

# My Notes....

## NATIONAL

### AADHAAR IS CONSTITUTIONALLY VALID

The Supreme Court 26 September 2018 declared the Centre's flagship Aadhaar scheme as constitutionally valid but struck down some of its provisions including its linking with bank accounts, mobile phones and school admissions. A five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra held that while Aadhaar would remain mandatory for filing of IT returns and allotment of Permanent Account Number (PAN), it would not be mandatory to link Aadhaar to bank accounts and the telecom service providers cannot seek its linking for mobile connections.

What

1. The bench also struck down the national security exception under the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016.
2. Observing that Aadhaar was meant to help the benefits reach the marginalised sections of society, it said the scheme takes into account the dignity of people not only from personal but from the community point of view as well and served the much bigger public interest. Aadhaar means unique and it is better to be unique than being best.
3. The verdict struck down Section 57 of Act permitting private entities like telecom companies or other corporates to avail Aadhaar data.
4. Ruling that Aadhaar authentication data cannot be stored for more than six months, it directed the government not to give Aadhaar to illegal immigrants.
5. The court upheld the passage of the Aadhaar Bill as a Money Bill by the Lok Sabha.
6. The bench also said there was nothing in the Aadhaar Act that violates right to privacy of an individual.

#### Flashback

1. The Aadhaar framework was first built by the UPA II government in 2009-10.
2. Based on a report of the Kargil Review Committee, a Group of Ministers had recommended a multipurpose National Identity Card.
3. In 2010, the National Identification Authority of India Bill, 2010, was introduced. The Bill, however, was passed only in 2016, under the present BJP-led government.
4. Since the passage of the Bill, several petitions have been filed challenging the validity of the Aadhaar Act, 2016.

Services requiring Aadhaar linking

1. It is mandatory to link PAN card with Aadhaar. New PAN cards will not be issued without Aadhaar number.
2. Aadhaar is compulsory for filing Income Tax returns (ITR). **If you don't link your PAN card with Aadhaar then you will not be able to file ITR. You have time till March 31 to do so.**
3. Aadhaar must for availing facilities of welfare schemes and government subsidies.

Services not requiring Aadhaar linking

1. It is not mandatory to link bank account with Aadhaar.
2. Telecom service providers cannot ask for linking mobile number with Aadhaar.
3. CBSE, NEET, UGC cannot make Aadhaar mandatory.
4. Aadhaar not compulsory for school admissions.
5. No child can be denied benefits of any schemes on not being able to bring Aadhaar.

## NDCP-2018 APPROVED

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the National Digital Communications Policy-2018 (NDCP-2018) and re-designation of the Telecom Commission as the "Digital Communications Commission". The NDCP-2018 envisions supporting India's transition to a digitally empowered economy and society by fulfilling the information and communications needs of citizens and enterprises by establishment of a ubiquitous, resilient and affordable digital communications infrastructure and services. The **'Customer focused' and 'application driven' NDCP-2018** shall lead to new ideas and innovations, after the launch of advanced technology such as 5G, IOT, M2M, etc. which shall govern the telecom sector of India.

### Objectives

1. Broadband for all;
2. Creating four million additional jobs in the Digital Communications sector;
3. Enhancing the contribution of the Digital Communications sector to 8% of India's GDP from ~ 6% in 2017;
4. Propelling India to the Top 50 Nations in the ICT Development Index of ITU from 134 in 2017;
5. Enhancing India's contribution to Global Value Chains; and
6. Ensuring Digital Sovereignty.
7. These objectives are to be achieved by 2022.

### The policy aims to

1. Provide universal broadband connectivity at 50 Mbps to every citizen;
2. Provide 1 Gbps connectivity to all Gram Panchayats by 2020 and 10 Gbps by 2022;
3. Ensure connectivity to all uncovered areas;
4. Attract investments of USD 100 billion in the Digital Communications Sector;
5. Train one million manpower for building New Age Skill;
6. Expand IoT ecosystem to 5 billion connected devices;
7. Establish a comprehensive data protection regime for digital communications that safeguards the privacy, autonomy and choice of individuals
8. Facilitate India's effective participation in the global digital economy;
9. Enforce accountability through appropriate institutional mechanisms to assure citizens of safe and
10. Secure digital communications infrastructure and services.

### Background

1. As the present world has entered the era of modern technological advancements in the Telecom Sector such as 5G, IoT, M2M etc., a need was being felt to introduce a 'customer focused' and 'application driven' policy for the Indian Telecom Sector, which can form the main pillar of Digital India by addressing emerging opportunities for expanding not only the availability of telecom services but also telecom based services.
2. Accordingly, the new National Digital Communications Policy - 2018 has been formulated, in place of the existing National Telecom Policy-2012, to cater to the modern needs of the digital communications sector of India.

### The policy advocates:-

1. Establishment of a National Digital Grid by creating a National Fibre Authority;
2. Establishing Common Service Ducts and utility corridors in all new city and highway road projects;
3. Creating a collaborative institutional mechanism between Centre, States and Local Bodies for Common Rights of Way, standardization of costs and timelines;

4. Removal of barriers to approvals; and
5. Facilitating development of Open Access Next Generation Networks.

## NOVASAR AND S1-4 LAUNCHED

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched two satellites—NovaSAR and S1-4—belonging to United Kingdom (UK) based Surrey Satellite Technology Limited (SSTL). Both satellites were injected into Sun Synchronous Orbit (pole-to-pole orbit) at an altitude of 583 km after the launch.

What

1. These satellites were launched on board of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C42) from first launch pad of Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
2. This was the 44th flight of PSLV and the 12th flight of Core Alone version of the vehicle.
3. Core Alone version of PSLV is lightest version without six strap-on motors. It is used for launching smaller payloads.
4. **It was ISRO's first fully commercial trip of the year.** This launch helped Antrix Corporation, commercial arm of ISRO to earn more than Rs. 220 crore.
5. As on date, ISRO has launched 239 foreign satellites of 28 countries.
6. S1-4 Satellite is high resolution earth observation satellite meant for surveying resources, environment monitoring, urban management and disaster monitoring.
7. NovaSAR Satellite carries S-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) and Automatic Identification Receiver payloads.
8. It is technology demonstration mission designed to test capabilities of new low cost S-band SAR platform.

### Flashback

1. PSLV is the third generation launch vehicle of India designed and developed by ISRO's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Thiruvananthapuram.
2. It is hailed as the reliable and versatile workhorse launch vehicle of India.
3. It consists of four stages, using solid and liquid propulsion systems alternately.
4. Each stage of PSLV is self-contained vehicle capable of functioning independently with own propulsion systems.
5. It is capable of launching 1600 kg satellites in 620 km sun-synchronous polar orbit and 1050 kg satellite in geosynchronous transfer orbit.
6. There are three variants of PSLV, namely, PSLV-G, PSLV-CA, PSLV-XL. In the standard configuration, it measures 44.4 m tall, with a lift off weight of 295 tonnes.

## ADULTERY DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL

The Supreme Court on 27 September 2018 declared as unconstitutional the penal provision on adultery, saying it was manifestly arbitrary and dents the individuality of women. A five-judge Constitution bench was unanimous in holding Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code, dealing with the offence of adultery, as unconstitutional and struck down the penal provision. Section 497 of the 158-year-old IPC says: "Whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of another man, without the consent or connivance of that man, such sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape, is guilty of the offence of adultery." The offence of adultery entailed a maximum punishment of five years, or with fine, or both.

What

1. The bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices R F Nariman, A M Khanwilkar, D Y Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra held that Section 497 is unconstitutional.
2. In four separate but concurring judgments, the five-judge bench of the Supreme Court said the 158-year-old law was unconstitutional and fell foul of Article 21 (Right to life and personal liberty) and Article 14 (Right to equality).

3. The apex court also declared Section 198(1) and 198(2) of the CrPC, which allows a husband to bring charges against the man with whom his wife committed adultery, unconstitutional.
4. Any provision of law affecting individual dignity and equality of women invites the wrath of the **Constitution**. It's time to say that a husband is not the master of wife. Legal sovereignty of one sex over other sex is wrong.
5. However, if any aggrieved spouse ended her life because of her **partner's** adulterous relation, it could be treated as an abetment to suicide if evidence was produced, the CJI said.
6. Section 497 was manifestly arbitrary and offends the dignity of women. Stating that the beauty of our Constitution was that it includes "I, me and you".
7. Section 497 is based on gender stereotypes of the role women. The provision is unconstitutional.
8. **Saying that Section 497 also deprived a woman of her privacy, "Society has two sets of standards for judging the morality of men and women. The law is gender biased, gives unequal voice to partners."**
9. Justice Indu Malhotra, the lone woman judge on the bench, said that Section 497 was a clear violation of fundamental rights granted in the Constitution and there was no justification for the continuation of the provision.
10. The five-judge bench of the Supreme Court had reserved judgment on August 8, saying that making adultery a penal offence would be irrational and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution.

