International Literacy Day

Literacy in a digital world
8 September

Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana
SAUBHAGYA

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**Joint Proposal by India & China in WTO on Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS)**

**{Economic Policy}**

**In News**

Recently (on 18 July 2017) India and China jointly submitted a proposal to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) calling for the elimination – by developed countries – of the most trade-distorting form of farm subsidies, known in WTO parlance as Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) or ‘Amber Box’ support as a prerequisite for consideration of other reforms in domestic support negotiations.

**Context**

*This is an important proposal by India and China in view of the ongoing negotiations for the upcoming 11th Ministerial Conference of the WTO to be held in Buenos Aires in December 2017. It counters the efforts by some countries to target the subsidies of the developing countries while letting the developed countries retain their huge farm subsidies.*

**Findings of the Joint Paper**

The joint paper reveals that developed countries, including the US, the EU and Canada, have been consistently providing trade-distorting subsidies to their farmers at levels much higher than the ceiling applicable to developing countries.

Developed countries have more than 90% of global AMS entitlements amounting to nearly US$ 160 bn. Most of the developing countries, including India and China, do not have AMS entitlements.
Asymmetry in the rules on Agricultural Trade

- Listing the most heavily and frequently subsidised products by the US, the EU and Canada since 1995, the paper calls for elimination of such subsidies.
- The numbers reveal that subsidies for many items provided by the developed world are over 50% and some even more that 100% of the value of production of the product concerned, while developing countries are forced to contain it within 10% of the value of production.
- In other words, while developed Members have access to huge amount of AMS beyond their de minimize (these are the minimal amounts of domestic support that are allowed even though they distort trade — up to 5% of the value of production for developed countries, 10% for developing.) in contrast most developing Members have access only to de minimize resulting in a major asymmetry in the rules on agricultural trade.

Elimination of AMS is the starting point of reforms of WTO

The paper illustrates the adverse effects of concentration of AMS on a few products, which no other proposal in the WTO addresses. Elimination of AMS, India and China believe, should be the starting point of reforms rather than seeking reduction of subsidies by developing countries, some of which like India provide a subsistence amount of about US $ 260 per farmer per annum compared to over 100 times more in some developed countries.

Impact of Demonetisation on Black Money, Widening of Tax Base and Direct Tax Collections

| Economic Policy |

The Government of India launched a concerted drive against black money with Demonetisation being an important step in that direction. Among the main objectives of Demonetisation was the flushing out of black money and also
conversion of the non-formal economy into a formal economy to expand the tax base. The impact of Demonetisation on black money, widening of tax base and Direct Tax Collections is summed up hereunder.

**Impact on black money**

The Income Tax Department launched ‘Operation Clean Money’ (OCM) on 31st January, 2017 to analyse the data of the persons who deposited large sums of cash and whose returns of income were not in sync with such deposits.

**Impact on Widening of Tax-base**

The number of e-returns of Individual taxpayers filed till 5th August, 2017 (due date of filing) increased to 2.79 crore from 2.22 crore returns filed during the corresponding period of last year, registering an increase of about 57 lakh returns (25.3%).

This shows marked improvement in the level of voluntary compliance as a result of action taken by the Income Tax Department on the basis of data of cash deposits in the wake of demonetization.

**Impact on Direct Tax Collections**

The effect of Demonetization is also clearly visible in the growth in Direct Tax Collections. Collection of Advance Tax under Personal Income Tax (i.e. other than Corporate Tax) as on 05.08.2017 showed a growth of about 41.79% over the corresponding period in F.Y. 2016-2017.

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**DBT’s Smart Agriculture Conclave sets the stage for FarmerZone: The future of agriculture**
In News

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), under the Ministry of Science and Technology, convened the Smart Agriculture Conclave in New Delhi from August 29 – 31 2017, in partnership with the UK’s Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and Research Councils UK (RCUK) India.

FarmerZone platform

Farmer Zone envisioned by the DBT aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s call for effective decision-making in agriculture by integrating science, technology, innovation and farm ecosystem.

Objective

✓ This platform aims to cater all needs of farmer from dealing with climate change, weather predictions and soil, water and seed requirements.
✓ It will connect farmers and scientists, government officials, economists and representatives from global companies who work in the big-data and e-commerce space to bring about technology-based localised agri-solutions. This platform will work to collect relevant quality data related to agriculture into the cloud and also
develop sites to help link with farmers and evolve PPP based enterprises for data delivery.

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### National Nutrition Week to be observed from 1st to 7th September

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**Health policy**

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### In News

The National Nutrition Week will be observed throughout the country from 1st to 7th September.

The **theme** of the National Nutrition Week for 2017 is “Optimal Infant & Young Child Feeding Practices: Better Child Health“.  

**Objective**  
The basic objective of this annual event is to intensify awareness generation on the importance of nutrition for health which has an impact on development, productivity, economic growth and ultimately National development.
**Issue of nutrition**

- Nutrition is an issue of survival, health and development for current and succeeding generations.
- Child born underweight have impaired immune function and increased risk of diseases such as diabetes and heart diseases in their later life.
- Malnourished children tend to have lower IQ and impaired cognitive ability, thus affecting their school performance and then productivity in their later life. It has to be realized that the nutritional health and all age groups represent say National Economic Asset.
- As, improving the nutritional status of the population is imperative for National Development. Under nutrition in young children continues to be a major public health problem in India.
- The NFHS4 has not shown an encouraging improvement in the nutritional status, especially among women and children. As per NFHS-4 the level of underweight has decreased by 6.8% and is stunting by 9.6%. Level of anaemia has decreased by 11% as compared to NNHS-3 figures.

**Way Forward**

Malnutrition is not to be viewed merely as an offshoot of poverty having adverse effects on health and development of individuals but as a national problem that results in loss of productivity and economic backwardness.

Thus, series of convergent and well coordinated actions in different sectors are required to be undertaken in the mission mode approach to address this big network problem of malnutrition.

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**Swiss technology companies should take part in our initiatives like Make in India, start-up India, Swachh Bharat and skill India, says President**
Welcoming the Swiss President, the President said that Switzerland and India are natural partners. Switzerland is one of the oldest democracies and India is the largest democracy.

*A Treaty of Friendship between India and Switzerland signed in New Delhi in August 1948 was one of the first treaties to be signed by independent India.*

*Relation between India and Switzerland*

Switzerland is an important trade and investment partner for India. **India is a preferred destination for FDI as it is the world’s fastest growing large economy.**

India has made great progress on the ‘Ease of Doing Business’ and in creating a unified market through GST and other measures. Swiss companies are ideally positioned to take advantage. **He invited Swiss technology companies to take part in initiatives like Make in India, Start-Up India, Swachh Bharat and Skill India.**

**India and Switzerland enter the 70th year of the Friendship and Establishment Treaty.** Both India and Switzerland represent democratic and plural societies that believe in the principles of “respect for differences” and “unity in diversity”. Switzerland is India’s seventh largest trading partner and 11th largest foreign investor.

India and Switzerland can grow and diversify their trade, investment and technological exchanges. **The two countries need to pursue even closer business partnerships in priority sectors such as precision and high technology manufacturing, infrastructure, skill development, renewable energy and clean-tech research.** There is scope for creating partnerships between R&D labs and institutions.
Like Switzerland, India is committed to multilateralism.

*The multilateral order needs to undergo multiple transformations*

- Reform and restructuring of the United Nations and other multilateral institutions;
- Tackling urgent challenges of international terrorism and radicalism, as well as of financial and cyber-crimes and of Internet governance; and Meeting pressing concerns of climate change and attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.
- India is keen to build synergies with Switzerland in all of these endeavours, while working within the framework of a rules-based multilateral system.

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**Environment Ministry launches environment awareness initiative, Prakriti Khoj, on Teachers’ Day**

**In News**

- The Union Environment Ministry on 5 September 2017 launched an environment awareness initiative on the occasion of Teachers’ Day.
- Under the initiative, an online environmental quiz competition named “Prakriti Khoj” will be conducted at the national level.
- The Prakriti Khoj will be an ideal medium to reach out to young minds through a fun-filled interactive learning mode to trigger their sensitivity towards environment protection and conservation. This quiz will provide a unique platform for students to measure their awareness level regarding environmental issues.
Key highlights

- As per the ministry, the objective of the quiz is to generate interest among school children about the science related to environment.
- The quiz will help in sensitizing the children on the issues related to environment and development.
- The initiative is to motivate children towards environment conservation-orientated lifestyles.
- The initiative will also trigger their nature appreciation and conservation, leading to positive environmental actions at different levels.
- The mode of quiz will be online through multiple choice questions. Thematic areas like climate change, biodiversity, forest and wildlife, pollution, waste management, rivers and lakes, natural history, international conventions such as Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora etc. have been chosen for the quiz.
- A separate web portal, [www.ngc.nic.in](http://www.ngc.nic.in), containing information on the quiz has been developed by Ministry.
- Dates of the quiz will be updated on the Prakriti Khoj portal, as well as the Ministry’s website.
- The students from Eco-clubs specially registered on the portal will be able to participate in the qualification round from 18 September 2017 onwards.
- Quiz will be organized in school premises under the supervision of Principals/Eco-club Coordinators.
- There will be cash prizes for the winners. In addition, all participants will receive an E-certificate of participation, duly signed by Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
APEDA’s new progressive step: Hortinet

*Agriculture*

**In news**

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has launched a new mobile app “Hortinet” to apply for farm registration and approval by State Govt. & Lab Sampling.

**About Hortinet**

Hortinet is an integrated traceability system developed by APEDA for providing Internet based electronic services to the stakeholders for facilitating farm registration, testing and certification of Grape, Pomegranate and Vegetables for export from India to the European Union in compliance with standards.

**Objective**

To harness the potential of mobile technology, APEDA has developed a mobile app to allow farmers to apply on-line to facilitate their farm registration, tracking the status of application & approvals by State Government and Lab sampling by authorized Laboratories.

This mobile app initiative is expected to increase the accessibility and reach of the Traceability software system among the farmers and other stakeholders.

**Importance**
This new Mobile app will also assist State Horticulture/Agriculture Department to capture real time details of farmers, farm location, products and details of inspections like date of inspection, name of inspecting directly from field. After registration and approval of farm, farmer gets approval information.

**The key features of the app**

- Online Farm registration application and status tracking.
- Processing and approval on on-line farmer applications by State Horticulture Agriculture department.
- Registration of farmers, farms and products by State Horticulture/Agriculture department.
- Capture geo location of the farms registered through the app.
- Sample collection by APEDA authorized Laboratories along with geo location of the sample.

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**CIPAM-DIPP launches social media campaign to promote Geographical Indications**

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**{Economic Policy}**

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**In News**

The Cell for IPR Promotions and Management (CIPAM) on 4 September 2017 launched a social media campaign to promote Indian Geographical Indications (GIs).

The CIPAM comes under the aegis of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The campaign will be promoted with #LetsTalkIP which is an ongoing movement initiated by CIPAM to make more people aware about the importance of Intellectual Property Rights.
The promotion of GIs is in line with the Government’s ‘Make in India’ campaign.

Importance of Indian Geographical Indications

✓ A Geographical Indication is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
✓ Such signs convey an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to its origin in that defined geographical locality. Darjeeling Tea, Mahabaleshwar Strawberry, Blue Pottery of Jaipur, Banarasi Sarees and Tirupati Laddus are some of the GIs.
✓ GIs are of utmost importance to the country as they are an integral part of India’s rich culture and collective intellectual heritage.
✓ It is an area of strength and optimism for India, whereby the GI tag has accorded protection to a number of hand-made and manufactured products, especially in the informal sector.
✓ Certain GI products can benefit the rural economy in remote areas, by supplementing the incomes of artisans, farmers, weavers and craftsmen.

Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM)

Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) has been created as a professional body under the aegis of DIPP to take forward the implementation of the National IPR Policy that was approved by the Government in May 2016, with the slogan – “Creative India; Innovative India

CIPAM is working towards creating public awareness about IPRs in the country, promoting the filing of IPRs through facilitation, providing inventors with a platform to commercialize their IP assets and coordinating the implementation of the National IPR Policy in collaboration with Government Ministries/Departments and other stakeholders.
India despatches First Diesel Consignment to Myanmar

{International Relations}

Context

Signifying the developing hydrocarbon commitment between India and Myanmar, the first consignment of 30 MT of High Speed Diesel was sent from India to Myanmar by land route.

