 countries on the basis of their global military prowess, trailing behind only the US, Russia and China in that order. **India's western neighbour Pakistan ranks 13** on the Global Firepower (GFP) list 2017. India has managed to maintain its position among the top five military powers in the world on the GFP list while Pakistan could break in the top 15 only last year. Major military powers, France, the UK, Japan, Turkey and Germany, complete the top 10. Meanwhile, China also crept up behind Russia and is poised to take the second place soon. It has more aircraft and naval ships than Russia but is hugely outnumbered in total tanks in service.

What

1. The rankings for the index are reached after judging the countries on 50 parameters, including military resources, natural resources, industry and geographical features and available manpower.
2. India and China being placed higher on the index are helped to a great degree with the sizeable number of armed forces personnel with the respective countries.
3. **According to GFP's assessment, India leads China in terms of total armed personnel with India's 4,207,250 personnel against China's 3,712,500.**
4. China, however, leads in terms of active personnel with 2,260,000 troops compared to **India's 1,362,500. India's reserve components were assessed to be 2,844,750 while China trailed with 1,452,500.**
5. **The index didn't count nuclear stockpiles** for the ranking but gave points for nuclear capability, whether recognised or suspected. Another aspect for consideration was the defence budget allocation with China allocating over three times the amount India set aside for its military.
6. India led the way on all aspects except the number of attack helicopters, self-propelled artillery and waterway coverage.

FIRST INDIAN WINS PRITZKER PRIZE

Indian architect Balkrishna Doshi, a pioneer of low-cost housing design, won the prestigious Pritzker Prize, considered **architecture's Nobel equivalent**. The 90-year-old Doshi—one of the last living architects to have apprenticed with the Franco-Swiss trailblazer Le Corbusier—distinguished his work by committing to sustainable architecture and inexpensive housing, bringing modernist design to an India rooted in traditionalism. He is the 45th Pritzker laureate and the first from India.

What

1. Balkrishna Doshi has always created an architecture that is serious, never flashy or a follower of trends," said the Pritzker jury, which said Doshi "has continually exhibited the objectives" of architecture's highest honour.
2. Balkrishna Doshi constantly demonstrates that all good architecture and urban planning must not only unite purpose and structure but must take into account climate, site, technique, and craft, along with a deep understanding and appreciation of the context in the broadest sense.

3. His accomplishments include everything from working on the Indian Institute of Management to designing the Aranya Low Cost Housing bloc in the city of Indore, completed in 1989.
4. The intricate labyrinth of houses, courtyards and internal trails today houses some 80,000 low to middle income people, with more than 6,500 units ranging from modest one-bedrooms to spacious homes.
5. The international **Pritzker prize, established by Chicago's Pritzker family in 1979**, bestows laureates with \$100,000 along with a bronze medallion.

CHILD MARRIAGES DECLINE IN INDIA: UNICEF

India saw a sharp decline in child marriages over the last ten years with 27 per cent of girls getting married before their 18th birthday as against 47 per cent a decade ago, **the United Nations children's agency UNICEF said on 6 March 2018**. This decline in India has contributed significantly to a global decline in child marriages. Overall, the proportion of girls who were married as children decreased by 15 per cent in the last decade, from 1 in 4 to approximately 1 in 5.

What

1. According to a statement issued by the UNICEF, 25 million child marriages were prevented globally in the last 10 years (2005-06 and 2015-16) with the largest reduction seen in South Asia with India being at the forefront.
2. South Asia has witnessed the largest decline in child marriages worldwide in the last **10 years, as a girl's risk of marrying before her 18th birthday has** dropped by more than a third, from nearly 50 per cent to 30 per cent, in large part due to progress in India.
3. **The UN children's agency attributed increasing rates of girls' education, proactive government investments in adolescent girls, and strong public awareness about the illegality of child marriage and the harm it causes are among the reasons for the decline.**
4. When a girl is forced to marry as a child, she faces immediate and lifelong consequences. Her odds of finishing school decrease while her odds of being abused by her husband and suffering complications during pregnancy increase.
5. There are also huge societal consequences, and higher risk of intergenerational cycles of poverty.

