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IAS EXAM PREPARATION

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**# DAILY CURRENT EVENTS**

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**JULY 2016**  
**(1<sup>st</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>)**

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## Table of Contents

<b>GS I .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Paper 1 Topic: Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present- significant events, personalities, issues. ....</i>	<i>4</i>
PM pays tributes to Babu Jagjivan Ram on his death anniversary .....	4
<i>Paper 1 Topic: Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India. ....</i>	<i>5</i>
Roots of Khasis .....	5
<b>GS II .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Paper 2 Topic: Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.....</i>	<i>6</i>
Clarification regarding transgender.....	6
Collegium reiterates objections to draft memo.....	6
<i>Paper 2 Topic: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies. ....</i>	<i>7</i>
DRI unearths Rs. 2,240 cr. banking-hawala scam .....	7
SC to consider whether NHRC is 'toothless tiger' .....	8
India Post to sell collectible stamps .....	9
<i>Paper 2 Topic: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity. ....</i>	<i>9</i>
SC seeks review of law on advocates .....	9
Farmer can't be evicted even after lease expires: SC .....	10
<i>Paper 2 Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation. ....</i>	<i>11</i>
Ministry seeks law panel's opinion on uniform civil code .....	11
SC sets deadline for blocking online sex selection ads.....	11
Utensil makers oppose quality norms on steel .....	13
SC ends impunity for armed forces in disturbed areas.....	13
'Flat fee optimal for spectrum use' .....	15
Asylum seekers can own property .....	16
Madhya Pradesh becomes first state to have 'Happiness Department' .....	17
<i>Paper 2 Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources, issues relating to poverty and hunger. ....</i>	<i>18</i>
FSSAI signs pact with ASCI to check misleading advertisements.....	18
Pizzas in Kerala get a 14.5% 'fat tax' topping.....	19
India felicitated by WHO .....	20
Census 2011 records rise in literacy among disabled .....	22
<i>Paper 2 Topic: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws,</i>	

<i>institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.....</i>	23
SC rues barriers for disabled in govt. service.....	23
New Central scheme targets skilling of one crore people.....	23
<i>Paper 2 Topic: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.....</i>	24
International Solar Alliance Cell and World Bank Signs Declaration for Promoting Solar Energy.....	24
MoU between India and Mauritius in the field of Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation.....	25
Sri Lanka to seal trade pact with India by mid-2017.....	26
MoUs between India and Mozambique.....	26
India signs five agreements with Tanzania.....	27
India, Kenya to deepen security ties.....	27
Sri Lanka urged to ratify cluster convention.....	27
Loan agreement between ADB and India.....	28
<i>Paper 2 Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.....</i>	29
300 Indians stranded in Juba as civil war reignites.....	29
Tribunal rejects Beijing's claims on South China Sea.....	29
Beijing could declare air defence zone over South China Sea.....	30
<i>Paper 2 Topic: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.....</i>	31
India abstains on vote for LGBT rights at U.N.....	31
Indian Captain Radhika Menon Is First Woman To Get Bravery At Sea Award.....	32
India to seek help for services pact at UN.....	33
Ulaanbaatar Declaration adopted.....	34
UNESCO declares Nalanda Mahavihara World Heritage Site.....	35
<b>GS III.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<i>Paper 3 Topic: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.....</i>	36
RBI's steps on FCNR get FSDC nod.....	36
BSE unveils online system for Sovereign gold bond.....	37
Sebi notifies stricter transfer norms for Participatory Notes.....	37
Income Declaration Scheme extended to September 2017.....	38
India slips on business optimism index: survey.....	39
<i>Paper 3 Topic: Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.....</i>	40
Automation to hit textile sector jobs.....	40

<i>Paper 3 Topic: Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing. ....</i>	<i>40</i>
Interest subvention.....	40
<i>Paper 3 Topic: infrastructure. ....</i>	<i>41</i>
Logistics performance index.....	41
Development of Port-Rail Connectivity Projects approved under Sagarmala Programme..	42
Nuclear plants insured.....	43
Many don't have power in 'power-surplus India'.....	44
<i>Paper 3 Topic: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life Achievements of Indians in science &amp; technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.....</i>	<i>44</i>
Jawaharlal Nehru Port Becomes First Port in Country to Implement Logistics Data Tagging of Containers.....	44
<i>Paper 3 Topic: Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.....</i>	<i>45</i>
Juno successfully enters Jupiter orbit: NASA.....	45
New Horizons' next goal .....	46
Network Readiness Index.....	47
DAWN marks ice-bearing Ceres craters.....	48
Juno Spacecraft Sends First Image From Orbit Around Jupiter.....	48
<i>Paper 3 Topic: biodiversity. ....</i>	<i>49</i>
India's thriving biodiversity: 445 new species added in 2015 .....	49
<i>Paper 3 Topic: conservation. ....</i>	<i>50</i>
Plantation drive on 1,500 km of National Highways under Green Highways Project .....	50
Ozone layer over Antarctic shows signs of healing .....	51
Impose Rs 5,000 fine for littering track: NGT to Railways .....	52
'Almost 30 per cent of our land undergoing degradation' .....	54
'Clean Ganga' project launched at 100 places .....	54
Kendrapada sheep gets rare status .....	55
<i>Paper 3 Topic: disaster management.....</i>	<i>56</i>
NDRF trains one lakh people in one month for better reach.....	56
<i>Paper 3 Topic: Security challenges and their management in border areas; linkages of organized crime with terrorism. ....</i>	<i>57</i>
Putin signs controversial 'Big Brother' law.....	57
<i>Paper 3 Topic: Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.....</i>	<i>58</i>
Ashok Patnaik is NATGRID chief .....	58

*Paper 3 Topic: Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention. .... 58*

MHA opposes visa-free entry..... 58

### **Facts for Prelims..... 59**

RIMPAC/ DCN/ Parishikshak / RCEP..... 59

Flying Daggers 45 ..... 60

MOFs..... 61

Enayam port / National Apprenticeship promotion scheme ..... 61

Kutchi new year/ Shankar Acharya committee ..... 62

BRICS anti-narcotics / Germany sexual assault law..... 62

Yamal LNG - Arctic..... 63

Bornean orangutan/Arvind Subramaniam Committee on MSP of Pulses/Jnanpith Award. 63

Sesame seed Exports/INS Karna..... 64

Megh Prahar/Sankat Mochan ..... 64

## **GS I**

*Paper 1 Topic: Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present- significant events, personalities, issues.*

### **PM pays tributes to Babu Jagjivan Ram on his death anniversary**

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, paid tributes to Babu Jagjivan Ram on his death anniversary on 6<sup>th</sup> July.

#### Key facts:

- Jagjivan Ram, popularly known as Babuji was a national leader, a freedom fighter, a crusader of social justice, a champion of depressed classes, an outstanding Parliamentarian, a true democrat, a distinguished Union Minister, an able administrator and an exceptionally gifted orator.
- Jagjivan Ram had organized a number of **Ravidas Sammelans** and had celebrated **Guru Ravidas Jayanti** in different areas of Calcutta (Kolkata).
- In 1934, he founded the **Akhil Bhartiya Ravidas Mahasabha** in Calcutta and the **All India Depressed Classes League**. Through these Organizations he involved the depressed classes in the freedom struggle.

- In October 1935, Babuji appeared before the **Hammond Commission at Ranchi and demanded, for the first time, voting rights for the Dalits.**
- Babu Jagjivan Ram played a very active and crucial role in the freedom struggle. Inspired by Gandhiji, Babuji courted arrest on 10 December 1940. After his release, he entrenched himself deeply into the Civil Disobedience Movement and Satyagraha.
- Babuji was arrested again on 19 August 1942 for his active participation in the Quit India Movement launched by the Indian National Congress.
- He has also served as the deputy prime minister of India.

Sources: pib.

***Paper 1 Topic:** Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.*

### **Roots of Khasis**

Pre-historic megaliths and tools discovered in Meghalaya's Ri-Bhoi district indicate that the Khasi tribe had made the State their home since around 1200 BCE.

- Excavations carried out near Lummawbuh village in the northern slopes of **Sohpetbneng (Heaven's Naval) peak near the NH-40** revealed these facts.
- Archeologists have found megalithic structures, and iron implements that date back to the prehistoric period in the ridge spreading over 1.5 k.m.

#### Key facts:

- The Khasi people are an indigenous tribe, the majority of whom live in the State of Meghalaya, with a significant population in the border areas of the neighbouring state of Assam, and in certain parts of Bangladesh.
- They call themselves **Ki Khun U Hynñiewtrep**, which means "The Children of The Seven Huts" in their language.
- Their language, also called Khasi, is categorized as the northernmost language under the Austroasiatic family stock. The Khasi language was essentially oral until the arrival of Christian missionaries.
- The Khasi people form the majority of the population of the eastern part of Meghalaya, and is the state's largest community.
- Though the majority of the 85% Khasi populace have embraced Christianity, a substantial minority of the Khasi people still follow and practice their age old indigenous religion, which is known as "Ka Niam Khasi".
- The Khasi people designed and built the famous living root bridges of the Cherrapunjee region.
- Under the Constitution of India, the Khasis have been granted the status of Scheduled Tribe.
- A unique feature of the Khasi people is that they follow the matrilineal system of descent and inheritance.

Sources: the hindu.

## GS II

*Paper 2 Topic: Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.*

### **Clarification regarding transgender**

Supreme Court has refused to modify its 2014 order on transgenders while clarifying that lesbians, gays and bisexuals are not third gender. Clarification in this regard was asked by additional solicitor general (ASG) Maninder Singh, appearing for the Centre. The court has clarified that lesbians, gays and bisexuals are not transgenders.

#### Background:

In a landmark verdict, the Supreme Court had on April 15, 2014 granted legal recognition to transgenders or eunuchs as third category of gender and had directed the Centre and all states to treat them as socially and educationally backward classes to extend reservation in admission in educational institutions and for public appointments.

- Paving way to bring transgenders in national mainstream, the apex court directed governments to take steps to remove problems faced by them such as fear, shame, social pressure, depression, and social stigma. It had also said that section 377 of IPC is being misused by police and other authorities against them and their social and economic condition is far from satisfactory.
- However, in September 2014, the Centre had filed an application in the apex court seeking clarification on the definition of transgender saying lesbian, gay and bisexual cannot be treated under the category of transgender.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Collegium reiterates objections to draft memo**

The Supreme Court collegium has reiterated its rejection of several crucial clauses in the government's draft Memorandum of Procedure for appointment of judges. The collegium is standing firm by its objections despite government's insistence to smoothen ruffled feathers over judicial appointments. The collegium has said both merit and seniority should be balanced.

#### Background:

Raising concerns over two issues in the draft Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) for appointment of judges including the one relating to government's right to reject a recommendation on concerns of national interest, the Supreme Court had sent back the draft on judges' appointment in May 2016.



*Proposed contentious rules:*

- Government's right to reject a recommendation on concerns of national interest.
- Involvement of the AG in suggesting a list of suitable candidates.
- Names for judges' appointments could be suggested by all judges of the bench as well as by the AG and the bar.
- The list of candidates brought before the collegium will first be vetted by a committee of two retired judges and an eminent person.

*Present scenario:*

Presently, the government is bound to comply if the Supreme Court collegium chooses to override its disapproval of a person recommended for judicial appointment. If the government returns the candidate's file to the collegium, and the latter reiterates its recommendation, the government has no choice but to comply.

Sources: the hindu.

*Paper 2 Topic: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.***DRI unearths Rs. 2,240 cr. banking-hawala scam**

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) in Mumbai has unearthed a 'banking-hawala' scam, in which reputed public sector banks illegally remitted Rs. 2,240 crore overseas based on forged documentation and declarations of traded goods by exporters and importers.

*DRI:*

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence was constituted on 4th December 1957, for dealing exclusively with the work relating to the collection and study of information on smuggling activities and the deployment of all anti-smuggling resources at the all India level, besides arranging training for the intelligence and Investigation officers of the Custom Houses and Central Excise Collectorates deployed on similar work.

- DRI is the major intelligence agency which eradicates smuggling of drugs, gold, diamonds, electronics, foreign currency, counterfeit Indian currency, etc.
- The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence functions under the Central Board of Excise and Customs in the Ministry of Finance, Department of Revenue.
- The Directorate is run by officers from Central Excise and Customs. Though its early days were committed to combating smuggling in of gold, it has now tuned itself to the changing nature of crimes in the field of narcotics and economic crimes.

*The essential features of the organization are:*

- It is designed to collect and collate information and to strike swiftly;
- It is officer-intensive and the ministerial staff has been kept at a minimum;



- Although small, it is a high-powered organization so that it can issue instructions to Collectors and can command the confidence and respect of the other State and Central organizations with which it has necessarily to deal in order to become effective;
- It consists of selected officers, that is, those who by temperament and experience, are equipped to do this specialized kind of work;
- It will have no routine job of its own in the sense that it is required to collect a certain amount of revenue. It will have complete liberty to act on 'hunches' and only the ends will justify the means it adopts.

Sources: the hindu.

### **SC to consider whether NHRC is 'toothless tiger'**

The Supreme Court has proposed to consider the grievance of the National Human Right's Commission (NHRC) that it has become a "toothless tiger". NHRC had also recently complained about difficulties in discharging its duties, including non-cooperation from State governments and lack of staff.

- The court has noted NHRC's submission that "it was helpless in taking any coercive measures since it has no power to take action against persons or authorities who do not follow the guidelines laid down by it nor does it have power to give directions or pass orders but can only make recommendations."
- The matter was considered by the court while dealing with a PIL petition on extra-judicial killings in militancy infested Manipur and the plea for repealing the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act.

#### **NHRC:**

It is a statutory body established in 1993.

#### **Composition:**

- It consists of a Chairman and 4 members. Chairman should be a retired Chief Justice of India. Members should be either sitting or retired judges of the Supreme Court or a serving or retired Chief Justice of a High Court and 2 persons having practical knowledge in this field.
- Ex officio members are the chairmen of National Commission for Scheduled Caste, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, National Commission for Minorities and National Commission for Women.

✓ **Appointment:** The chairman and members are appointed on the recommendation of a 6 member committee consisting of Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, leaders of opposition in both the houses of parliament and Union Home Minister.

- ✓ **Term:** Term of the chairman and members is 5 years or 70 years whichever is earlier. After retirement they are not eligible for further reappointment.
- ✓ **Removal:** President has to refer the matter to Supreme Court and if after enquiry Supreme Court holds it right then they can be removed by the President.