Objective

To enhance hydrocarbon synergy with neighbouring countries as well as promoting India’s Act East Policy.

Key Points

✓ Numaligarh Refinery Ltd. (NRL), which has been supplying HSD to Bangladesh, despatched the first diesel consignment through NH 37 on to the Myanmar side.
✓ In their effort to strengthen the oil and gas engagement, more Indian companies are planning to set up their offices in Myanmar soon.

BRICS Xiamen Summary

Documents signed in the presence of BRICS Leaders during BRICS Summit – 2017 in Xiamen, China (September 04, 2017).

✓ BRICS Action Agenda on Economic and Trade Cooperation.
✓ Strategic Framework of BRICS Customs Cooperation.
✓ Memorandum of Understanding between the BRICS Business Council and the New Development Bank on Strategic Cooperation.

Theme

“BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future”.

We endeavor to build on our achievements already made with a shared vision for future development of BRICS.

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**India is keen to suppress international terrorism: Vice President**

{Terrorism}

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**Context**

✓ The Vice President of India said that India is keen to see the decision of convention on the suppression of international terrorism, which is frightening world peace.

✓ SAARC convention on the suppression of international terrorism as well as the Indian proposal to conclude a comprehensive convention on suppression of international terrorism is now under consideration of the UN.

**Key Points**

✓ The Vice President said that India will not only create greater awareness on the prominence of international law but will also inspire young lawyers and students to specialize in this subject.
✓ The concept of the rule of law has been practiced in India from times immemorial, “Dharma Rakshati Rakshitah”, the Sanskrit sloka in Manu Smriti aptly sums up the basic Indian philosophy – the law will protect and defend those who protect and defend it.

✓ India attaches huge importance to the implementation of international statutes and the rule of law and is a firm believer in promotion of peace and justice globally.

### Way forward

✓ India’s foreign policy is based on sovereign equality of States, non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States and peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with principles articulated in Article 33 of the United Nations.

✓ Our country attaches high importance to bilateral negotiations in settling its differences and disputes with other nations on the basis of international law, justice and equity.

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**NITI Aayog calls renewed focus on Nutrition, launches the National Nutrition Strategy- “Kuposhan Mukt Bharat”**

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**Economic Policy**

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To address this and to bring nutrition to the centre-stage of the National Development Agenda, NITI Aayog has drafted the National Nutrition Strategy.

Formulated through an extensive consultative process, the Strategy lays down a roadmap for effective action, among both implementers and practitioners, in achieving our nutrition objectives.
Background

✓ With a benefit to cost ratio of 16:1 for 40 low and middle-income countries, there is a well recognized rationale, globally, for investing in Nutrition.
✓ The recently published NFHS-4 results reflect some progress, with a decline in the overall levels of under nutrition in both women and children. However, the pace of decline is far below what numerous countries with similar growth trajectories to India have achieved. Moreover, India pays an income penalty of 9% to 10% due to a workforce that was stunted during their childhood.

National Nutrition Strategy

✓ The nutrition strategy envisages a framework wherein the four proximate determinants of nutrition – uptake of health services, food, drinking water & sanitation and income & livelihoods – work together to accelerate decline of under nutrition in India.
✓ Currently, there is also a lack of real time measurement of these determinants, which reduces our capacity for targeted action among the most vulnerable mothers and children.
✓ Supply side challenges often overshadow the need to address behavioural change efforts to generate demand for nutrition services. This strategy, therefore, gives prominence to demand and community mobilisation as a key determinant to address India’s nutritional needs.
✓ The Nutrition Strategy framework envisages a Kuposhan Mukt Bharat – linked to Swachh Bharat and Swasth Bharat.
✓ The aim is ensure that States create customized State/ District Action Plans to address local needs and challenges. This is especially relevant in view of enhanced resources available with the States, to prioritise focused interventions with a greater role for panchayats and urban local bodies.

The Code on Wages Bill 2017

{Development and Employment}
As part of labour law reforms, the Government has undertaken the exercise of rationalisation of the 38 Labour Acts by framing 4 labour codes viz Code on Wages, Code on Industrial Relations, Code on Social Security and Code on occupational safety, health and working conditions.

✓ The Code on Wages Bill 2017 has been introduced in Lok Sabha on 10.08.2017 and it subsumes 4 existing Laws, viz. the Minimum Wages Act, 1948; the Payment of Wages Act, 1936; the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965; and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. After the enactment of the Code on Wages, all these four Acts will get repealed. The Codification of the Labour Laws will remove the multiplicity of definitions and authorities leading to ease of compliance without compromising wage security and social security to the workers.

✓ At present, the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act and the Payment of Wages Act do not cover substantial number of workers, as the applicability of both these Acts is restricted to the Scheduled Employments / Establishments. However, the new Code on Wages will ensure minimum wages to one and all and timely payment of wages to all employees irrespective of the sector of employment without any wage ceiling.

✓ A concept of statutory National Minimum Wage for different geographical areas has been introduced. It will ensure that no State Government fixes the minimum wage below the National Minimum Wages for that particular area as notified by the Central Government.

✓ The proposed payment of wages through cheque or digital/ electronic mode would not only promote digitization but also extend wage and social security to the worker. Provision of an Appellate Authority has been made between the Claim Authority and the Judicial Forum which will lead to speedy, cheaper and efficient redressal of grievances and settlement of claims.

✓ Penalties for different types of violations under this Code have been rationalized with the amount of fines varying as per the gravity of violations and repeat of the offences. Provision of compounding of offences has been made for those which are not punishable by a penalty of imprisonment.

✓ Further, the Code on Wages Bill 2017, in the clause 9 (3), clearly states that the Central Government, before fixing the national minimum wage, may obtain the advice of the Central Advisory Board, having representatives from employers and employees. Therefore the Code provide for a consultative mechanism before determining the national minimum wage.

✓ Some reports have also been appearing in the media regarding the revised methodology for calculation of minimum wages by enhancing the units from
three to six. It was purely a demand raised by Trade Unions in the recent meeting of the Central Advisory Board on Minimum Wages. However it is clarified that such proposal is not part of the Code on Wages Bill.

"Implement 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Building Broader Partnerships for Development"- Intervention by Prime Minister at the BRICS Emerging Markets and Developing Countries Dialogue

[Sustainable Development]

SDGs to our own development programmes and scheme, both at the federal and state level

✓ Two years since the adoption of UN’s 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the imperative of collaborative action to achieve the goals is even stronger.
✓ Recently, India completed its first voluntary national review of SDGs. The bedrock of our development agenda lies in the notion of “SabkaSaath, SabkaVikaas” – that is: Collective Effort, Inclusive Growth.
✓ To cite just one example, our three-pronged approach of providing a bank account to the unbanked, providing a biometric identity to all, and using innovative mobile governance solutions, has enabled Direct Benefit Transfers to almost 360 million people for the first time.

Noble commitments for global transformation

✓ Creating a Safer World: by organized and coordinated action on at least three issues: Counter Terrorism, Cyber Security and Disaster Management;
✓ Creating a Greener World: by taking concerted action on countering Climate Change, through initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance;
✓ Creating an Enabled World: by sharing and deploying suitable technologies to enhance efficiency, economy and effectiveness;
✓ Creating an Inclusive World: by economic mainstreaming of our people including in the banking and financial system;
✓ Creating a Digital World: by bridging the digital divide within and outside our economies;
✓ Creating a Skilled World: by giving future-ready skills to millions of our youth;
✓ Creating a Healthier World: by cooperating in research and development to eradicate diseases, and enabling affordable healthcare for all;
✓ Creating an Equitable World: by providing equality of opportunity to all, particularly through gender equality;
✓ Creating a Connected World: by enabling free flow of goods, persons and services; and,
✓ Creating a Harmonious World: by promoting ideologies, practices, and heritage that are centered on peaceful coexistence and living in harmony with nature.

Through these agenda points, and action on them, we will be contributing directly to the welfare of the Global Community in addition to welfare of our own people. And in this, India stands ready as a willing and committed partner to enhance cooperation and support each other’s national effort.

Joint Press Statement on The India-Japan Annual Defence Ministerial Dialogue

{International Politics}

The Defence Minister of India Shri Arun Jaitley is on a bilateral visit to Japan at the invitation of the Defence Minister of Japan Mr Itsunori Onodera from 05 to 06 September 2017

Background
✓ The Ministers exchanged views and ideas with the aim to further strengthen defence and security cooperation under the framework of the “Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership”.
✓ They expressed satisfaction at the continued deepening and diversification of bilateral defence cooperation since the signing of the bilateral Memorandum on Defence Co-operation and Exchanges in September 2014 and the two Defence Framework agreements signed in December 2015.

**India-Pacific region**

✓ The Ministers exchanged views on the current security situation in the Indo-Pacific region.
✓ They condemned in the strongest terms North Korea’s nuclear test of 03 September 2017, which is in violation of its international obligations and commitments, including under relevant UNSC resolutions and called upon DPRK to cease such action which adversely impacts peace and stability of the region and beyond.
✓ The Ministers noted that regular interactions at all levels, in particular the establishment of Staff Talks at the level of the three Services, have enhanced mutual understanding.

*The Ministers underlined their intention to explore opportunities for enhancing exchanges and decided to promote cooperation in the following areas.*

1. Institutionalised Dialogue and Visits.

2. Exchanges between Japan Ground Self Defence Force and Indian Army
   ✓ The Ministers welcomed the progress in the Army to Army Staff talks in November 2016 and agreed to develop active exchanges in the fields of PKO, Counter-Terrorism and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), as key areas of common interest for the two countries.
   ✓ Japan Ground Self Defence Force (JGSDF) would invite Indian Armed Forces personnel to participate in the HADR exercise conducted by JGSDF as Observers.
   ✓ In the context of enhanced co-operation between the two ground forces the Ministers decided to explore a joint field exercise in the field of counter-terrorism between the Indian Army and the JGSDF in 2018.
Exchanges between Japan Maritime Self Defence Force and the Indian Navy.

✓ The Ministers expressed satisfaction at the success of Japan-India-US Trilateral Maritime Exercise MALABAR 2017 in July 2017 and confirmed their intention to further deepen and advance the objectives of this Exercise. Minister Onodera expressed his intention to have state-of-the-art Japanese assets including P-1 to participate in the MALABAR 2018. Minister Jaitley welcomed this proposal.

✓ The Ministers noted the importance of bilateral training interactions between Indian Navy and Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF). The two sides will consider inclusion of Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) training to expand cooperation.


✓ The Ministers welcomed the participation of Vice Chief of Staff, JASDF in “Aero India-2017” in February 2017.

✓ They also welcomed the visit of Indian Air Force helicopter crews to JASDF’s Air Rescue Squadron in Hyakuri, expanding bilateral air-to-air exchanges in the domains of aviation safety and air crew exchanges.

5. Education and Research exchanges

6. Cooperation in Defence Equipment and Technology

✓ The Ministers endorsed the importance of enhancing interaction between governments and defence industries of the two countries to encourage equipment collaboration including defence and dual-use technologies.

7. Cooperation in Defence Equipment and Technology

✓ The Ministers endorsed the importance of enhancing interaction between governments and defence industries of the two countries to encourage equipment collaboration including defence and dual-use technologies.

✓ They welcomed the constructive engagement between Acquisition, Technology and Logistic Agency (ATLA) and Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and agreed to commence the technical discussions for research collaboration in the areas of Unmanned Ground Vehicles and Robotics.
UJALA scheme launched in Melaka, Malaysia

In news

Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), under Ministry of Power, Government of India has launched UJALA (Unnat Jyoti by Affordable Lighting for All) Scheme in the State of Melaka, Malaysia.

✓ In due course of time, the successful Indian model of UJALA scheme has become a sought-after example for the different nations of the world and will now be implemented in Melaka to extend programme benefits to people of the region.
✓ Under this scheme, each household in Melaka will get 10 high quality 9-watt LED bulbs at a cost of only RM 10, which is a special price and is almost half of what in begin offered in the market.
✓ The distribution of these LED bulbs will take place from 28 numbers of Japerun in the region. These Japerun are a unique community welfare and engagement centers, which are situated across the Melakan State.
✓ Under the extensive and ever-expanding idea of UJALA, Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) plans to distribute about 1 million 9W LED bulbs, which will replace 18W CFLs. The initiative will have the logistical assistance and facilitation support from Green Growth Asia, which is a not for profit organization.
✓ These bulbs sent from India will be of leading brands and manufacturers like Osram, Philips along with other companies of repute.