#### Flashback

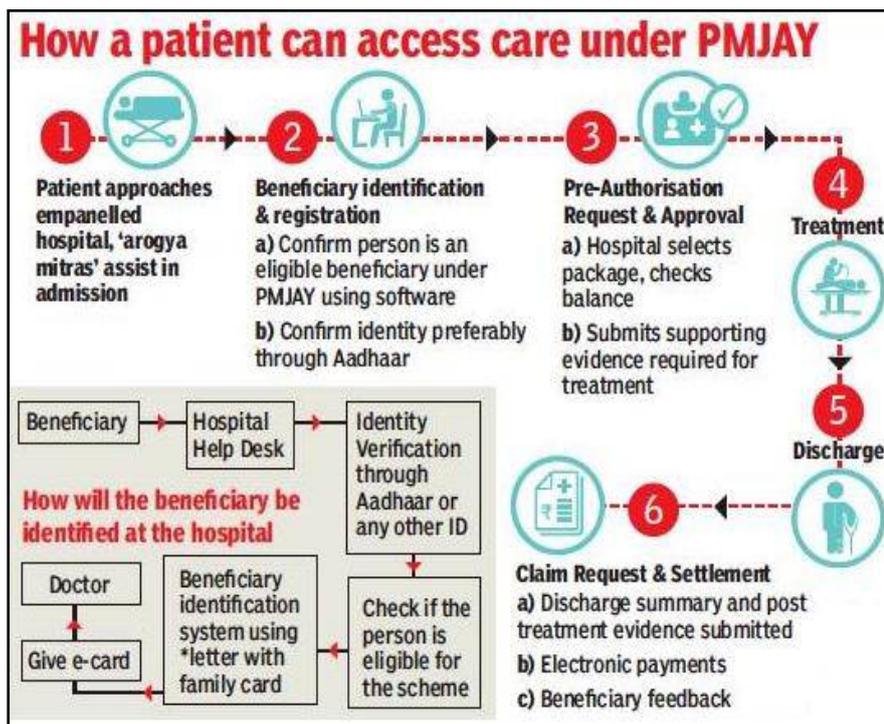
1. The petition seeking the repeal of Section 497 IPC was filed by a non-resident Keralite — Joseph Shine — who termed the 158-year-old law enacted **by the Britishers as "unjust, illegal and arbitrary and violative of citizens' fundamental rights"**.
2. Questioning the gender bias in the provision drafted by Lord Macaulay in 1860, Shine has also challenged Section 198(2) of the CrPC.
3. When the sexual intercourse takes place with the consent of both the parties, there is no good reason for excluding one party from the liability, the PIL said.
4. In its affidavit, the Centre has contended that adultery should remain an offence, saying Section 497 was enacted so as to safeguard the sanctity of marriage.
5. Adultery should remain an offence. Diluting adultery law will impact the sanctity of marriages. Making adultery legal will hurt marriage bonds, the Centre had said.
6. On January 5, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, referred the PIL to a larger constitutional bench.
7. The bench had contended the provision seemed "quite archaic, especially when there is societal **progress**".
8. In three earlier judgments in 1954, 1985 and in 1988, the court had upheld the provision.

#### **WORLD'S LARGEST HEALTHCARE SCHEME LAUNCHED**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), under Ayushman Bharat umbrella at Ranchi, Jharkhand. The scheme aims to provide annual health insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh to 10.74 crore beneficiary families i.e. over 50 crore beneficiaries across India. **It is touted as world's largest healthcare** scheme that will serve beneficiary population that equals 27-28 European countries and almost equal to population of Canada, Mexico and US put together. The scheme will become operational from September 25, 2018 i.e. on birth anniversary of Deendayal Upadhyay.

What

1. PMJAY is government-sponsored health insurance scheme that will provide free coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year in any government or empanelled private hospitals all over India.



2. It will cover beneficiaries families identified on the basis of Socio Economic Caste Survey (SECC) 2011 in 444 districts of 30 states/Union Territories.
3. Telangana, Odisha, Kerala, Punjab and Delhi (UT) are the states which have still not signed MoUs for joining this scheme.
4. National Health Agency (NHA) is the apex body for implementing this scheme.
5. States will be required to form State Health Agency (SHA) to implement scheme and at the district level also structure for its implementation will be set up.
6. PMJAY will be funded with 60% contribution from Centre and remaining from the states.
7. NITI Aayog will be working as partner for this scheme for operationalizing robust, modular and interoperable IT platform which will involve a paperless and cashless transaction.

## PM-AASHA APPROVED

Union Cabinet recently approved **new umbrella scheme “Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan” (PM-AASHA)** to give major boost to pro-farmer initiatives of Government. The Scheme is aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce as announced in Union Budget for 2018.

What

1. The scheme was launched in keeping with **Government’s** commitment and dedication for Annadata.
2. It will help to protect farmers’ income which is expected to go long way towards the welfare of farmers.
3. Government has already increased the MSP of kharif



crops by following the principle of 1.5 times the cost of production.

4. It is expected that the increase in MSP will be translated to farmer's income by way of robust procurement mechanism in coordination with the State Governments.

#### Components of PM-AASHA

1. Price Support Scheme (PSS) - Under it physical procurement of pulses, oilseeds and copra will be done by central modal agencies with proactive role of state governments.
2. Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS) - It will cover all oilseeds for which minimum support price (MSP) is notified. Pre-registered farmers will be direct paid difference between MSP and selling or modal price for his produce in notified market yard through transparent auction process.
3. Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS) - It will allow participation of private sector in procurement operation needs on pilot basis. Learnings from these outcomes will help to increase ambit of private participation in procurement operations.

#### INDIA AND THE UNSDF (2018-2022)

CEO NITI Aayog, Amitabh Kant and United Nations Resident Coordinator in India, Yuri Afanasiev, was signed the Government of India-United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) for 2018-2022, at a special signing ceremony on September 28 at NITI Aayog premises. The signing ceremony was presided over by Vice Chairperson, NITI Aayog, Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Members of NITI Aayog and will be attended by the heads of UN agencies in India.

#### What

1. Government of India-United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (SDF) 2018-2022 outlines the work of UN agencies in India, to support the achievement of key development outcomes that have been identified in consultation with the government and are aligned to the national priorities.
2. The NITI Aayog is the national counterpart for the UN in India for the operationalization of the UNSDF. Nineteen (19) UN agencies have signed on the UNSDF 2018-2022.
3. The UNSDF 2018-22 comprises of seven priority areas that outline the work that UN agencies will undertake jointly or individually, fully aligned with the priorities of the Gol.

The priority areas outlined in the UNSDF are

1. Poverty and Urbanization
2. Health, Water, and Sanitation
3. Education and Employability
4. Nutrition and Food Security
5. Climate Change, Clean Energy, and Disaster Resilience
6. Skilling, Entrepreneurship, and Job Creation
7. Gender Equality and Youth Development.

#### SABARIMALA TEMPLE VERDICT

The Supreme Court on 28 September 2018 paved the way for entry of women of all ages into the Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala in Kerala. The five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, in its 4:1 verdict, said that banning the entry of women into the shrine is gender discrimination and the practice violates rights of Hindu women. The CJI said religion is a way of life basically to link life with divinity. While Justices R F Nariman and D Y Chandrachud concurred with the CJI and Justice A M Khanwilkar, Justice Indu Malhotra gave a dissenting verdict.

#### What

1. Justice Malhotra, the lone woman judge in the bench, passed a dissenting judgement and said that issues which have deep religious connotation should not be tinkered with to maintain secular atmosphere in the country. She was of the view that it is not for courts to determine which religious practices are to be **struck down except in issues of social evil like 'Sati'**

2. The court passed four sets of separate judgements on a clutch of pleas **challenging ban on the entry of women of menstrual age in Kerala's Sabarimala temple** saying law and society are tasked with the task to act as levellers.
3. The CJI said devotion cannot be subjected to discrimination and patriarchal notion cannot be allowed to trump equality in devotion. He said devotees of Lord Ayyappa do not constitute a separate denomination.
4. The CJI said practice of exclusion of women of 10-50 age groups cannot be regarded as essential religious practice and Kerala law denies rights to women on ground of physiological reasons. Justice Nariman said the Sabarimala temple custom barring women of 10-50 age is not backed by Article 25 and 26 of the Constitution.
5. Custom of barring women is violative of Article 25 (Clause 1) and Rule 3(b) of Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (authorisation of entry) Rules, 1965 is struck down by Justice Nariman.
6. Justice Chandrachud said religion cannot be used as cover to deny rights of worship to women and it is also against human dignity. He said prohibition on women is due to non-religious reasons and it is a grim shadow of discrimination going on for centuries.

## Sabarimala Verdict: Fight for Women's Entry

**In 2006, PIL was filed by the Indian Young Lawyer's Association in which they challenged the tradition to not allow women as on which the Supreme Court gave the judgment today on 28th Sept. 2018 overruling the 1991 judgment by a 4:1 ratio.**

### INDIA COOLING ACTION PLAN (ICAP)

Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) on eve of World Ozone Day (16th September) released draft India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP). It makes India first country in world to develop such document. The draft was prepared by Ozone Cell of MoEFC.

What

1. It aims to provide sustainable cooling while keeping in mind, at the same time, the need to protect the ozone layer from substances that can deplete it.
2. It provides a 20-year perspective, with projections for cooling needs in 2037-38.
3. India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP) addresses cooling requirement across sectors and lists out actions which can help reduce cooling demand.
4. Its thrust is to look for synergies in actions for securing both environmental and socio-economic benefits.

Goals suggested in ICAP are

1. Reduce refrigerant demand by 25% to 30% by year 2037-38.
2. Reduce cooling demand across sectors by 20% to 25 % by year 2037-38.
3. Reduce cooling energy requirements by 25% to 40% by year 2037-38.
4. Train and certify 100,000 servicing sector technicians by 2022-23, in synergy with Skill India Mission.
5. Recognize cooling and related areas as thrust area of research under national science and technology programme to support development of technological solutions and encourage innovation challenges.