Sources: the hindu.

### **India Post to sell collectible stamps**

The Department of Post is planning to set up an independent company for its philately business with an aim to boost revenues from the sale of collectible stamps. The proposal would soon be sent to the Cabinet.

#### Details:

- India Post Philately Company is proposed as a public limited company, fully owned by the government, with an authorised capital of Rs. 100 crore.
- The proposed company will be a service-based one, which will not only sell its products to existing customers —collectors and philatelists — but will also try to attract new ones. It will focus on promotion of philately, mainly among the younger generation.
- As per the proposal, the new firm will have a corporate office and four zonal offices. The board of directors will have seven officials. While the Secretary, Department of Posts, will be the non-executive chairman, India Post officials of the rank of Joint Secretary will be appointed as chairman and managing director on deputation. The board will have three persons from the department and four outsiders.

#### Background:

India Post is eyeing a jump of Rs. 100 crore, or over 250%, in turnover from the philately segment to Rs. 141 crore in the current fiscal. The earnings from this segment stood at Rs. 39.88 crore during 2015-16 and Rs. 32.85 crore during 2014-15.

Sources: the hindu.

***Paper 2 Topic:** Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.*

### **SC seeks review of law on advocates**

The Supreme Court has asked the Law Commission to review “all relevant aspects” relating to the law governing the legal profession, including issues like professional misconduct by lawyers, in consultation with all stakeholders. Therefore, **Advocates Act**, under which lawyers are governed, will be reviewed.

- The court has also asked the government to take appropriate steps in the light of report of the Law Commission within six months. The Central Government may file an appropriate affidavit in this regard within one month after expiry of one year.

[Background:](#)

The direction came in a verdict by which the apex court upheld the conviction of a Uttar Pradesh-based advocate for criminal contempt for intimidating and threatening a civil judge in Etah.

[Law commission:](#)

Law Commission of India is an **executive body established by an order of the Government of India**. Its major function is to work for legal reform. Its membership primarily comprises legal experts, who are entrusted a mandate by the Government. The Commission is established for a **fixed tenure and works as an advisory body to the Ministry of Law and Justice**.

Sources: the hindu.

**Farmer can't be evicted even after lease expires: SC**

The Supreme Court has held that a **farmer, who is in possession of leased land even after expiry of the lease period, cannot be evicted if the owner either acknowledges the tenancy or is accepting the rent.**

[Background:](#)

These observations were made by the court during the review of the verdict of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. Referring to a provision of the **Transfer of Property Act**, the court has set aside the verdict of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, which ordered the eviction of a farmer after expiry of the lease period of the land.

[What has the Supreme Court said?](#)

The operation of Section 116 of the Transfer of Property Act would confer legitimacy to the possession of the tenant even after the termination or expiration of the deemed period of the lease so as to confer on him a status akin to that of a statutory tenant and hence protection from eviction as envisaged by the provisions of the Act (Punjab Security of Land Tenure Act) of 1953. Also, there was no legal provision to evict the farmer as the eviction conditions laid down in the Punjab Security of Land Tenure Act 1953 and the Punjab Tenancy Act 1887 did not include a tenant whose lease had expired.

Sources: the hindu.

***Paper 2 Topic:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

### **Ministry seeks law panel's opinion on uniform civil code**

The Union Law Ministry has asked the Law Commission to examine in detail all issues pertaining to the Uniform Civil Code and submit a report to the government. The government has clarified that a decision on the future course of action would be taken on the basis of the Law Commission report. If it is required in the larger interest of the country, the government has clarified that it will hold consultations with various stakeholders on the issue.

#### Constitutional provision regarding UCC:

Article 44 of the Constitution says that there should be a Uniform Civil Code. According to this article, "The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India". Since, the Directive Principles are only guidelines, it is not mandatory to use them.

#### What is uniform civil code?

Uniform civil Code is a proposal to have a generic set of governing laws for every citizen without taking into consideration the religion.

#### Current situation:

Currently, there are personal laws based on the scriptures and customs of each major religious community. They are separate from the public law and are applied on issues like-

- Marriage.
- Divorce.
- Inheritance.
- Adoption and maintenance.

#### Why it is difficult to have a UCC?

India being a secular country guarantees its minorities the right to follow their own religion, culture and customs under Article 29 and 30. But implementing a Uniform Code will hamper India's secularism.

Sources: the hindu.

### **SC sets deadline for blocking online sex selection ads**

Rapping online search engines like Google, Yahoo and Microsoft for patently violating Indian law, the Supreme Court recently asked the Centre to hold a meeting with their technical experts so as to find a solution to check advertisements and information on pre-natal sex determination being hosted by them.

- The court has asked the Centre to convene a meeting of technical experts and the search engines within 10 days to explore ways to block such advertisements.

**Background:**

The apex court had in January last year directed the search engines to strictly comply with Indian laws and lock advertisements on sex determination of a foetus.

**PCPNDT Act:**

The Pre-conception & Pre-natal Diagnostics Techniques (PC & PNDT) Act, 1994 was enacted in response to the decline in Sex ratio in India, which deteriorated from 972 in 1901 to 927 in 1991.

- The main purpose of enacting the act is to ban the use of sex selection techniques before or after conception and prevent the misuse of prenatal diagnostic technique for sex selective abortion.
- Offences under this act include conducting or helping in the conduct of prenatal diagnostic technique in the unregistered units, sex selection on a man or woman, conducting PND test for any purpose other than the one mentioned in the act, sale, distribution, supply, renting etc. of any ultra sound machine or any other equipment capable of detecting sex of the foetus.

**Main provisions in the act are:**

- The Act provides for the prohibition of sex selection, before or after conception.
- It regulates the use of pre-natal diagnostic techniques, like ultrasound and amniocentesis by allowing them their use only to detect few cases.
- No laboratory or centre or clinic will conduct any test including ultrasonography for the purpose of determining the sex of the foetus.
- No person, including the one who is conducting the procedure as per the law, will communicate the sex of the foetus to the pregnant woman or her relatives by words, signs or any other method.
- Any person who puts an advertisement for pre-natal and pre-conception sex determination facilities in the form of a notice, circular, label, wrapper or any document, or advertises through interior or other media in electronic or print form or engages in any visible representation made by means of hoarding, wall painting, signal, light, sound, smoke or gas, can be imprisoned for up to three years and fined Rs. 10,000.
- The Act mandates compulsory registration of all diagnostic laboratories, all genetic counselling centres, genetic laboratories, genetic clinics and ultrasound clinics.

Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 (PNDT), was amended in 2003 to The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition Of Sex Selection) Act (PCPNDT Act) to improve the regulation of the technology used in sex selection. The Act was amended to bring the technique of pre conception sex selection and ultrasound technique within the ambit of the act. The amendment also empowered the central

supervisory board and state level supervisory board was constituted. In 1988, the State of Maharashtra became the first in the country to ban pre-natal sex determination through enacting the Maharashtra Regulation of Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Utensil makers oppose quality norms on steel**

Manufacturers and exporters of stainless steel utensils and cutlery in India are opposing the recent curbs imposed on the import of different types of so-called 'substandard' stainless steel.

#### Why?

According to them, the move will result in a shortage of raw material and push up costs for the sector. This, they warned, could in turn lead to closure of several firms in the sector due to non-viability of operations, thereby causing large-scale unemployment.

#### Background:

The government recently brought out the quality-control order. The order prohibits manufacture, storage, sale and distribution of stainless steel products that do not conform to the standards specified in that order and which do not bear the 'Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)' mark (given after obtaining a licence from the BIS).

- The move is also aimed to prevent 'poor quality' steel imports from countries, including China. It is applicable on various grades of stainless steel plate, sheets and strips used for utensils as well as for low nickel austenitic stainless steel sheet and strips used in kitchen appliances and utensils.
- The quality control order was imposed over and above the minimum import price (MIP) ranging from \$341 to \$752 per tonne on 173 steel products to protect local steel manufacturers from a surge in cheap imports of steel.
- The MIP, which was imposed on February 5 is in place at least until August 4. In March, the government had also extended the safeguard duty (of 20% that will gradually drop to 10%) on steel imports till March 2018.

Sources: the hindu.

### **SC ends impunity for armed forces in disturbed areas**

Supreme Court has ruled that armed personnel cannot just shoot to kill militants who create internal disturbances under the presumption that they are enemies, and would face criminal prosecution if found using excessive force even in areas where the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (Afspa) is in force.

- The verdict is likely to have far reaching consequences in places where security forces have been insulated by Afspa to carry out counter-insurgency operations.

#### Important observations made by the Court:

- Indefinite deployment of armed forces in the name of restoring normalcy under AFSPA “would mock at our democratic process”, apart from symbolising a failure of the civil administration and the armed forces.
- It does not matter whether the victim was a common person or a militant or a terrorist, nor does it matter whether the aggressor was a common person or the state. The law is the same for both and is equally applicable to both.
- There is no concept of absolute immunity from trial by a criminal court if an Army man has committed an offence.

#### Background:

The judgment came on a plea by hundreds of families in the north-eastern State of Manipur for a probe by a Special Investigation Team into 1,528 cases of alleged fake encounters involving the Army and the police.

#### Implications:

- The verdict tears down the cloak of secrecy about unaccounted deaths involving security forces in disturbed areas and serves as a judicial precedent to uphold civilian and human rights in sensitive areas under military control. Henceforth, a thorough enquiry will be conducted into “encounter” killings in disturbed areas.
- Also, errant armed personnel would face criminal charges notwithstanding the immunity conferred under Afspa for anything done in “lawful exercise” of “official duties.”

#### What is Afspa?

Afspa, which was enacted in 1958 amid the nascent Naga insurgency, gives powers to the army and state and central police forces to shoot to kill, search houses and destroy any property that is “likely” to be used by insurgents in areas declared as “disturbed” by the home ministry. Security forces can “arrest without warrant” a person, who has committed or even “about to commit a cognizable offence” even on “reasonable suspicion”. It also protects them from legal processes for actions taken under the act.

#### Which states are under Afspa?

It is in force in *Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Manipur* (except the Imphal municipal area). In Arunachal Pradesh, only the *Tirap, Changlang and Longding* districts plus a 20-km belt bordering Assam come under its purview. And in *Meghalaya Afspa is confined to a 20-km area bordering Assam.*

#### What are ‘disturbed’ areas?

The state or central government considers those areas as ‘disturbed’ “by reason of differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.”

#### How is a region declared ‘disturbed’?



Section (3) of the Afspa empowers the governor of the state or Union territory to issue an official notification in The Gazette of India, following which the Centre has the authority to send in armed forces for civilian aid.

Once declared 'disturbed', the region has to maintain status quo for a minimum of three months, according to The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976.

*What is state government's role?*

The state governments can suggest whether the act is required to be enforced or not. But under Section (3) of the act, their opinion can be overruled by the governor or the Centre.

*Is the act uniform in nature?*

Initially, it was meant only for Assam and Manipur, where there was an insurgency by Naga militants. After the reorganisation of the northeast in 1971, the creation of new states like Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh paved the way for the Afspa to be amended, so that it could be applied to each of them. The amendments contain different sections as applicable to the situation in each state.

Sources: the hindu.

**'Flat fee optimal for spectrum use'**

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has drilled holes in a formula government uses to calculate annual spectrum charges payable by mobile phone operators and suggested using value generated by use of the airwaves to be included in the basis for computing levies.

- It has said that formula in practice may have a significant impact on the revenue payable to the government. TRAI has also identified complications in adopting flat spectrum rate recommended it earlier.

*TRAI's proposal:*

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) has suggested adding another element — the final bid value for a spectrum band won in an auction — to the weighted-average formula proposed by the telecom department (DoT), saying the change would reflect potential revenue from the airwaves that had been acquired, and thus was a better way of calculating SUC. If the proposal is accepted, telcos will need to pay more to the government.

*Background:*

The Cabinet last month approved spectrum auction rules except spectrum usage charges (SUC) recommended by the inter-ministerial panel Telecom Commission. The Cabinet asked telecom ministry to seek Trai's view on SUC before it approves the rule.

- Currently, telcos are charged different rates based on the complicated weighted-average formula, which takes into account non-auctioned or auctioned spectrum, quantum of airwaves bought, and the specific SUC applicable to the auction from which airwaves were

bought. The 4G spectrum bought in 2010 is kept out of this formula and is charged at a flat 1% of annual revenue.

- The DoT's latest formula includes the 2010 4G airwaves for calculating SUC. In 2013, Trai had proposed a flat 3% SUC across all bands of spectrum— auctioned or not—which could be gradually brought down to 1%, as it was difficult to distinguish revenue accruing from different bands of airwaves.
- All operators that currently pay SUC as per weighted-average formula had been in favour of flat SUC of 3%, citing problem with revenue segregation, especially with 4G services being offered using different airwaves. This, they felt, could lead to revenue arbitrage.
- Currently, telecom operators pay in the range of 3% to 8% of their adjusted gross revenue as SUC for spectrum bands except 2300 MHz, for which the charge is 1 per cent of AGR. This arbitrage may be exploited by operators as it is not possible for the government to segregate revenue accrued from different bands of spectrum.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Asylum seekers can own property**

The Union Cabinet has approved proposals for extending several benefits to “persecuted” minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh living in India on long-term visas.

#### Details:

- The beneficiaries can buy property for self-occupation or use in self-employment. They are allowed free movement within the State of their stay, and can get their long-term visa papers transferred from one State to another.
- The government has permitted them to apply for long-term visas from the place of their current residence, even if they have moved to the present place without seeking permission.
- The Collector or District Magistrate would be empowered to authorise an officer not below the rank of Sub-divisional Magistrate for administering the oath of allegiance to the applicant.
- The powers will be delegated to the Collectors of 16 districts in Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh for two years for registration as citizens of India.
- The government has waived the penalty on late application for extension of their short- or long-term visas. The registration fees for citizenship will be reduced to Rs. 100 from Rs. 3,000-15,000.
- Soon, the Citizenship Rules, 2009, will be amended to help such persons get citizenship.

#### Background:

Many members of the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities have come to India fearing persecution in their home countries.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Madhya Pradesh becomes first state to have 'Happiness Department'**

Madhya Pradesh has become the first state in the country to set up 'Happiness Department'.

