

NEWS ANALYSIS

For Civil Services Exams

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CONTENTS

Lead Article

- HIV/AIDS Bill 2016: A Giant Step

National News

- Cab safety measured for women included in new Taxi Policy Guidelines
- Karnataka launched campaign against H1N1
- Uttar Pradesh government scrapped Samajwadi pension scheme
- EC threw open challenge to people to hack its EVM's from 1st week of May
- Haryana government launched Operation Durga for women's safety
- Telangana Government to increase quota for Muslims, STs in the state
- PM Narendra Modi launched BHIM-Aadhaar Pay app
- PM Modi inaugurated new units in Koradi thermal power station in Nagpur
- President Pranab Mukherjee gave assent to four GST related legislations

International News

- Malala 6th person to receive honorary Canadian citizenship
- Amnesty International released Death Penalty Report 2016
- Russia vetoed UN resolution condemning Syria chemical attack
- Union Cabinet approved signing of Framework of Understanding for hydrocarbon cooperation with Bangladesh
- US dropped 'Mother of All Bombs' on ISIS Caves in Afghanistan

Economy

- Mukulita Vijayawargiya took charge as Whole Time Member of IBBI
- Cairn India merged with Vedanta Ltd
- CBDT to issue PAN and TAN within 1 day to improve Ease of Doing Business
- CCEA approved listing of 11 CPSEs on stock exchanges

Schemes & Committees

- Union Government sets up inter-ministerial panel to monitor UDAN
- Reliance Jio launched Dhan Dhana Dhan offer
- Union Government launched Aadhaar Seeding Application
- Union Cabinet approved implementation of Target Plus Scheme under Foreign Trade Policy 2004-09

Defence

- Indo-Mongolia Joint Military Exercise Nomadic Elephant 2017

Awards

- National Hindi Sevi Samman Awards for the year 2015 announced
- President Pranab Mukherjee present SCOPE Awards
- President Pranab Mukherjee conferred National Geoscience Awards 2016

Sports

- India's Harbhajan among 8 ambassadors for ICC Champions Trophy
- US, Canada & Mexico make a joint bid for 2026 FIFA World Cup
- Lewis Hamilton won 2017 Chinese Grand Prix
- Indian Olympic Association granted affiliation to Boxing Federation of India

Miscellaneous

- India's Harbhajan among 8 ambassadors for ICC Champions Trophy
- Two day Convention on World Homoeopathy Day concludes in India
- 126th Birth Anniversary of Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar observed nationwide
- UN chief Guterres named Achim Steiner as new administrator of UNDP
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- International Day of Human Space Flight observed on April 12
- Pioneering HIV/AIDS researcher Mark Wainberg passes away
- The Flaming Tresses of Draupadi, authored by M Veerappa Moily launched



PANACEA BHARTI
Institute

- Opp. New Court, Near Bhaiwala Chowk, Ferozepur Road, Ldh
- PAU Gate No. 3 Road • SCO 37, 32 Sector Market, Chd. Road, Ludhiana

M : 9888 405 906 | www.panaceabharti.com

Lead Article

HIV/AIDS Bill 2016: A Giant Step

The Union Cabinet passed the HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Bill, 2016. This comes after the government revived the bill to look into its flaws in July 2016. The Bill was first introduced in Parliament by the UPA government in its last days in 2014 and aimed to make anti-retroviral treatment a legal right of HIV/AIDS patients.

What are the Provisions in the Bill

The bill is considered to be an important step to address problems related HIV/ AIDS in India.

Here are some important provisions in the bill:

1. Anti- Retroviral Therapy

The bill states that central and state governments are obliged to provide for anti-retroviral therapy (ART) and management of opportunistic infections. The opportunistic infections are infections that take advantage of weakness in the immune system and occur frequently.

2. Discrimination and confidentiality

The bill forbids specific acts of discrimination by the state, or any other person, against HIV-positive people, or those living with such people. The protection from any kind of discrimination mandated in the Bill extends to the fields of healthcare services, employment, educational services, public facilities, holding public office, property rights, and insurance. The bill also provides for confidentiality of HIV-related information and makes it mandatory to get informed consent for undertaking medical treatment, HIV tests, and research.