5. ICAP's overarching goal is to provide sustainable cooling and thermal comfort for all while securing environmental and socio-economic benefits for the society.

### AP TOPS IN 'EASE OF LIVING INDEX'

**Andhra Pradesh topped the 'Ease of Living Index' ranking** which was released by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. Odisha and Madhya Pradesh were in the second and third position respectively.

What

1. The three were awarded the best performing States under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) at the national dissemination workshop on the Ease of living Index 2018.
2. "Ease of Living Index is a transformative initiative of the Ministry to help the cities assess their liveability vis-à-vis national and global benchmarks.
3. Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh have been awarded at the National Dissemination Workshop on Ease of Living Index, 2018, held in New Delhi on September 24.
4. The Ease of Living Index is a transformative initiative of the ministry to help cities assess their liveability vis-à-vis national and global benchmarks.
5. AMRUT was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June 2015, aims at ensuring robust sewage networks, water supply and other infrastructure to improve the quality of life of people in urban areas.
6. The Ease of Living Index seeks to assist cities in undertaking a 360-degree assessment of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It was decided in June 2017 to rank 116 cities (all smart cities and million plus cities) based on the liveability parameters. The implementation of the assessment commenced formally on January 19, 2018.
7. MoHUA released the first Ease of Living Index covering 111 Indian cities on August 13, 2018, which serves as a litmus test to help assess the progress made in cities through various initiatives.
8. All cities were evaluated out of 100. The 'physical' pillar (infrastructure) was given the highest weightage of 45, while institutional (governance) and social were weighted 25 each. Economy was weighted 5.
9. Another highlight of the Ease of Living assessment standards is its close linkage with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
10. **Of the 17 SDG goals, 8 goals are directly linked to India's ease of living assessment framework with SDG 11,"** Puri said.
11. The ease of living index provides a strong impetus to **India's effort for** systematically tracking the progress of SDGs in the urban areas.

### ISA, IORA AND REINVEST MEET

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is organising the First Assembly of International Solar Alliance (ISA); the 2nd Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Renewable Energy Ministerial Meeting and the 2nd Global Renewable Energy Investment Meeting and Expo, (REINVEST- 2018) from 2nd to 5th October 2018 in New Delhi. The three events will be inaugurated in a common function by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, in the presence of Mr Antonio Guterres, Secretary General, United Nations on 2nd October 2018 in Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi. The Business and Technical Sessions of ISA Assembly, IORA Meet and RE-INVEST 2018 Expo will be held at India Expo Mart, Greater Noida, UP.

About ISA

1. The International Solar Alliance (ISA), an Indian initiative, was launched jointly by Shri Narendra Modi, **Hon'ble Prime Minister of India and H.E. François Hollande, Hon'ble President of France on 30 November 2015 in Paris, France** on the side-lines of the 21st Conference of Parties (CoP 21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

2. The Alliance, recognising that solar energy provides potential member solar resource rich countries lying fully or partially between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, with an unprecedented opportunity to bring prosperity, energy security and sustainable development to their peoples, opened ISA Framework Agreement for signature on 15 November 2016 in Marrakech, Morocco, on the side-lines of COP-22.
3. In conformity with the ISA Framework Agreement, 30 days after ratification by the 15th country, on 6 December 2017, ISA became the first full-fledged treaty based international intergovernmental organization headquartered in India.
4. Through this initiative, the countries, inter alia, share the collective ambition: (i) to address obstacles that stand in the way of rapid and massive scale-up of solar energy; (ii) to undertake innovative and concerted efforts for reducing the cost of finance and cost of technology for immediate deployment of competitive solar generation, mobilise more than 1000 Billion US Dollars of investments by 2030.
5. On 11 March 2018, the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi and the President of France, H.E. Emmanuel Macron co-hosted the Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
6. Forty eight countries, including India participated in this conference. In addition, there were representations from the United Nations, Multilateral Development Banks, energy-related think tanks, corporate sector and civil society.
7. The Delhi Solar Agenda, adopted in the Founding Conference of the ISA, states that the ISA member States inter-alia have agreed to pursue an increased share of solar energy in the final energy consumption in 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, as applicable, in respective States.
8. Consequent to the Founding Conference, the first Assembly of ISA will be held from 2nd to 5th October 2018.
9. Till date, out of 121 prospective member countries that lie either fully or partially between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, 68 countries have signed the Framework Agreement of the ISA.
10. Out of 68 countries that have signed Framework Agreement of the ISA, 44 countries have deposited the instrument of ratification.
11. The first Assembly, in a way, will lay the foundation for global Solar Agenda. The Assembly, as supreme decision making body of the ISA, will steer the process to significantly harness solar energy for achieving universal energy access at affordable rates.

#### About IORA

1. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) was set up with the objective of strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean Region with 21 Member States and 7 Dialogue Partners.
2. The last Renewable Energy Ministerial Meeting was held on 21st January, 2014 in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Subsequently, during the meeting of IORA Council of Ministers, held in October, 2016 in Bali, Indonesia, it was decided that the next conference will be held in India.
3. In line with the commitment made, India will be hosting 2nd IORA Renewable Energy Ministerial meet from 2nd to 4th October, 2018.
4. In this meeting, Ministers and delegates from all 21 member-countries are expected to participate. India, Australia, Iran IR, Indonesia Thailand, Malaysia, South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Singapore, Mauritius, Madagascar, UAE, Yemen, Seychelles, Somalia, Comoros and Oman are members of IORA.

#### About RE-INVEST

1. The 2nd RE-INVEST aims at accelerating the worldwide effort to scale up renewable energy and connect the global investment community with Indian energy stakeholders.

2. 2nd RE-INVEST will include a three-day Conference on renewables, cleantech and future energy choices, and an Expo of renewables-related manufacturers, developers, investors and innovators.
3. The 2nd RE-INVEST will provide a great opportunity to various organisations to showcase their business strategies, achievements and expectations.
4. It would facilitate collaboration and cooperation with key stakeholders in India, **which has today emerged as one of the world's largest renewable** energy markets.
5. The 2nd RE-INVEST is expected to be attended by Ministerial Delegations from across the world, including ISA and IORA Member Countries, over 600 global industry leaders, and 10,000 delegates.

## RAIL HERITAGE DIGITISATION PROJECT

Union Railway Ministry has launched Rail Heritage Digitisation Project in collaboration with Google Arts and Culture Association. It is first-of-its-kind project that aims **to showcase India's rail heritage to the national and international audience** in an online story-telling platform. It is also largest cultural heritage digitisation project in India and possibly in entire Asia Pacific Region.

What

1. The project is able to digitise National Rail Museum, Rewari Steam Centre, three World Heritage Railways, CSMT Mumbai building and other prominent aspects of **country's rail heritage**.
2. The project was completed after almost 2 years of hard work, research, inquiry and execution.
3. Digitization of rail heritage will **make India's rich rail**-heritage and legacy digitally accessible to people in India around the world.
4. It will also provide opportunity to contextualize artifact and other heritage assets with stories for next generation.
5. Digital heritage provides universal access to large repository of knowledge and thus removes bottleneck of being physically there.
6. It will also bring lost stories and heroic efforts of people like track-man, station master and workshop engineers to celebrate their contribution.

### Flashback

1. Indian Railway is one of the most celebrated railway networks in the world with over 151,000 kilometres of track, 7,000 stations, 1.3 million employees and 160 years of history.
2. The first railway in India was started on 16th April, 1853 between Bori bunder and Thane.
3. Since then it has expanded to become one of largest network in world and also significantly contributed to social, technological and economic development of the country.

## ASTRA BVR AIR-TO-AIR MISSILE

Astra, the indigenously developed Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM), was successfully test fired by the Indian Air Force from Su-30 aircraft on 26 September 2018 from Air Force Station, Kalaikunda.

What

1. The missile successfully engaged a manoeuvring target with high precision meeting the mission objectives.
2. In the series of trials held to date, Astra has been launched in the complete Su-30 flight envelope.
3. The flight test assumes significance as it was part of the series of final pre-induction trials.
4. Astra is the best in class weapon system and has undergone more than twenty developmental trials.

## SC EXTENDS 'CREAMY LAYER' TO SCS & STS

In a historic decision, a five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court on 26 September 2018 ruled that the "creamy layer exclusion" principle, till date applied only

to OBCs, can be extended to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) to deny reservation to the "elite" among the two underprivileged communities. The order of Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices Kurian Joseph, R F Nariman, Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Indu Malhotra overshadowed the relief they gave to the Centre, states and SC & ST government employees in exempting states from collecting quantifiable data on backwardness to justify reservation in promotion for the two categories.

What

1. The bench said their backwardness has been recognised as inherent to them after statutorily provided scrutiny to warrant inclusion in the list of scheduled communities under Presidential Order to get reservation benefits.
2. The requirement to furnish quantifiable data, laid down by the Supreme Court in the M Nagraj case in 2006, to justify reservation in promotions for SC & ST employees has held up elevation of serving employees from the two categories, leading to restiveness in their ranks.
3. But the extension of "creamy layer" criterion is sure to temper the happiness over the bench doing away with the mandatory requirement to back up the case for promotion in quota by marshalling data on backwardness.
4. The CJI -led bench unanimously agreed to extend the "creamy layer exclusion" principle to SCs and STs and said: "The whole object of reservation is to see that backward classes of citizens move forward so that they may march hand in hand with other citizens of India on an equal basis."
5. This will not be possible if only the creamy layer within that class bag all the coveted jobs in the public sector and perpetuate themselves, leaving the rest of the class as backward as they always were.
6. This being the case, it is clear that when a court applies the creamy layer principle to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, it does not in any manner tinker with the Presidential List under Articles 341 or 342 of the Constitution of India.