#### Key facts:

- The department will work to ensure "happiness in the lives of common people" on the lines of Bhutan.
- A panel of experts will be formed in the newly-constituted department which will give suggestions to ensure happiness in the lives of the people.
- The department will identify and define parameters that make people happy, coordinate among various departments, recommend policy changes and formulate an action plan to "increase the level of happiness and satisfaction" among the state's more than 7.25 crore population — all on a Rs 3.60 crore budget.
- The department will have a president, a chief officer, a director (research), a director (coordination) and four research assistant among others. Experts working in the field could be nominated to the department.
- The department will take feedback from people on the happiness parameters at regular intervals, publish survey reports and carry out research to improve the existing parameters.

#### Background:

Bhutan, the first country to come up with the concept of gross national happiness, has fixed standards of living, health, education, good governance and psychological happiness among the various parameters that make its citizens happy.

- Some of the US states that follow Gross National Wellness have included emotional and psychological ability, physical health, work, income, economic progress and holidays among other parameters.
- The parameters used by the United Nations include per capita GDP, health, community cooperation during bad times, and trust-inducing measures like corruption-free government and business, freedom to take decisions, and philanthropy.

#### WHR:

The World Happiness Report 2016 by the UN ranks India at 118th among 156 countries, behind Somalia (76), China (83), Pakistan (92), Iran (105), Palestinian Territories (108) and Bangladesh (110). Madhya Pradesh, which has made remarkable progress in agriculture in recent times, does not figure among the country's developed states, and fares badly when it

comes to social indices like maternal and infant mortality. It also has a very high rate of crimes against women.

Sources: the hindu.

***Paper 2 Topic:** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources, issues relating to poverty and hunger.*

### **FSSAI signs pact with ASCI to check misleading advertisements**

Regulator FSSAI and Advertising Standard Council of India (ASCI) have signed an MoU to check misleading advertisements in the food and beverages sector.

#### Details:

- As per the MoU, advertising Standard Council of India (ASCI) will comprehensively monitor these advertisements across various media.
- The council has been given a suo motu monitoring mandate by FSSAI to process complaints against misleading advertisements of food and beverages.
- The agreement also requires ASCI to report to FSSAI non-compliance of ASCI's decisions for further action as required per provisions of the Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) Act.
- FSSAI will also redirect complaints against misleading food and beverages advertisements to ASCI, which will be reviewed using ASCI's code and guidelines. The review will include violation of the FSS Act and regulations related to advertisements making misleading, unsubstantiated or false claims.
- This partnership will put in place a mechanism to monitor misleading advertisements and lead to streamlining advertisements effectively through structured guidelines and appropriate action.

#### About FSSAI:

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been established under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 which consolidates various acts & orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.

- It was created for laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.
- Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the Administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.
- The Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) are appointed by Government of India.
- The Chairperson is in the rank of Secretary to Government of India.

Important functions performed by the authority:

- Framing of Regulations to lay down the Standards and guidelines in relation to articles of food and specifying appropriate system of enforcing various standards thus notified.
- Laying down mechanisms and guidelines for accreditation of certification bodies engaged in certification of food safety management system for food businesses.
- Laying down procedure and guidelines for accreditation of laboratories and notification of the accredited laboratories.
- To provide scientific advice and technical support to Central Government and State Governments in the matters of framing the policy and rules in areas which have a direct or indirect bearing of food safety and nutrition .
- Collect and collate data regarding food consumption, incidence and prevalence of biological risk, contaminants in food, residues of various, contaminants in foods products, identification of emerging risks and introduction of rapid alert system.
- Creating an information network across the country so that the public, consumers, Panchayats etc receive rapid, reliable and objective information about food safety and issues of concern.
- Provide training programmes for persons who are involved or intend to get involved in food businesses.

Sources: the hindu.

**Pizzas in Kerala get a 14.5% 'fat tax' topping**

Kerala has announced a 14.5% "fat tax" on pizzas, burgers, sandwiches and tacos sold through branded outlets. This announcement is in sync with the World Health Organization's advocacy of using fiscal tools to promote healthy eating.

Will it have any positive outcomes?

According to the government, "the 'fat tax' may not stop children from eating junk food altogether. But there will definitely be a drop in consumption because many parents will put their foot down when it comes to spending more."

- Also, like a cigarette tax and an alcohol tax, a fat tax would dissuade children from eating a lot of energy dense foods.
- Although the outcome is still being debated, the British Medical Journal said a year ago that consumption of 'junk food' fell in Denmark by 10 to 15%.
- Data from Finland show demand for sugar, sweets and sugary drinks is quickly affected by prices, particularly among less affluent sections, and helps cut body weight and thus diabetes risk.

Background:

Worldwide, obesity rates have prompted governments to consider imposing a tax to slow sales of food laden with saturated fat and sugars. Denmark introduced a surcharge a few years ago on foods that contain over 2.3% saturated fat, drawing criticism about excessive bureaucracy. It was abolished in 15 months.

Sources: the hindu.

### **India felicitated by WHO**

India recently received the official citation from WHO and UNICEF for Elimination of Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus and for being YAWS-free.

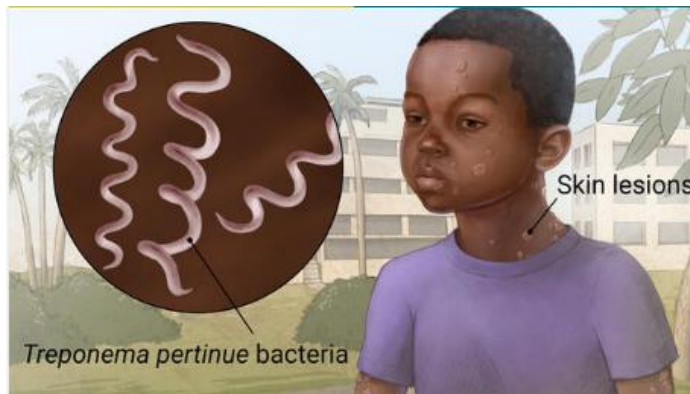
- India is the first country to be officially acknowledged as being Yaws-free.
- India was validated for Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus Elimination (MNTE) in April 2015, much ahead of the global target date of December 2015.

#### **Yaws – key facts:**

- Yaws is a chronic disfiguring and debilitating childhood infectious disease *caused by* *Treponema pallidum* subspecies pertenue.
- It is one of the first diseases targeted by WHO and UNICEF for eradication nearly in the 1950s.
- The disease affects skin, bone and cartilage. Humans are currently believed to be the only reservoir, and transmission is from person to person.



- Yaws is cured by a single oral dose of an inexpensive antibiotic azithromycin.



A chronic bacterial infection that affects the skin, bone and cartilage.

### Extremely rare

Fewer than 5 thousand cases per year (India)

- Treatable by a medical professional
- Requires a medical diagnosis
- Lab tests or imaging always required
- Spreads by skin-to-skin contact
- Chronic: can last for years or be lifelong

Yaws most often affects children in tropical regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It spreads through direct contact with the skin of an infected person.

A single, berry-like sore on the skin is the first sign of yaws. Without treatment, sores begin to spread. Yaws may eventually cause disfigurement and disability.

The condition is treated with antibiotics.

### How it spreads

By skin-to-skin contact (handshakes or hugs).

Yaws forms part of a group of chronic bacterial infections commonly known as the endemic treponematoses. These diseases are caused by spiral bacteria of the genus *Treponema*, which also includes endemic syphilis (bejel) and pinta. Yaws is the most common of these infections.

The disease is found primarily in poor communities in warm, humid and tropical forest areas of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific.

About 75-80% of people affected are children under 15 years of age, and they constitute the main reservoir of infection. Peak incidence occurs in children aged 6–10 years, and males and females are equally affected.

Transmission is through direct (person-to-person) non-

sexual contact of minor injuries of an uninfected person with the fluid from the yaws lesion of an infected person. Most lesions occur on the limbs.

### Tetanus:

- Tetanus is a non-communicable disease contracted through exposure to the spores of the bacterium, *Clostridium tetani*, that exists worldwide in soil and in animal intestinal tracts, and as such can contaminate many surfaces and substances.
- As a result of the ubiquity of the bacterium causing tetanus, the disease cannot be eradicated.
- Neurotoxins produced under anaerobic conditions in wounds contaminated with the bacterial spores lead to tetanus.



- Tetanus occurring during pregnancy or within 6 weeks of the end of pregnancy is called “maternal tetanus”, while tetanus occurring within the first 28 days of life is called “neonatal tetanus”.
- People of all ages can get tetanus but the disease is particularly common and serious in newborn babies and their mothers when the mothers` are unprotected from tetanus by the vaccine, tetanus toxoid.
- Tetanus can be prevented through immunization with tetanus-toxoid-containing vaccines (TTCV). Neonatal tetanus can be prevented by immunizing women of reproductive age with TTCV, either during pregnancy or outside of pregnancy. This protects the mother and – through a transfer of tetanus antibodies to the fetus – also her baby.
- Additionally, clean practices when a mother is delivering a child are also important to prevent neonatal and maternal tetanus.
- People who recover from tetanus do not have natural immunity and can be infected again and therefore need to be immunized. To be protected throughout life, WHO recommends that an individual receives 3 doses of DTP in infancy, followed by TTCV boosters at school-entry age (4-7 years), in adolescence (12-15 years), and in early adulthood or during the first pregnancy.

Sources: pib.

### **Census 2011 records rise in literacy among disabled**

New numbers released from Census 2011 show that **literacy among disabled has increased in the country.**

#### Highlights:

- More than half of the total disabled population in India are now literate. The literacy rate among the disabled has increased from 49.3% in 2001 to 54.5% in 2011. However, this is significantly lower than the overall literacy level of India which stands at 74%.
- Both rural and urban areas saw an increase of around four percentage points in literacy rate of the disabled.
- Among the urban disabled, 68% are literate while the number stands at 49% for disabled in the rural areas.
- The difference between literacy rate of males and females is wider in rural areas — 72% of disabled males and 61% of disabled females in urban areas are literate, a difference of nine percentage points.
- But in rural areas, the difference stands at 20 percentage points, as 58% of disabled males and only 38% of disabled females are literate.

Sources: the hindu.

***Paper 2 Topic:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.*

### **SC rues barriers for disabled in govt. service**

Quashing the central government's earlier orders on restricting reservation for the differently-abled in promotion to Group A and Group B posts, the Supreme Court has ruled that 3% reservation shall be provided to them in all posts and services under the Government of India.

#### Background:

The government had confined such reservation to Group C and Group D posts. In its memoranda issued in 1997 and 2005, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) had also created a distinction between posts to be filled through direct recruitment and those through promotion, while stating that no reservation shall be provided in posts to be filled through promotion in Group A and Group B categories.

#### Supreme Court's observations:

- The Court has declared the DoPT memoranda as "illegal and inconsistent" with the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
- The apex court has said that the government must scrutinise the barriers to their entry by rigorous standards within the legal framework of the 1995 Act.
- The court has also directed the government to extend 3% reservation to PWD (persons with disability) in all identified posts in Group A and Group B, irrespective of the mode of filling up such posts.

#### Significance of this judgement:

This is the first authoritative judgment that has explicitly directed the government to do away with the distinction and give benefits of reservation to the differently-abled, without any classification.

Sources: the hindu.

### **New Central scheme targets skilling of one crore people**

The Cabinet has cleared the decks for a Rs. 12,000-crore plan to train 60 lakh youths and certify 40 lakh informally skilled workers over the next four years with a revamped version of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), which includes a mechanism to revive the traditional Guru-Shishya approach to train youth with the help of local craftsmen and trade practitioners.

#### Details:

- As per the approved plan, training centres will be categorised on the basis of their infrastructure and past performance and third party agencies will be deployed to validate their training efforts and placement records.
- Members of Parliament will also be roped in to mobilise youth for training, monitor the scheme in their constituencies and post-training placement of trainees.
- For youths from the Kashmir Valley, the Leh region, the north-eastern States and Left-wing extremism-affected districts, residential programmes will be promoted.
- Training partners under the scheme will be required to ensure valid Aadhaar numbers of trainees at the time of enrolment and subsequently track attendance through students' biometrics.

**PMKVY:**

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the flagship outcome-based skill training scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE). The objective of this skill certification and reward scheme is to enable and mobilize a large number of Indian youth to take up outcome based skill training and become employable and earn their livelihood. Under the scheme, monetary reward would be provided to trainees who are successfully trained, assessed and certified in skill courses run by affiliated training providers.

Sources: the hindu.

**Paper 2 Topic:** *Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.*

**International Solar Alliance Cell and World Bank Signs Declaration for Promoting Solar Energy**

In a significant push for solar power, the World Bank has signed an agreement with the International Solar Alliance (ISA)—launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Paris climate summit last year—to mobilize \$1 trillion in investments by 2030. This agreement establishes the World Bank group as a financial partner for the alliance.

- As part of the agreement, the World Bank Group will develop a roadmap to mobilize financing for development and deployment of affordable solar energy, and work with other multilateral development banks and financial institutions to develop financing instruments to support solar energy development.

**Background:**

- ISA was launched at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in 2015 by Modi and French President Francois Hollande.

- The alliance, headquartered in India, aims to bring together countries situated between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn which receive abundant sunshine for around 300 days a year.
- This alliance brings together developing and developed countries to expand energy access, accelerate solar power deployment, and stimulate economic development.
- India will provide land and \$30 million to form a secretariat for the Alliance, and also support it for five years.
- Among the tasks that the Alliance would pursue are, cooperation in training, building institutions, regulatory issues, common standards, and investment including joint ventures.

Sources: the hindu.

### **MoU between India and Mauritius in the field of Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation**

The Union Cabinet has approved signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Mauritius.

#### Details:

- The MoU will help to establish a framework for cooperation between the National Development Unit, Prime Minister's Office of the Republic of Mauritius and the Ministry of Rural Development of the Republic of India in the sphere of rural development.
- The MoU will encourage cooperation in the field of rural development and capacity building on the basis of equality and mutual benefit between both countries.
- Under the MoU, a Joint Committee on Cooperation on Rural Development will be established which will meet alternatively in both countries on mutually agreed dates.
- Both countries have agreed to coordinate and facilitate appropriate technical cooperation, including the access to Indian expertise institutions that can assist in fulfilling the objectives of this MoU, exchange of relevant information and documents in the sphere of rural development.
- The MoU also facilitates transfer of latest technology, state of the art equipment and materials, and share best practices.

#### Background:

Both India and Mauritius have a large segment of their population living in rural areas and are pre-dominantly dependent on agriculture and its allied activities for their livelihoods. The Ministry of Rural Development plays a pivotal role in the overall development strategy of rural areas of the country.