Importance
✓ UJALA’s impact in Malaysia will bring about clean energy, contribute to climate change targets and save the already dwindling energy resources.
✓ With a fairly large switch to LED bulbs, Melaka will be able to reduce carbon emissions by around 19,000 tonnes per year.
✓ An innovative zero-subsidy model, this scheme will help reduce the subsidy burdens of the State Government.
✓ The concept of energy efficiency has strongly overcome many bottlenecks and this adoption by a Malaysian State is yet another achievement towards furthering the idea of energy efficiency to conserve the resources, money and environment.

**The UJALA programme**

✓ The UJALA programme has been one of the prime achievements of Government of India in promoting and executing the concept of energy efficiency. A simple act of change of one light bulb to LED at South Block Prime Minister’s office in India heralded a movement in the entire country for considering the same change.
✓ Prime Minister of India Sh. Narendra Modi on January 5, 2015 had launched the world’s largest and most extensive LED distribution programme, UJALA (Unnat Jyoti by Affordable Lighting for All).
✓ In this initiative, the nodal organisation, EESL, had undertaken the task of setting up phase-wise LED distribution centers across the nation to provide people with affordable LED bulbs and energy efficient appliances.

**Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL)** is a joint venture of NTPC Limited, Power Finance Corporation, Rural Electrification Corporation and POWERGRID.

Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) was set up under Ministry of Power (India) to facilitate implementation of energy efficiency projects.

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**Health Ministry launches two new contraceptives**

*(Health policy)*
In news

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched two new contraceptives, an injectable contraceptive MPA under the ‘Antara’ programme and a contraceptive pill, ‘Chhaya’, in the public health system to expand the basket of contraceptive choices to meet the emerging needs of couples.

The contraceptives, which are available for free in Medical Colleges and District Hospitals at present, have so far been launched in 10 states that includes Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Haryana, West Bengal, Odisha, Delhi and Goa.

Objective

To help improve the supply and distribution of contraceptives, the Ministry had recently launched a new software, Family Planning Logistics Management Information System (FP-LMIS), designed to provide robust information on the demand and distribution of contraceptives to health facilities and ASHAs.

Mission Parivar Vikas

Mission Parivar Vikas, a central family planning initiative has also been launched by the Ministry. The key strategic focus of this initiative is on improving access to contraceptives through delivering assured services, ensuring commodity security and accelerating access to high quality family planning services.

✓ The mission is being implemented in 146 high focus districts with the highest total fertility rates in the country. These districts are in the seven high focus, high Total Fertility Rates (TFR) states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Assam, which constitute 44% of the country’s population.
✓ The main objective of the Mission Parivar Vikas family planning initiative is to bring down the Total Fertility Rate to 2.1 by the year 2025.
NITI Aayog constitutes Expert Task Force on Employment and Exports

{Economic Policy}

✓ In a bid to provide a “major” thrust to job creation by enhancing India’s exports, the NITI Aayog has set up a task force to be headed by its Vice-Chairman Rajiv Kumar.
✓ The task force, which includes government and private sector representatives, will submit its report by November.

The steps outlined by the taskforce to address this challenge of creating well-paid, formal sector jobs, include

✓ Proposing a comprehensive plan of action to generate employment and alleviate under-employment in both goods and services sectors and low wages by boosting India’s exports in key labour-intensive industries
✓ Recommending sector-specific policy interventions in key employment sectors
✓ Recommending measures to enhance trade in services with high employment potential
✓ Identifying key macroeconomic factors constraining exports and suggesting methods to address these constraints
✓ Assessing the effectiveness of existing schemes to promote exports
✓ Addressing issues related to logistics, export credits and trade facilitation
✓ Suggesting ways to enhance the availability of data on trade such that it is reliable, globally comparable and timely, particularly with respect to trade in services.

Background

Incidentally, the “Three Years Action Agenda” unveiled by the Finance Minister Arun Jaitley recently had also stressed on creation of well-paid jobs by exploiting the
potential in exports. The action agenda had also laid emphasis on creation of well-paid jobs by expanding the formal sector.

**Way ahead**

✓ While the Indian workforce has high aspirations, a majority of the workers are still employed in low-productivity, low-wage jobs in small, micro and own-account enterprises.
✓ An urgent and sustained expansion of the organized sector is essential to address India’s unemployment and under-employment issue.
✓ An important strategy is also to enable a shift towards more labour-intensive goods and services that are destined for exports. Given the importance of exports in generating jobs, India needs to create an environment in which globally competitive exporters can emerge and flourish.

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**International Literacy Day – 2017**

{Education}

The 51st International Literacy Day is being celebrated on 8th September, 2017 and the theme announced by UNESCO is ´Literacy in a digital world´.

**Background**

✓ The International Literacy Day is celebrated on 8th September every year throughout the world. On this day, in the year 1965 the World Congress of Ministers of Education met in Tehran for the first time to discuss the programme of education at the international level.
✓ The UNESCO in its 14th Session in November, 1966, declared 8th September as the International Literacy Day. Since then, ILD is celebrated on 8th September every year by most of the member countries.
The key aspect of the observance of ILD is to mobilize public opinion in favour of struggle against illiteracy. ILD is a forum to disseminate information on literacy and raise the public awareness and the significance of literacy for individual and national development.

**Literacy rate in India**

- As per Educational Statistics for 2015-16, the literacy rate in India increased to 69.3% in 2011. In comparison to 2001, when the literacy rate was 61.0%, the improvement is decent.
- A dramatic improvement is seen in the literacy rate of female population which improved from 47.8% in 2001 to 59.3% in 2011. Among males, the literacy rate has improved from 73.4% in 2001 to 78.8% in 2011.
- Though the literacy rate has been on an upward trajectory in the past decade, the overall literacy rate in India is still lower than the global rate. Compared to the global youth literacy rate of 91%, India lags far behind with 69.3%.

**Way ahead**

- The international community already has its eyes on 2030 with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and has aimed to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning” within its goals.

**Northeast calling festival in Delhi, B2B summit prime focus**

**{Governance}**

Aims at promoting art, culture, heritage, cuisine, handicrafts, business and tourism of the seven sisters and Sikkim.
✓ The “North East Calling” event is being organised by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), Government of India under its ‘Destination North East’ series of this year.
✓ The purpose of the event is to promote the art, culture, heritage, cuisine, handicrafts, business and tourism of North East India.

Key facts

✓ The Business to Business (B2B) conference is also being organised during the event. On the occasion, three MoUs were also signed in the presence of the Minister.
✓ The first MoU was signed between North East Tourism Development Council and the Yes Bank.
✓ The other two MoUs were signed with the Ministry under Science & Technology Interventions in the North East Region (STINER) aiming at enabling STINER and promoting NISARGRUNA technology of BARC in bio-energy technology in association with Tripura State.
✓ “North East Venture Fund’, a joint initiative of Ministry of DoNER and North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd, that seeks to promote entrepreneurship and start-ups in the region.

NISARGRUNA Biogas plant – Based on Biodegradable waste resource

✓ This plant can process biodegradable waste such as kitchen waste, paper, grass, gobar and dry leaves.
✓ It offers Zero garbage and Zero effluent and provides high quality manure and methane gas.
✓ Weedfree manure obtained from such waste has high nitrogen contents and acts as an excellent soil conditioner.
✓ This plant could be set up for ecofriendly disposal of wet-waste generated in kitchens/canteens of big Hospitals/Hotels/Factories/residential complexes and can avoid health hazards due to dump sites.
✓ This technology of biphasic **biomethanation** has high potential of solving the solid waste management problems of the urban areas and provides organic manure and bio-gas as a fuel.

**Process**

✓ The waste is first segregated carefully to remove non-biodegradable material and then homogenized to make a slurry. It is then processed in a sequential manner first by aerobic and then by anaerobic process. The products of the process are biogas consisting of methane, carbon dioxide and water vapor & weed free good quality manure. About 70% of Water can be recycled at the end of the process.

**Biomethanation**

Biomethanation is a process by which organic material is microbiologically converted under anaerobic conditions to biogas. Three main physiological groups of microorganisms are involved: fermenting bacteria, organic acid oxidizing bacteria, and methanogenic archaia.

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**Successful Flight Test of 3rd Generation Anti Tank Guided Missile – NAG**

**Science and Technology**
India’s indigenously developed 3rd generation Anti Tank Guided Missile (ATGM), Nag has been successfully flight tested twice by DRDO against two different targets in the ranges of Rajasthan.

- The ATGM Nag missile has successfully hit both the targets under different ranges and conditions with very high accuracy as desired by the Armed Forces.
- With these two successful flight trials, and the flight test conducted earlier in June in the peak of summer, the complete functionality of Nag ATGM along with launcher system NAMICA has been established and marked the successful completion of development trials of Nag Missile.

**NAMICA (NAG Missile Carrier), Advanced NAG Variant, Anti-Tank Weapon**

- This is considered the one of the ghost weapon developed by India as many of us don’t even know about it. It is the mainly the 3rd generation Nag “fire-and-forget” anti-tank missile developed in India that is mounted on BMP-2 tank. It is one of five missile systems developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP).
- NAMICA (NAG missile carrier) part of the Nag anti-tank missile system which is launched from a retractable armoured launcher that contains four launch tubes and the guidance package. “Nag” is a fire-and-forget top-attack ATGM with a tandem-HEAT warhead.

**Features and Capabilities**

- NAMICA contains 8 Nag missiles in armoured box launchers and a further 8 more for reload with a complete optical and IR sensor suite to detect enemy tanks.
- The missiles are work on fire and forget principle which increases their capability of hitting the target at even more than 5 kms of range.
Navika Sagar Parikrama

{Women’s Empowerment}

Defence Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman recently flagged-off all-women crew of Navika Sagar Parikrama at the INS Mandovi naval training base near Panaji.

✓ The crew of the ‘Sagar Parikrama’ comprises of six-member all women team on board the sailing vessel INSV Tarini and will circumnavigate the globe in approximately 165 days.

Key facts

✓ This is the first ever Indian circumnavigation of the globe by an all-women crew. The project is considered essential towards promoting Ocean Sailing activities in the Navy while depicting Government of India’s thrust for ‘Nari Shakti’.

✓ The expedition has been aptly titled ‘Navika Sagar Parikrama’, aimed at promoting women empowerment in the country and ocean sailing by the Indian Navy.

✓ Navika Sagar Parikrama would cover the expedition in five legs with stop-overs at four ports (Fremantle, Australia; Lyttleton, New Zealand; Port Stanley, the Falklands; and Cape town, South Africa) for replenishment of ration and repairs as necessary, before returning to Goa in April 2018.

Aims of the Expedition are as follows

✓ Nari Shakti: In consonance with the National policy to empower women to attain their full potential, the expedition aims to showcase ‘Nari Shakti’ on the world platform. This would also help to discard the societal attitudes and mindset towards women in India by raising visibility of participation by women in challenging environment.
✓ **Environment and Climate Change:** Sailing encourages the use of environment friendly non-conventional renewable energy resources which affects the life of women. The expedition thereby aims at harnessing the energy to optimise the livelihood of the women onboard.

✓ **Make in India:** The voyage also aims to show case the ‘Make in India’ initiative by sailing onboard the indigenously built INSV Tarini.

✓ **Meteorological/Ocean/Wave Data Observation:** The crew would also collate and update Meteorological/Ocean/Wave data on a daily basis for subsequent analysis by research and development organisations.

✓ **Marine Pollution:** The crew would monitor and report marine pollution on the high seas.