## PANEL FORMED FOR LOKPAL

Moving closer to constitution of the anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal, the Centre on 27 Septemeber 2018 announced an eight-member search committee, headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, to recommend names for posts of the Lokpal chairperson and members. The appointment of the search committee puts on track the much-delayed rollout of the watchdog mechanism, given that the Lokpal and Lokyauktas legislation was enacted way back in 2014. The selection process of Lokpal is under way as per guidelines laid down in the Lokpal Act.

What

1. Though Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha is a member of the Lokpal selection committee, Congress does not have the required strength in the Lok Sabha to claim the post.
2. The search committee will start functioning soon, said a senior government functionary. While the search committee will recommend names for Lokpal chairperson and members, the selection panel can also consider names other than those recommended by the panel.
3. As per the Lokpal Act, a search committee was required to consist of at least seven persons of **standing and having "special knowledge** and expertise in matters relating to anti-corruption policy, public administration, vigilance, policy-making, finance, including insurance and banking, law and management or in any other matter which, in the opinion of the selection committee, may be useful in making the selection of the chairperson and members of the Lokpal.
4. No less than 50% of the members of search committee were to be from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, other backward Classes, minorities and women.

## YUDH ABHYAS 2018 CONCLUDED

Exercise Yudh Abhyas, a joint Indo-US Military exercise which witnessed participation of an Infantry Battalion of Indian Army and the 1st Battalion 23 Infantry Regiment of US Army concluded at Chaubattia, Uttarakhand on 29 Sep 2018. The exercise was the 14th in the Yudh Abhyas series, which started in 2004 under US Army Pacific Partnership Programme.

What

1. Exercise Yudh Abhyas strengthens and broadens interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and US armies.
2. It is the fourth Indian US Army exercise at Chaubattia and complements number of other exchanges and exercise between the forces.
3. Over the years the two countries have decided to progressively increase the scope and content of the combined exercise and Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2018 has witnessed a Division Headquarter based command post exercise and one Infantry Battalion each carrying out field training exercise under a joint Brigade Headquarters and discussions on issues of mutual interest by experts of both countries.
4. The exercise provided an ideal platform for the personnel of the two countries to share their experiences on counter terrorist operations, especially in mountainous terrain.
5. A magnificent parade and the customary exchange of mementoes marked the successful completion of Indo-US combined Army Exercise.
6. The combined exercise was undoubtedly, an unprecedented success. Besides promoting understanding and interoperability between the two armies, it further helped in strengthening ties between India and US.

## PRITHVI INTERCEPTOR MISSILE SUCCESSFUL TESTED

India successfully conducted Prithvi Defence Vehicle (PDV) missile test off the Odisha coast at night. With this, Defence Research and Development Organization achieved major milestone in developing indigenous two-layer Ballistic Missile Defence system.

What

1. PDV interceptor missile was launched from Abdul Kalam Island (earlier known as Wheeler Island) of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) off Odisha coast.
2. Its mission was aimed at test-firing of interceptor missile of coast of Odisha to intercept an incoming ballistic missile off the Bay of Bengal
3. Prithvi Defence Vehicle (PDV) missile has been developed by indigenously by DRDO.
4. It is two-stage missile and both stages are powered by solid propellants.
5. It is intended to replace the existing Prithvi Air Defence (PAD) in PAD/Advanced Air Defence (AAD) combination.
6. It is designed for engaging targets in exo-atmosphere region at altitude 50 km of **earth's atmosphere.**
7. It is guided by high-accuracy Inertial Navigation System (INS) supported by Redundant Micro Navigation System for estimating point of interception.

## INTERNATIONAL

### USAID-INDIA END TB ALLIANCE ANNOUNCED

**United States and India have formed 'USAID-India End TB Alliance** comprising leading experts in public and private sectors to combat the menace of tuberculosis. It was announced by US Agency for International Development (USAID) administrator Mark Green at event in New York in presence of Union Health Minister J P Nadda.

What

1. The alliance members include industry and civil society leaders, academics, scientists, innovators, investors, and members of the diaspora.

2. The experts in the alliance will offer innovative approaches to combat tuberculosis in India.
3. It two members include Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Director General of World Health Organisation (WHO) and Blessina Kumar from Global Coalition of TB Activists.
4. USAID will make initial US \$30 million commitment, subject to approval of the US Congress

#### Tuberculosis (TB)

1. TB is disease caused by bacteria **“Mycobacterium tuberculosis”** that most often affect the lungs.
2. It spreads from person to person through the air. It commonly affects lungs but can also affect other parts of the body.
3. It is the second biggest killer disease worldwide next only to HIV/AIDS.
4. India accounts for about a quarter of the global TB burden. Worldwide India is the country with the highest burden of both TB and MDR (Multi-drug resistant) TB.

## UNCTAD FAVOURS DATA LOCALISATION

The United Nations Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD), in its latest trade development report, has cautioned **developing countries against a “premature”** commitment to rules on e-commerce, where, it believes, the influential actors are driven by narrow business interests. The report also warned that trade wars were a symptom of a degraded economic system and multilateral architecture, and the consequences of any serious escalation in the recent round of tariff hikes could have more damaging consequences in the medium term while trade growth in 2018 could be at the same level as 2017.

What

1. **As per UNCTAD’s** projections, **India’s and China’s economies were expected to** grow at 7 per cent and 6.7 per cent respectively in 2018, while the world average growth would be 3.1 per cent, which was the same in 2017.
2. While the global economy has picked up since early 2017, growth remains **spasmodic, and many countries are operating below potential,”** said the UNCTAD report titled ‘Power, Platforms and The Free Trade Delusion’ released on 26 September 2018.
3. Elaborating on the digital economy taking shape around the world, the **recommendations of the report endorse India’s stand on mandatory data localisation** and lack of support for negotiations on e-commerce rules at the World Trade Organization (WTO).
4. Developing countries will need to preserve, and possibly expand, their available policy space to implement an industrialisation strategy that should now include digital policies around data localisation, management of data flows, technology transfers and custom duties on electronic transmissions, according to the report.
5. Pointing out that there was still not much clarity on what rules and regulations would be required to manage digitisation and e-commerce in a country and around the world, the report cautioned that multilateral or bilateral pacts on the sector should not be forged by developing nations in a hurry.
6. The international community is just beginning a dialogue on the required rules and regulations to manage all this, and agreement still needs to be reached on which issues relating to the digital economy are in the realm of the WTO and which fall under other international organisations, the report said.

## GLOBAL STATUS REPORT ON ALCOHOL 2018

The per capita alcohol consumption in India increased two folds between 2005 and 2016, according to the Global status report on alcohol and health 2018 released by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 29 September 2018. Indians consumed 2.4 litres of alcohol in 2005, which increased to 4.3 litres in 2010 and scaled up to 5.7 litres in 2016, the report said. According to the report, the highest increase in alcohol

consumption is expected in South-East Asia, with an increase of 2.2 litres in India alone, from 2005 to 2016. More than 3 million people died as a result of harmful use of alcohol in 2016, the report said. More than three quarters of those reported dead were men. Overall, the harmful use of alcohol causes more than 5% of the global disease burden.

What

1. The report highlighted those 51.1 men per 100,000 population and 27.1 women per 100,000 populations suffered from liver cirrhosis.
2. Cancers associated with alcohol abuse resulted in 181 men per 100,000 population and 126.4 women per 100,000 populations.
3. Of all deaths due to alcohol, 28% were from injuries, such as those from traffic crashes, self-harm and interpersonal violence; 21% due to digestive disorders; 19% due to cardiovascular diseases, and the remaining due to infectious diseases, cancers, mental disorders and other health conditions.
4. Far too many people, their families and communities suffer the consequences of the harmful use of alcohol through violence, injuries, mental health problems and diseases such as cancer and stroke.
5. According to the report, almost all (95%) of countries globally have alcohol excise taxes, but fewer than half of them use other price strategies such as ban on volume discounts.
6. The majority of these countries have some type of restrictions on beer advertising, with bans most common for television and radio, but less common for the Internet and social media.

## EMERGENCY CALL TO REFORM THE MTS

The World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund and World Bank on 30 September 2018 issued an emergency call to reform the multilateral trading system (MTS) as the US retreats from prior agreements in Geneva. The urgent challenge is to harness the unique strength of the WTO,' **the bodies said in a joint report.**

What

1. The slow pace of reforms since the early 2000s, fundamental changes in a more interconnected modern economy, and the risk of trade policy reversals call for urgency to reinvigorate trade policy **reforms.**'
2. President Donald Trump this week harshly criticized globalism in general and **questioned America's participation in multilateral institutions** like the WTO during the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York.
3. Meanwhile, fallout from the escalating US-China trade conflict led the WTO to cut its trade growth forecast this week, and WTO Director-General Roberto Azevedo warned that a **full-blown trade war 'would knock around 17% off global trade growth, and 1.9% off GDP growth.'**
4. The joint paper by the Washington-based groups outlined specific initiatives aimed at modernizing WTO rules, including a focus on increased market access for e-commerce, more flexible negotiating structures and better transparency of government trade policies.
5. The recommendations echo many goals outlined in various WTO reform proposals offered this month by the European Union and Canada.
6. Recognizing the dire state of the WTO, countries like Canada and the EU are preparing the groundwork to update **the organization's 23-year-old rule book.**
7. Though both China and the US endorse the need for WTO change, they have polarized views on how to do so.
8. The WTO, IMF and World Bank jointly called for new rules to address the expanding role of electronic commerce along with investment and services trade in the 21st century.
9. The opportunities provided by information technology and other fundamental changes in the global economy are yet to be reflected in modern areas of trade **policy,' the report said.**

10. The three institutions also advocated the more so-called use of plurilateral talks to help unblock trade negotiations that have failed to advance at the multilateral level.