Sources: pib.

### **Sri Lanka to seal trade pact with India by mid-2017**

India and Sri Lanka are planning to expedite negotiations on the proposed Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA). In this regard, a delegation from India will shortly visit Colombo.

#### Background:

India, accounting for 23% (\$ 4,268 million in 2015) of Sri Lanka's total imports, has been negotiating with the island nation on the ETCA, an extension over the existing Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

#### ETCA:

The Indo-Lanka **Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement** better known as ETCA (formerly CEPA) is a trade agreement. The ETCA agreement seeks to boost cooperation in technical areas, scientific expertise and research amongst institutions, boost standards of goods and services able to compete on the global market and improve opportunities for manpower training and human resource development.

Sources: the hindu.

### **MoUs between India and Mozambique**

Three agreements were signed in areas of drug trafficking, pulse trading and sports between India and Mozambique during PM Modi's recent visit to the country.

#### The three Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) are:

1. On reduction of drug trafficking and psychotropic substances and related materials.
2. On cooperation in the field of youth affairs and sports.
3. On long term agreement for purchase of pulses.

#### Key aspects of the MoUs:

- Mozambique will be focusing on the production of tur dal (Pigeon Peas) to facilitate the long term trade goals with India.
- The imports are aimed at dropping the consistent inflation of pulses that has been over 30% since a few months. The import deal has been signed for a duration of five financial years (till 2020-21).
- The trade will either be held by both the governments directly or through government-nominated private channels.
- The MoU on drug trafficking will aim at the reduction of the trade of psychotropic substances and related materials.

Sources: the hindu.

**India signs five agreements with Tanzania**

India and Tanzania have signed five agreements. The agreements were signed following delegation-level talks headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Tanzanian President John Magufuli.

[Details:](#)

- According to one agreement, India will extend a line of credit of \$92 million for the rehabilitation and improvement of the water supply system in Zanzibar.
- A memorandum of understanding (MoU) on water resource management and development was also signed.
- Another MoU seeks to establish a vocational training centre in Zanzibar.
- An MoU was also signed on visa waiver for diplomatic and official passport holders.
- An agreement was also signed between the National Small Industries Corporation of India and the Small Industries Development Organisation of Tanzania.

Sources: the hindu.

**India, Kenya to deepen security ties**

India and Kenya have signed seven pacts. These pacts were signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ongoing visit to the country.

[Details:](#)

MoUs signed between the two nations include:

- MoU on Defence Cooperation.
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of National Housing Policy Development and Management.
- MoU between Bureau of Indian Standards and Kenya Bureau of Standards.
- Agreement on Exemption of Visa for holders of Diplomatic Passports.
- Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income.
- Line of Credit Agreement for US\$ 15 million to IDB Capital Limited, for development of small and medium enterprises [SMEs].
- Line of Credit Agreement for US\$ 29.95 million to the Government of Kenya for upgrade of Rift Valley Textiles Factory (RIVATEX).

Sources: the hindu.

**Sri Lanka urged to ratify cluster convention**

Peace activist in Sri Lanka have pitched strongly for an early ratification of the **Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM)**. Experts say, this move will not only provide solace to those who were traumatised by the decades-long war in Sri Lanka but also reassure people of the country that such a heinous practice will not be resorted to in future.

[Convention on Cluster Munitions:](#)

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) is an international treaty that addresses the humanitarian consequences and unacceptable harm to civilians caused by cluster munitions, through a categorical prohibition and a framework for action.

- The Convention prohibits all use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions. In addition, it establishes a framework for cooperation and assistance to ensure adequate care and rehabilitation to survivors and their communities, clearance of contaminated areas, risk reduction education and destruction of stockpiles.
- Adopted in May 2008 in Dublin, Ireland, the Convention on Cluster Munitions entered into force on 01 August 2010.
- As of 16 June 2016, a total of 119 states have joined the Convention, as 100 States parties and 19 Signatories.

Countries that ratify the convention will be obliged “never under any circumstances to”:

- Use cluster munitions.
- Develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer to anyone, directly or indirectly, cluster munitions.
- Assist, encourage or induce anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Convention.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Loan agreement between ADB and India**

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed a \$100 million loan agreement to strengthen key irrigation and drainage system and improve water management in the Vennar sub-basin of the Cauvery delta in Tamil Nadu.

Details:

- The financing will be used to strengthen embankments of six major irrigation water channels in the Vennar system and rehabilitate 13 irrigation pumping schemes.
- The project aims to improve existing infrastructure and will provide flood protection and renewed access to irrigation.
- The loan will support Tamil Nadu’s water resources professionals to manage resources better, and with greater involvement of the stakeholders they service.
- Communities will be involved in planning and delivery of water services. Flood forecasting and warning systems will be installed and a flood risks map drawn up to help communities respond more effectively to extreme events.
- The loan from ADB’s ordinary capital resources has a 25-year term. The Water Resources Department of the State of Tamil Nadu is responsible for implementing the project, which is expected to be completed by December 2020.

Background:



The Cauvery river basin is a critical source of water for agriculture, both within Tamil Nadu and neighbouring states. The vast majority of the delta's population is engaged in farming and fishing.

Sources: pib.

***Paper 2 Topic:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.*

### **300 Indians stranded in Juba as civil war reignites**

Reignited civil war in Juba has left at least 300 Indians stranded. Juba is the capital of South Sudan. Fleeing the fight between the heavily armed rival factions divided on ethnic lines, Indians have taken refuge at various locations, including the Embassy of India.

- Law and order has broken down in the country. Even the U.N. peacekeeping contingent was busy defending its bases.

#### Background:

South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in July 2011, but the hard-won celebration was short-lived. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement, the ruling political party that originally led the way for independence, is now divided and fighting for power.

#### Recent crisis:

In December 2013, political infighting erupted into violence in the streets of the capital, Juba, after South Sudan's president accused his vice president of an attempted coup. Violence spread across the young nation like wildfire, displacing 413,000 civilians in just the first month of conflict. Tens of thousands of civilians rushed to seek refuge in U.N. bases that were subsequently turned into makeshift displacement camps. The fighting has continued, becoming increasingly brutal and affecting nearly the entire country.

#### What's going on now?

A handful of peace agreements have been signed over the course of the war — the most recent in August 2015 — but they have been repeatedly violated. The situation remains highly unstable. While some regions have recently become slightly less volatile, allowing people to move around fairly freely and return to their homes, violent outbreaks are still occurring throughout the country.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Tribunal rejects Beijing's claims on South China Sea**

The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague, Netherlands, has ruled that **China's claims of historical rights over South China Sea (SCS) has no legal basis**. China has boycotted the hearings at the Permanent Court of Arbitration, saying it does not have jurisdiction to decide on the matter.

**Background:**

The case against China was initiated by the Philippines. The Philippines formally lodged its arbitration case under the United Nations' 1982 Convention of the Law of the Sea, known as UNCLOS, in January 2013.

**What did the arbitration panel rule?**

The Hague-based PCA ruled that China has no legal basis to claim historical rights to islands in the SCS, and has violated Philippines' sovereign rights. It said Beijing "had no historic rights to resources in the waters of the South China Sea" and that "such rights were extinguished to the extent they were incompatible with the exclusive economic zones provided for in the Convention."

**Why is South China Sea considered so important?**

The SCS is a busy international waterway, being one of the main arteries of the global economy and trade. More than \$5 trillion of world trade ships pass through the SCS every year. The SCS is also resource rich, with numerous offshore oil and gas blocks.

**So what is the dispute about?**

There are a few hundred small islands in the SCS, a part of the Pacific Ocean. Some of the main ones are *Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands and Scarborough Shoal* — the bone of contention between *China and the Philippines*. China claims most of these islands as its own. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Taiwan have rival claims. China has said it will not permit other nations to infringe on what it considers its sovereign rights in the strategically vital area.

**Implications of this ruling:**

The ruling stands to further ramp up tensions in the region, where China's increased military assertiveness has spread concern among its smaller neighbours and is a point of confrontation with the United States. This victory for the Philippines could spur Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei, which also have overlapping claims, to file similar cases.

Sources: the hindu.

**Beijing could declare air defence zone over South China Sea**

China is planning to set up an air defence zone in the South China Sea (SCS). This announcement comes shortly after a UN-backed tribunal ruled the country had no historic rights over islands in the contested region.

**Implications:**

Setting up an ADIZ would mean that international flights flying over the waters would be required to notify China. China had set up an ADIZ over the East China Sea in 2013, prompting angry reactions from the US and Japan, though the zone was not fully enforced.

**Background:**

An arbitral tribunal set up by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PAC) in The Hague recently ruled that China had violated the sovereign rights of the Philippines and caused harm to the coral reef environment. However, China dismissed the verdict, calling the tribunal “illegal” and the ruling “null and void”.

Sources: the hindu.

***Paper 2 Topic:** Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.*

### **India abstains on vote for LGBT rights at U.N.**

India chose to abstain at the UN Human Rights Council vote recently to appoint an independent investigator to help protect homosexuals and transgender people worldwide from violence and discrimination.

- India abstained from the LGBT vote in the United Nations as the case is subjudice and the Supreme Court is yet to pronounce its verdict.
- However, overcoming strong objections by Saudi Arabia and Muslim countries, UNHRC adopted a Western-backed resolution by a vote of 23 states in favour and 18 against with six abstentions including that of India, South Africa and the Philippines.

#### Background:

In 2011, the UN rights body declared there should be no discrimination or violence against people based on their sexual orientation. At the time, Western countries called the vote historic but Islamic states firmly rejected it.

India's response on the LGBT vote in the UN comes hours after LGBT community members expressed disappointment over its move to help protect the rights of homosexuals and transgenders worldwide.

#### UNHRC:

It is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.

- It meets at the UN Office at Geneva.
- The Council is made up of 47 United Nations Member States which are elected by the UN General Assembly.
- The term of each seat is three years, and no member may occupy a seat for more than two consecutive terms.
- The council works closely with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and engages the United Nations' special procedures.

- The General Assembly can suspend the rights and privileges of any Council member that it decides has persistently committed gross and systematic violations of human rights during its term of membership. The suspension process requires a two-thirds majority vote by the General Assembly.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Indian Captain Radhika Menon Is First Woman To Get Bravery At Sea Award**

Captain **Radhika Menon**, first woman captain of the Indian Merchant Navy will receive IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea.

- The 2016 **International Maritime Organisation Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea** will be given to Captain Radhika Menon for her role in the dramatic rescue of seven fishermen from a sinking fishing boat in tumultuous seas in the Bay of Bengal in June last year.

#### About IMO:

The International Maritime Organization – is the **United Nations specialized agency** with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships.

- It has 171 Member States and three Associate Members.
- The IMO's primary purpose is to develop and maintain a comprehensive regulatory framework for shipping and its remit today includes safety, environmental concerns, legal matters, technical co-operation, maritime security and the efficiency of shipping.
- IMO is governed by an assembly of members and is financially administered by a council of members elected from the assembly.
- The IMO's structure comprises the Assembly, the Council, the Maritime Safety Committee, the Marine Environment Protection Committee, the Legal Committee, the Technical Cooperation Committee, and the secretariat, headed by a Secretary-General.

#### IMO council:

The IMO Council acts as the IMO's Governing Body. It has a crucial role to play in deciding various matters in relation to the global shipping industry, including its work programme strategy and budget.

- Members of the Council consist of 40 member states, elected by its Assembly including 10 members in category A with the largest interest in providing international shipping services; 10 members in category B with the largest interest in international seaborne trade and 20 members in category C with special interests in maritime transport or navigation.
- India has been one of the earliest members of the IMO, having ratified its Convention and joined it as a member-state in the year 1959.

[About the award:](#)

The annual Award was established by IMO to provide international recognition for those who, at the risk of losing their own life, perform acts of exceptional bravery, displaying outstanding courage in attempting to save life at sea or in attempting to prevent or mitigate damage to the marine environment.

- Nominations are scrutinized by an Assessment Panel made up of members of non governmental organizations in consultative status with IMO, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General.
- Subsequently, a Panel of Judges meets (under the chairmanship of the Chairman of the Council, with the participation of the Chairmen of the Maritime Safety Committee, the Marine Environment Protection Committee, the Legal Committee, the Technical Cooperation Committee and the Facilitation Committee) to consider the recommendations of the Assessment Panel and to select the recipient of the Award.

There are **three categories of honour**: first, the Award itself, for the nominee judged to have performed the most outstanding act of bravery from among those described. Secondly, Certificates of Commendation are awarded to nominees who have committed acts of extraordinary bravery. And, thirdly, Letters of Commendation are sent to those nominees who are judged to deserve some special recognition for meritorious actions.

Sources: pib.

**India to seek help for services pact at UN**

During the forthcoming **Nairobi meet of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**, India is planning to press for endorsement by more nations for its proposal on a global pact to expedite the services trade flow.

[About the pact:](#)

- It will officially be known as the '**Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) for Services**' at the World Trade Organisation (WTO)-level.
- The proposed pact, among other things, is aimed at making it easier for services professionals and skilled workers to move across borders for 'short-term' projects.
- Its objectives include streamlining procedures for global services trade, besides ensuring recognition at the WTO-level for services as a tradable item by establishing a framework — for clarity on definitions and for settlement of disputes.

[Background:](#)

The idea of a 'TFA for Services' – similar to the WTO's 'TFA for Goods' — was mooted by India soon after the WTO's tenth Ministerial Conference in Nairobi in December 2015. India had on April 22 ratified the 'TFA for Goods', which is aimed at easing customs norms and boosting global merchandise trade.

- India had reiterated the proposal for a TFA in Services during the informal meeting of trade ministers from 25 WTO member countries on the sidelines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ministerial council meeting in Paris.

### Trade facilitation:

The Trade Facilitation Agreement forms part of the **Bali Package** agreed by members at the **Ninth Ministerial Conference** in Bali.

- The agreement contains provisions for faster and more efficient customs procedures through effective cooperation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and customs compliance issues. It also contains provisions for technical assistance and capacity building in this area.
- It is being believed, especially by the proponents of the agreement that deal could add \$1 trillion to global GDP and also can generate 21 million jobs by slashing red tape and streamlining customs.

### UNCTAD:

UNCTAD has 194 member States and is the UN subsidiary looking at measures to boost trade and investment in developing countries.