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**Eastern Fleet Ships on Overseas Deployment to East and South-East Asia**

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**Context**

*India’s ‘Act East Policy’*

*The Indian Navy routinely undertakes deployment of ships to friendly nations.*

*The visit of Indian Naval Ships to East and South-East Asia underscores India’s peaceful presence and harmonious relations with the countries in the region.*

*The deployment aims to strengthen existing bonds between India and the regional countries.*

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**Press release**

✓ Two Indian Naval Ships proceeded on deployment to East and South-East Asia this year.
INS Satpura and INS Kadmmatt departed Visakhapatnam today to visit 12 ports in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Philippines, South Korea, Japan, Brunei and Russia.

During this deployment, the ships will participate in the International Fleet Review hosted by the Association of South East Asian Countries (ASEAN) at Thailand.

They will visit Singapore, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia and Brunei to commemorate the 25th anniversary of India-ASEAN dialogue.

The ships will also participate in the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise at Malaysia.

At Russia, the ships will participate in the annual India-Russia bilateral exercise INDRA.

**Key Fact**

INS Satpura and INS Kadmmatt are both indigenously built warships.

INS Satpura, synonymous with the formidable mountain range in Central India, is a multi-role stealth frigate.

INS Kadmmatt, named after an island in the beautiful Lakshadweep chain, is an Anti-Submarine Corvette.

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**Cabinet approves MoU between India and Morocco on cooperation in the field of health**

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**International Relations**

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**Keypoints**

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Morocco on cooperation in the field of health.
The MoU covers the following areas of cooperation

- Non-communicable diseases, including child cardiovascular diseases and cancer;
- Drug Regulation and Pharmaceutical quality control;
- Communicable Diseases;
- Maternal, child and neonatal health;
- Hospital twinning for exchange of good practices;
- Training in administration and management of health services and Hospitals;
- Any other area of cooperation as may be mutually decided upon.

A Working Group will be set up to further elaborate the details of cooperation and to oversee the implementation of this MoU.

Cabinet approves MoU between India and Armenia on Cooperation in the field of Disaster Management

Key points

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Armenia on Cooperation in the field of Disaster Management
- The MoU would enhance cooperation in the field of Disaster Management and contribute to the well-being and safety of the people of both the countries in the event of disaster.
- It will also result in exchange of information in the relevant fields of disaster management which is of mutual interest. Further, the MoU will help in strengthening the areas of preparedness, response and capacity building.
Cabinet approves introduction of the Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017 in the Parliament

{Public Policy}

**Key points**

✓ The Union Cabinet has given its approval for introduction of the Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017 in the Parliament.
✓ The Amendment will increase the maximum limit of gratuity of employees, in the private sector and in Public Sector Undertakings/ Autonomous Organizations under Government who are not covered under CCS (Pension) Rules, at par with Central Government employees.

**Background**

✓ The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 applies to establishments employing 10 or more persons.
✓ The main purpose for enacting this Act is to provide social security to workmen after retirement, whether retirement is a result of the rules of superannuation, or physical disablement or impairment of vital part of the body.
✓ Therefore, the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 is an important social security legislation to wage earning population in industries, factories and establishments.
✓ The present upper ceiling on gratuity amount under the Act is Rs. 10 Lakh.
✓ The provisions for Central Government employees under Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1972 with regard to gratuity are also similar.
✓ However, with implementation of 7th Central Pay Commission, in case of Government servants, the ceiling now is Rs. 20 Lakhs effective from 1.1.2016.
✓ Therefore, considering the inflation and wage increase even in case of employees engaged in private sector, the Government is of the view that the entitlement of gratuity should be revised for employees who are covered under the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972.
Cabinet approves implementation of the scheme “Dairy Processing & Infrastructure Development Fund”

{Public Policy}

Context

✓ The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister has approved a Dairy Processing & Infrastructure Development Fund” (DIDF).
✓ Consequent to the Union Budget 2017-18 announcement, Dairy Processing & Infrastructure Development Fund will be set up as a corpus of Rs 8004 crore with National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).
✓ The end borrowers will get the loan @ 6.5% per annum. The period of repayment will be 10 years with initial two years moratorium.

The major activities of DIDF

✓ The project will focus on building an efficient milk procurement system by setting up of chilling infrastructure & installation of electronic milk adulteration testing equipment, creation/modernization/expansion of processing infrastructure and manufacturing faculties for Value Added Products for the Milk Unions/ Milk Producer Companies.

Management of DIDF

✓ The project will be implemented by National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and National Dairy Development Cooperation (NCDC) directly through the End Borrowers such as Milk Unions, State Dairy Federations,
Multi-state Milk Cooperatives, Milk Producer Companies and NDDB subsidiaries meeting the eligibility criteria under the project.

✓ An Implementation and Monitoring Cell (IMC) located at NDDB, Anand, will manage the implementation and monitoring of day-to-day project activities.

**Benefits from DIDF**

✓ With this investment, 95,00,000 farmers in about 50,000 villages would be benefitted.
✓ Additional Milk processing capacity of 126 lakh litre per day, milk drying capacity of 210 MT per day, milk chilling capacity of 140 lakh litre per day, installation of 28000 Bulk Milk Coolers (BMCs) along with electronic milk adulteration testing equipment and value added products manufacturing capacity of 59.78 lakh litre per day of milk equivalent shall be created.

**Employment Generation Potential**

✓ The implementation of DIDF scheme will generate direct and indirect employment opportunities for skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manpower.
✓ Direct employment opportunities for about 40,000 people will be created under the scheme.
✓ About 2 lakh indirect employment opportunities will be created on account of expansion of milk and milk product marketing operations from existing Tier I, II & III to Tier IV, V & VI cities/towns etc.
✓ With the increase in milk procurement operations of the Milk Cooperatives, there would be generation of additional manpower employment for supervision of increased milk procurement operations, transportation of milk from villages to processing units, and increased input delivery services like Artificial Insemination (AI) services, Veterinary Services, etc.

**WCD Ministry invites nominations for Nari Shakti Puraskar 2017**

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September 2017
{Women's Empowerment}


Key facts

✓ The objective of the award is to acknowledge and recognize the services of individuals and institutions who have made a lasting contribution to women’s empowerment.
✓ The awards are also an effort to recognize role models who act as torch bearers for the younger generation and catalysts of change in the lives of women and society at large.
✓ Through Nari Shakti Puraskar, Government of India reaffirms its commitment towards strengthening women’s position in the society.
✓ The Ministry of Women and Child Development is seeking nominations from individuals and institutions who have displayed outstanding work preferably in exceptional circumstances towards economic and social empowerment of women, effective implementation of women related legislations, gender mainstreaming, etc.

Conference on “Sustainable Landscapes & Forest Ecosystems: Theory to Practice”
Environment Minister launches “Wood is Good” Campaign

{Environment} {Climate Change}

Emphasising the need to create an enabling environment through small steps such as planting more trees, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate
Change, that new and innovative ways must be thought of, to bring more areas under forest and tree cover.

✓ Inaugurating a two-day conference on “Sustainable landscapes and forest ecosystems: Theory to Practice”, the Environment Minister urged the gathering to deliberate and come out with out-of-the-box ideas and solutions on increasing the forest cover much beyond the stipulated 33 per cent.

Key facts

✓ Reiterating the Government’s commitment to increase the country’s forest cover from 24% to 33% of the geographical area and creating an additional carbon sink of 5 to 3 billion tons of CO2 equivalent in forests, as reflected in Nationally Determined Contribution, that the target is proposed to be achieved through a number of planned afforestation drives and initiatives.

✓ The Minister advocated the balancing of environmental and developmental concerns and also urged the gathering of scientists and foresters to devise a solution to the problem of weeds.

✓ MoEF launched the “Wood is Good” campaign on the occasion. Wood is a climate-friendly material, as it is a renewable resource, having zero carbon footprint.

Partnership

✓ The Partnership for Land Use Science (Forest-Plus) is a joint programme by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to strengthen capacity for REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) implementation in India.

✓ The programme brings together experts from India and the United States to develop technologies, tools and methods of forest management to meet the technical challenges of managing forests for the health of ecosystem, carbon stocks, biodiversity and livelihood.

✓ Some of the objectives of the conference include - exploring issues and opportunities for ecosystem approach to land management in India; discussing how the approaches and tools developed under the Forest-PLUS programme
can be used to improve forest management in India and to document and disseminate that learning with a wider group.

**USAID: United States Agency for International Development**

- USAID is the lead U.S. Government agency that works to end extreme global poverty and enable resilient, democratic societies to realize their potential.
- S. foreign assistance has always had the twofold purpose of furthering America’s interests while improving lives in the developing world. USAID carries out U.S. foreign policy by promoting broad-scale human progress at the same time it expands stable, free societies, creates markets and trade partners for the United States, and fosters good will abroad.

**Spending less than 1 percent of the total federal budget, USAID works in over 100 countries to:**

- Promote broadly shared economic prosperity;
- Strengthen democracy and good governance;
- Protect human rights;
- Improve global health,
- Advance food security and agriculture;
- Improve environmental sustainability;
- Further education;
- Help societies prevent and recover from conflicts; and
- Provide humanitarian assistance in the wake of natural and man-made disasters.

**REDD+:**

- **REDD+** – Reducing Emissions by Deforestation and Degradation It aims to incentivize developing countries to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conserve forest carbon stocks, sustainably manage forests and enhance forest carbon stocks.
- The United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries was launched in 2008 and builds on the convening role and technical expertise of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
• The UN-REDD Programme supports nationally led REDD+ processes and promotes the informed and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities, in national and international REDD+ implementation.

REDD+ and sustainable co-benefits REDD+ is not only about climate change. Other goals, known as ‘co-benefits’ (i.e., benefits in addition to reduced climate change) are also important. There are at least four types of co-benefits to consider.

- First, forest conservation, in addition to storing carbon, provides other ecosystem services, such as preserving biodiversity.
- Second, REDD+ actions (e.g., financial flows) and forest conservation might have socio-economic benefits, such as reducing poverty, supporting livelihoods and stimulating economic development.
- Third, REDD+ actions may spark political change toward better governance, less corruption, and more respect for the rights of vulnerable groups.
- Fourth, REDD+ actions and forest conservation could boost the capacity of both forests and humans to adapt to climate change.

Implementing policies that protect and restore ecosystem carbon can bring biodiversity and ecosystem.

**Forest-PLUS**

- USAID Forest-PLUS is a bilateral program between India and the U.S. to develop solutions for sustainable forest land use in India.
- The program, in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), prepares India to implement successfully Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), an international mechanism for climate change mitigation, livelihoods improvement, and biodiversity protection.

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**Successful Development Trials of Astra Missile**
{Science and Technology}

In news

The final Development Flight Trials of Astra – Beyond Visual Range Air to Air Missile (BVRAAM) were successfully conducted over the Bay of Bengal, Off the Coast of Chandipur, Odisha during 11-14 Sep 2017.

Highlights

✓ A total of seven trials were conducted against Pilotless Target Aircrafts (PTA)
✓ The missions included engagement of target at very long range, engagement of high manoeuvring target at medium range and multiple launches of missiles in salvo to engage multiple targets.
✓ All the sub-systems including the indigenous RF Seeker performed accurately, meeting all the mission parameters and objectives. Two missiles were also launched in the combat configuration with warhead and the targets were neutralized.
✓ This effort for building a state-of-the-art BVRAAM by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), together with Indian Air Force (IAF) has completed the development phase of the weapon system successfully.
✓ More than 50 public and private industries have contributed in building the Astra weapon system.

President of India launches ‘Swachhta hi Seva’ Campaign

{Social issue}

To take the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan at a higher level, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, The President of India, on September 15, 2017, launched a nationwide sanitation
campaign, ‘Swachhta hi Seva’ (Cleanliness is Service), at Ishwariganj village in Kanpur.

The President also administered ‘Swachhta hi Seva’ oath to all present there whereby they pledged to create a healthy, clean, and new India. This ‘Swachhta hi Seva’ campaign aimed to strengthen the flagship program ‘Swachh Bharat Mission’.

**Highlights**

- After the launch of this campaign, the President honoured village-level champions who contributed to making Ishwariganj village ‘Open Defecation Free’.
- The President also launched the Solid and Liquid Waste Management activities in the village which is the next major step in Swachhta after getting the villages Open Defecation Free.
- Before launching of this campaign, the President addressed the people out there and said India is on a war for Healthy and clean India. He also stressed on the responsibility of making India clean on not only the sanitation personnel but on the entire country.
- He said every person in this country is Nation Builder (Rashtra Nirmata). Together we should make the effort to clean our houses, public places, villages and cities. The aim is all-round cleanliness and hygiene everywhere, with implications for health and sanitation and overall prosperity of our people. Achieving the goals of the Swachh Bharat Mission expeditiously will be an appropriate tribute to the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi.