## NEW PRESIDENT OF MALDIVE

Opposition leader **Ibrahim Mohamed Solih won the Maldives' presidential** election, results showed 24 September 2018, a surprise defeat for President Abdulla Yameen, **following a campaign observers said was rigged in the strongman's favour. Results** released by the Elections Commission showed Solih had secured 58.3 per cent of the popular vote.

What

1. Solih had the backing of a united opposition trying to oust Yameen but struggled for visibility with the electorate, with the local media fearful of falling afoul of heavy-handed decrees and reporting restrictions.
2. The polls were closely watched by regional rivals India and China, who are jostling to influence Indian Ocean Nations.
3. The European Union and United States, meanwhile, has threatened sanctions if the vote is not free and fair. Many voters across the Indian Ocean archipelago said they stood in line for over five hours to cast their ballots, while expatriate Maldivians voted in neighbouring Sri Lanka and India.
4. **India, long influential in Maldives' affairs** -- it sent troops and warships in 1988 to stop a coup attempt -- expressed hopes the election would represent a return to democratic norms.

## FIRST TRADE DEAL WITH SOUTH KOREA

US President Donald Trump **inked his administration's first trade deal with South Korea, which he described as "a historic milestone" and a promise fulfilled to his** countrymen. The new US-Korea agreement includes significant improvements to reduce our trade deficit and expand opportunities to export American products to South Korea.

What

1. Describing it as a **"very big deal" and a great day for the two countries**, Trump said these outcomes give the finest American-made automobiles, innovative medicines and agricultural crops a much better access to Korean markets.
2. As a part of the agreement, the US has also secured an increased access to **America's auto industry**. According to the US Trade Representatives, since the US-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS) came into effect in 2012, the US trade deficit in goods with Korea increased by 75 per cent from USD 13.2 billion to USD 23.1 billion (2017), while the overall deficit increased by 57 per cent from USD 6.3 billion to USD 9.8 billion (2017).
3. Through negotiations to improve KORUS, the United States has secured changes that will reduce the trade deficit and ensure that KORUS is a good deal for American workers, farmers and businesses.
4. The agreement will reduce bureaucracy and increase prosperity in both the countries. Workers in the US and South Korea will find new customers and new opportunities to expand and grow.
5. The two leaders agreed on the importance of maintaining vigorous enforcement of existing sanctions to ensure North Korea understands that denuclearisation is the only path to economic prosperity and lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula.
6. Both leaders also discussed plans for a second summit between President Trump and Chairman Kim in the not too distant future and committed to closely coordinate on next steps.

## MACEDONIA VOTING TO CHANGE ITS NAME

Macedonians are casting ballots on 30 September 2018 on whether to add "North" to their country's official name. The name change is an effort to overcome a 27-year-old argument with neighbouring Greece, which has refused to recognise Macedonia's name since the Balkan country declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. Athens argues that the name belongs solely to its own northern province called Macedonia, and accuses its Balkan neighbour of harbouring territorial ambitions. In protest, Greece has blocked Macedonia from NATO and the EU.

What

1. Athens has also forced the country to use the clunky name FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) in the UN.
2. The animosity deepened when Macedonia's former premier Nikola Gruevski went on a construction spree in the capital Skopje, erecting massive statues of Alexander the Great -- a hero both countries claim as their own -- and plastering government buildings in Hellenic-inspired facades.
3. Athens, fiercely proud of its ancient history, blasted the moves as cultural appropriation.
4. But Gruevski's downfall and the arrival last spring of a new government led by Macedonia's Social Democrats, allowed for an opening.
5. Prime Minister Zoran Zaev and his Greek counterpart Alexis Tsipras met several times and inked an agreement in June that voters are now being called upon to approve. It is not just about the country's official name.
6. The key clause is Article 7, which says the terms "Macedonia" and "Macedonian" refer to "a different historical context and cultural heritage" for each country.

## ECONOMY

### FINANCIAL INCLUSION INDEX LAUNCHED

The Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley launched the Financial Inclusion Index after his Annual Performance Review Meeting with CEOs of the Public Sector Banks in New Delhi on 26 September 2018. Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance will release an Annual Financial Inclusion Index (FII) which will be a measure of access and usage of a basket of formal financial products and services that includes savings, remittances, credit, insurance and pension products.

What

1. The index will have three measurement dimensions; (i) Access to financial services (ii) Usage of financial services and (3) Quality.
2. The single composite index gives a snap shot of level of financial inclusion that would guide Macro Policy perspective.
3. The various components of the index will also help to measure financial services for use of internal policy making.
4. Financial Inclusion Index can be used directly as a composite measure in development indicators.
5. It enables fulfilment of G20 Financial Inclusion Indicators requirements.
6. It will also facilitate researchers to study the impact of financial inclusion and other macro-economic variables.
7. This will be released on January, 2019.

### COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE COMPETITION ACT

In pursuance of its objective of ensuring that Legislation is in sync with the needs of strong economic fundamentals, the Government has constituted a Competition Law Review Committee to review the Competition Act. The Competition Act was passed in the year 2002 and the Competition Commission of India was set up in pursuance of the same.

#### What

1. The Commission started functioning in right earnest from 2009 and has contributed immensely towards the development of competition and fair play practices in the Indian market.
2. During the past nine years the size of the Indian Economy has grown immensely and India is today amongst the top five Economies in the World and poised to forge ahead further.
3. In this context, it is essential that Competition Law is strengthened, and recalibrated to promote best practices which result in the citizens of this country achieving their aspirations and value for money.

#### The Terms of References of the Committee

1. To review the Competition Act/ Rules/ Regulations, in view of changing business environment and bring necessary changes, if required;
2. To look into international best practices in the competition fields, especially anti-trust laws, merger guidelines and handling cross border competition issues;
3. To study other regulatory regimes/ institutional mechanisms/ government policies which overlap with the Competition Act;
4. Any other matters related to competition issue and considered necessary by the Committee.
5. The Committee shall complete its work and submit its report within three months of the date of its first meeting.

### HLAG CONSTITUTED FOR TRADE

The Minister of Commerce & Industry, Suresh Prabhu, has approved the constitution of a High Level Advisory Group (HLAG) to make recommendations for identifying and pursuing opportunities and for addressing challenges in order to find a way forward in the contemporary global trade scenario. The HLAG will consider ways for **boosting India's share and importance in global merchandise** and services trade, managing pressing bilateral trade relations and mainstreaming new age policy making.

#### What

1. The terms of reference (ToR) of the HLAG are to examine the prevailing international trade dynamics, including, but not confined to, the rising protectionist tendencies, especially on the part of major economies, non-engagement by some countries on outstanding trade negotiation issues and commitments, including the Doha Development Agenda, and their insistence on pursuing negotiating mandates, in many cases prematurely and without efforts, to build consensus and common understanding.
2. On new issues and in light of this examination, the HLAG will suggest a way forward for India, taking into account its interests and sensitivities, and provide options for a balanced approach for the global community to build on achievements thus far, in creating a conducive global trade framework and move forward in a harmonious and consensual manner that is acceptable to the larger global community.
3. The Group may consider possible approaches and suggest a pragmatic **framework for India's future engagement in international trade**, and the manner in which it can play a proactive and constructive role in working with the community of Nations in exploring and building consensus on resolving emergent trade related issues.
4. Dr. Surjit S. Bhalla, Director of Oxus Research and Investments will chair the HLAG.
5. The HLAG will meet regularly over the next two months and make specific implementable recommendations in light of the ToR, including on each of the areas, to facilitate the formulation of future trade policies.
6. The HLAG may invite special invitees whose inputs may be considered necessary. Centre for WTO Studies (CWTOS), New Delhi shall provide the secretariat to the HLAG.

## NEW MEASURE TO EASE LIQUIDITY SHORTAGE

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a measure that will allow banks more access to funds as it moved to ease a liquidity squeeze afflicting the **nation's money** markets. RBI increased the facility to avail funds for liquidity coverage ratio to 13% from 11%, effective 1 October, according to a central bank statement on 27 September 2018.

What

1. The increase will take the carve out from the statutory-liquidity ratio that is available to banks to 15% of their deposits.
2. The central bank also said that it stands ready to meet the durable liquidity requirements of the system.
3. RBI has been prompted to buy rupees in the currency markets to shore up **Asia's** worst-performing currency at a time when a rare default in the credit market is tightening money supply.
4. This move of RBI comes following the **worst cash crunch in India's banking** system in more than two years.
5. This effectively means that more SLR bonds can be used to borrow liquidity from banking system.

## HLC 2018 CONSTITUTED

A High Level Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility – 2018 (HLC-2018) has been constituted under the Chairmanship of Shri. Injeti Srinivas, Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) to review the existing framework and guide and formulate the roadmap for a coherent policy on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The Committee is expected to review the existing CSR framework as per Act, Rules and Circulars issued from time to time and recommend guidelines for better enforcement of CSR provisions.