- Upcoming Nairobi (Kenya) meet will be the UN Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) 14th quadrennial 'Ministerial Conference'.
- The 'Ministerial Conference' is the Geneva-headquartered UNCTAD's highest decision-making body, and is held every four years ever since UNCTAD was set up in 1964.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Ulaanbaatar Declaration adopted**

The **11<sup>th</sup> edition of the Asia-Europe Meeting Summit (ASEM11)** was recently concluded in Ulaanbaatar.

- The theme of the Summit is '**20 Years of ASEM: Partnership for the Future through Connectivity**'.
- **Ulaanbaatar Declaration** was adopted as an outcome document of the Summit, in which the participating leaders from Asia and Europe renewed their political will and strong resolve to work together to promote mutually beneficial partnership and co-operation between the two continents, with a view to building a better future for the peoples of Asia and Europe.

### Highlights:

- The declaration has reaffirmed ASEM's commitment for greater partnership through informal political dialogue and initiatives in economic and socio-cultural fields.
- It also has expressed its commitment for united fight against terrorism and violent extremism.

- The declaration will also focus on maritime security cyber security.

**ASEM:**

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation bringing together the 28 European Union member states, 2 other European countries, and the European Union with 21 Asian countries and the ASEAN Secretariat.

- The ASEM dialogue addresses political, economic and cultural issues, with the objective of strengthening the relationship between the two regions, in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership.
- It was officially established on 1 March 1996 at the first summit in Bangkok, Thailand.
- The ASEM Summit is a biennial meeting between the Heads of State and Government, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Sources: the hindu.

**UNESCO declares Nalanda Mahavihara World Heritage Site**

UNESCO has declared Bihar's much awaited ancient site – the ruins of Nalanda Mahavihara – a World Heritage Site.

- With the inclusion of Nalanda, this would be the **second UNESCO Heritage Site in Bihar after Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya.**

**Key facts:**

- Nalanda stands out as the most ancient university of the Indian Subcontinent. It engaged in the organized transmission of knowledge over an uninterrupted period of 800 years.
- The historical development of the site testifies to the development of Buddhism into a religion and the flourishing of monastic and educational traditions.
- It was a major Mahavihara or a large Buddhist monastery that also doubled up as an important centre of learning from the 5th to 1200 AD in the erstwhile kingdom of Magadh.
- The construction of Nalanda university began in 5th century AD and flourished under the Gupta rulers. It came to an end in the 12th century when it was destroyed in 1193 AD by the invading Turkish army led by its commander Bakhtiar Khilji.

**UNESCO world heritage site:**

A UNESCO World Heritage Site is a place that is listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as of special cultural or physical significance.

- The list is maintained by the **international World Heritage Programme administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee**, composed of 21 UNESCO member states which are elected by the General Assembly.



- Each World Heritage Site remains part of the legal territory of the state wherein the site is located and UNESCO considers it in the interest of the international community to preserve each site.
- The List of recorded sites on the World Heritage now stands at 981 which include both cultural and natural wonders.
- Italy is home to the greatest number of World Heritage Sites with 50 sites.

Sources: the hindu.

### GS III

*Paper 3 Topic: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.*

#### **RBI's steps on FCNR get FSDC nod**

The Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) recently said that the Reserve Bank of India has taken the right steps to address the issue of concessional swaps against Foreign Currency Non-Resident (FCNR) deposits.

##### Background:

Banks had raised about \$34 billion through FCNR (B) deposits in 2013, most of which are due this year. In 2013 the rupee was at an all-time low of 68.85 against the dollar and the central bank had asked commercial banks to raise the foreign currency deposits to shore up reserves. Banks, then, had swapped those dollars with the RBI. The central bank thereafter readied itself by buying forwards dollar. Now, the RBI estimates that the immediate effect of the maturity of these deposits would be an outflow of about \$20 billion.

##### Details:

- FCNR (B) deposits mature mostly in three years. RBI had said that the swaps and the forwards will take care of the dollar requirement and should be neutral for the reserves. However, banks should witness deposit base depletion and some rupee liquidity will be strained.
- RBI had also said that it would take "all necessary measures to even out the resultant rupee liquidity gaps through use of appropriate instruments".
- Assuring the market that the swaps are adequately covered by RBI's forward purchases, the central bank, however, had also cautioned that the foreign exchange reserve could see some dip in the interim as the swaps and forwards are not timed perfectly.

##### FCNR:

An FCNR account is a term deposit account that can be maintained by NRIs and PIOs in foreign currency. Thus, FCNRs are not savings accounts but fixed deposit accounts. The account can be opened in the name of NRI individuals (single/ joint) or with resident Indians on 'former or survivor' basis.

[What foreign currencies can one maintain in FCNR accounts?](#)

Prior to 2011, FCNR deposits were allowed to be maintained in six currencies: US dollar, Pound Sterling (GBP), Euro, Japanese Yen, Australian dollar and Canadian dollar. However, in October 2011, the RBI decided that authorised dealer banks in India may be permitted to accept FCNR deposits in any permitted currency. 'Permitted currency' for this purpose would mean a foreign currency which is freely convertible and popularly include Danish Krone, Swiss Frank and Swedish Krona among others.

[Exemption from IT:](#)

It should also be noted here that interest income from FCNR (B) accounts is exempt from Income Tax. And deposit held under FCNR (B) a/cs is not taxable under Wealth Tax.

Sources: the hindu.

### **BSE unveils online system for Sovereign gold bond**

BSE has unveiled an online bidding platform for sovereign gold bonds and begun conducting mock bidding sessions on the system. BSE has received Reserve Bank's approval to start an online bidding platform for **sovereign gold bond (SGB) scheme**. So far, three tranches of the bonds have been issued amounting to about Rs.1,322 crore.

[About Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme:](#)

Under the scheme, gold bonds are issued in denominations of 5 grams, 10 grams, 50 grams and 100 grams for a term of 5-7 years with a rate of interest to be calculated on the value of the metal at the time of investment. The scheme has an annual cap of 500 grams per person.

- The bonds will be sold through banks, Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited and designated post offices.
- As per the scheme, the gold bonds will be sold only to resident Indian entities including individuals, Hindu undivided families, trusts, universities, and charitable institutions.
- The bond tenure will be eight years with exit option beginning the fifth year onwards. They will also be tradable in the bourses.
- Bonds can also be used as collateral for loans.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Sebi notifies stricter transfer norms for Participatory Notes**

To allay concerns over misuse of controversy-ridden P-Notes, regulator Sebi has notified new norms restricting transfer of these offshore instruments **only to entities authorised for their use and that too after prior consent from the issuer foreign investor**.

Details:

- As per the new notification, a foreign portfolio investor will have to ensure that any transfer of offshore derivative instruments issued by or on behalf of it, is made subject to two specific conditions — such ODIs are transferred to persons fulfilling Sebi norms for subscription and a prior consent of the FPI is obtained for such transfer, except when the persons to whom the ODIs are to be transferred to are pre-approved by the FPI.
- As per the Sebi regulations, no FPI can issue, subscribe to or otherwise deal in ODIs, directly or indirectly, unless they satisfy certain strict conditions. As per these conditions, the ODIs can be issued only to persons who are regulated by an appropriate foreign regulatory authority and they can be issued only after compliance to the prescribed 'know your client' norms.
- Also, only the top-two categories of FPIs, including sovereign funds, central banks and multi-lateral institutions, and certain broad-based funds including insurers and pension notes, can issue or deal in ODIs.
- The Category III FPIs, which mostly include hedge funds and individual investors, cannot issue, subscribe to or otherwise deal in ODIs, directly or indirectly.
- All these conditions would now also apply for transfer of the ODIs.

What are P-notes?

Participatory Notes or Offshore Derivative Units are issued by Sebi-registered foreign portfolio investors to other overseas entities looking for an exposure to the Indian markets without getting registered directly to save on costs and procedures.

Sources: the hindu.

**Income Declaration Scheme extended to September 2017**

The Centre has announced an extension of a deadline under the Income Declaration Scheme, aimed at bringing undeclared income and assets into the tax net to, September 30, 2017.

Details:

- The government has also decided to stagger the due dates for the payments. According to the new plan, a minimum of 25% of the tax, surcharge and penalty is to be paid by November 30, 2016, another 25% by March 31, 2017, and the remaining amount by September 30, 2017. The previous deadline for the entire payment of the tax, interest, and penalty was November 30, 2016.
- The government also clarified about a pending issue on whether the tax, surcharge and penalty could be paid with undisclosed income not included in the amount that was originally declared, effectively reducing the rate payable from 45% to 31%. If a person declared Rs.100 lakh as undisclosed income under the scheme, then he would have to pay a

total of Rs.45 lakh as tax, surcharge and penalty. In case this is paid from other undisclosed income, then “the declarant will not get any immunity under the Scheme.”

Background:

The Income Declaration Scheme offers people with undisclosed income to declare it by paying a penal tax rate of 45% on such income. An amendment in this regard was also recently moved in the Finance Bill, 2016. The Finance Bill has imported Section 138 of the Income Tax Act into the declaration scheme's ambit. Bringing in Section 138 to the Scheme brings in objectivity on confidentiality of income tax information and the limitations thereof.

Sources: the hindu.

### **India slips on business optimism index: survey**

**Business Optimism Index**, part of Grant Thornton International Business Report (IBR) for April-June 2016, was recently released. The survey took note of 2,500 businesses across 36 economies.

Highlights:

- India slipped to the **third position**, during April-June, after remaining on top globally for the two preceding quarters.
- Companies in India were mainly concerned about the delays in key reforms like the goods and services tax, non-resolution of tax disputes and the banking sector's performance.
- India continues to top the chart on expectations of revenue increases.
- Growth in employment expectations dropped to the second position during this period from top rank in the previous quarter.
- The rank on optimism further slipped to fourth in terms of profitability expectations.
- While the business confidence in India has weakened, there is a rise in optimism on the export front. However, red tape continued to hamper growth and ranked India as number two on the issue.
- Research and development continue to be an area of concern.
- On the global front, there is a rise in the proportion of businesses worldwide expecting increased revenue over the coming 12 months. However, growth in global export expectations continues to be slow, indicating that revenue is dependent on domestic consumer spending power.
- Consumer spending is now under threat from increased political instability, recovering oil prices and reduced plans to offer pay increases.

Sources: the hindu.

***Paper 3 Topic:** Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.*

### **Automation to hit textile sector jobs**

According to a recently released report, the textile industry in the country is unlikely to create more jobs along with the growth in the industry.

#### What the report says?

Textile and apparel industry in India is likely to create only 29 lakh jobs compared to the government's target of one crore new jobs, even as the sector's market size is expected to grow by 40% to \$142 billion in the next five years.

#### Why?

This is mainly because of automation. The technological advancement leading to increased efficiency may reduce job opportunities. The spinning, autoconers and auto-splicers divisions have replaced a job of 20 workers by 2 workers. The inter-fiber shift, moving from relatively labour intensive spun yarn to synthetic filament segment, are also leading to lower job creation.

#### Concerns:

- As per a World Bank report, 69% of the jobs in India are at a higher risk of being replaced by automation.
- Also, according to the report, absence of FTAs with the EU, Australia and Canada, almost 55 lakh jobs are lost to added exports that would have been generated if the FTAs were signed.

#### Way ahead:

- The government recently approved a Rs.6,000 crore package for textiles and apparel sector with an aim to create one crore new jobs in three years and attract investments of \$11 billion.
- Along with this, both Central and state governments need to actively promote hub and spoke model in the sector to increase supply of suitable jobs to rural women and youth.

Sources: the hindu.

***Paper 3 Topic:** Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.*

### **Interest subvention**

The Union Cabinet has approved the Interest Subvention Scheme for farmers for the year 2016-17. The Government has earmarked a sum of Rs. 18,276 Crore for this purpose.

- This will help farmers getting short term crop loan payable within one year up to Rs. 3 lakhs at only 4% per annum.

#### The salient features of the scheme are as follows:

- The Central Government will provide interest subvention of 5% per annum to all farmers for short term crop loan upto one year for loan upto Rs. 3 lakhs borrowed by them during the year 2016-17. Farmers will thus have to effectively pay only 4% as interest. In case farmers do not repay the short term crop loan in time they would be eligible for interest subvention of 2% as against 5% available above.
- In order to give relief to small and marginal farmers who would have to borrow at 9% for the post harvest storage of their produce, the Central Government has approved an interest subvention of 2% i.e an effective interest rate of 7% for loans upto 6 months.
- To provide relief to the farmers affected by Natural Calamities, the interest subvention of 2% will be provided to Banks for the first year on the restructured amount.
- In case farmers do not repay the short term crop loan in time they would be eligible for interest subvention of 2% as against 5% available above.

Sources: pib.

*Paper 3 Topic: infrastructure.*

### **Logistics performance index**

India has improved its ranking in the World Bank Group's bi-annual "**Logistics Performance Index 2016**", jumping from 54th in 2014 to 35th in 2016. This was announced by the **World Bank Group** in its recent launch of the report.

- In the latest ranking India has gone past countries like New Zealand, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Iceland, Latvia and Indonesia who were ahead of it in the index.

India has improved significantly in the following sub-indices:

- The efficiency of customs and border management clearance, improving from 65 to 38.
- The ability to track and trace consignments, improving from 57 to 33.
- The quality of trade and transport infrastructure, improving from 58 to 36.
- The competence and quality of logistics services, improving from 52 to 32.
- On the remaining two sub-indices – the ease of arranging competitively priced shipments and the frequency with which shipments reach consignees within scheduled or expected delivery times – by 5 and 9 places respectively.

Background:

The World Bank Group's bi-annual report 'Connecting to Compete 2016: Trade Logistics in the Global Economy', launched recently, captures critical information about the complexity of international trade. The Logistics Performance Index (LPI) within the report scores 160 countries on key criteria of logistics performance.

- The scores are based on two sources of information: a worldwide survey of logistics professionals operating on the ground (such as global freight forwarders and express

carriers), who provide feedback on the countries in which they operate and with whom they trade; and quantitative data on the performance of key components of the supply chain, such as the time, cost and required procedures to import and export goods.

- The World Bank studies the policy regulation as well as supply chain performance outcomes across six sub-indices of the Logistics Performance Index and ranks countries based on their performance in all the indices.

Sources: pib.

### **Development of Port-Rail Connectivity Projects approved under Sagarmala Programme**

The Ministry of Railways will be taking up 21 port-rail connectivity projects, at an estimated cost of more than Rs.20,000 Crores, as identified under the port-connectivity enhancement objective of **Sagarmala**, the flagship programme of the **Ministry of Shipping**.