CSIA BAGS AWARD

The Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (CSIA) in Mumbai - operated and managed by GVK-Mumbai International Airport Pvt Ltd - has been rated the World's Best Airport for Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Awards 2017 for customer experience. The award was announced on 6 March 2018 by the Airports Council International (ACI), the only global trade representative of the world's airport authorities. Selected by millions of passengers in a survey carried out by ACI, the trade association of 1953 member airports across 176 countries, the award reflects Mumbai airport's excellence in service parameters that go towards satisfying the needs of travellers.

What

1. As part of the ACI's worldwide programme, passengers were surveyed across international airports for their feedback on 34 key performance indicators, including airport access, check-in, security screening, restrooms, stores and restaurants.
2. A highly regarded accomplishment in the aviation industry, this honour is a testament to GVK MIAL's unflinching commitment towards operating with an approach that promises efficiency, safety and reliability.
3. The award acknowledges the company's endeavours towards offering a world-class environment to all travellers transiting through the airport.
4. The award is a testimony to the quality service provided during 2017 to over 46 million travellers by the 30,000 odd airport community members comprising the CISF, Customs, Immigration teams, airline staff, F&B and retail teams, the

housekeeping and maintenance units and employees who work at the airport with a mission to constantly raise the bar and create new benchmarks day after day.

5. GVK Mumbai International Airport Pvt Ltd (MIAL) is a Public Private Partnership joint venture between a GVK-led consortium and the Airports Authority of India (AAI).

TWO INDIAN AIRPORTS RANKED BEST IN THE WORLD

Top two metro airports of India have emerged as top scorers in the ranking of the world's best airports. Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGIA) airport and Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (CSIA) have emerged as the winner among the world's best airports. According to Airport Service Quality (ASQ) ranking by the Airports Council International (ACI), an association of the world's airports, Delhi won the best airport award in 2017 for passenger service under the category of airports handling over 40 million passengers per annum (mppa). Mumbai, on the other hand, scored the highest for customer experience in the same category.

What

1. ASQ is considered the key to understanding how to increase passenger satisfaction and improve business performance.
2. The survey, the result of which came, covers 34 service areas, including access, check-in, security, airport facilities, food and beverage and retail.
3. Delhi Airport is managed by GMR group and Mumbai airport is managed by GVK group.
4. In 2007, when we had taken over the complete operations of the airport, the ASQ score was 3.53, and in ten years we have got it to hover around 4.99 out of a maximum five. It is a testimony to the quality service provided in 2017.
5. In 2017, Delhi airport handled 63.5 million passengers higher than Changi, Incheon and Bangkok airports in terms of passenger growth. It is now the seventh-busiest airport in Asia and among the top 20 busiest airports across the world.

FORBES' 2018 'WORLD'S BILLIONAIRES' LIST

Mukesh **Ambani's net worth has soared to \$40.1 billion**, making him the richest Indian for the 11th year in a row, while Amazon founder Jeff Bezos toppled Bill Gates as the world's wealthiest person, says Forbes. According to **Forbes' 2018 'World's Billionaires' list, Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani's wealth surged a whopping 72.84% to \$40.1 billion— highest among the 119 Indian billionaires on the list.** Ambani was ranked 19th globally, up from 33rd position in 2017. Mukesh Ambani chairs and runs \$51 billion (revenues) oil and gas giant Reliance Industries, among India's most valuable companies.

What

1. **Bezos, referred to as the "Centi-billionaire", topped the list with a net worth of \$112 billion**, becoming the only person to appear in the Forbes list with a 12-figure fortune. Shares of his e-commerce giant Amazon rose 59% in 12 months, helping boost his fortune by \$39.2 billion. It was the biggest one year gain since Forbes started tracking billionaires in 1987.
2. The Amazon founder moved ahead of Bill Gates, who is now the second richest person globally with a fortune of \$90 billion.
3. India is home to 119 billionaires, 18 more than last year. **This year's list consists of 2,043 of the richest people in the world.**
4. The combined net worth of this elite group is a whopping \$9.1 trillion, up 18% since last year. Their average net worth is a record \$4.1 billion.
5. Azim Premji is the second richest Indian and was ranked 58th on the overall list with a net worth of \$18.8 billion, followed by Lakshmi Mittal (62nd position, net worth of \$18.5 billion), Shiv Nadar (98th, \$14.6 billion) and Dilip Shanghvi (115th, \$12.8 billion).
6. The 10 richest Indians include Kumar Birla, ranked 127th overall with a fortune of \$11.8 billion, Uday Kotak (143, \$10.7 billion), Radhakishan Damani (151, \$10

billion), Gautam Adani (154, \$9.7 billion) and Cyrus Poonawalla (170, \$9.1 billion). Acharya Balkrishna, the co-founder of FMCG company Patanjali Ayurved, was ranked 274th on the list with a net worth of \$6.3 billion.