3. Ombudsman

The HIV/ AIDS Bill, 2016 includes the role of an ombudsman. The provision related to the ombudsman says an ombudsman shall be appointed by each state government to scrutinize the complaints pertaining to the violation of the Act and the provision of health care services.

The ombudsman is required to submit a report to the state government in every six months. In the report s/he will be stating the number and nature of complaints received, the actions were taken and orders passed. In case, when violations are found, punitive actions of discriminators would be taken against

the violators which include jail terms of up to 2 years and possibly even significant fines.

4. Guardianship Provision

In this bill, the provisions related to guardianship are specified. A person between the age of 12 to 18 years who has sufficient maturity in managing and understanding the issues of his HIV or AIDS-affected family shall be competent to act as a guardian of another sibling below 18 years of age.

The guardianship will be applied in matters pertaining to admission to operating bank accounts, educational establishments, care and treatment, managing property, and amongst others.

5. Secrecy of Patient Record in legal cases

The bill states that patient records are now required to adopt stringent data protection methods. In legal cases relating to HIV-positive persons shall be dealt in the court on a priority basis. In any legal proceeding, if an HIV affected or infected person is a party, the court may pass orders that the proceedings be conducted (a) by not revealing the identity of the person, in camera and to prohibit any person from publishing information that leaks the identity of the applicant.

Data on HIV in India

The National AIDS Control Program in India is trying to prohibit cases of new infections as part of its target of ending the epidemic by 2030.

The current data shows that about 2,170,000 people are living with HIV in India. It is estimated that around 6.54 percent of them are children under the age of 15.

In India, testing is still not at 100 percent. Testing with high-risk groups is still having significant room for improved testing rates. The testing rate for female sex workers, it is at 72 percent, for gay males at about 70 percent and for drug users, it is at 71 percent.

Issues with the bill

An earlier version of the Bill stated the need to strengthen injection safety program as Injecting Drug Users (IDUs) can significantly lower their risk of getting and transmitting HIV, viral hepatitis and other blood bore infections by using a sterile needle for every injection. But, Clause 22 of the new Bill simply states the words 'injection safety requirements' without specifying the rules.

If a volunteer gives sterile needles and takes back used needles from a patient, he could

be picked up for aiding and abetting unlawful use of drugs. Provision of sterile needles is seen as a crime and this Bill was expected to clarify the needles safety guidelines. What we have now instead clarified is completely open to interpretation.

The Clause 14(1) of the Bill relating to prevention of the spread of the virus includes a phrase 'as far as possible.' The loophole makes the right to access life-saving anti-retroviral therapy weak and subject to interpretation.

The critics have argued that the clause is seeking to limit the right to treatment of the patients

The HIV community in India objected to the long awaited HIV/AIDS Bill in its present form and demanded a removal of the phrase "as far as possible" from the proposed legislation.

Conclusion

The commitment to authentically respond and communicate to the demands of HIV/AIDS affected people is a testimony to the unique effort in the history of law-making in India. In India, it is a fact that the vast majority of people affected by HIV come from relatively poor and marginalized communities. This exacerbates their disparities.

In the final analysis, this bill is a victory of these sections that reflects and reassures us that vibrant democratic processes are possible in India. The current version of the bill that has been put in public domain shows that the Bill has been amended to state that governments are required to focus on prevention that too, as far as possible. Above all, the bill is a giant step in eradicating rampant discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS in India.

The hope is that the bill will set the foundation for weeding out the prevalence of these conditions entirely from Indian soil. Apart from it, it should be hoped that implications of this bill will open the doors for the LGBTQI community so that they can also be properly analyzed and set free from any stigma and discrimination once this bill is in place.

National News

Cab safety measures for women included in new Taxi Policy Guidelines

The Union Ministry of Women and Child

Development has recommended the safety measures concerning safety of women commuters availing of cab services.

The recommended measures were included in the new Taxi Policy Guidelines on 12 April 2017.

These measures have been recommended by the Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, WCD Minister, to the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and Shipping (MoRTH).

The recommendations have come in the background of numerous cases of sexual harassment of women in cabs.

The Union WCD Minister has launched a hashtag, #HelpMeWCD, where any woman or child facing harassment/ violence can directly report their cases by tweeting.