- These projects are aimed at strengthening the rail evacuation network and the last mile connectivity to the ports. In addition, another six projects are being considered by the Indian Port Rail Corporation Limited (IPRCL).
- The Indian Port Rail Corporation Limited (IPRCL), which has been incorporated by the Ministry of Shipping, would take up the projects after prioritizing them. IPRCL has already awarded 3 port connectivity projects for Vishakhapatnam and Chennai ports for quick evacuation of cargo, and another 19 projects are in the pipeline.

#### Sagarmala Initiative:

The Sagarmala project seeks to develop a string of ports around India's coast. The objective of this initiative is to promote "Port-led development" along India's 7500 km long coastline.

- It aims to develop access to new development regions with intermodal solutions and promotion of the optimum modal split, enhanced connectivity with main economic centres and beyond through expansion of rail, inland water, coastal and road services.
- **The Union Ministry of Shipping has been appointed as the nodal ministry** for this initiative.

The Sagarmala initiative will address challenges by focusing on three pillars of development, namely:

- Supporting and enabling Port-led Development through appropriate policy and institutional interventions and providing for an institutional framework for ensuring inter-agency and ministries/departments/states' collaboration for integrated development.
- Port Infrastructure Enhancement, including modernization and setting up of new ports.
- Efficient Evacuation to and from hinterland.

#### Other objectives:



- In addition to strengthening port and evacuation infrastructure, it also aims at simplifying procedures used at ports for cargo movement and promotes usage of electronic channels for information exchange leading to quick, efficient, hassle-free and seamless cargo movement.
- It also strives to ensure sustainable development of the population living in the Coastal Economic Zone (CEZ). This would be done by synergising and coordinating with State Governments and line Ministries of Central Government through their existing schemes and programmes such as those related to community and rural development, tribal development and employment generation, fisheries, skill development, tourism promotion etc.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Nuclear plants insured**

India's first insurance policy covering public liability to an atomic power plant operator has been issued to Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL).

#### Details:

- The insurance policy was issued by the country's largest non-life insurer **New India Assurance Company Ltd.**
- NPCIL got the insurance policy covering all its atomic power plants. The total premium came around Rs. 100 crore for a risk cover of Rs. 1,500 crore.
- The policy complies with all the provisions of the **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act.**
- The policy would cover the liability towards public as a consequence of any nuclear accident in the plants covered under the policy and also the right of recourse of NPCIL against equipment suppliers.
- However, the reinstatement premium would be decided post a claim based on the capacity — to underwrite the risk-available with the insurers. Reinstatement clause in an insurance policy enables a policyholder to extend the insurance cover to the original limit on payment of premium post a claim.
- The policy does not have any 'policy excess' — part of the claim a policyholder has to bear himself.

#### Background:

The Central government had announced in June 2015 the setting up of the Rs. 1,500-crore India Nuclear Insurance Pool to be managed by national reinsurer GIC Re.

- The GIC Re, four government-owned general insurers and also some private general insurers have provided the capacity to insure the risks of up to Rs 1,000 crore with the balance Rs 500 crore being obtained from the British Nuclear Insurance Pool.
- The insurance pool was formed as a risk transfer mode for the suppliers and also NPCIL.

Sources: the hindu.

**Many don't have power in 'power-surplus India'**

The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has released the Load Generation and Balance Report (LGBR) 2016-17.

Highlights of the report:

- In India, 300 million people don't have access to electricity, power cuts are rampant and per capita power consumption is significantly lower than the world average.
- The deficit has reduced from 11% in 2008-09 to 2.9% in 2015-16 and for the first time, there will be a surplus in 2016-17. India is likely to experience the energy surplus of 1.1% in 2016-17. However, state discoms are unable to buy electricity due to poor financial health.
- Transmission and distribution constraints are also responsible for power cuts. To solve this problem, the government launched the Ujjawal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY) in November 2015. By operational and financial turnaround of discoms, UDAY is expected to facilitate reliable, adequate and sufficient power supply to consumers, among other things.
- On an average, in 2015-16, the per capita consumption in India was 1,070 kWh, less than the world average of 3,026 kWh. It is also the lowest among BRICS nations.
- The low per capita consumption is mainly due to a large population, a low per capita income and a huge population not having access to electricity.
- Note that six States — Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, Sikkim, Mizoram, Tripura — will be power-surplus in 2016-17 but the per capita availability in the States is lower than the national average. Overall, 17 States will have power-surplus in 2016-17.
- Power demand for India grew by 6.6% in 2014-15 and 4.2% in 2015-16. In the last two years, Bihar — which has the lowest per capita power availability, witnessed the highest percentage growth, with demand increasing by around 25% in both years. This is indicative of more people getting connected to the grid.

Sources: the hindu.

***Paper 3 Topic:** Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.*

**Jawaharlal Nehru Port Becomes First Port in Country to Implement Logistics Data Tagging of Containers**

Jawaharlal Nehru Port has become the **first port in the country to implement logistics data tagging of containers**. The Port recently implemented the logistics data bank tagging of containers, first of its kind facility, which will help importers/exporters track their goods in transit through logistics data bank service.

### How it operates?

An RFID (Radio Frequency Identification Tag) tag would be attached to each container which would be tracked through RFID readers installed at different locations.

### Benefits:

- This would provide the 'Visibility' and 'Transparency' of the EXIM Container Movement by covering the entire movement through rail or road till the ICDs (Inland Container Depot) and CFSs (Container Freight Station).
- This service will integrate the information available with various agencies across the supply chain to provide detailed real time information within a single window.
- This would help in reducing the overall lead time of the container movement across the western corridor and lower the transaction costs incurred by shippers and consignees.

### What is RFID tagging?

RFID tagging is an ID system that uses small radio frequency identification devices for identification and tracking purposes. An RFID tagging system includes the tag itself, a read/write device, and a host system application for data collection, processing, and transmission. An RFID tag (sometimes called an RFID transponder) consists of a chip, some memory and an antenna.

RFID tags that contain their own power source are known as active tags. Those without a power source are known as passive tags. A passive tag is briefly activated by the radio frequency (RF) scan of the reader.

Sources: the hindu.

***Paper 3 Topic:** Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.*

### **Juno successfully enters Jupiter orbit: NASA**

NASA's unmanned Juno spacecraft has successfully entered Jupiter's orbit, after a five year journey.

### Background:

Juno was launched nearly five years ago on a mission to study Jupiter's composition and evolution. It's the first spacecraft to orbit Jupiter since Galileo. Galileo was deliberately crashed into Jupiter on September 21, 2003, to protect one of its discoveries — a possible ocean beneath Jupiter's moon Europa.

Galileo, launched in 1989, circled Jupiter for nearly a decade, beaming back splendid views of the planet and its numerous moons. It uncovered signs of an ocean beneath the icy surface of the moon Europa, considered a top target in the search for life outside Earth.

### Other details:

- The Juno spacecraft – named after the Roman goddess and wife of Jupiter – is packed with nine instruments capable of peering into the planet’s heart.
- It will fly 2,600 miles above the cloud tops – 3,000 miles closer to the surface than any other mission has ever achieved.
- Juno became the **first spacecraft to cruise this far out into the solar system powered solely by the sun**, beating Europe’s Rosetta spacecraft. A trio of massive solar wings sticks out from Juno like blades from a windmill, generating 500 watts of power to run its nine instruments.
- Juno, built by Lockheed Martin, is an armored spacecraft – its computer and electronics are locked in a titanium vault to shield them from harmful radiation. Even so, Juno is expected to get blasted with radiation equal to more than 100 million dental X-rays during the mission.

#### *What next?*

Once in position to begin its 20-month science mission, Juno will fly in egg-shaped orbits, each one lasting 14 days, to peer through the planet’s thick clouds, map its gargantuan magnetic field and probe through the crushing atmosphere for evidence of a dense inner core. The probe also will hunt for water in Jupiter’s thick atmosphere, a key yardstick for figuring out how far away from the sun the gas giant formed.

Sources: the hindu.

#### **New Horizons’ next goal**

After its historic first-ever flyby of Pluto, NASA’s New Horizons mission has received the green light to fly onward to an object deeper in the Kuiper Belt. NASA has extended its mission to go further into the Kuiper Belt to explore an ancient object, which is a remnant from the time when the planets in our Solar System first formed. The Kuiper Belt Object, the spacecraft is now heading for, is provisionally called 2014 MU69.

#### *About New Horizons Mission:*

New Horizons was launched on 19 January 2006, and has been travelling through space for the past nine years.

- Just over a year after launch, it passed Jupiter and used the giant world’s gravity to boost its velocity, as well as making scientific observations. This boost shortened the time to reach Pluto by years.
- In July 2015, New Horizons flew 12,500km above the dwarf planet’s icy surface, becoming the first spacecraft to explore Pluto.
- New Horizon’s core science mission is to map the surfaces of Pluto and Charon, to study Pluto’s atmosphere and to take temperature readings.

- The spacecraft was launched in 2006, before the big debate started over Pluto's status as a planet. In August of that same year, the International Astronomical Union reclassified Pluto as a dwarf planet.

Kuiper belt is a region of the solar system beyond the planets, extending from the orbit of Neptune. It consist mainly small bodies or remnants from the solar system's formation.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Network Readiness Index**

India has slipped two places to the 91st position on a global list of countries in terms of their readiness for transition to a digitised economy and society. The annual **Networked Readiness Index** was released by the Geneva-based World Economic Forum (WEF).

- The index, forming part of the WEF's Global Information Technology Report, measures countries' success in creating the conditions necessary for a transition to a digitised economy and society.

#### Key facts:

- Among the major emerging markets, India is ranked the lowest with Russia retaining the top place at 41st rank, followed by China at 59th (up three places), South Africa up 10 places at the 65th spot and Brazil moving up to the 72nd position.
- The list is once again topped by Singapore while Finland has also retained its second place.
- Others in the top-ten are Sweden, Norway, the US, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the UK, Luxembourg and Japan.
- India's position on the list has come down for the fourth year in a row, from 89th in 2015, 83rd in 2014 and 68th in 2013.
- While India has scored better in terms of political and regulatory environment (78th position), it fares worse in terms of business and innovation environment (110th).
- In terms of infrastructure it is even worse at 114th place, while it is ranked very high at 8th place in terms of affordability. India also fares poorly on sub-indices for skills and individual usage.
- According to the report, lack of infrastructure (114th) and low levels of skills among the population (101st) remain the key bottlenecks to widespread ICT adoption, especially in terms of individual usage (120th).
- The report further noted that a third of the Indian population is still illiterate and a similar share of youth is not enrolled in secondary education.
- India's performance in terms of providing online services and allowing e-participation has so far been in line with that of peer countries, but far from the global best (57th and 40th, respectively).

Sources: the hindu.

### **DAWN marks ice-bearing Ceres craters**

Scientists with NASA's Dawn mission have identified, on the dwarf planet Ceres, permanently shadowed regions most of which likely have been cold enough to trap water ice for a billion years. The findings suggest that that ice deposits could exist in these regions even now.

#### Key findings:

- The conditions on Ceres are right for accumulating deposits of water ice. Ceres has just enough mass to hold on to water molecules, and the permanently shadowed regions identified are extremely cold — colder than most that exist on the moon or Mercury.
- Permanently shadowed regions do not receive direct sunlight. They are typically located on the crater floor or along a section of the crater wall facing the pole. The regions still receive indirect sunlight, but if the temperature stays below about minus minus 151 degrees Celsius, the permanently shadowed area is a cold trap: a good place for water ice to accumulate and remain stable.

#### Dawn mission:

NASA's Dawn mission will study the asteroid Vesta and dwarf planet Ceres, celestial bodies believed to have accreted early in the history of the solar system. The mission will characterize the early solar system and the processes that dominated its formation.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Juno Spacecraft Sends First Image From Orbit Around Jupiter**



NASA's Juno spacecraft has sent an image of Jupiter and three of its moons. It's the first spacecape returned after the probe's daring plunge through Jupiter's lethal radiation belts.

#### Details:

- Juno took the photo while it was 2.7 million miles away from the solar system's biggest planet.

- In it, Jupiter's beautiful atmospheric bands and shrinking Great Red Spot are visible. Also shown, hanging against the cosmic black, are three of the planet's four Galilean moons- volcanic Io, humongous Ganymede, and watery Europa.

Background:

Juno was launched nearly five years ago on a mission to study Jupiter's composition and evolution. It's the first spacecraft to orbit Jupiter since Galileo. Juno spacecraft successfully entered Jupiter's orbit recently, after a five year journey.

Other details:

- The Juno spacecraft – named after the Roman goddess and wife of Jupiter – is packed with nine instruments capable of peering into the planet's heart.
- It will fly 2,600 miles above the cloud tops – 3,000 miles closer to the surface than any other mission has ever achieved.
- Juno became the first spacecraft to cruise this far out into the solar system powered solely by the sun, beating Europe's Rosetta spacecraft. A trio of massive solar wings sticks out from Juno like blades from a windmill, generating 500 watts of power to run its nine instruments.
- Juno, built by Lockheed Martin, is an armored spacecraft – its computer and electronics are locked in a titanium vault to shield them from harmful radiation. Even so, Juno is expected to get blasted with radiation equal to more than 100 million dental X-rays during the mission.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3 Topic: biodiversity.

**India's thriving biodiversity: 445 new species added in 2015**

In all, 445 new species have been added to India's list in 2015, according to the report on animal and plant discoveries of 2015. The figure includes 262 animal species and 183 plant species. The country is home to 97,514 species of animals.

Details:

- The list includes four species of reptiles, six species of amphibians, 26 species of fishes, three species of wild ginger and three of figs among others.
- Some of the notable additions to the list of animals include a rock gecko (*Hemidactylus yajurvedi*) found in Kanker Chhattishgarh, a new frog species (*Fejervarya gomantaki*) from the Western Ghats, and a shiny new species of fish (*Barilius ardens*), also from the Western Ghats.



- Among the plants, a new species of ginger *Zingiber bipinianum* has been found in the South Garo hills of Meghalaya, and a species of mushroom (*Bondarzewia zonata*) has been collected from north Sikkim at an altitude of 2,829 m.
- The most discoveries were made in the Eastern Himalaya region, which accounts for 19% of the total discoveries followed by the Western Ghats (18%) and Andaman and Nicobar Islands at about 15%.