- Acharya Balkrishna derives his fortune from fast-growing consumer goods giant Patanjali Ayurved. Balkrishna owns 98.6% of the privately-held company, which he cofounded with politically well-connected yoga guru Baba Ramdev.

RICHEST INDIAN WOMEN

Forbes magazine came out with its annual list of billionaires. The list features eight Indian women and nineteen billionaires from the country in all. On International Women's day, let's take a look at how the wealthiest Indian women have made their money. The list is in decreasing order of their wealth.

- Savitri Jindal- the richest Indian mother, \$8.8 billion: Savitri Jindal is the matriarch of the Jindal group. Though the company was divided among her four sons after the death of O P Jindal, she has been the group's Chairman since 2005. Under Mrs Jindal's leadership, the mining-to-oil conglomerate's revenues have more than quadrupled in the last decade.
- Kiran Mazumdar Shaw- India's garage entrepreneur, \$3.6 billion: Shaw, the Chairperson and MD of Biocon, is the richest Indian woman entrepreneur. She was born in a Gujarati family and wanted to become a brewmaster like her father, who worked at United Breweries. However, she failed to realise her dream and "accidentally" started Biocon in her garage in 1979. The Biocon founder was also listed as the 85th most powerful woman in the world in 2005.
- Smita Crishna-Godrej, \$2.9 billion: Smita inherited a fifth of the storied Godrej family's assets. She had been in the news for acquiring India's atomic energy pioneer Homi Bhaba's bungalow in South Mumbai.
- Leena Tewari- the shy baroness, \$2.4 billion: Tewari chairs the privately held USV India, which her late father Vithal Gandhi set up with Revlon in 1961. USV is a pharmaceutical major with focussing on diabetes and cardiovascular fields in India. She has a BCom from Bombay University and a Master of Business Administration from Boston University.
- Vinod Rai Gupta, \$2.1 billion: Mother and son Vinod and Anil Rai Gupta draw their fortune from a 43% holding in flagship Havells India. The company, which is run by Anil, makes everything from electrical and lighting fixtures to fans, refrigerators and washing machines. Havells was founded by Vinod's late husband Qimat Rai Gupta in 1958 as an electricals trading business. The company has 12 factories and a presence in 40 countries.
- Sheela Gautam, who set up Sheela Foam in 1971, best known for its Sleepwell brand of mattresses, was ranked at the 1,999th place in the Forbes list with \$1.1 billion. Gautam founded Sheela Foam in 1971 and has been actively involved in growing the organisation for two decades. A prominent figure in Indian Politics, she was elected to the Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), for four consecutive terms.

RARE SIGNED PHOTO OF GANDHI AUCTIONED

A signed vintage photo of Mahatma Gandhi walking alongside Madan Mohan Malaviya was sold at a US auction for \$41,806 – more than four times the expected amount. **Signed in fountain pen, "M K Gandhi," the rare photo was taken after the second session of India's Round Table Conference in London in September 1931. Reverse of photo bears two Associated Press of Great Britain copyright stamps, as well as collector's ink notations identifying Malaviya and the date. The photo dates to a period in which Gandhi, suffering from pain in his right thumb, opted to write with his left hand, a temporary inconvenience that lasted from August 8 to December 19, 1931. The photo was initially expected to fetch \$10,000.**

What

- The autographed photo of Gandhi presents him as **he is doing his life's work.**

2. We are not surprised that this giant of the 20th century still resonates today. As the delegate acting on behalf of the Indian National Congress, Gandhi attended the second session of the British-organised Round Table Conference, a three-part conference series held in London from 1930 to 1932, with the aim of discussing the ongoing constitutional reforms in India.
3. Malaviya, who had formerly been president of the Congress and played a significant role in the Gandhi-led non-cooperation movement, joined him as a representative advocating for a free India.