What

1. It will analyze outcomes of CSR activities/programmes/projects and suggest measures for effective monitoring and evaluation of CSR by companies. Suggestions are also expected on innovative solutions, use of technology, platform to connect stakeholders, and social audit.
2. The provisions of section 135 of Companies Act, 2013 (Act) pertaining to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) came into force on 01.04.2014 with a view to promoting responsible and sustainable business through inclusive growth.
3. The four years of implementation have enabled compilation of data on the number of companies complying with CSR provisions, funds allocated and spent across various sectors, geographical spread of CSR spending, etc.
4. Experience has also been gained on the quantum, outreach and impact of CSR (which is estimated to be around Rs. 38, 000 crore up to FY 2016-17) and immense feedback has been received on how CSR provisions can be leveraged to have larger and more impactful outcomes.
5. The existing provisions of in Companies Act, 2013 with respect to CSR fully empower the Board of a Company to decide on their CSR Policy, approve projects and oversee implementation.
6. Many suggestions with respect to CSR such as local preference, earmarking CSR spend for backward areas, contribution to national/state funds, notifying priority areas, monitoring compliance, supplementing / complimenting government programmes, etc. have been received from various stakeholders.
7. The Ministry had earlier set up a High Level Committee on CSR in 2015 which made several recommendations, including review of CSR framework after three years which is almost over.
8. The Committee shall submit its report within three months from the date of holding its first meeting. The recommendations of this Committee shall be submitted to the Government.

## PAYROLL REPORTING IN INDIA

The Central Statistics Office (CSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has released the Employment Outlook of the country covering the period September, 2017 to July, 2018, based on the administrative records available with selected government agencies to assess the progress in certain dimensions.

What

1. This is the Fourth in this series of employment statistics.
2. The Ministry brought out the first release of employment related statistics in the formal sector in April, 2018 covering the period September 2017 to February, 2018, using information on the number of subscribers who have availed benefits under three major schemes, namely, the **Employees' Provident Fund (EPFO)**, **Employees' State Insurance Scheme (ESIC)** and the National Pension Scheme (NPS).
3. The second such report was released in May 2018, covering the period September, 2017 to March, 2018.
4. The Third report was released in June 2018, covering the period September, 2017 to April, 2018.

## GSTN CONVERT INTO GOVERNMENT-OWNED COMPANY

The Cabinet 26 September 2018 cleared a proposal to convert GST Network (GSTN) into a government-owned company, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley that 50 per cent stake will be owned by the Centre and the remaining by the states on pro-rata basis in the new structure.

What

1. Currently, the Centre and states together hold 49 per cent stake in the GST Network, the company that provides IT backbone to the new indirect tax regime.
2. The remaining 51 per cent is held by five private financial institutions -- HDFC Ltd, HDFC Bank Ltd, ICICI Bank Ltd, NSE Strategic Investment Co and LIC Housing Finance Ltd.
3. The proposal to convert GSTN into 100 per cent government-owned company was earlier approved by the all-powerful GST Council.
4. The GSTN was incorporated as a private limited company on March 28, 2013, under the UPA government.
5. It is a Section 8 company under the new Companies Act and hence is a not-for-profit entity.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### INDIA'S FIRST PROTOTYPE FAST BREEDER REACTOR

**India's first indigenously developed 500-megawatt (mw) Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR)** at Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu is expected to achieve criticality in 2019. It was stated by Sekhar Basu, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and Secretary, Department of Atomic Energy at 62th General Conference of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, Austria. The indigenously developed PFBR is now undergoing sodium commissioning.

What

1. Criticality of Nuclear Reactor is an event of nuclear reactor reaching self-sustained chain reaction.
2. This means that no external source of neutrons is required to sustain fission in reactor core.
3. It is precondition of producing useful amounts of energy from the reactor.
4. PFBR has been designed indigenously by Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR).
5. It is pool-type reactor with 1,750 tonnes of sodium as coolant.

6. It is designed to generate 500 MWe of electrical power, with operational life of 40 years.
7. It generates power by burning mixed uranium-plutonium MOX fuel, a mixture of PuO<sub>2</sub> and UO<sub>2</sub>.
8. PFBR at Kalpakkam was earlier expected to be commissioned in 2012, but has missed several deadlines.
9. PFBR design is build on decades of experience gained from operating lower power Fast Breeder Test Reactor (FBTR).
10. **It comes under second stage of India's three-stage nuclear power programme.**
11. Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam (Bhavini), a public sector company under DAE, has been given the responsibility to build these reactors.
12. India is planning to build 21 such reactors by 2030.

## SOI FOR SUPPLY-CHAIN USING BLOCKCHAIN

In order to fight the growing problem of counterfeit drugs in India, NITI Aayog and Oracle signed a Statement of Intent (Sol) to pilot a real drug supply-chain using blockchain distributed ledger and Internet of Things (IoT) software. Apollo Hospitals and Strides Pharma Sciences will partner in this effort.

What

1. The problem of fake and counterfeit drugs is a major issue, costing the Indian pharma industry billions. **At the same time, it's putting patients at higher risk.**
2. This agreement with Oracle and our partnership with Apollo Hospitals and Strides Pharma, will help ensure that Indian drug manufacturers and healthcare experts have access to a standards-based, modern technology platform – blockchain and IoT, to help eliminate fake drug distribution.
3. The major advantages of blockchain software will be its ability to allow the sharing of information across the drug supply chain securely with every exchange of information getting recorded, inability to tamper with any record of the drug movement and inability to delete any records so there can be no dispute, if an offender is caught.

### About Blockchain technology in drug supply-chain

1. Blockchain technology helps to **permanently register a drug's record in the manufacturer's drug supply chain** (serial number, labelling, scanning), leaving no scope for record tampering.
2. At every point of hand change, it **records the drug's movement** – from manufacturer to logistics, to stockist to hospital, or pharmacy to consumer.
3. In case of a fake drug, the software will detect irregularity.
4. Additionally, critical information such as chemical ingredients of the drug or maintenance of temperature control in case of life saving drugs or vaccines, can also be tracked.

## INDIA'S BIGGEST CYCLOTRON FACILITY

**India's biggest cyclotron facility named Cyclone-30** became operational at Kolkata-based Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre (VECC), which comes under Department of Atomic Energy (DAE). Cyclotron is used to produce radioisotopes for diagnostic and therapeutic use for cancer care. Radiations from these isotopes are used to destroy cancer cells.

What

1. Cyclone-30 will produce radioisotopes vital for diagnosis and treatment of cancer.
2. It will be first and only cyclotron facility in country to produce Germanium 68 radioisotopes, which is used in diagnosis of breast cancer.

3. It will also produce Palladium 103 isotopes, which is used for the treatment of prostate cancer.
4. In its future stages, it will also produce Iodine 123 isotopes, which can help detect thyroid cancer.
5. It started working for first time when 30 MeV beam reached Faraday Cup (a metal cup designed to catch charged particles in vacuum).
6. The beam from this facility was used to produce fluorine-18 isotope for preparation of radio-pharmaceutical fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG), which is used for diagnose various types of cancer.
7. It will start regular production by mid-2019 after supporting nuclear systems and regulatory clearances are commissioned.

### **‘MARTIAN DIRT’ MAY UNVEIL HOW TO GROW SPACE FOOD**

Scientists have created experimental Martian dirt – a simulant that closely resembles the soil on Mars and could help find ways to grow food on the red planet for future human colonies. Researchers from University of Central Florida (UCF) in the US developed a scientifically based, standardised method for creating Martian and asteroid soil known as simulants.

What

1. The simulant is useful for research as we look to go to Mars. If we are going to go, we’ll need food, water and other essentials. As we are developing solutions, we need a way to test how these ideas will fare,” said Dan Britt, from UCF.
2. Scientists looking for ways to grow food on Mars need to test their techniques on soil that most closely resembles the stuff on Mars.
3. **The researchers’ formula is based on the chemical signature of the soils on Mars collected by the Curiosity rover.**
4. Researchers believe that there is a market for the simulant. At \$20 (Rs 1450 approx.) a kilogram, plus shipping, it may be easier to send UCF an order, than to try and make it in labs across the nation.
5. The team already has about 30 pending orders. The researcher will help accelerate the drive to explore our solar system as demonstrated by investments already being made by Space X, Blue Origin and other private companies.

### **INDIA’S FIRST ‘SMART FENCE’ PILOT PROJECT**

**India’s first ‘smart fence’ pilot project** was inaugurated along two 5-km each patches of India-Pakistan International Border Jammu and Kashmir. It was launched by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh from Border Security Force (BSF) Headquarters in Ploura, J&K.

What

1. The initiative has been taken up by BSF as part of comprehensive integrated border management system (CIBMS).
2. The pilot project involves deploying of laser-activated fences and technology-enabled barriers to plug vulnerable gaps along the frontiers.
3. It uses number of devices for surveillance, communication and data storage.
4. It also comprises automated surveillance technology and alarm detection systems.
5. It also has sensors like thermal imager, underground sensors, fiber optical sensors, radar and sonar mounted on different platforms like aerostat, tower and poles as part of the smart fence
6. Smart fence system is technological solution devised to make security system at borders more strong and effective.
7. It will help to provide round-the-clock surveillance along the border, even in harsh weather conditions such dust storm, fog or rain.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### PM GETS UN'S HIGHEST ENVIRONMENTAL HONOUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is amongst the six winners of the **United Nation's** highest environmental honour, the 'Champions of the Earth Awards' that was announced on 26 September 2018 for his "unprecedented pledge to eliminate all single-use plastic in India by 2022." Modi along with French President Emmanuel Macron were recognised in the 'Policy Leadership Category' for their "pioneering work in championing" the International Solar Alliance and "new areas of levels of cooperation on environmental action", the UN Environment Programme said.