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**India Signs 76 Million US Dollar Loan Deal with Japan International Cooperation Limited**

**{International Relation}**
In news

The Government of India signed a loan deal worth $76 million with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) today, for a project to upgrade the environment management plan at Alang-Sosiya ship recycling yards.

Benefits of this project

✓ This project will help the Alang-Sosia ship-recycling yards to comply with international safety & environmental regulations.
✓ This will attract more business at the recycling facilities at Alang, thereby further consolidating India’s share in the global ship-recycling industry.
✓ This project will also help in safeguarding the marine and coastal environment. The use of advanced decontamination technology will rule out the possibility of fire accidents in oil and chemical tankers, thereby ensuring workers safety.
✓ The project is expected to result in increase in direct employment from 50,000 to 92,000 people and in-direct employment from 1.5 lakhs to 3 lakh people.

30th Anniversary of Montreal protocol and 23rd World Ozone Day Celebrated

{Climate Change}

Highlighting the strength of the active collaboration between the government, industries and all stakeholders in the implementation of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) phase-out programme in the country, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Pan-India awareness campaign
✓ Addressing a gathering at the celebrations of the 30th anniversary of the Montreal Protocol and 23rd World Ozone Day here today, with the theme- “Caring for all life under the Sun”, the Minister made a special mention of the Pan-India awareness campaign launched by the Environment Ministry on the occasion.

✓ This campaign was among the most widespread engagements of the Ministry for awareness generation, carried out with the active partnership of States through schools and academic/research institutions spread across the country.

✓ The awareness campaign saw a participation of about 28 lakh students in more than 13,000 schools and reached out to 214 districts across 16 states of the country. The Minister also spoke of the strong policy leadership given by India during the negotiations for the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol.

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**The Montreal protocol on substance that DEPLETE THE OZONE LAYER**

✓ Montreal Protocol, formally Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, international treaty, adopted in Montreal on Sept. 16, 1987, that aimed to regulate the production and use of chemicals that contribute to the depletion of Earth’s ozone layer.

The meeting called for international cooperation in research to convention of Ozone layer

✓ Involving ozone-depleting chemicals (ODCs) and

✓ Empowered the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to lay the groundwork for the Montreal Protocol.

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**A Brief background of MONTREAL PROTOCOL**

✓ The year 2017 marks the 30th Anniversary of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

✓ The Montreal Protocol is one of the most successful global environmental treaties, the implementation of which has not only led to the phase-out of around 98% of ozone depleting chemicals, but also averted more than 135 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions.
Nearly 2 million cases of skin cancer per year have been averted globally. The Montreal Protocol is the only environmental treaty which enjoys universal ratification of 197 UN member countries.

During the Kigali negotiations, India piloted the concept of two base lines and a differentiated phased down time schedule to factor in the needs of developing countries. This was the first time in the Montreal Protocol that the concept of two baseline has been adopted both for developed and developing countries.

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**INDO-USA Joint Exercise Yudh Abhyas – 2017**

**{International Relations}**

Exercise Yudh Abhyas – 2017, a joint military exercise between Indian and US armies commenced this morning at Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington, USA with a brief and impressive opening ceremony. In inaugural remarks, he highlighted the common shared beliefs of democracy, freedom, equality and justice that are precious to both the nations.

During the two-week long exercise soldiers from both countries will hone their tactical skills in counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations under a joint brigade headquarter.

Both sides will jointly train, plan and execute a series of well-developed tactical drills for neutralization of likely threats that may be encountered in UN peace keeping operations. Experts from both sides will hold detailed discussions to share their experience and expertise on varied operational topics.

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**First ever National Conference on “Mission Mode to address Under-Nutrition” to be held in New Delhi**
{Health issue}

In news

The Ministry of Women and Child Development will hold the first ever National Conference in New Delhi tomorrow on Mission Mode to address Under-Nutrition in the country. This conference is being organized by the Ministry of Women & Child Development in collaboration with Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, keeping in mind the goal of “Malnutrition Free India-2022”.

Key Points

At least one district has been selected from each State/UTs so that the action taken in the selected district can be emulated in the other districts also,

Its aims at bringing convergence at District/Block levels of the three key Departments (Health & Family Welfare, ICDS/Social Welfare and Drinking Water and Sanitation) wherein a roadmap would be drawn to evolve an appropriate strategy in tackling the problem of stunting, under-nutrition and wasting comprehensively and conclusively.

Some of the important sessions include efficacy of food fortification, sustainable solution through breast feeding, dietary diversification, improving maternal & child health through Mission Indradhanush, improving program delivery effectiveness, accelerating Real Time Monitoring among others.

Mission Indradhanush

The ultimate goal of Mission Indradhanush is to ensure full immunization with all available vaccines for children up to two years and pregnant women.
The Mission is strategically designed to achieving high quality routine immunization coverage while contributing to strengthening health systems that can be sustained over years to come. In the last few years, India’s full immunization coverage has increased only by 1% per year. The Mission has been launched to accelerate the process of immunization and achieve full immunization coverage for all children in the country.

The Government has identified 201 high focus districts across 28 states in the country that have the highest number of partially immunized and unimmunized children.

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**Union Home Minister operationalises the New Intelligence Set-up of SSB**

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**Internal Security**

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**In news**

Union Home Minister *Shri Rajnath Singh* operationalised the New Intelligence Set-up of the *Sashastra Seema Bal* (SSB). This marked the culmination of a long pending aspiration of the Force following approval of the Union Home Minister.

SSB has been mandated with the responsibility of guarding the Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan borders where there are no restrictions on the movement of people on either side. The border population on both sides have strong regional, cultural and economic ties.

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**Key points**

- SSB has been declared as the Lead Intelligence Agency (LIA) for both the Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan borders.
Thus, it was felt that a well-knit intelligence network of the highest capabilities that can function and deliver would be the prime requirement of comprehensive Border Management.

This was quite essential as the operations of SSB have to be Intelligence based so as to prevent criminals and smugglers from taking advantage of the friendly borders with Nepal and Bhutan.

MHA has accordingly sanctioned 650 posts in various ranks from Battalion to Frontier Headquarters.

This makes the task much more challenging and demands highest alertness to check illegal activities like smuggling of arms, Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN), drugs and human-trafficking.

WARB

On the occasion, the Union Home Minister launched the Welfare and Rehabilitation Board (WARB) Mobile App for CAPF personnel. The App is available on Google Play store and is user friendly.

It contains various useful features to facilitate retired CAPFs and Assam Rifles personnel to get their genuine grievances redressed, seek skill development training through National Skill Development Corporation under “Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, re-employment and other relevant and important information.

This mobile App shall also help retired personnel to have better co-ordination with WARB and its field formation at states/UTs and district level.

‘Sanrakshan’ scheme

SSB Wives’ Welfare Association “SANDIKSHA” has taken up the task to help out wards of such martyrs under the ‘Sanrakshan’ scheme. “SANDIKSHA” is providing financial help to children of martyrs who are still studying in school, colleges and universities to continue their studies.

1st AICTE-ECI Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards - 2017

{Science and Technology}
All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and Engineering Council of India (ECI), felicitated the award winners of “AICTE-ECI Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards” of AICTE approved Degree & Diploma level Technical Institutions/Universities.

**AICTE-ECI Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards**

The ‘AICTE-ECI Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards’ are an epitome for motivating individuals and institutions/organizations to raise their performance in their specific domains leading to significant contribution towards the growth & development of the nation.

These Awards are given in following categories separately for Degree and Diploma Students (including students from AICTE approved Community College) for providing an innovative solution “To convert existing institutes into smart institute using innovative approaches:

**Category-I:** Outstanding Student Engineers (3 Awards each in Civil, Electrical, Mechanical, Electronics Engineering, Computer Science and Biotechnology streams or their allied branches)

**Category-II:** Outstanding Teachers Awards (3 Awards each in Civil, Electrical, Mechanical, Electronics Engineering, Computer Science and Biotechnology streams or their allied branches)

**Category-III:** Outstanding Institutions Awards (3 Awards) based on the maximum number of awards won from the above two categories and other criteria.

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**Study of Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) by Management Development Development Institute (MDI), Gurugram**

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**In news**
Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Shri Giriraj Singh was presented with Evaluation Study of Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) conducted by Management Development Institute (MDI), Gurugram. The institute was entrusted with the task of conducting Evaluation Study of PMEGP in January, 2017.

**Objective**

The aim of the study was examine the impact of the scheme in terms of employment generation and improvement in income of the rural and urban artisans and unemployed youth. major problems in implementation of Scheme and ways to resolve them and to make recommendations on making further improvements in the Scheme.

**Key facts**

- Scheme has been able to provide Sustainable Employment. Units set up under the scheme provided employment throughout year and for large number of years.
- Scheme has good reach, it has targeted at almost all sections of the society (based on social background, education background, location etc)

**Problem Areas**

- Delay in the process of sanctioning of loans at different stages.
- Hypothecation & collaterals asked for.
- Physical verifications & delay in adjustment of margin money.
- Records keeping, hand holding, access of data & reporting by implementing agencies.
- Marketing for products.

**Key recommendations**

- Increased availability of field officers (They are a key connect between beneficiary and agencies and are currently sparse)
- EDP Training content needs to be more relevant and rigorous. On line EDP could be encouraged.
✓ Content partnership/Integration with MOOCs (Massive Open Online Coursewares) of recognized reputational technical and managerial institutes (such as IITs and IIMs)
✓ Agencies could consider hiring interns from leading management institutions (India/Abroad) to further handholding of beneficiaries
✓ Integration with Aadhar to authenticate the trainee identity and progress.
✓ For motivating beneficiaries to repay loans – The people whose Margin Money has been successfully adjusted, need to be rewarded with an option of 2nd round of subsidized loans (at say 15% of subsidy).
✓ Enforcement of deadlines (either of 60 or 90 days) on banks to decide about decision (acceptance or rejection) of the loan application

Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)

{Development and Employment}

✓ The Scheme is implemented by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), as the nodal agency at the National level.
✓ At the State level, the Scheme is implemented through State KVIC Directorates, State Khadi and Village Industries Boards (KVIBs) and District Industries Centres (DICs) and banks.
✓ The Government subsidy under the Scheme is routed by KVIC through the identified Banks for eventual distribution to the beneficiaries / entrepreneurs in their Bank accounts.

Objectives

✓ To generate employment opportunities in rural as well as urban areas of the country through setting up of new self-employment ventures/projects/micro enterprises.
✓ To bring together widely dispersed traditional artisans/ rural and urban unemployed youth and give them self-employment opportunities to the extent possible, at their place.
✓ To provide continuous and sustainable employment to a large segment of traditional and prospective artisans and rural and urban unemployed youth in the country, so as to help arrest migration of rural youth to urban areas.

✓ To increase the wage earning capacity of artisans and contribute to increase in the growth rate of rural and urban employment.

**Nature of assistance:** The maximum cost of the project/unit admissible under manufacturing sector is Rs.25 lakhs and under business/service sector is Rs.10 lakhs.

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**Who can apply?**

✓ Any individual, above 18 years of age. At least VIII standard pass for projects costing above Rs.10 lakhs in the manufacturing sector and above Rs. 5 lakhs in the business / service sector.

✓ **Only new projects are considered for sanction under PMEGP.**

✓ Self Help Groups (**including those belonging to BPL provided that they have not availed benefits under any other Scheme**), Institutions registered under Societies Registration Act, 1860; Production Co-operative Societies, and Charitable Trusts are also eligible.

✓ Existing Units (under PMRY, REGP or any other scheme of Government of India or State Government) and the units that have already availed Government Subsidy under any other scheme of Government of India or State Government are NOT eligible.

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**Dr Jitendra Singh to inaugurate first ‘Pension Adalat’**

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**Governance**

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**In news**

Dr Jitendra Singh will inaugurate the first ‘Pension Adalat’. He will also award the Pensioners for their outstanding contribution towards ‘Anubhav’ – a platform for retiring employees for sharing their experience of working with Government.
Moving ahead from e-governance to m-governance, a Mobile App has been created to avail the services of Pensioners’ Portal which will also be launched by Dr Jitendra Singh.