Key recommendations of the WCD Ministry included in the New Taxi Policy Guidelines:

- The taxis should be mandatorily fitted with GPS panic devices.
- For the safety of women and child passengers, the central locking system in the taxis should not be allowed.
- The driver's identification along with the photo and registration number of the vehicle should also be prominently displayed in the taxi.
- Violation of the stipulated rules by the taxi operators/drivers should be strictly dealt in accordance with law.
- Sharing of seat should be subject to willingness of passengers.

Karnataka launched campaign against H1N1

Karnataka Government announced to launch Awareness Campaign against H1N1 in high incidence districts of Bengaluru, Mysore and Chitradurga.

In Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) limits, so far 766 positive cases of influenza A H1N1 have been reported along with the two deaths.

Highlights of the campaign

- As per the campaign, throat swab will be taken by doctor if swine flu is suspected.
- Within 24 hours, test report will be given free of cost.
- Tamiflu tablets will be given free at all the government hospitals and primary health centers.
- On the similar lines, free Homeopathy doses will be given to help build immunity.
- Allopathic and Homeopathy treatment can be taken simultaneously for better results.

- Positive cases will be contacted by 104 helpline to immediately refer to specialised care centres like Rajiv Gandhi Chest institute in Bengaluru and others to ensure that patients do not develop pneumonia.
- Also, patients will be kept in isolation to prevent spread of infection.

Uttar Pradesh government scrapped Samajwadi pension scheme

Uttar Pradesh government scrapped the Samajwadi Pension Scheme, which was initiated by the previous Akhilesh Yadav government.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath who scrapped the scheme has also ordered a probe into the selection of beneficiaries under the scheme. Ordering the investigation, the chief minister has directed that the investigation should be completed within a month.

He said in future Mukhya Mantri Pension scheme will be introduced and beneficiaries from most Dalit communities will also be included.

CM Yogi Adityanath said that a cabinet proposal will be prepared to enhance pension amounts from Rs 500 to Rs 1000 being given to widows, handicapped and old age people.

Other decisions taken were

- Authorities were directed to chalk out a special welfare scheme for the scheduled tribal's residing at Sonbhadra and other districts of the state. He also said that proper arrangements must be made for the education of tribal children.
- The government has directed authorities to amend scholarship regulations to bring maximum students under it.
- Chief Minister Adityanath also directed to link all social welfare schemes run by the state government with the schemes initiated by the union government.

Besides, the Uttar Pradesh government has ordered 18-hour power supply in villages and 24 hours in district headquarters of the state. Officials were asked to ensure there is an uninterrupted supply of electricity on the villages from 6 pm to 6 am.

EC threw open challenge to people to hack its EVM's from 1st week of May

The Election Commission of India (ECI) threw an open challenge to people to hack its Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). The move came after opposition parties urged it to revert to the paper ballot system raising doubts over infallibility of the EVMs.

Reports suggest that the experts,

technocrats, scientists and others can come forward to hack the machines. The challenge, which will be last for a week of 10 days, will be open to the public in the first week of May 2017.

The Commission had announced a similar challenge in 2009 and it claimed no one could hack the EVMs.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Venkaiah Naidu has welcomed the Election Commission's decision to open challenge. Naidu said if anybody has proof they can show that to the commission.

Comment: It seems those political parties and its leaders who claimed that the EVMs used by the Election Commission were tampered during the recent concluded Assembly elections will come forward to prove their claim. The results of the assembly elections in five states, namely Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa and Manipur were announced on 11 March 2017.

Post results, several political leaders claimed requested the Election Commission to replace the EVMs with paper ballots. They claimed that people had lost trust in the efficacy of the machines.

Haryana government launched Operation Durga for women's safety

On the lines of the Anti-Romeo Squad of Uttar Pradesh, the Haryana Government launched 'Operation Durga' to ensure women safety in the state.

On the first day of its launch itself, the police teams nabbed 72 people from all the districts for allegedly indulging in crimes against women including eve teasing.

Key Highlights

- The Flying Squad of Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar formed twenty-four teams for carrying out the Operation Durga.
- The teams comprise woman personnel, including nine Sub- inspectors of Police, 14 Assistant Sub-inspectors, six Head Constables and 13 constables, besides other police officers from each district.
- The teams will visit public places such as schools, colleges, bus stands and railway stations.