What

1. The **Cochin International Airport took home the 'Entrepreneurial Vision'** Award for its leadership in the use of sustainable energy.
2. Cochin is showing the world that our ever-expanding network of global movement **doesn't have to** harm the environment.
3. As the pace of society continues to increase, the **world's first fully solar-powered** airport is proof positive that green business is good business, the UNEP statement said.
4. The other winners include environmental and indigenous rights defender Joan Carling and the 'Beyond Meat and Impossible Food' in the Science and Innovation category for their popular, plant-based alternative to beef and "their efforts to educate consumers about environmentally conscious alternatives."
5. **China's Zhejiang's Green Rural Revival Programme was awarded** for the Inspiration and Action for the "transformation of a once heavily polluted area of rivers and streams in East China's Zhejiang province."

Champions of the Earth award

1. It is **UN's highest environmental** recognition celebrating exceptional figures from public and private sectors and from civil society, whose actions have had transformative positive impact on the environment.
2. It was established in 2005 by United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment).
3. This award programme is successor to **UNEP's Global 500 Roll of Honour**.
4. Past laureates include: Afroz Shah, who **led world's largest beach cleanup (2016)**, Rwandan President Paul Kagame (2016), Ocean Cleanup CEO Boyan Slat (2014), scientist-explorer Bertrand Piccard, developer of Google Earth Brian McClendon (2013), and former US Vice-President Al Gore (2007).

### INDIA'S OFFICIAL ENTRY FOR OSCARS 2019

**Assamese movie 'Village Rockstars'** was selected as **India's official entry to the Oscars 2019** (91st Academy Awards) under Foreign Language Film category. It was selected by 12-member jury of Film Federation of India (FFI), led by Kannada producer-director SV Rajendra Singh Babu from 29 other films.

What

1. The film is written, edited, co-produced, and directed by Rima Das, who is a self-taught filmmaker.
2. **It has been set in Das' own village Kalardiya in Chaygao district of Assam.**
3. Its story revolves around 10-year-old girl, Dhunu (played by child actor Bhanita Das), who dreams to form her own rock band and goes in search of electric guitar in her village.
4. The film was made over period of four years, and was shot on hand-held camera and shoe-string budget in rural Assam.

## INDIA'S FIRST COAL-GASIFICATION FERTILIZER PLANT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched commencement of work for **India's first** Coal-gasification based fertilizer plant with pet coke blending will come up in Talcher, Odisha. The coal gasification based fertilizer plant is being developed by Talcher Fertilizers Limited (TFL).

What

1. TFL is joint venture company of GAIL (India) Limited (GAIL-29.67% stake), Coal India Limited (CIL-29.67% stake), Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilizers Limited (RCFL-29.67% stake) and Fertilizer Corporation of India Limited (FCIL-10.99% stake).
2. The plant will be built at an estimated investment of Rs. 13,000 crore and is targeted to be commissioned by 2022.
3. This plant will have capacity of producing 1.27 Million Metric Tonnes Per Annum (MMTPA) of Neem coated prilled urea using coal and petcoke as feedstock.
4. Neem coated urea reduces leaching of nitrogen into soil and checks diversion of urea from agriculture uses.

## FGM REFERS TO CONSTITUTION BENCH

The Supreme Court 24 September 2018 referred to a five-judge constitution bench the plea challenging practice of female genital mutilation among Dawoodi Bohra Muslims. A bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud was hearing a PIL filed by a Delhi-based lawyer challenging the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) of minor girls of the Dawoodi Bohra Muslim community.

What

1. **Female genital mutilation is performed “illegally upon girls** (between five years and before she attains puberty)” and is against the “UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of which is India is a signatory”, the plea said, adding the practice caused “permanent disfiguration to the body of a girl child”.
2. A group of Dawoodi Bohra Muslim community

### Flashback

1. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (commonly abbreviated as the CRC or UNCRC) is a human rights treaty which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children.
2. The Convention defines a child as any human being under the age of eighteen, unless the age of majority is attained earlier under national legislation.
3. The UN General Assembly adopted the Convention and opened it for signature on 20 November 1989 (the 30th anniversary of its Declaration of the Rights of the Child).
4. It came into force on 2 September 1990, after it was ratified by the required number of nations.
5. Currently, 196 countries are party to it, including every member of the United Nations except the United States.

members had earlier told the apex court that the female circumcision is practised by a few sects of Islam, including the Dawoodi Bohra community, and the validity of this be examined, if at all, by a larger constitution bench.

## FIRST AIRPORT IN THE HIMALAYAN STATE

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on 24 September 2018 inaugurated the Pakyong Airport in Sikkim. This is the first airport in the Himalayan State, and the 100th airport in the country.

What

1. The airport is situated at a height of 4,500 feet from sea level and has been constructed at a cost of more than Rs 600 crore. The scenic visuals of the airport have already created a buzz on the social media.
2. It is the first greenfield airport in Northeast India and covers an area of 990 acres. The airport is around 33 km from the state capital - Gangtok.
3. Earlier, visitors had to take a flight to West Bengal's Bagdogra airport and then travel for 124 km uphill to reach Gangtok. Till date, Sikkim is the only state in the country that has no functional airport.
4. The first commercial flight from Pakyong would begin from October 4. SpiceJet will operate 78-seater Bombardier Q400 flights to and fro Delhi, Kolkata and Guwahati every day.
5. The reinforcement wall of the project is 80-metre-high, one of the tallest in the world. The Pakyong airport is located around 60 km from the India-China border.

## CRIMINALISATION OF POLITICS IS UNSETTLING: SC

The Supreme Court on 25 September 2018 held that all candidates will have to declare their criminal antecedents to the Election Commission before contesting polls, and termed as **“unsettling” the criminalisation of politics in the world’s largest democracy**. The apex court said that informed choice is the cornerstone of democracy and asked the legislature to consider framing a law to ensure decriminalisation of politics.

What

1. The top court said corruption and criminalisation of politics are hitting at the roots of Indian democracy and Parliament must take steps urgently to curb this menace.
2. A five-judge Constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, said that citizens have a right to be informed about the antecedents of their candidates.
3. The bench comprising Justices R F Nariman, A M Khanwilkar, D Y Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra, said that political parties are obligated to put all the information about their candidates on their websites.
4. The apex court also said that political parties must be informed by the candidates about their criminal background. It called for wider publicity, through print and electronic media about the antecedents of candidates affiliated to political parties.
5. The Election Commission of India had taken a view which was apparently opposite to the Centre and said that the recommendations for decriminalising politics were made by the poll panel and the Law Commission back in 1997 and 1998, but no action was taken on them. It exhorted the court to issue the direction in the matter besides asking Parliament to make the suitable law.
6. The PILs were filed by **NGO ‘Public Interest Foundation’** and BJP leader Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay.

## COMMITTEE CONSTITUTES FOR JAIL REFORMS

The Supreme Court 25 September 2018 constituted a three-member committee, headed by its former judge Justice Amitava Roy, to look into jail reforms across the country and suggest measures to deal with them. A bench headed by Justice Madan B Lokur said the panel will look into various matters including over-crowding in prisons and the issues concerning women prisoners. The bench was hearing a matter relating to inhuman conditions in 1,382 prisons across India.

What

1. The apex court on August 27 had reserved its order on the issue of constituting a committee to deal with issues pertaining to jails and suggest reforms.
2. The bench, also comprising justices S Abdul Nazeer and Deepak Gupta, had earlier perused the draft of terms of reference of the committee which was prepared by Additional Solicitor General (ASG) A N S Nadkarni and advocate Gaurav Agrawal, who is assisting the court as an amicus curiae in the matter.
3. The apex court had on August 5 expressed displeasure that several states had not yet appointed the board of visitors who regularly inspect prisons to ensure that they are being run in accordance with rules.
4. It had taken strong exception to overcrowding of jails across the country and said prisoners also have **human rights and cannot be kept like “animals”**.
5. It had earlier passed a slew of directions over unnatural deaths in jails and on prison reforms across India.

### NS AWARDS 2018 AND NA AWARDS 2017 CONFERRED

President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind conferred National Sports (NS) Awards 2018 and National Adventure (NA) Awards, 2017 in a ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhawan on 25 September 2018. Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Youth Affairs and Sports Col. Rajyawardhan Rathore was among the dignitaries present on the occasion. Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar was conferred Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy 2017-18.

Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna 2018

S. No.	Name of the Sports person	Discipline
1.	Ms. S. Mirabai Chanu	Weightlifting
2.	Shri Virat Kohli	Cricket

Dronacharya Awards for the year 2018

S. No.	Name of the Coach	Discipline
1.	Subedar Chenanda Achaiah Kuttappa	Boxing
2.	Shri Vijay Sharma	Weightlifting
3.	Shri A. Srinivasa Rao	Table Tennis
4.	Shri Sukhdev Singh Pannu	Athletics
5.	Shri Clarence Lobo	Hockey (Life Time)
6.	Shri Tarak Sinha	Cricket (Life Time)
7.	Shri Jiwan Kumar Sharma	Judo (Life Time)
8.	Shri V.R. Beedu	Athletics (Life Time)

Arjuna Awards for the year 2018

S. No.	Name of the Sports person	Discipline
1.	Shri Neeraj Chopra	Athletics
2.	Naib Subedar Jinson Johnson	Athletics

3.	Ms. Hima Das	Athletics
4.	Ms. Nelakurthi Sikki Reddy	Badminton
5.	Subedar Satish Kumar	Boxing
6.	Ms. Smriti Mandhana*	Cricket
7.	Shri Shubhankar Sharma	Golf
8.	Shri Manpreet Singh	Hockey
9.	Ms. Savita	Hockey
10.	Col. Ravi Rathore	Polo
11.	Ms. Rahi Sarnobat	Shooting
12.	Shri Ankur Mittal	Shooting
13.	Ms. Shreyasi Singh	Shooting
14.	Ms. Manika Batra	Table Tennis
15.	Shri G. Sathyan	Table Tennis
16.	Shri Rohan Bopanna*	Tennis
17.	Shri Sumit	Wrestling
18.	Ms. Pooja Kadian	Wushu
19.	Shri Ankur Dhama	Para-Athletics
20.	Shri Manoj Sarkar	Para-Badminton

## Dhyan Chand Awards for the year 2018

S. No.	Name of the Sports person	Discipline
1.	Shri Satyadev Prasad	Archery
2.	Shri Bharat Kumar Chetri	Hockey
3.	Ms. Bobby Aloysius	Athletics
4.	Shri Chougale Dadu Dattatray	Wrestling

## Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar for the year 2018

S. No.	Category	Name of the entity
1.	Identification and Nurturing of Budding & Young Talent	Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited
2.	Encouragement to Sports through Corporate Social Responsibility	JSW Sports
3.	Sports for Development	Isha Outreach

### Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Awards 2017

S.No	Name	Category
1	Dr AnshuJamsenpa	Mountaineer
2.	Late Shri Ravi Kumar	Mountaineer
3	Lt Cdr Vartika Joshi	Navy
4	Lt Cdr PratibhaJamwal	Navy
5	Lt Cdr PatarlapalliSwathi	Navy
6	Lt Cdr ShougrakpamVijaya Devi	Navy
7	Lt Cdr AishwaryaBoddapati	Navy
8	Lt Payal Gupta	Navy
9	CaptUditThapar	Skydiver
10	Shri SonamWangyal	Mountaineer (Life time)

### NATIONAL TOURISM AWARDS 2016-17

Gujarat won three major national tourism awards for 2016-17 as India celebrated the World Tourism Day on 27 September 2018. The state received accolades for its efforts to make Gujarat a great tourist destination. Gujarat won the awards for the Best Civic Management (at Saputara Hill Station), Best Heritage City-Ahmedabad (jointly with Mandu, Madhya Pradesh), and the Best Airport-Ahmedabad. Last year, Gujarat Tourism had been honoured with the Hall of Fame award in the category of comprehensive development.

What

1. The awards were given in various segments of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry.
2. Andhra Pradesh bagged the first prize in state category for comprehensive development of tourism and Rajasthan Tourism bagged the national award for most innovative use of Information Technology, social media and websites.
3. Ahmedabad **had been declared India's first World Heritage City by UNESCO last year.**
4. The more than 600-year old Walled City is known for its architectural marvels and has been the centre of the non-violent Freedom Movement that led India to Independence in 1947.
5. It has some of the finest examples of Indo-Islamic architecture and Hindu Muslim art.

### WORLD RABIES DAY

The World Rabies Day is observed every year on 28 September across the world to raise awareness about rabies disease and its preventable measures. The theme of this year (2018) was 'Rabies: Share the message. Save a life'.

What

1. Observance of the day seeks to raise awareness about the impact of rabies on animals and human beings.
2. It also seeks to share information on how to prevent disease and highlight progress in defeating this horrifying disease.
3. This Day is initiative of Global Alliance for Rabies Control.

4. It was initiated in 2007 to create global opportunity for people to focus on rabies prevention.
5. The day is annually on 28 September to mark death anniversary of Louis Pasteur, a French chemist and microbiologist who had developed the first rabies vaccine along with his colleagues.

#### About Rabies

1. Rabies is viral disease that causes inflammation of brain (acute encephalitis) in warm-blooded animals.
2. It is zoonotic disease i.e. transmitted from one species to another, commonly by bite or scratch from infected animal such as dogs to humans.
3. The rabies virus infects central nervous system (CNS) and ultimately causes disease in brain and death.
4. Domestic dogs are most common reservoir of rabies virus.
5. Dog-mediated rabies accounts for more than 95% of human deaths.
6. Its symptoms include neurological problems and a fear of light and water. Vaccination of pets helps to prevent and control rabies.

## WORLD TOURISM DAY

The World Tourism Day (WTD) is being observed every year on 27th September to raise awareness about importance of tourism. Observance of day aims to foster awareness among international community of importance of tourism and its social, cultural, **political and economic value**. **The theme of this year's World Tourism Day is 'Tourism and the Digital Transformation'**.

What

1. The Theme of this year is to show importance of digitally advanced tourism sector for improving entrepreneurship, inclusion, local community empowerment and efficient resource management, amongst other important development objectives.
2. It further explores opportunities provided to tourism by technological advances including big data, artificial intelligence and digital platforms.
3. The World Tourism Day marks adaptation of Statutes of UNWTO (World Tourism Organization) on September 27, 1970.
4. The adoption of these Statutes is considered a milestone in global tourism.
5. The purpose of this day is to raise awareness on role of tourism within international community.
6. It also seeks to demonstrate the impact of tourism sector on social, cultural, political and economic values worldwide.

## WORLD MARITIME DAY

The World Maritime Day (WMD) is observed every year on last Thursday of September to acknowledge the maritime industry and to highlight importance of shipping safety, maritime security and marine environment and to acknowledge maritime industry. This it was observed on September 27 with theme as **"IMO 70: Our Heritage – Better Shipping for a Better Future"**.

What

1. The World Maritime Day marks date of adaptation of International Maritime Organization (IMO) Convention in 1958.
2. The day was first observed in 1978. The **IMO's original name was the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO)** but it was changed to IMO in 1982.
3. IMO is a specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for regulating shipping.
4. It was established in 1948 in Geneva as ICMO and came into force in 1959.

5. Its headquarters are in London, United Kingdom. It has 171 member states and 3 associate members.
6. India was one of the earliest members of IMO and had joined it as member-state in 1959.
7. **IMO's functions are to develop and maintain** a comprehensive regulatory framework for shipping and its remit.
8. This framework addresses various areas like safety, legal matters, environmental concerns, technical co-operation, maritime security and efficiency of shipping.

#### INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE TOTAL ELIMINATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons is observed every year on 26 September across the world. The day aims to provide an occasion for world community to reaffirm its commitment to global nuclear disarmament as high priority. It also seeks to provide opportunity to educate public and their leaders about real benefits of eliminating such weapons, and the social and economic costs of perpetuating them.

Flashback

1. The International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons was proclaimed by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) by adopting resolution in December 2013 as follow-up to its high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament which was held on 26 September 2013, in New York, US.
2. The day is aimed at enhancing public awareness and education about threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons and the necessity for their total elimination.
3. It is latest in series of efforts by UNGA to raise public awareness and seek deeper engagement on nuclear disarmament matters.
4. UNGA also observe 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests. It was proclaimed through resolution adopted in 2009.

#### ANTYODAYA DIWAS OBSERVED

25th September was observed as Antyodaya Diwas across the country to mark the birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, a noted philosopher, historian and political activist. Antyodaya means uplifting of the weakest section of the society. Several activities including blood donation camps, seminar, symposia were organised on this occasion across the country.

What

1. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya (1916-68) was well-known political personality and thoughtful philosopher.
2. He was coordinator and famous leader of Jan Sangh, which is considered precursor to BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party).
3. He was critic of both capitalism and communism. He advocated his own brand of Integral Humanism which combined morality in politics and human centric approach to economics.
4. He wrote drama Chandragupta Maurya in Hindi and later wrote a biography of Shankaracharya.

#### NEW CHAIRMAN OF ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

Appointment Committee of the Cabinet has appointed renowned scientist Kamlesh Nilkanth Vyas as chairman of Atomic Energy Commission and secretary of Department of Atomic Energy (DAE). He will have tenure till he attains the age of 64 years, i.e. till May 2021. He will succeed Shekhar Basu.

What

1. Vyas at present is Director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC).
2. He is Mechanical Engineering graduate from MS University, Vadodara. After completion of training in BARC training school in 1979, he had joined Fuel Design and Development Section of Reactor Engineering Division of BARC.

3. Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) is the governing body of the DAE which is under the direct charge of Prime Minister.
4. It was established in 1948 to look after atomic energy activities in the country.
5. Its functions are to organise research in atomic scientists in India, train atomic scientists in the country, **promote nuclear research in commission's own laboratories** and undertake prospecting of atomic minerals and extract such minerals for use on industrial scale.

## WORLD OZONE DAY

The International Day for Preservation of Ozone Layer (or World Ozone Day) is observed every year on September 16 for the preservation of the Ozone Layer. This year, **the theme for the Day is 'Keep Cool and Carry On: The Montreal Protocol'.**

What

1. The day was designated by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 19, 1994.
2. Its observance commemorates the date in 1987 on which Montreal Protocol was signed on substances that deplete the ozone layer.
3. It also is intended to spread awareness of the depletion of the Ozone Layer and search for solutions to preserve it.
4. The Ozone layer is fragile shield of gas which protects Earth from harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation of Sun and thus helping preserve life on the planet.
5. It contains high concentrations of ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) in relation to other parts of the atmosphere.
6. Stratospheric Ozone is not harmful, but its presence on land it is harmful.
7. Substances like Chlorofluorocarbons, halons, Carbontetrachloride are responsible for ozone layer depletion.