FIRST UNION TERRITORY TO RUN 100% ON SOLAR POWER

Diu has become the first and only Union Territory in the country to be fully run on solar energy. The UT generates total of 13 megawatts (MW) of electricity from solar power generating facilities daily. Of this, 3 MW is generated by rooftop solar plants and 10 MW by its other solar power plants.

What

1. **Diu's peak**-time demand for electricity goes up to 7 MW and now it daily generates about 10.5 MW of electricity from solar energy, making it electricity surplus.
2. Despite scarcity of land, solar power plants have been installed over more than 50 acres. The solar power also has come as big relief for local residents as their monthly bill charges have fallen by around 12%.
3. It also has significantly reduced electricity loss.

Background

1. Diu has an area of just 42 square kilometres and population of 56,000.
2. For water and electricity, the Union territory was solely dependent on Gujarat government. The electricity supplied from power grid owned by Gujarat government was causing huge line losses.
3. **To overcome this limitation, UT's** administration has decided to set up solar power plants.

CAMPAIGN TO ERADICATE TB

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 13 March 2018 launched a campaign to eradicate tuberculosis (TB) from India by 2025, five years ahead of a globally-set deadline. After inaugurating the Delhi End-TB Summit, the prime minister launched the TB-free India Campaign to take the activities under the National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination forward in a mission mode for ending the epidemic by 2025.

What

1. A target has been set to end TB globally by 2030. I would like to announce that we have set aim to eradicate it from India five years ahead by 2025, Modi said.
2. He further said that front-line TB physicians and workers can make a major **contribution in this direction**. **"State governments have a major role to play in** elimination of TB from India.
3. TB was the most prevalent among communicable diseases in the country and the poor were the worst affected by it.
4. Every step taken towards eradicating the disease is directly connected to their lives, he added. Leaders from across the globe have converged in the national capital for the summit, hosted by the Union ministry of health along with the WHO and the Stop TB Partnership.
5. Tuberculosis was responsible for 1.7 million deaths in 2016, despite most cases being curable while over 10 million people contract TB every year.
6. The summit would set the stage for the September 2018 United Nations High-Level Meeting on TB, where for the first time, TB would be discussed in the UN General Assembly at the Heads of State level.

SCIENTIST STEPHEN HAWKING DIES AT 76

Stephen Hawking, arguably the greatest-ever theoretical physicist since the times of legendary Albert Einstein, passed away small hours of 14 March 2018, a statement from his family said. The British scientist, best known for his work on black holes and relativity, was 76 when he breathed his last and survived by his children Lucy, Robert and Tim. He was a great scientist and an extraordinary man whose work and legacy will live on for many years.

What

1. He was a great scientist and an extraordinary man whose work and legacy will live on for many years.
2. His courage and persistence with his brilliance and humour inspired people across **the world. He once said, 'It would not be much of a universe if it wasn't home to the people you loves.' We will miss him forever.**"
3. A rare form of motor neurone disease - amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS – that he suffered from since the age of 22, left Hawking wheelchair-bound and unable to speak except through a voice synthesiser, specially created for him. The doctors then gave him just one year to survive.
4. Hawking was not only known for his pioneering work in the field of cosmology, but also as author of several popular science books, including the immensely popular A Brief History of Time (1992).

INDIA WINS BEST EXHIBITOR AWARD

India won Best Exhibitor Award at ITB–Berlin World Tourist Meet convened at Berlin, Germany. More than 100 countries had participated in the mega meet with their respective Tourism Ministers. India was represented by Minister of State (Independent charge) for Tourism Mr K. J. Alphons along with Tourism Ministry officials. **India's Incredible India (Ministry of Tourism) presented short film named "Yogi of the Racetrack"** in the meet. The short film had received 3.2 million hits in 60 hours.

ITB Berlin

1. The ITB Berlin (Internationale Tourismus-Börse Berlin) **is world's largest tourism trade fair.**
2. It is represented by companies from tourism sector including hotels, tourist boards, tour operators, system providers, airlines and car rental companies.
3. The fair takes place annually in March at Messe Berlin and always has official partner country.

AWARD FOR E-OFFICE

The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Dr Jitendra Singh, presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation for implementation of e-office software.