**Objective**

To create awareness about the post-retirement entitlements as well as an advance planning for life after retirement.

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**Cabinet approves Revamped Khelo India Programme**

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**Sports**

This programme strives to promote “Sports for All” as well as “Sports for Excellence.

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the revamped Khelo India programme.

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**Objective**

This marks a watershed moment in the history of Indian sports, as the Programme aims at mainstreaming sport as a tool for individual development, community development, economic development and national development.

The revamped Khelo India Programme would impact the entire sports ecosystem, including infrastructure, community sports, talent identification, coaching for excellence, competition structure and sports economy.

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**Salient features**

- An unprecedented Pan Indian Sports Scholarship scheme, which would cover 1,000 most talented young athletes each year across select sports disciplines.
- Each athlete selected under the scheme shall receive an annual scholarship worth Rs. 5.00 lakh for 8 consecutive years.
✓ This is the first time ever that a long-term athlete development pathway would be made available to gifted and talented youngsters to excel in competitive sports and will create a pool of highly competitive athletes who can compete to win at the world stage.
✓ The Programme aims to promote 20 universities across the country as hubs of sporting excellence, which would enable talented sports persons to pursue the dual pathway of education and competitive sports.
✓ The Programme also aims at creating an active population with healthy life-style.
✓ The Programme would cover about 200 million children in the age group of 10-18 under a massive national physical fitness drive, which will not only measure the physical fitness of all children in the age group, but also support their fitness related activities.

**Impact**

✓ The power of sport in promoting gender equity and social inclusiveness is also fully recognized and special measures are provided for to achieve these objectives.
✓ The programme also aims at engaging youth living in disturbed and deprived areas, in sporting activities, to wean them away from unproductive and disruptive activities and mainstream them in the nation-building process.
✓ The programme strives to raise the standards of competition, both at school and college level, to have maximum access to organized sports competitions.
✓ It also includes the use of latest user-friendly technology in all aspects of sports promotion such as, use of mobile apps for dissemination of sports training; National Sports Talent Search portal for talent identification; interactive website for indigenous sports; GIS based information system for locating and using sports infrastructure, etc.
✓ This programme strives to promote “Sports for All” as well as “Sports for Excellence.”

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**Environment Ministry to conduct five rounds of Quiz – ‘Prakriti Khoj’ across the Country**

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```Environment```
In news

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change will hold a quiz on environment – ‘Prakriti Khoj’ throughout the country. The quiz is planned in five rounds and the qualifying round will begin on September 25, 2017 by paying tribute to Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya on his birth anniversary.

✓ Second Round: 30th October to 3rd November 2017
✓ Third round: 20-24, November 2017
✓ Fourth round: 4-6, December 2017
✓ Fifth round: 18-20, December 2017

The quiz will be conducted online though multiple-choice questions. Thematic areas like climate change, biodiversity, forest and wildlife, pollution, waste management, etc.

A separate web portal – www.ngc.nic.in and www.pkeq.nic.in, containing information on the quiz has been developed by the Ministry.

Why this quiz is organized?

This environment awareness initiative – “Prakriti Khoj had been launched on September 5, 2017. It has been launched with an aim to reach out to young, aspiring minds of school students through a fun-filled interactive learning mode for triggering a sense of awareness towards environment protection and conservation.

This quiz, in a way, will provide a unique platform for students to measure their awareness levels regarding environmental issues and motivate them to participate in major programmes of the Ministry related to conservation and protection.

Attaining New Heights in Biotechnology

{Science and Technology}
The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under the Ministry of Science & Technology, has taken many steps to bring about a paradigm shift in biotechnology in the country’s North-East Region (NER).

 ✓ **Eyeing an inclusive growth, DBT has announced a series of new programs and missions to turn this into a reality.**
 ✓ **DBT has established a dedicated ‘North Eastern Region Biotechnology Programme Management Cell (NER-BPMC)’, with an annual investment of Rs. 180 crores, to evolve, implement and foster biotechnology research in the north east states.**

**They are,**

**Phyto-Pharma Plant Mission:** This is a Rs 50 crore Mission aimed at conservation and cultivation of endangered and threatened endemic medicinal plants, and discovery of new botanical drugs for unmet medical needs using the rich traditional ethno-botanical knowledge and biodiversity of these states and at the same time also improve availability of authentic and quality botanical raw material on sustainable basis for a boom in the phyto-pharmaceutical industry.

1. **DBT has announced launch of the Phyto-pharmaceutical Mission in NER with three major objectives**

 ✓ Captive cultivation of selected medicinal plants of NER, which have great demand to ensure supply of authentic and quality botanical raw material to the user industries in the country.
 ✓ Development of technology packages for production of GMP grade medicinal plant extracts for export markets.
 ✓ Production of safe and efficacious phytopharmaceuticals from medicinal plants of NER for unmet medical needs using modern scientific tools and following global standards.

2. **Brahmaputra Biodiversity and Biology Boat (B4) on the Brahmaputra River, a major ecology hotspot, in NER, in collaboration with DONER, B4 will establish a large barge on the river with a well-equipped laboratory for analysis of all components of the entire ecosystem of the river and surroundings.**
 ✓ The B4 will link to all the local research institutions along the river, as well as national and international laboratories.
✓ B4 will have capability to analyse soil, water, environment, plant and animal life, human health and agriculture and an equal component that involves local citizens in the experimental process of science in data generation and management.

3. **Frugal microscopy through the Foldscope**: a frugal microscope assembled from simple components, including a sheet of paper and a lens, is acting as a tool connecting students and science from the region, with the rest of the country.

### Skilling Human Resources

✓ Twinning R&D Programme: DBT has initiated 480 R&D twinning programs that link institutes in NER with those across the country.

✓ To create an environment of training and research in medial biotechnology, DBT has supported Medical Diagnostic facilities at 11 medical colleges in NER with an investment of Rs. 40.00 crores.

✓ At school levels, DBT has launched the ‘Biotechnology Labs in Senior Secondary schools (BLiSS) programme’, a first of its kind in India, for schools where biotechnology labs have been set up at 88 Senior Secondary Schools from NER with an investment of Rs. 2.20 crores.

✓ To provide these students with access to world-class journals and publications, the DBT e-Library consortium (DeLCON) has been launched in partnership with 18 institutions of NER, which provides access to more than 900 high impact e-journals.

✓ DBT’s ‘Overseas Associateship for North East Region’ has seen 208 scientists from NER being trained overseas with Rs. 5.25 crore invested every year to support this programme.

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**(DBT’s BLiSS program for teachers inculcating interest in science among NER students)**

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**{Governance}**

“Hunar Haat” to be organised in Puducherry from 24th to 30th September 2017 by Ministry of Minority Affairs
Union Minister for Minority Affairs Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi today said that Ministry of Minority Affairs is organising “Hunar Haat” at Puducherry, one of renowned centre of art & culture, from 24th to 30th September, 2017 to provide market and opportunity to master artisans belonging to the Minority communities.

**Key Facts**

- Master artisans from 16 states would be showcasing their traditional talent. Artisans will bring for display and sale, a wide variety of traditional and rare Handicraft and Handloom items which include Hyderabad Pearl, Wrought Iron & Wood Carving, etc.
- The participating artisans belong to different parts of the country. Artisans from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Orissa, Puducherry and Uttarakhand etc are participating.

The Ministry of Minority Affairs has organized “Hunar Haat” earlier also at different places. Recently, “Hunar Haat” had been organized at Baba Kharak Singh Marg, Cannaught Place in New Delhi

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**India to conduct the First ‘BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise- 2017’ from October 10-13**

**In news**

The Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh will inaugurate the four-day First ‘BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise- 2017’ (BIMSTEC DMEx-2017) on 10th October, 2017
The Exercise will be conducted by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR).

**When was this decided?**

At the 17th BIMSTEC Senior Officials Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on February 7, 2017, it was decided that India would organize the first annual Disaster Management Exercise for the region.

**Main exercises**

- The main exercise will comprise of Table Top Exercise (TTX), Field Training Exercise (FTX) and After Action Review (AAR)
- **Highlights**
  - This Exercise will be a platform for sharing Best Practices on all aspects of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), strengthening regional response and coordination for Disaster Management among the BIMSTEC member countries.
  - The main focus of the BIMSTEC DMEx-2017 will be on testing the region’s preparedness and resilience towards effective activation of inter-Governmental interaction/dialogue/agreements for immediate deployment of regional resources for disaster response.

**Basics**

BIMSTEC

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organization comprising seven Member States lying in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal constituting a contiguous regional unity.
- This sub-regional organization came into being on 6 June 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration. It constitutes seven Member States: five deriving from South Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand.
- Initially, the economic bloc was formed with four Member States with the acronym 'BIST-EC' (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation).
Following the inclusion of Myanmar on 22 December 1997 during a special Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok, the Group was renamed ‘BIMST-EC’ (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation). With the admission of Nepal and Bhutan at the 6th Ministerial Meeting (February 2004, Thailand), the name of the grouping was changed to ‘Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation’ (BIMSTEC).

**Objective**

The objective of building such an alliance was to harness shared and accelerated growth through mutual cooperation in different areas of common interests by mitigating the onslaught of globalization and by utilizing regional resources and geographical advantages.

**Way ahead**

- At the end of the four-day Exercise, a publication will be brought out on the outcomes and recommendations of the Joint/Common Exercise and include Agreement among BIMSTEC Nations on regional cooperation for Disaster Management and Emergency Response.
- This would be presented to the BIMSTEC Leaders at the Summit to be hosted by Nepal in October/November, 2017.

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**Centre announces new PPP Policy to promote private investments in affordable housing**

**{Development and Employment}**

Central Government has announced a new PPP Policy for Affordable Housing that allows extending central assistance of up to Rs.2.50 lakh per each house to be built by private builders even on private lands besides opening up immense potential for private investments in affordable housing projects on government lands in urban areas.
✓ This policy seeks to assign risks among the government, developers and financial institutions, to those who can manage them the best besides leveraging under utilized and un-utilized private and public lands towards meeting the **Housing for All target by 2022.**

✓ The policy gives eight PPP (Public Private Partnership) options for private sector to invest in affordable housing segment.

✓ Eight PPP options, including six for promoting affordable housing with private investments using government lands have been evolved after extensive consultations with States, promoter bodies and other stakeholders.

### Two models using private lands

✓ The two PPP models for private investments in affordable housing on private lands include extending central assistance of about Rs.2.50 lakh per each house as interest subsidy on bank loans as upfront payment under the **Credit Linked Subsidy Component (CLSS)** component of Pradhan Mantri Awas yojana (Urban).

✓ Under the second option, central assistance of Rs.1.50 lakh per each house to be built on private lands would be provided, in case the beneficiaries do not intend to take bank loans.

### The six models using government lands are

✓ **DBT Model:** Under this option, private builders can design, build and transfer houses built on government lands to public authorities. Government land is to be allocated based on the least cost of construction. Payments to builders will be made by the public authority based on progress of project as per agreed upon milestones and buyers will pay to the Government.

✓ **Mixed Development Cross –subsidized Housing:** Government land to be allotted based on number of affordable houses to be built on the plot offered to private builders, cross subsidizing this segment from revenues from high end house building or commercial development.

✓ **Annuity Based Subsidized Housing:** Builders will invest against deferred annuity payments by the Government. Land allocation to builders is based on unit cost of construction.

✓ **Annuity-cum-Capital Grant Based Affordable Housing:** Besides annuity payments, builders could be paid a share of project cost as upfront payment.
Direct Relationship Ownership Housing: As against government mediated payments to builders and transfer of houses to beneficiaries in the above four models, under this option, promoters will directly deal with buyers and recover costs. Allocation of public land is based on unit cost of construction.

Direct Relationship Rental Housing: Recovery of the costs by builders is through rental incomes from the houses built on government lands.

Under these six Government land based PPP models, beneficiaries can avail central assistance of Rs.1.00 to Rs.2.50 lakh per house as provisioned under different components of PMAY(Urban). Beneficiaries will be identified as per the norms of PMAY(Urban).