Background

Earlier, the Haryana government constituted women police stations in all districts to ensure safety of women and provide them with a safe place for lodging complaints. However, to the contrary, it was observed that women hesitated in reporting incidents involving such anti-social

elements.

Therefore, the campaign Operation Durga was undertaken after identifying places where such anti-social elements were indulging in eve teasing, vulgar comments, stalking and other similar activities.

Telangana Government to increased quota for Muslims, STs in the state

The Telangana Government decided to increase the reservations quota for the socially and economically backward Muslim population and the Scheduled tribes in the state.

The decision was taken on the basis of a report presented by the State's Backward Classes Commission, which recommended a hike in the reservation for the classes.

Key Highlights

- Presently, while the Muslim population who are referred to as BC-E in the state enjoy 4 per cent reservation, the STs enjoy 7.5 per cent reservation.
- The exact raise in the percentage of the quota of both the groups would be decided by the cabinet at its next meeting, which is scheduled to be held on 15 April 2017.
- Increasing the reservation quota of the BC-E and STs was one of the promises made by the ruling Telangana Rastra Samithi party during its election campaign.
- The decision would be backed by a legislation in the name of Telangana State Reservation Act that will be introduced at a special session of the state's assembly on 16 April 2017.

Speaking on the development, the Chief Minister of the state, K. Chandrasekhar Rao said that the reservation quota for the particular groups was being raised not on a caste or religious basis but keeping in mind the social composition of the state following the bifurcation.

Rao further added that the Telangana government would be following a model similar to that of Tamil Nadu in raising the quota up to 69 per cent, much above the constitutionally approved limit of 50 per cent.

He also supported the cabinet's decision by recalling the judgement of Supreme Court in Indira Sawhney case after Mandal Commission protests, which stated that the Central and State governments were free to exceed the 50 per cent cap on the reservation quota if they had "quantifiable and impeccable" data about population and social composition.

The SC, ST, BC and other minority groups

amount to about 90 per cent of the Telangana's total population.

PM Narendra Modi launched BHIM-Aadhaar Pay app

Prime Minister Modi, the 126th birth anniversary of Dr. BR Ambedkar, launched BHIM-Aadhaar app for merchants in Nagpur. In addition to this, he also launched cash back and referral bonus schemes for BHIM and declared about 75 townships spread all over India as 'less-cash townships'.

The initiatives were launched with an aim to further the digital payments revolution in India. It also seeks to reinforce the vision of Baba Saheb for social empowerment of all through financial inclusion.

About BHIM-Aadhaar platform

- BHIM-Aadhaar, the merchant interface of the BHIM App will pave the way for making digital payments by using the Aadhaar platform.
- This will enable every Indian citizen to pay digitally using their biometric data like their thumb imprint on a merchants' biometric-enabled device which could be smart phone having a biometric reader.
- Any citizen without access to smart phones, the internet, debit or credit cards will be able to transact digitally through the BHIM Aadhaar platform.

With a view of achieving the target of 2500 crore digital transactions during the financial year 2017-18, the Prime Minister will also announce about 75 townships spread all over India as 'less-cash townships'.

Besides, the Prime Minister also launched two new initiative schemes and they are BHIM - Cashback and Referral bonus. These schemes have an outlay of Rs 495 rupees for a period of six months. These schemes will provide a major impetus to the digital payment revolution in India.

• **Referral bonus scheme:** Under the scheme both the existing user who refers BHIM and the new user who adopts BHIM would get a cash bonus credited directly to their account. Per referral, the government will deposit Rs 10 to the account holder. The scheme will run until 14 October 2017.

• **Cashback scheme:** Under the scheme, the merchants will get a cash back on every transaction using BHIM.

What is a less-cash township?

A less-cash township is one where the deployment of payment acceptance infrastructure

is complete and all the families in the township are covered under training programmes. These townships are likely to generate over 1.5 lakh digital transactions every day.

Before inaugurating these schemes and the app, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi went to pray at Deekshabhoomi in Nagpur, a holy spot closely associated with Dr Ambedkar. After which he inaugurated several units of Thermal Power Stations at Koradi, Chandrapur and Parli.