What

1. E-Office is one of the Mission-mode Projects under the Digital India programme.
2. The e-Office solution enables core operations of the Government at all levels to be performed in a **'paper-less' environment**, including the E-leave, E-tour, Knowledge Management, Notice Board, Download Forms, Inventory Control etc.
3. The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has the distinction of making 100 percent use of e-Office.
4. In the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, the entire e-office suite was implemented in the first week of December, 2014 and since then it is being used by all stake holders in the Ministry.
5. All the files in the Ministry are e-files and these have been successfully handled though this system for over three years now, when the transition to electronic mode first took place.

SULTAN AZLAN SHAH CUP 2018

Australia won 27th edition of the Sultan Azlan Shah cup 2018 for record 10th time. In the final match held in Ipoh, Malaysia, Australia defeated defending champion England by narrow 2-1 goal margin. Earlier, in the classification match for third place, Argentina defeated host Malaysia by 3-2 goals.

What

1. **It is an annual international men's field hockey tournament held in Malaysia.**
2. It has been **named after 9th king of Malaysia and 'Father of Malaysian Hockey'** Sultan Azlan Shah also avid fan of field hockey.
3. It was established in 1983 as biennial sporting event.
4. It was converted into annual event after 1998, following its growth and popularity. Australia has won prestigious tournament for record 10 times in 1983, 1998, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2016 and 2018.
5. India had won it 4 times 1985, 1991, 1995, and 2009 was shared it in 2010 with South Korea.

WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY 2018

Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution launched integrated portal for consumer services i.e jagograhakjago.gov.in on the occasion of World Consumer Rights Day. The Union Minister emphasized on the key consumer rights such as safety, information, choice, complaint lodging and grievances redressal. Shri Paswan said that consumers have all the right to get information about what they are spending on.

What

1. World Consumer Rights Day 2018 with the theme **of "Making Digital Markets Fairer" was organized by the** Department of Consumer Affairs in New Delhi on 15 March 2018.
2. Government is on the right track in enabling the consumers to harness the full benefits of digitization and putting in place adequate safeguards against risks associated with the electronic world.
3. Digital education and awareness programmes need to support consumers to develop the skills and confidence to be able to manage risks and opportunities, make informed choices, know how to get assistance and advice and take action to protect and improve their well-being and identity online.
4. Shri Paswan mentioned about Cybercrime that is becoming a major area of concern. The openness of the Internet, the lack of identification and the low level of **users' understanding of security, particularly among the first time users is a major** area that requires focused efforts.

KOCHON PRIZE 2017 FOR TB RESEARCH

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) was awarded Kochon Prize 2017 for building tradition of excellence in Tuberculosis (TB) research and development. It had emerged winner from among 18 nominations. It was awarded for establishing India TB Research Consortium to

accelerate R&D efforts in the country. The consortium is working with public and private

Kochon Prize

1. The Kochon Prize is awarded annually by Stop TB Partnership to individuals and organizations that have made significant contribution to combating the disease.
2. The prize is endowed by Kochon Foundation, a non-profit foundation registered in South Korea. It consists of prize of US \$65,000 award.
3. The prize was established in 2006 in honour of late Chairman Chong-Kun Lee (left), founder of Chong Kun Dang Pharmaceutical Corporation and Kochon Foundation.
4. He was committed throughout his career to improve access to low-cost lifesaving antibiotics and anti-TB drugs.

institutes to guide country's research efforts towards development of point-of-care diagnostics, shorter treatment regimens and effective vaccine for TB.

What

1. **The ICMR is India's apex scientific body** for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research.
2. It was established in 1911 as Indian Research Fund Association (IRFA) making it one of the oldest and largest medical research bodies in the world.
3. The ICMR functions under the Department of Health Research, Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and is headquartered in New Delhi.

EIU SURVEY

Three Indian cities - New Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai, are among the cheapest cities in the world, according to an Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) survey, that named Singapore as the most expensive city. According to the Worldwide Cost of Living 2018 survey, South Asian cities, particularly those in India and Pakistan offer the best value for money. Bengaluru, Chennai, Karachi and New Delhi featured among the 10 cheapest locations surveyed.