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**NITI Aayog’s SATH Program launched in Assam**

**Economic Policy**

National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog’s SATH (Sustainable Action for Transforming Human capital) Program was launched in in Guwahati, Assam. The SATH program aims to provide structured support to Assam in identifying key health priorities and implement the solutions towards transforming the health and improving the well-being of people of state.

**SATH program**

- The vision of SATH program is to initiate transformation in education and health sectors.
- It embodies the philosophy of co-operative federalism to addresses the need expressed by many states for technical support from NITI Aayog.
- The program will be implemented by NITI along with McKinsey & Company and IPE Global consortium, who were selected through a competitive bidding process.

SATH Program aims to build three selected states viz. Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka as future ‘role model’ states for health systems. Under it, NITI Aayog will work in close collaboration with state machinery in these three selected states to design a robust roadmap of intervention, develop program
governance structure, set up monitoring and tracking mechanisms, handhold state institutions through the execution stage and provide support on a range of institutional measures to achieve the end objectives.

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**Multi-Agency Exercise ‘Pralay Sahayam’**

**{Disaster Management}**

A multi-agency exercise was recently conducted on the banks of Hussain Sagar Lake as the final event of ‘Pralay Sahayam’ in Hyderabad. The event demonstrated efforts of all central and state agencies, National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF) and the Armed Forces towards jointly tackling an urban flooding scenario in Hyderabad.

**Key facts**

- The exercise brought out the role and function of the State Emergency Operations in coordinating conduct of the joint operations.
- The exercise emphasized the significance of early warning systems of agencies like Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) and Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS).
- The exercise culminated with a static display which demonstrated the efficient and functional layout of a relief and rehabilitation camp for the displaced persons.

**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.

**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.

Bharat ke Kaushalzaade

{Public Policy}

Rural Skills Division, Ministry of Rural Development has organized ‘Bharat ke Kaushalzaade’, an event honouring beneficiaries of its key skilling programmes, on the eve of Antyodaya Diwas 2017.

Objective

The event aims to celebrate and honour beneficiaries from both of MoRD’s flagship skill development programmes i.e. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) and Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETI).

DDU-GKY not only offers industry relevant skill training to candidates, it also works closely with industry and leading corporates to strengthen the post-training employment scenario for its trainees.

‘Kaushal Panjee’

The event also witnessed the mobilization platform launch, branded ‘Kaushal Panjee’ (Skill Register).
It aims to be citizen centric end-to-end solution to aid mobilization of candidates for RSETIs and DDU-GKY.
It facilitates mobilization of candidates through Self Help Group members, Gram Panchayat Functionaries, Block Officials, CSCs and directly by the candidate.
✓ RSETIs and DDU-GKY Partners can access the Kaushal Panjee to connect with the mobilized rural youth.
✓ Kaushal Panjee is connected to the Social Economic Caste Census (SECC 2011) which will help the States plan and target their mobilizations based on the socio-economic profile of households in their State.

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**Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU GKY)**

**{Public Policy}**

**Vision:** Transform rural poor youth into an economically independent and globally relevant workforce

✓ The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) announced the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) Antyodaya Diwas, on 25th September 2014. DDU-GKY is a part of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), tasked with the dual objectives of adding diversity to the incomes of rural poor families and cater to the career aspirations of rural youth.
✓ DDU-GKY is uniquely focused on rural youth between the ages of 15 and 35 years from poor families.
✓ As a part of the Skill India campaign, it plays an instrumental role in supporting the social and economic programs of the government like the Make In India, Digital India, Smart Cities and Start-Up India, Stand-Up India campaigns.

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**Shri Rajnath Singh to launch PENCIL Portal at the National Conference on Child Labour**

**{Social issue}**
“PENCIL”: an electronic platform for effective enforcement for no child labour developed by Ministry of Labour and Employment is going to be launched by Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singhji on 26th September 2017 in the National Conference on Child Labour at Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra, Chanakya Puri, New Delhi.

**PENCIL Portal has following components**

- Child Tracking System
- Complaint Corner
- State Government
- National Child Labour Project
- Convergence

**Why this portal is designed?**

Children are valuable assets for any country who need to be nurtured for the better future of the country. The census 2011 showed a substantial decline in child labour as compared to the data of Census 2001, but a lot is required to be done to protect their childhood.

**Governments steps in favour of children**

**Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016**

- Government has enacted the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016 which came into force with effect from 1st September, 2016. With this amendment, employment of a child below 14 years is completely prohibited in any occupation or processes.

- **This is a historic progression since the inception of the Act in 1986**, when a complete ban in engaging children below 14 years is foreseen as a reality by this amendment.: First time the age of child is linked with the age of the child in the Right of Children to free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.

- Also, for the first time the definition of adolescent has been introduced and the ambit of the Act is enhanced to include adolescent in the age group of 14-18 years. The amendment prohibits the employment of adolescent in hazardous occupations and processes.

**The National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme**
It was initiated in the in 1988 to rehabilitate working children by eliminating all forms of child labour through identification and withdrawal of all children in the Project Area from child labour, Preparing children withdrawn from work for mainstream education along with vocational training. NCLP has been revised expanded and aligned to the new legislative provisions.

- The legislative changes have been accompanied by creation of additional institutional mechanisms at the district, state and national level for identification and rescue, along with revamping the rehabilitation scheme and a centralized database for case to case monitoring and accountability.
- The Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) is aimed at creating a ready reckoner for trainers, practitioners and monitoring agencies to ensure complete prohibition of child labour and protection of adolescents from hazardous labour ultimately leading to Child Labour Free India.
- The genesis of the portal is in the felt need to create a robust implementing and monitoring mechanism for both enforcement of the legislative provisions and effective implementation of the NCLP especially in the backdrop that the subject of Labour is in the concurrent list and enforcement to a large extent depends of respective State Governments. It was felt that an online portal which connects Central Government to State Government, District and to all Project Societies would provide a mechanism for implementation.

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**PM launches Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana “Saubhagya”**

**{Governance}**

The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has launched a new scheme Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana –“Saubhagya” to ensure electrification of all willing households in the country in rural as well as urban areas.

**What is the scheme all about?**
The scheme funds the cost of last-mile connectivity to willing households to help achieve the goal of lighting every household by 31 December 2018.

**Why was it launched?**

Despite the government’s aggressive village electrification programme, the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana launched in July 2015, under which 78% of 18,000 villages have been electrified, it was realised that the problem of electricity ‘access’ wasn’t resolved. A village is declared to be electrified if 10% of the households are given electricity along with public places such as schools, panchayat office, health centres, dispensaries and community centres. With a large number of household still remaining without access to electricity, the scheme aims at ensuring the coverage of households as opposed to only villages.

**The expected outcome of the Scheme is as follows**

- Environmental upgradation by substitution of Kerosene for lighting purposes
- Improvement education services
- Better health services
- Enhanced connectivity through radio, television, mobiles, etc.
- Increased economic activities and jobs
- Improved quality of life especially for women

**How will it work?**

- With no subsidy component for monthly electricity consumption, the Gram Panchayat and public institutions in the rural areas will be authorised to carry out billing and collection tasks which have been pain points for the discoms.
- For those household where the national electricity grid can’t reach, households will be provided with solar power packs along with battery banks. **State-run Rural Electrification Corporation is the nodal agency for the scheme.**

**Minimum Support Price for Minor Forest Produce is launched**
In news

Minister of Tribal Affairs Shri Jual Oram inaugurated the National Workshop organized by TRIFED on “Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Minor Forest Produces (MFP) scheme – Taking it to the next level for a Fair and Equitable Deal to the Tribals” Ministers of State for Tribal Affairs.

TRIFED

This workshop is a clarion call for understanding the gaps in the scheme of providing Minimum Support Price to Minor Forest Produce and making course correction

This workshop aims at expanding the horizon and taking it to all the States. MoU with Amazon is a step towards expanding the reach of the ‘Tribe India’ brand to next level to National & International markets through e-commerce.

✓ “TRIBES INDIA” showrooms managed by TRIFED, offer a wide range of Tribal Products from different parts of the country, which include Metal Craft, Tribal Textiles, Jewellery, Tribal Paintings, Cane & Bamboo, Pottery, Gifts and Novelties, Organic and Natural products sourced from tribals at their places of habitats from higher Himalayas (Bhutia tribes in the Uttarakhand, Bodh & Kinnaura tribes in Himachal Pradesh) in the North and (Toda & Irula Tribes in Nilgiri Hills) in the South and from North Eastern States (Tangkhul Naga, Bodo, Konyak & Dimasa Tribes) to the desert of Rajasthan and Rann of Kutch (Bhil, Garasia, Rathwa, Gamit Tribes ) in the West.
✓ There is fabulous collection of tribal paintings mainly Saura from Orissa, Gond from Madhya Pradesh, Warli from Maharashtra and Pithora from Gujarat.

Background

✓ Government of India has taken a number of initiatives for socio economic development of tribals like introduction of Forest Rights Act, PESA Act and has
been implementing schemes for development of MFP by providing financial support to State TDCCs and TRIFED for market development of MFPs.

✓ Recognizing the critical importance which MFP hold for tribals and its potential to create large scale employment opportunity thereby, helping in reducing poverty and increasing empowerment of tribals particularly women and poor people of the poorest and backward districts of the country, Govt. of India has now decided to introduce an ambitious scheme of providing fair price for the MFP collected by tribals through Minimum Support price (MSP).

✓ The scheme has been started with the objective of providing fair price to MFP gatherers, enhance their income level and ensure sustainable harvesting of MFPs. The MSP scheme seeks to establish a framework to ensure fair prices for the produce collected by them, assurance of buying at a particular price, primary processing, storage, transportation etc while ensuring sustainability of the resource base. It is a holistic scheme for development of MFP trade and covers 24 non-nationalized / non-monopolized MFPs namely.

“Electronic Negotiable Warehouse Receipt (e-NWR) System”

{Governance} {Public Policy}

In news

_Shri Ram Vilas Paswan_, Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution today launched the Web Portal of Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) & “Electronic Negotiable Warehouse Receipt (e-NWR) System” in New Delhi,

Key Points

✓ e-NWRs would have no chances of any tempering, mutilation, fudging, loss or damage and with no possibility of any multiple financing.
These initiatives would revolutionise the marketing of agricultural commodities and help farmers realize better price for their produce which will be a step towards doubling the farmers’ income by 2022.

Benefits

- NWRs will not only facilitate an easy pledge financing by banks and other financial institutions but also smooth trading on various trading centres like commodity exchanges, electronic National Agriculture Markets (e-NAM) and other electronic platforms.
- e-NWRs will save expenditure in logistics as the stocks could be traded through multiple buyers without physical movement and can be even split for partial transfer or withdrawal.

India Joins Race in 5G Ecosystem, Constitutes High Level Forum on 5G India 2020

{Science and Technology}

Government has constituted High Level 5G India 2020 Forum. For India, 5G provides an opportunity for industry to reach out to global markets, and consumers to gain with the economies of scale. Worldwide countries have launched similar Forums and thus, India has joined the race in 5G technologies.

Technologies rollout will help in

- Increasing GDP
- Creating Employment
- Digitizing the economy.

The Term of Reference of the High Level Forum for 5G India 2020 shall be

- Vision Mission and Goals for the 5G India 2020, and
- Evaluate, approve roadmaps & action plans for 5G India 2020.
The primary goals of the forum are to achieve:
✓ Early deployment of 5G in India
✓ A globally competitive product development and manufacturing ecosystem targeting 50% of India market and 10% of global market over next 5 to 7 years.

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**Sujalam Sufalam Yojana**

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**Environment** {Agriculture}

Linkage of rivers will help farmers to grow more crops and contribute in progress of the country

✓ Gujarat Government has given concrete shape to the concept of river linkage and has linked Narmada and Sabarmati rivers, so that more and more farmers are benefitted. He further said that he is fortunate to inaugurate the Plaque for the Project Sujalam Sufalam Yojana’ (Water and Irrigation Projects).

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**Sujalam Suphalam Spreading Canal**

The works of 332 K.M. long Sujalam Suphalam Spreading Canal, traversing through seven districts from Mahi to Banas river which includes diversion of surplus flood water of Kadana Reservoir and Narmada to the water deficit areas.