PM Modi inaugurated new units in Koradi thermal power station in Nagpur

Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated various units of the thermal power plants at Koradi, Chandrapur and Parli of Maharashtra to the nation. The total capacity of these plants is 3230 Mega Watts.

The dedicated power plants include

- Three super-critical units 660 MW each at Koradi
- Two of 500 MW each at Chandrapur
- One of 250 MW at Parli

The power station was inaugurated during Modi's day-long visit to Nagpur.

Highlights of PM Modi's visit to Nagpur

- Immediately after arrival at airport, he proceeded to sacred Deekshabhoomi and paid rich tributes to the Architect of Indian Constitution Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar at the Central Memorial on his birth anniversary.
- Later, he dedicated the thermal power plants to the nation.
- Other events that is scheduled in the day are
- He will release two special commemorative postal stamps. The two stamps of five rupees denomination and they are
 - a) One depicts Deekshabhoomi in its full glory
 - b) The other with twin pictures of Lord Gautam Buddha and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar
- At another function of NITI Aayog, PM Modi will grace the 100th and final Digidhan Mela, where the prize-winners of Lucky Grahak and Digidhan Vyapar Yojana would be awarded. The function will be held at Mankapur Indoor Stadium.
- During the function, he will also launch several initiatives including launch BHIM-Aadhaar (the merchant interface of the BHIM app) and the ambitious 'Home for All by 2022' scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana by performing bhoomipujan for 21 projects coming up in state.
- He will also lay the foundation stone for the

Nagpur campus of Indiana Institute of Management as well as All India Institute of Medical Sciences and Indian Institute of Information Technology.

President Pranab Mukherjee gave assent to four GST related legislations

President Pranab Mukherjee gave his assent to four supporting legislations related to Goods and Services Tax, GST. The nod paves the way for the roll out of one-nation-one-tax regime from 1 July 2017. The four legislations are the Integrated GST Act 2017, GST (Compensation to States) Act 2017, Central GST Act 2017 and Union Territory GST Act, 2017. These GST bills were passed in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha on 6 April 2017 and 29 March 2017 respectively.

What will GST do?

The GST, which is being termed as the biggest taxation reform since independence, will create a uniform market across India by subsuming the central excise, service tax and Value Added Tax (VAT) along with other local levies.

About the four legislations of the GST

- The Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017: It provides for the levy of the Central Goods and Services Tax by the Union Government on the supply of goods and services within the boundary of a state.
- Integrated GST Act, 2017: It deals with the levy of Integrated Goods and Services Tax by the Union Government on the inter-state supply of services and goods.
- Goods and Services Tax (Compensation to States) Act, 2017: It provides for compensation to the states for the loss of revenue (if any), which arises on account of implementation of Goods and Services Tax.
- Union Territory GST Act, 2017: This legislation makes a provision for levy and collection of tax on intra-state supply of services and goods or both by the Union Territories.

Limitation of the GST bill

The Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley earlier in Rajya Sabha said that the law will not apply in Jammu and Kashmir due to Article 370 of the constitution that gives special status to the state. For the purpose of being the law, J&K will have to legislate its own law so that they can integrate themselves with the GST regime.

With this nod from the President, all eyes

are on the meeting of the goods and services tax (GST) council that will meet on 18 and 19 May 2017 in Srinagar to discuss the tax rates under the new tax regime system. The meet on the GST rates will be chaired by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

The GST council constitutes of the Union Finance minister and finance ministers of states.

Earlier in Rajya Sabha in the second week of April 2017, Jaitley said that the GST Council had agreed to take a decision on bringing real estate within the ambit of the new tax regime within a year of its rollout. The council will also take decisions on inclusion of petroleum products and alcohol in the GST network, one by one. The inclusion will take place in the foreseeable future.

International News:

Malala 6th person to received honorary Canadian citizenship

Youngest Nobel Peace laureate Malala Yousafzai became the sixth person to receive honorary Canadian citizenship.

Malala, 19, was bestowed with the title during an honorary citizenship ceremony held in Ottawa. The Pakistani activist was welcomed to the seat of Canada's democracy by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. With this, she also became the youngest person to receive the honorary Canadian citizenship.