What

1. India is tipped for rapid economic expansion, but in per-head terms, wage and spending growth will remain low. Income inequality means that low wages are the norm, limiting household spending and creating many tiers of pricing as well as strong competition from a range of retail sources.
2. Moreover, cheap and plentiful supply of goods into cities from rural producers with short supply chains as well as government subsidies on some products, has kept prices down, especially by Western standards.
3. Syria's capital, Damascus is the cheapest city in the world. Joining Damascus at the bottom is Venezuela's capital, Caracas and Kazakhstan's business centre, Almaty, in the second and third position respectively.
4. Others in the 10 cheapest cities list include Lagos at the 4th place, Bengaluru (5th), Karachi (6th), Algiers (7th), Chennai (8th), Bucharest (9th) and New Delhi (10th).
5. Although the Indian subcontinent remains structurally cheap, instability is becoming an increasingly prominent factor in lowering the relative cost of living of a location. This means that there is a considerable element of risk in some of the world's cheapest cities.
6. Singapore retained its title as the world's most expensive city for the fifth consecutive year. Singapore was ranked ahead of Paris placed second on the list, Zurich (3rd) and Hong Kong (4th).
7. According to the report, Oslo is the 5th most expensive city in the world, followed by Geneva (6th), Seoul (7th), Copenhagen (8th), Tel Aviv (9th) and Sydney (10th).
8. The Worldwide Cost of Living is a biannual Economist Intelligence Unit survey that compares more than 400 individual prices across 160 products and services.
9. These include food, drink, clothing, household supplies and personal care items, home rents, transport, utility bills, private schools, domestic help and recreational costs.

WORLD WILDLIFE DAY

The World Wildlife Day is observed every year on 3rd March to celebrate and raise awareness about the world's **wild fauna and flora**. It is celebrated to mark the signing of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) on this day in 1973.

What

1. It aims to create awareness and encourages people across the globe to protect endangered species.

2. It also calls for taking up urgent steps to fight wildlife crime which has wide-ranging environmental, economic and social impacts.
3. The theme for this year is **'Big Cats: Predators under Threat'**.
4. Big cats are among most widely recognized and admired animals across the globe.
5. These predators are facing many and varied threats, mostly caused by human activities. The theme aims to raise awareness about plight of big cats and galvanize support for many global and national actions that underway to save these iconic species.
6. It also expands definition of big cats being used, which includes not only lion, tiger, leopard and jaguar (4 largest wild cats that can roar) but also cheetah, snow leopard, puma, clouded leopard, etc.

Flashback

1. The World Wildlife Day was designated by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) at its 68th session on 20 December 2013. On this day in 1973, CITES was adopted.
2. CITES is international agreement to regulate worldwide commercial trade in wild animal and plant species.
3. Its aim is to ensure that international trade does not threaten the survival of the species in the wild.
4. It was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of IUCN. It entered into force in July 1975.
5. It is administered through United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
6. Its secretariat is located in Geneva (Switzerland). CITES is legally binding on state parties to the convention, which are obliged to adopt their own domestic legislation to implement its goals.

C-17 GLOBEMASTER

The Indian Air Force (IAF) for first time flawlessly landed its largest transport US-manufactured aircraft, C-17 Globemaster at strategic Tuting Advanced Landing Ground (ALG) in Arunachal Pradesh, which is close to Chinese border. After the trial landing, C17 carried out operations mission and airlifted 18 tons of loads.

What

1. The landing of this aircraft **is seen as part of IAF's** move to strengthen its overall operations in strategically-key border state.
2. It also **demonstrated IAF's** capability in terms of operational performance and tactical air mobility in challenging Tuting airfield which is surrounded high hills in narrow valley.
3. Earlier, in November 2016 too, IAF had successfully carried out landing of C-17 Globemaster at its strategic

ALG of Mechuka in West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh which was re-activated in May 2016 and is just 29 kilometers from border with China.

Flashback

1. The C-17 is US-manufactured transport aircraft commonly used to perform strategic airlift missions, transporting troops and cargo throughout the world along with medical evacuation and airdrop duties.
2. It is 174 feet long and has wingspan of about 170 feet (52 m). Its cargo compartment is 88 feet (27 m) long by 18 feet (5.5 m) wide by 12 feet 4 inches (3.76 m) high.
3. Its floor has rollers for palletized cargo but it can be flipped to provide flat floor suitable for vehicles and other rolling stock. The cargo
4. In 2013, C-17 was officially put into service by IAF.