Sources: the hindu.

*Paper 3 Topic: conservation.*

### **Plantation drive on 1,500 km of National Highways under Green Highways Project**

The government recently launched the initial plantation drive on 1,500 km of National Highways at a cost of about Rs 300 crore under the **National Green Highways Mission**.

#### Background:

The government, in September 2015, flagged off its Green Highways (Plantation, Transplantation, Beautification and Maintenance) Policy 2015. The policy aims to help the environment, help local communities, and generate employment by planting trees along all the highways in the country.

#### Key features:

- The vision of the policy is to provide dignified employment to local people and communities.
- Under this policy, every year 1% of the total cost of highway projects will go to the **Green Highways Fund**. That works out to around Rs.1,000 crore every year.
- The policy's objectives include developing a framework for the plantation of trees along highways, reducing the impact of air pollution and dust, providing shade on glaring hot roads during summer, reducing the impact of noise pollution and soil erosion, preventing the glare from the headlights of oncoming vehicles, and generating employment.
- The Policy envisages a strict system of **auditing** whereby money will be released by the government to the empanelled agencies only if they have achieved a **survival rate of 90%** the previous year.
- The implementation and progress of plantation will be monitored via images by **Indian Space Research Organisation or ISRO** and audit will involve **modern information technology tools**.
- According to the policy, contracts for greening will be given to **NGOS, agencies, private companies and government organisations** with proven track record in the past in the field. Those selected will be responsible for the survival and health of trees and will be strictly monitored by a body appointed by the ministry.
- The target for the first year is to cover 6,000 km of highways.

#### Benefits:

- The greening project has a huge potential to generate jobs and can prove to be a game-changer for agriculture and rural economy. It is estimated that greening of one km of highway provides employment to ten people.
- The community will gain in terms of huge employment opportunities and entrepreneurship development.
- Also, the afforestation is expected to help in sequestering approximately 12 lakh mt carbon annually.

Sources: pib.

### **Ozone layer over Antarctic shows signs of healing**

Atmospheric scientists have seen signs of the mending of the ozone hole above the Antarctic. Scientists have said that this healing is a direct result of the curb on the release of chlorofluorocarbons following from the **Montreal protocol** of 1987.

- Scientists have found that the ozone hole has shrunk by more than four million square kilometres since 2000. This is the year when ozone depletion was at its peak.

#### [What is ozone hole?](#)

The ozone hole is a region of depleted layers of ozone above the Antarctic region, whose creation is linked to increased cases of skin cancer.

#### [Factors responsible for the depletion of ozone:](#)

Depletion of ozone is due to many factors, the most dominant of which is the release of chlorine from CFCs (Chlorofluorocarbons) which destroys the ozone. CFCs are released by products such as hairsprays, old refrigerators etc.

According to scientists, there are three stages in the [ozone recovery process](#):

1. Reduced rate of decline.
2. Levelling off of the depletion.
3. Ozone increase linked to reduction of the levels of CFCs.

#### [Montreal protocol:](#)

The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was designed to reduce the production and consumption of ozone depleting substances in order to reduce their abundance in the atmosphere, and thereby protect the earth's fragile ozone Layer. The original Montreal Protocol was agreed on 16 September 1987 and entered into force on 1 January 1989.

- The Montreal Protocol includes a unique adjustment provision that enables the Parties to the Protocol to respond quickly to new scientific information and agree to accelerate the reductions required on chemicals already covered by the Protocol. These adjustments are then automatically applicable to all countries that ratified the Protocol.

- Montreal Protocol stipulates that the production and consumption of compounds that deplete ozone in the stratosphere-chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, carbon tetrachloride, and methyl chloroform-are to be phased out by 2000 (2005 for methyl chloroform).
- These compounds significantly deplete the stratospheric ozone layer that shields the planet from damaging UV-B radiation.
- So far, 197 countries have signed the Protocol.
- The treaty now calls for complete phase out of HCFC by 2030.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Impose Rs 5,000 fine for littering track: NGT to Railways**

The National Green Tribunal has directed the Indian Railways to “strictly” impose fine of Rs 5,000 on those throwing waste on rail tracks and act against them effectively.

- The tribunal has also directed the Railways to produce a list of offenders who have been fined till date for throwing garbage and other waste on tracks.
- The tribunal has also slammed Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) for the delay in relocation and rehabilitation of slum clusters near the railway tracks.

#### **Background:**

The green panel had earlier slammed Railways over human defecation and other waste on rail lines and directed the authorities to expeditiously decide on rehabilitation of slum clusters located near the tracks. It had also asked the authorities to impose a fine of Rs 5,000 on those defecating and throwing waste on tracks and act against them effectively.

#### **National Green Tribunal (NGT)**

The National Green Tribunal has been established under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010 for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources including enforcement of any legal right relating to environment and giving relief and compensation for damages to persons and property and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

- It is a specialized body equipped with the necessary expertise to handle environmental disputes involving multi-disciplinary issues.
- The Tribunal is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.
- The Tribunal’s dedicated jurisdiction in environmental matters shall provide speedy environmental justice and help reduce the burden of litigation in the higher courts.
- The Tribunal is mandated to make and endeavour for disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing of the same.

**Members:**

- The sanctioned strength of the tribunal is currently 10 expert members and 10 judicial members although the act allows for up to 20 of each.
- The Chairman of the tribunal who is the administrative head of the tribunal also serves as a judicial member.
- Every bench of the tribunal must consist of at least one expert member and one judicial member. The Chairman of the tribunal is required to be a serving or retired Chief Justice of a High Court or a judge of the Supreme Court of India.
- Members are chosen by a selection committee (headed by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court of India) that reviews their applications and conducts interviews.
- The Judicial members are chosen from applicants who are serving or retired judges of High Courts. Expert members are chosen from applicants who are either serving or retired bureaucrats not below the rank of an Additional Secretary to the Government of India (not below the rank of Principal Secretary if serving under a state government) with a minimum administrative experience of five years in dealing with environmental matters. Or, the expert members must have a doctorate in a related field.

**Other notable facts:**

- The Tribunal has Original Jurisdiction on matters of “substantial question relating to environment” (i.e. a community at large is affected, damage to public health at broader level) & “damage to environment due to specific activity” (such as pollution). However there is no specific method is defined in Law for determining “substantial” damage to environment, property or public health.
- The powers of tribunal related to an award are equivalent to Civil court and tribunal may transmit any order/award to civil court have local jurisdiction.
- Also Tribunal is competent to hear cases for several acts such as Forest (Conservation) Act, Biological Diversity Act, Environment (Protection) Act, Water & Air (Prevention & control of Pollution) Acts etc. and also have appellate jurisdiction related to above acts after establishment of Tribunal within a period of 30 days of award or order received by aggrieved party.
- The NGT Act says that decision taken by majority of members shall be binding and every order of Tribunal shall be final. Any person aggrieved by an award, decision, or order of the Tribunal may appeal to the Supreme Court within 90 days of commencement of award but Supreme Court can entertain appeal even after 90 days if appellant satisfied SC by giving sufficient reasons.

Sources: the hindu.

**‘Almost 30 per cent of our land undergoing degradation’**

According to a study, nearly 30% of the country's total geographical area is undergoing degradation. The ongoing study, initiated by the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, was led by the Indian Space Research Organisation and involved 19 institutes. The study analysed satellite imageries of the country over an eight-year period.

- The report was recently released by ISRO's Space Applications Centre in the form of a 'Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas', combining GIS and remote sensing data.

[Highlights of the report:](#)

- The degrading area has increased over 0.5% to 29.3 million hectares during the period 2003-05 and 2011-13. Desertification increased by 1.16 million hectares (m ha) and stood at 82.64 m ha during 2011-13.
- There was high desertification and degradation in Delhi, Tripura, Nagaland, Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram, while Odisha, Telangana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh showed some improvement.
- Just nine States together account for nearly 24% of desertification; the other States have less than one per cent of this land. The culprit States in that order are Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana.
- Southern State Kerala figures among northern and northeastern States where less than 10% land is degraded. With it are relatively greener States of Assam, Mizoram, Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Arunachal Pradesh.
- The main culprit for degradation is water erosion (26%) followed by degrading vegetation (rising slightly nearly 9%) and land or soil erosion due to wind.

India has committed itself to the U.N. Convention on Combating Desertification that it would fully stop land degradation by 2030. The atlas, adding 68 vulnerable districts, would form part of the country's action plan to arrest the phenomenon and also be a status report to the U.N. body.

Sources: the hindu.

**‘Clean Ganga’ project launched at 100 places**

The Central government has launched 231 projects under the 'Namami Gange' project. This would take it closer to achieving its Clean Ganga objective.

[Namami Gange Programme:](#)

The Union government approved "Namami Gange" Program in May 2015. It integrates the efforts to clean and protect the Ganga River in a comprehensive manner.

[Focus of the programme:](#)

Among other things, the programme will focus on pollution abatement interventions namely Interception, diversion & treatment of wastewater flowing through the open drains through bio-remediation / appropriate in-situ treatment / use of innovative technologies.

Implementation:

- The program would be implemented by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), and its state counterpart organizations i.e., State Program Management Groups (SPMGs).
- In order to improve implementation, a three-tier mechanism has been proposed for project monitoring comprising of a) High level task force chaired by Cabinet Secretary assisted by NMCG at national level, b) State level committee chaired by Chief Secretary assisted by SPMG at state level and c) District level committee chaired by the District Magistrate.
- The program emphasizes on improved coordination mechanisms between various Ministries/Agencies of Central and State governments.

Other details:

- The program has a budget outlay of Rs. 20,000 crore for the next 5 years.
- Under this programme, the focus of the Government is to involve people living on the banks of the river to attain sustainable results.
- The programme also focuses on involving the States and grassroots level institutions such as Urban Local Bodies and Panchayati Raj Institutions in implementation.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Kendrapada sheep gets rare status**

'**kuji mendha**', a threatened breed of sheep **found only in coastal Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapara districts of Odisha** has been conferred '**rare and singular species**' tag by the central government. The **National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR)** has accorded the genetic recognition. With NBAGR conferring it genetically rare status, conserving these domesticated species would receive a boost.

Key facts:

- Kuji Mendha sheep are fast breeders giving multiple birth. Sheep in other parts of Odisha are not known for giving multiple birth. This characteristic makes them distinctive from other species.
- The rare genetic traits lead to the **multiple birth syndrome** in them. These animals are dwarf in built with the body covered with coarse hair. The average adult sheep weighs 18-20 kg.
- Kendrapada sheep are primarily used for production of mutton. The other product of economic importance is their skin. They are well adapted to high ambient temperature, high humidity and heavy rains.

Background:

Researchers of Fisheries and Animal Resources Development (FARD) Department, Odisha Livestock Resources Development Society and College of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry had earlier conducted scientific study on this rare breed and had found the sheep to be carrying a rare gene mutation. Researchers from state units had laid claim for accordance of rare genetic status on the breed.

Sources: toi.

*Paper 3 Topic: disaster management.*

### **NDRF trains one lakh people in one month for better reach**

To ensure resilience and better preparedness against disasters, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has trained over a lakh people across the country in one month on the do's and don'ts during man-made or natural emergencies.

- This was achieved between June 1 and 30 as part of a special initiative when instructors and trainers of the NDRF reached 482 villages, towns and cities to sensitise people about disasters that occur specifically in those areas and also in general.
- Under this Community Awareness Programme, a total of 1,07,112 people in 22 States were trained in basic understanding of disaster management and combat by the NDRF in 482 sessions. The force also trained school students.

#### Background:

The aim of this first-of-its kind exercise was to sensitise the vulnerable sections to disasters and bring about a sense of community capacity building. It is believed that if a community was well prepared to combat issues like floods and earthquakes, the loss of life and property could be brought down significantly.

#### NDRF:

The Disaster Management Act has made the **statutory provisions for constitution of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** for the purpose of specialized response to natural and man-made disasters.

- Two national calamities in quick succession in the form of Orissa Super Cyclone (1999) and Gujarat Earthquake (2001) brought about the realization of the need of having a specialist response mechanism at National Level to effectively respond to disasters. This realization led to the enactment of the DM Act on 26 Dec 2005.

#### ROLE AND MANDATE OF NDRF:

- Specialized response during disasters.
- Proactive deployment during impending disaster situations.
- Acquire and continually upgrade its own training and skills.
- Liaison, Reconnaissance, Rehearsals and Mock Drills.



- Impart basic and operational level training to State Response Forces (Police, Civil Defence and Home Guards).
- Community Capacity Building Programme.
- Organize Public Awareness Campaigns.

Why it is said to be UNIQUE?

- It is the only dedicated disaster response force of the world.
- The only agency with comprehensive response capabilities having multi-disciplinary and multi-skilled, high-tech, stand alone nature.
- Experienced paramilitary personnel specially trained and equipped for disaster response.
- Capabilities for undertaking disaster response, prevention, mitigation and capacity building.

Sources: the hindu.

*Paper 3 Topic: Security challenges and their management in border areas; linkages of organized crime with terrorism.*

**Putin signs controversial 'Big Brother' law**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed into law a package of controversial anti-terror amendments dubbed "Big Brother" measures by critics that may cost Internet companies billions.

Controversial provisions in the law:

- Tougher sentences for extremism and heightened electronic surveillance of Russian citizens.
- Telecommunications operators are required to store recordings of their customers' phone calls and text messages for six months.
- Messaging services such as Facebook and Telegram have to provide decryption keys to Russia's Federal Security Service, or FSB.
- Russians have to inform authorities about potentially grave crimes or their planning, stiffen penalties for re-posting information deemed extremist on the Internet. R
- Postal employees are required to inspect packages.
- The number of crimes with which children between the ages of 14 and 17 can be charged is also increased.
- Public calls for terrorism or its public justification in the Internet will entail a penalty of up to 1 million rubles (\$15,620) or liberty deprivation for a term of 5-7 years.

Sources: the hindu.

***Paper 3 Topic:** Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.*

### **Ashok Patnaik is NATGRID chief**

The government has appointed a serving Intelligence Bureau (IB) officer Ashok Patnaik as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID).