The privilege was previously granted to five others namely Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi, religious leader Karim Aga Khan IV and Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg (posthumously).

In addition to this, Malala is the youngest person to speak to Canadian members of parliament and senators in a joint session.

About Malala Yousafzai

• Born on 12 July 1997, Malala, a co-recipient of 2014 Nobel peace Prize, is mainly known for human rights advocacy for education and for women in her native Swat Valley in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. She received the award along with Kailash Satyarthi.

• Earlier on 9 October 2012, she was injured after a Taliban gunman shot her in the head on a school bus. She was shot for defending her right to attend school. The event sparked national and international support for her.

• She was honoured with Pakistan's first National

Youth Peace Prize in 2012.

• She had featured in the Time magazine as one of the most influential people globally in its issues on 2013, 2014 and 2015.

• On 10 April 2017, she was named as a UN Messenger of Peace, the highest honour awarded by the United Nation. She was honoured with the title for her work on girls' right to education worldwide.

Earlier, Malala was invited to receive the Canadian citizenship in 2014 by the previous Conservative government, the year when she was awarded the Noble peace prize. But the ceremony was postponed due to attack on the Parliament and shooting of a ceremonial guard

Amnesty International released Death Penalty Report 2016

The Amnesty International released the Death Penalty Report 2016. As per the report, at least 1,032 people were executed in 23 countries in 2016. In 2015, Amnesty International recorded 1,634 executions in 25 countries worldwide.

As per the report, most executions took place in China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Pakistan – in that order.

Highlights of Death Penalty Report 2016

• The report concluded that China remained the world's top executioner. However, the true extent of the use of the death penalty in China is unknown as this data is considered a State secret.

• Excluding China, 87 per cent of all executions took place in just four countries – Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Pakistan.

• For the first time since 2006, the USA was not one figured in the Top 5 Executioners List. It fell to the seventh place behind Egypt. The 20 executions in the USA were the lowest in the country since 1991.

• During 2016, 23 countries, about one in eight of all countries worldwide, are known to have carried out executions.

• Belarus, Botswana, Nigeria and authorities within the State of Palestine resumed executions in 2016.

• Chad, India, Jordan, Oman and United Arab Emirates –all countries that executed people in 2015 – did not report any executions last year.

• In 2016, two countries – Benin and Nauru–abolished the death penalty in law for all crimes.

Russia vetoed UN resolution condemning Syria chemical attack

Russia vetoed a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution that condemned the

use of chemical weapons in the rebel-held Syrian town, Khan Sheikhoun and demanded a speedy investigation into the details of the attack.

The resolution drafted by Britain, France and the United States aimed to bring Russia's ally Syria on the negotiating table. The western countries believe that Bashar al-Assad-led Syrian government has a lot to do with the chemical attack, a claim that is rejected by both Moscow and Syria.

Key Highlights

- While 10 nations voted in favour of the resolution, Bolivia voted against and China, Ethiopia and Kazakhstan chose to abstain from the process.
- Russia used its veto power to prevent the adoption of the resolution. This is the eighth time that Russia has vetoed a resolution on Syria ever since the nation got embroiled in its long-drawn civil war.
- The deputy Russian ambassador to the UN, Vladimir Safronkov rejected the proposal with claims stating that the western powers had pre-judged the Syrian government to be guilty of the chemical attack that killed over 90 people, prior to the investigation.
- Russia had drafted an alternate resolution but did not put it up for a vote.
- The vote happened just hours after US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson met his Russian counterpart, Sergey V. Lavrov.

Speaking on the development, US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley stated that with its use of the veto, Russia has not only said no to accountability but has also said no to cooperating with the UN's investigation and to helping keep peace in Syria. She also added that by choosing to back Syrian President Assad, even as the rest of the world comes together to condemn the regime, Russia has further isolated itself.

The deadlock has left UN's most powerful body struggling to tackle the use of banned chemicals and the heating issue of Syrian civil war. It has also deepened the division between Moscow and the western powers, raising concerns over future clashes between the two sides.

What is the Veto Power?

The use of the veto in the UNSC refers to the power that enables the five permanent members of the council- France, China, Russia, UK and the US -to prevent the adoption of any substantive resolution.