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**CARA launches monthly “Jan Sampark” Program to facilitate adoption**

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**Social issue**

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**In news**
The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) of the Ministry of Women & Child Development has started a monthly “Jan Sampark” program to enable the public to have interaction with its officials and staff for seeking information related to Adoption as well as flagging their concerns.

**Key facts**

- The first of its kind programme was held in New Delhi. Nearly 150 Prospective Adoptive Parents (PAPs), Adoptive Parents and representatives of agencies participated in the session, which lasted for more than four hours.
- Details pertaining to Immediate Placement and Special Needs Adoption Module of Child Adoption Resource Information & Guidance System (CARINGS) as well as the newly launched Grievance/Query portal were shared with all the stakeholders. Also many of the PAPs were counselled and motivated to go for adopting older children.

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**Cabinet approves umbrella scheme of Modernisation of Police Forces**

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**{Internal Security}**

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**In news**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has given its approval for implementation of umbrella scheme of “Modernisation of Police Forces (MPF)” for years 2017-18 to 2019-20.

**Salient Features**

- Special provision has been made under the Scheme for internal security, law and order, women security, availability of modern weapons, mobility of police forces, logistics support, hiring of helicopters, upgradation of police wireless, National Satellite Network, CCTNS project, E-prison project etc.
✓ Under the umbrella scheme, earmarked for internal security related expenditure for Jammu & Kashmir, North Eastern States and left wing extremism affected States.

✓ Implementation of this scheme would bolster the Government’s ability to address challenges faced in different theatres such as areas affected by LWE, Jammu and Kashmir and North East effectively and undertake development interventions which will catalyze in improving the quality of life in these areas and help combat these challenges effectively at the same time.

✓ New initiatives are being introduced to provide assistance to States for upgradation of police infrastructure, forensic science laboratories, institutions and the equipment available with them to plug critical gaps in the criminal justice system. Police Stations will be integrated to set up a national data base of crime and criminals’ records. It will be linked with other pillars of criminal justice system such as ‘prisons, forensic science laboratories and prosecution offices.

✓ The umbrella scheme also provides for setting up of a State-of Art forensic science laboratory in Amravati, Andhra Pradesh and upgradation of Sardar Patel Global Centre for Security, Counter Terrorism and Anti Insurgency in Jaipur and Gujarat Forensic Science University in Gandhi Nagar.

‘National Tourism Awards, 2015-16’ to Various Segments of The Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Industry on ‘World Tourism Day’

{Tourism}

The President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind presented the “National Tourism Awards, 2015-16” to various segments of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry at a function organised by the Ministry of Tourism on the occasion of “World Tourism Day”

The President launched the “Incredible India 2.0 Campaign”; ‘Adopt A Heritage’

Project and new Incredible India Website on the occasion:
✓ “Incredible India 2.0 Campaign” marks a shift from the present generic promotions being undertaken across the world, to market specific promotional plans and product specific creatives, with greater focus on digital presence and social media.
✓ ‘Adopt A Heritage’ Project plans to entrust heritage sites to the public sector and private sector companies and individuals for the development of tourist amenities. They will become ‘Monument Mitras’ and adopt bthe sites.
✓ The “New Incredible India Website” is an advanced version of the website with more useful features.

**Key facts**

✓ Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world. Its evolution can be estimated from the fact that the number of tourists all over the world has increased from 2.5 crore in 1950 to 123 crore in 2016. The tourism industry contributes 10.2 percent of the world’s GDP.
✓ It is estimated that every 10th person in the world works in the tourism industry.
✓ In India too, the livelihood of a very large number of people is linked to the tourism industry. **In the year 2016, tourism’s contribution to GDP was 9.6 percent and 9.3 percent to total employment.**
✓ The tourism industry can contribute significantly in generating permanent employment opportunities and eliminating poverty. According to an assessment, an investment of Rs. 10 lakh in tourism industry provides employment to about 90 people, while about 45 in agriculture, and about 13 people in manufacturing.

**The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017**

✓ **The World Economic Forum** has, for the past 11 years, engaged leaders in travel and tourism to carry out an in-depth analysis of the Travel and Tourism competitiveness of 136 economies across the world.
✓ The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index measures “the set of factors and policies that enable the sustainable development of the travel and tourism sector, which in turn, contributes to the development and competitiveness of a country”.
✓ The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index enables all stakeholders to work together to improve the industry’s competitiveness in their national economies
✓ **The theme of this edition Paving the Way for a More Sustainable and Inclusive Future,** reflects the increasing focus on ensuring the industry’s sustained
growth in an uncertain security environment while preserving the natural environment and local communities on which it so richly depends.

**Cabinet approves signing and ratification of the Bilateral Investment Treaty between India and Belarus on investments**

**{International Relations}**

**In news**

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for **signing and ratification of the Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)** between the India and Belarus on Investments.

**Highlights**

- The Treaty is likely to increase investment flows between the two countries. The agreement is expected to improve the confidence of the investors resulting in an increase in FDI and Overseas Director Investment (ODI) opportunities and this will have a positive impact on employment generation.
- The signing and ratification of a BIT between the two countries will work as a strategic initiative as Belarus is the member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).
- India has already initiated the BIT text with the Kyrgyz Republic and is in talks with the Russian Federation for a new BIT, based on the Model BIT text.

**India and EEU**

- The **Eurasian Economic Union comprises Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan**. The FTA is expected to open up a huge market with a trade potential of $37 to 62 billion.
- Trade between India and the five Eurasian countries stands at about $11 billion. The FTA with the Eurasian countries was dictated by India’s need to diversify into new markets.
**What does the FTA with EEU have in store for India?**

- EEU has vast reserves of natural resources comprising oil, gas, electric power, mineral fertilisers, coal, iron and steel, etc, and offers a ready market to be harnessed and explored. Undoubtedly, the FTA with EEU will bring in a lot of benefits for the Indian economy.
- The realisation of the North-South Transport Corridor—connecting India, Central Asia, Russia and Iran—will provide momentum to the trading relationship between India and EEU members by ensuring easy movement of goods and reducing time and freight costs. Granting business visas to Indian exporters will also get channelised once the FTA is in place.

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**BRICS Interbank Cooperation**

**{International Relations}**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi** has given its approval to the signing of the
- Interbank Local Currency Credit Line Agreement and
- Cooperation Memorandum Relating to Credit Ratings by Exim Bank with participating member banks under BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism.

**Impact**

- The Agreements will promote multilateral interaction within the area of mutual interest which will deepen political and economic relations with BRICS nations.
- Signing of the Agreement will position Exim Bank in the international platform along with large development finance institutions, like CDS, VEB and BNDES.
- At an appropriate time, **Exim Bank, leveraging this umbrella agreement, could enter into bilateral agreement with any of these member institutions to raise resources for its business**. As and when an opportunity arises for co-financing in commercial terms, by any two member institutions (say India and South Africa), lending in single currency by both the institutions would also be possible.

**Background**
Exim Bank finances, facilitates and promotes India’s international trade.

It provides competitive finance at various stages of the business cycle covering import of technology, export product development, export production and export credit at pre-shipment and post-shipment stages and investments overseas.

**Interbank Local Currency Credit Line Agreement**

- The initial Master Agreement on Extending Credit Facility in Local Currency under the BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism had a validity of five years, which has expired in March 2017.
- It is understood that some of the member banks (like CDB and VEB; CDB and BNDES) have entered into bilateral agreements for local currency financing under the Master Agreement signed in 2012. Although the current conditions are not conducive to usage, it was useful to keep the same alive as an enabling feature in case a suitable opportunity materializes in future.
- Exim Bank raises resources in the off-shore market in diverse currencies and swaps to mitigate the risk. The umbrella Agreement would serve as an enabler to enter into bilateral agreements with member banks subject to national laws, regulations and internal policies of the signatories.

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**NITI Aayog invites Indian entrepreneurs to participate in the Global Entrepreneurship Summit, 2017**

**{Economic Policy}**

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**In news**

NITI Aayog, in partnership with the Government of the United States of America, is hosting the eighth annual Global Entrepreneurship Summit from Nov 28-30, 2017.

This year’s theme is “Women First, Prosperity for All” to celebrate entrepreneurial spirit in all its strength, diversity, and entirety.
Key facts

✓ This is the first time the Global Entrepreneurship Summit is being held in South Asia. Hosting GES 2017 in Hyderabad will empower Indian entrepreneurs to pitch their ideas, build partnerships, secure funding, and create innovative products and services that will transform societies for a better future.
✓ It will not only bring global best practices to India, but will create an irreplaceable place for India in the global entrepreneurial ecosystem.
✓ The theme for this year’s Summit – Women First, Prosperity for All – will celebrate entrepreneurship in all its strength, diversity and entirety.
✓ The four primary focus areas of GES 2017 are Health Care and Life Sciences, Digital Economy and Financial Technology, Energy and Infrastructure, and Media and Entertainment.
✓ Entrepreneurs, investors and ecosystem supporters in these sectors will come together for two and a half days to participate in dynamic panel discussions, high-impact networking, mentoring and investment matchmaking.

India registers significant decline in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)

Gender gap reducing: Big boost to ‘Beti Bachao Beti Padhao’

India has registered a significant decline in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR). According to the just released SRS bulletin, IMR of India has declined by three points (8% decline), from 37 per 1000 live births in 2015 to 34 per 1000 live births in 2016, compared to two points decline last year.

✓ Not only this, India also recorded a major drop in birth cohort, which has for the first time come down to below 25 million.
✓ According to the SRS Bulletin the gender gap in India for child survival is reducing steadily.
✓ The gender difference between female and male IMR has now reduced to <10%, giving a major boost to the ‘Beti Bachao Beti Padhao’ scheme of the Government.
✓ The results signify that the strategic approach of the Ministry has started yielding dividends and the efforts of focusing on low performing States is paying off.
✓ Among the EAG States and Assam, all States except Uttarakhand have reported decline in IMR in comparison to 2015. The decline is reported as 4 points in Bihar, 3 points in Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand and two points decline in Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Rajasthan.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

It has come to the notice of Ministry of Women & Child Development (MWCD), Government of India that certain unauthorized sites/organizations/NGOs/individuals are distributing illegal forms in the name of cash incentive under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme.

‘India Playing a Leadership Role in Wildlife Management by Involving Local Communities’

India Hosts Global Wildlife Programme to Address Illegal Wildlife Trade

✓ In an attempt to address illegal wildlife trade across 19 countries of Asia and Africa, India is hosting the Global Wildlife Programme (GWP) jointly with World Bank and United Nations Development Programme. Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Highlights
✓ Coinciding with the ‘Wildlife Week’, the theme of the Conference is – “Peoples’ participation in wildlife conservation”. The meeting will bring about strengthened cooperation between India and the 18 GWP countries in better management of wildlife habitats and minimizing human-wildlife conflict situations. It will also enable India to strengthen its enforcement mechanism to control illicit trade.
✓ The GWP will hold discussions on management of wildlife habitat, securing sustainable community livelihood, enhancing enforcement, monitoring, cooperation to reduce wildlife crimes such as poaching and related threats.
✓ The Conference will provide an opportunity for India to showcase its conservation efforts through joint forest management, vana sanrakshan samitis, eco-development committees in and around Protected Areas.

**Way ahead**

✓ The meeting will host wildlife experts, leading practitioners across 19 GWP countries, government representatives from India’s forestry and conservation sectors, leading corporate associated with environmental and biodiversity conservation, civil society organisations and school children.

**Why is the Global Wildlife Program needed?**

✓ The illegal wildlife trade (IWT) is a global threat. The problem is particularly acute in Africa, where iconic species – the African elephant, white and black rhinos, and pangolins – are being poached to extinction.
✓ As species are poached and illegally harvested at increasingly unsustainable levels, wildlife crime has become the fourth most lucrative illegal business after narcotics, human trafficking, and weapons.
✓ The presence of wildlife in protected areas ensures that an ecosystem can function and maintain natural capital (soil, forests, air, water, etc.) As natural resource crime such as poaching increases, it results in environmental degradation.
✓ This adversely affects ecosystem services, which in turn affects the survival of these communities who depend upon these services for livelihoods, fuel and food. The cost of environmental crime to developing countries is estimated to be more than $70 billion a year (World Bank 2014).