- The appointment is being seen as the government's effort to revive the project, which was conceived in the wake of the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

#### What is NATGRID?

NATGRID was among the ambitious slew of intelligence reforms undertaken in the wake of the Mumbai attacks of November 2008. NATGRID is a centralised agency which stores sensitive personal information on citizens from almost two dozen agencies to be made available for counter-terror investigations. It will be an attached office of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

#### It's role:

- NATGRID will become a secure centralised database to stream sensitive information from 21 sets of data sources such as banks, credit cards, visa, immigration and train and air travel details, as well as from various intelligence agencies.
- The database would be accessible to authorised persons from 11 agencies on a case-to-case basis, and only for professional investigations into suspected cases of terrorism.

Sources: the hindu.

***Paper 3 Topic:** Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.*

### **MHA opposes visa-free entry**

The home ministry has shot down the commerce ministry's ambitious proposal for 'visa-free' entry for business visitors and tourists from BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) countries, citing security concerns.

#### Why MHA is opposing?

There is negligible rate of visa rejections in the country now and visa processing has also become expeditious in recent times. It now takes 48 hours for 87% of e-visa applicants and three days for 80% of regular visa applicants.

- Between January 1, 2016 and June 2, 2016, as many as 1,53,4313 regular visas were issued by India, of which only 16,509 (barely 1%) were rejected. Besides, 9.5 lakh e-visas have been issued since launch of the facility in November 2014, with the rate picking up drastically over the past five months.
- Hence, given the low visa rejection rate, the extension of e-visa facility that allows applicants to get electronic confirmation of their tourist visa within 48 hours and the compressed

processing time for regular visa applications makes little sense. It also adds up to the security considerations.

#### eVisa:

eVisa facility is available for citizens of over 40 eligible countries. The application for e-Tourist Visa must be made minimum 4 days in advance of the date of arrival.

- Visa is valid for 30 days from the date of arrival and can be obtained twice in a calendar year.
- e-Tourist Visa allows arrival at only 9 airports in the country.

#### Who is not eligible?

- Not available to Diplomatic/Official Passport Holders.
- Not available to individuals endorsed on Parent's/Spouse's Passport i.e. each individual should have a separate passport.
- Not available to International Travel Document Holders.

Sources: the hindu.

### **Facts for Prelims**

#### **RIMPAC/ DCN/ Parishikshak / RCEP**

- The **World Bank has announced \$ 1 billion** in support of India's ambitious solar generation plans, its largest financing of solar projects for any country in the world. The projects now under preparation include solar rooftop technology, infrastructure for solar parks, bringing innovative solar and hybrid technologies to the market, and transmission lines for solar-rich States. The commitment includes an agreement for a \$ 625 million **grid-connected rooftop solar programme** for financing the installation of at least 40 megawatts of solar photovoltaic installations.
- The United States-led biennial maritime warfare exercise **Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC)** recently began its five-week run off Hawaii, bringing together 27 countries around the Pacific Ocean to increase their interoperability at sea. This year's RIMPAC, the 25th time it has been held, is the largest ever in scale since the regional exercise was first held in 1971. Participating countries include **India, South Korea, China, Japan and Singapore** as well as European nations like Denmark, France, Germany and Britain. Indian Navy's association with Ex RIMPAC commenced with participation as an 'Observer' in 2006, 2010 and 2012. In 2014, Indian Naval participation was enhanced with deployment of Indian Naval ship Sahyadri in the 24th edition of the exercise.
- The Defence Minister Shri Manohar Parrikar recently dedicated the **Defence Communication Network (DCN)** to the nation. The DCN is a strategic, exclusive, secure and state-of-the-art communication network. Implementation of DCN is a proof of strength of the

Indian industry and has reaffirmed the emphasis of the Government on Make in India, program. The DCN is a major step towards ensuring Network Centricity across the three Services, Integrated Defence Staff and Strategic Forces Command. The network provides converged voice, data and video services to the three Services based on secured system with adequate redundancy.

- **'Prashikshak'**, the teacher education portal for District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) was recently launched by the government. It is a unique IT Initiative taken up under DIET. Prashikshak is a unique IT initiative, a first of its kind in the country, which will contain a comprehensive database of all DIETs in the country with all relevant performance indicators. It will help benchmark DIETs to enable aspiring teachers to make informed choices about their future. At the same time, it will give the opportunity to Central and State Governments to do real time monitoring of the institutions. Prashikshak was established through joint collaboration between Ministry of Human Resource Development and Central Square Foundation. The objective of Prashikshak is to define quality benchmarks and help DIETs to make informed decisions about their institutes, compare the performance of their institute against other DIETs in the state/country as well as helping aspiring teachers make informed decision making.
- **RCEP nations include Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.**

#### **Flying Daggers 45**

- Two indigenous Tejas Light Combat Aircrafts were recently inducted into the IAF squadron, known as the **'Flying Daggers 45'**. The aircraft is equipped to handle air-to-air missiles, air-to-surface missiles, anti-ship missiles, bombs and rockets. It is considered to be the lightest multi-role supersonic aircraft of its class. **HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited), DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) and ADA (Aeronautical Development Agency)** are the key state-run defence companies that are behind the design and development of this Light Combat Aircraft. The combat aircraft uses fourth generation technologies and has intentionally been made longitudinally unstable to enhance manoeuvrability. The Tejas has a 'glass cockpit' which displays 'real-time' information to the pilot. The multi-role radar on Tejas – which was developed as **Indian-Israeli venture** – is meant to facilitate all weather use of a variety of air-to-air and air-to-surface weaponry. It is the primary targeting sensor on the LCA.

**MOFs**

- Researchers from Belgium have built a sensitive electronic nose with **metal-organic frameworks (MOFs)** that can detect pesticides and nerve gas in very low concentrations. MOFs are like microscopic sponges. They can absorb quite a lot of gas into their minuscule pores. The chemical sensor can easily be integrated into existing electronic devices. The new MOF is the most sensitive gas sensor to date for dangerous substances. MOFs can measure very low concentrations, so we could use them to screen someone's breath for diseases such as lung cancer and multiple sclerosis (MS) in an early stage.

**Enayam port / National Apprenticeship promotion scheme**

- The Centre has given its 'in-principle' approval to set up the country's **13th major port at Enayam, near Colachel in Tamil Nadu**. A special purpose vehicle (SPV) will be formed for the development of port that will act as a major gateway container port for cargo and become a trans-shipment hub for East-West trade route. The initial investment for the SPV will come from three major ports in Tamil Nadu — V. O. Chidambaranar Port Trust, Chennai Port Trust and Kamarajar Port Limited. The new port at Enayam will also reduce the logistics cost for exporters and importers in south India who currently depend on trans-shipment in Colombo or other ports leading to additional port handling charges.
- The Centre has approved an outlay of Rs.10,000 crore towards a scheme to provide apprenticeship training to 50 lakh youth by 2020. The approved **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme** will provide financial incentives to employers to engage apprentices. Under the scheme, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship will share 25% of the total stipend payable to an apprentice with employers. The government will also fund 50% of the total expenditure incurred by the employer in providing basis training to apprentices.
- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for signing of a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Mozambique on Drug demand reduction and prevention of illicit trafficking** in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals and related matters. The MoU is aimed to enhance mutual cooperation between the two countries in combating illicit trafficking in Narcotic drugs, Psychotropic substances and their precursors through exchange of information, expertise and capacity building.
- The Union Cabinet has approved signing of a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Tanzania in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy**. The MoU will provide structured frame work for the cooperation between

the two countries for the promotion and propagation of Indian Traditional Systems of Medicine & Homeopathy in Tanzania.

#### **Kutchi new year/ Shankar Acharya committee**

- **Kutchi new year** was celebrated on 6<sup>th</sup> July. The Kutchi people celebrate Kutchi New Year on Ashadi Beej, that is 2nd day of Shukla paksha of Aashaadha month of Hindu calendar. This Hindu New Year is observed in the Kutch region in Gujarat. As for people of Kutch, this day is associated with beginning of rains in Kutch, which is largely a desert area. Hindu calendar month of Aashaadh usually begins on 22 June and ending on 22 July.
- The findings of the 2.6 million-word Iraq Inquiry — seven years in the making — were recently released by probe chairman John Chilcot in London. The official inquiry delivered a devastating indictment of Britain's decision to invade Iraq, finding that the war was based on flawed intelligence and had been launched before diplomatic options were exhausted. The probe chairman has said that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein posed "no imminent threat" when the U.S-led invasion was launched in March 2003, and that while military action against him "might have been necessary at some point," the "strategy of containment" could have continued for some time. The report also notes that Blair's decision to invade Iraq was influenced by his interest in protecting the UK's relationship with the United States. The inquiry was commissioned in June 2009 by Blair's successor, Gordon Brown, following pressure from the public and Parliament.
- The finance ministry has set up a **committee under former chief economic adviser Shankar Acharya to examine the desirability and feasibility of having a new fiscal year**. Currently, India follows the April-March fiscal year and all macroeconomic and company data, including the government's budget, are compiled and prepared for the same period. However, most countries follow a January-December fiscal year. A committee of secretaries headed by the cabinet secretary had earlier this year recommended changing the fiscal year to January-December. The committee will examine the merits and demerits of various dates for the start of the fiscal year, including the existing dates. The committee has been asked to submit its report by 31 December.

#### **BRICS anti-narcotics / Germany sexual assault law**

- Germany has enacted a landmark **sexual assault law**. The German Parliament has passed "no means no" rape law. The law broadens the definition of sex crimes and makes it easier to deport migrants and refugees who commit them. It explicitly covers cases in which a victim withheld consent but did not physically fight back. It also lowers the bar for deporting sex offenders, classifies groping as a sex crime and targets assaults committed by

large groups. It specifically upgrades groping to a sex crime with sentences of up to two years' jail or a fine.

- The **second anti-drug working group meeting of heads of anti-narcotics agencies of BRICS** countries has begun in New Delhi. The meeting discusses issues related to narco-terrorism and money laundering. The meeting has been organised by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) of India.

#### **Yamal LNG - Arctic**

- Russia has offered Indian oil companies a stake in the second phase of **Yamal LNG**, the **biggest project to produce liquefied natural gas in the Arctic**. The Russian firm holds 50.1% stake in the project that comprises development of the South-Tambeyskoye field with proven deposits of 1.3 trillion cubic meters of natural gas and the construction of natural gas liquefaction plant (LNG) for producing 16.5 million tonnes of LNG a year by 2017.

#### **Bornean orangutan/Arvind Subramaniam Committee on MSP of Pulses/Jnanpith Award**

- To address the issue of trolls and abusive online behaviour, the Women and Child Development (WCD) ministry has set up a **cyber cell and appointed an officer of the rank of joint secretary to monitor it**. As part of the initiative, a separate e-mail id will be created for women to file their complaints. The cyber cell will go through the complaints. If the trolling pertains to threat or violent behaviour, the cell will refer it to the cyber crime department of Delhi Police for necessary action. Complaints will also be sent to social media platforms — Twitter or Facebook — where the alleged online abusive behaviour took place.
- The **Bornean orangutan** (*Pongo pygmaeus*) is now critically endangered, with populations in sharp decline due to habitat destruction and illegal hunting. This was announced by the IUCN recently. Bornean orangutans live only on the **island of Borneo**, where their populations have declined by 60% since 1950. New projections anticipate their numbers will fall another 22% by the year 2025 to an estimated 47,000 apes. The species, along with the Sumatran orangutan (critically endangered), belongs to the only genus of great apes native to Asia. The new IUCN findings suggest that hunting, habitat destruction, habitat degradation and fragmentation are the biggest drivers behind the population loss.
- Gujarati litterateur Dr **Raghuveer Chaudhari** was recently honoured with the 51st Bharatiya Jnanpith award for the year 2015 by President Pranab Mukherjee. The *Jnanpith Award is one of the prestigious literary honours* in the country. The award was instituted in 1961. Any *Indian citizen* who writes in *any of the official languages of India* is eligible for the honour.



- The government has decided to set up a **committee headed by Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian to consider increasing the Minimum Support Price (MSP)** and the bonus for pulses, a move that could promote pulses farming. The committee would consider a reasonable increase in the MSP for pulses and bonus for farmers for growing the crops. The committee will submit a report within two weeks.
- **Sushila Karki** recently took charge as the first woman chief justice of Nepal's Supreme Court.

### **Sesame seed Exports/INS Karna**

- India is planning to seek greater market access in the Japanese market for its farm products such as as sesame seeds as well as for its services professionals including nurses, during the upcoming joint committee meeting. The focus on sesame seeds is because **Japan is the world's second largest importer of the item** (after China). Following the detection of pesticides and insecticides such as DDT and malathion in some sesame seeds consignments from India over two decades ago, Japan has been reluctant to import the commodity from India. **India is the world's largest sesame seed producer with an annual production of around 7 lakh tonnes. India is also the world's largest exporter of the item.**
- In a bid to expand its customer base and gain access to loan portfolios that enjoy priority sector status, **IDFC Bank has decided to acquire micro-lender Grama Vidiyal in an all-cash deal.** IDFC Bank, a former infrastructure financier, converted itself to a bank in October last year. Headquartered in Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu, Grama Vidiyal Micro Finance, which started operations in 1997, has a loan book of about Rs.1,502 crore and 1.2 million customers primarily in its home State, Puducherry and Kerala and in parts of Karnataka and Maharashtra. While the assets of Grama Vidiyal will be transferred to IDFC Bank books, the former will retain its existence as a subsidiary of IDFC Bank, which will act as a business correspondent.
- The Navy's dedicated base for its Special Operation Forces – MARCOS – **INS Karna** was recently commissioned in Visakhapatnam. The establishment of the first base for Indian Navy's elite force with capability to operate in all three dimensions of warfare – air, land and sea – in the home port of the Navy on the Eastern Seaboard marks another milestone in Indian Navy bonding with the city of Visakhapatnam.

### **Megh Prahar/Sankat Mochan**

- The Indian Army's Strike 1 unit that is based in Mathura recently demonstrated its capabilities to seamlessly cross rivers during a training exercise along the Yamuna on a stretch near the cantonment there. The exercise code named "**Megh Prahar**" was undertaken using the formation of its spearhead armoured division that is based in Hisar, Haryana. It also

showcased the variety and versatility of equipment and the war-waging potential of the DOT (department of transport). Megh Parhar would help in testing the effectiveness of the T-90 & BMP-2 tanks of the Army in fighting along river obstacles.

- The Union Government has started the operation '**Sankat Mochan**' to evacuate Indian citizens stranded in South Sudan's capital Juba. The operation is being undertaken by Indian Air Force (IAF) and will be headed by Union Minister of State (MoS) for External Affairs General (Retd.) VK Singh.



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