Union Cabinet approved signing of

Framework of Understanding for hydrocarbon cooperation with Bangladesh

The Union Cabinet, presided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved signing of Framework of Understanding (FoU) on Cooperation in the Hydrocarbon Sector with Bangladesh.

The proposed Framework of Understanding aims to establish a cooperative institutional framework mechanism to facilitate and enhance India-Bangladesh bilateral cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector on the basis of equality and mutual benefit.

Key highlights of the Framework of Understanding

- The Framework of Understanding promotes bilateral cooperation at the sub-regional and regional levels.
- It will provide impetus to development and enable the two nations to realize their developmental aspirations.
- It will also speed up the two countries' shared destiny and common vision of a peaceful and prosperous South Asia.
- The framework is non-binding in nature.
- It will be valid for five years.

US dropped 'Mother of All Bombs' on ISIS Caves in Afghanistan

The United States dropped its largest non-nuclear bomb ever deployed in combat on an Islamic State tunnel complex in eastern Afghanistan. The bomb was dropped at around 7 PM local time in Afghanistan.

Adam Stump, the spokesman of the Pentagon stated, "*a GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast Bomb (MOAB), nicknamed Mother of All Bombs, was dropped on a tunnel complex of ISIS-Khorasan, a regional affiliate of the terror group, in Achin district of Afghanistan's Nanagarh province.*"

The **bomb was dropped by an MC-130 aircraft**, operated by the Air Force Special Operations Command.

President Donald Trump praised the military for the bombing run and called it a successful mission.

White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer stated that the US took all precautions necessary to prevent civilian casualties and collateral damage as a result of the operation.

What is Mother of All Bombs?

- The GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast is a large-yield conventional (non-nuclear) bomb.
- It was developed for the United States military by Albert L. Weimorts, Jr. of the Air Force Research Laboratory.
- At the time of development, it was touted as the most powerful non-nuclear weapon ever designed.
- The bomb was designed to be delivered by a C-130 Hercules, primarily the MC-130E Combat Talon I or MC-130H Combat Talon II variants.
- It is a 21600-pound, GPS-guided munition that is America's most powerful non-nuclear bomb.

Why America used Mother of All Bombs?

- Following the bombings on Afghanistan, US President Trump said that he does not know if this sends a message to North Korea. He said that North Korea is a problem and it will be taken care of.
- Perhaps, the US signals the North Koreans and the Syrians that the US can deploy such weapons against their bunker systems.
- Also, it is in American and Afghan interests for the US to stay in Afghanistan so that it does not transform into Iraq of 2014, when Taliban controlled much of the country while hosting a strong presence of ISIS.

Economy

Mukulita Vijayawargiya took charge as Whole Time Member of IBBI

Mukulita Vijayawargiya took charge as Whole Time Member of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) in New Delhi. Vijayawargiya will look after Administrative Law Wing of IBBI. She will also look after Information Technology, Limited Insolvency Examination, National Insolvency Examination, Finance and Accounts and Communication.

About Mukulita Vijayawargiya

- Vijayawargiya has vast experience of 35 years in various fields of law. She has been associated with drafting/ vetting of more than 100 legislative proposals in the legislative department.
- Earlier, She was a member of Bankruptcy Law Reforms Committee (BLRC). It was BLRC itself based on which, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 was framed.
- She played a key role in drafting the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 as Additional Secretary in the Legislative Department of the

Union Ministry of Law & Justice.
• She also served as a member of Indian Legal Service.

Cairn India merged with Vedanta Ltd

Metals and mining group Vedanta Ltd. got effectively merged with its oil and gas subsidiary Cairn India Ltd. Cairn India is a debt-free firm with cash and cash equivalents of Rs 22838.22 crore as of 30 September 2016.

Highlights of the merger

- The merged company will have a larger market cap of USD 15.6 billion.
 - As per the deal, Cairn India minority shareholders will receive one equity share and four redeemable preference shares in Vedanta Ltd against each share they hold.
 - Cairn India shareholders who will become shareholders of Vedanta will also receive an interim dividend of Rs 17.70 per equity share as approved by the board of Vedanta on 30 March 2017.
 - No shares will be issued to Vedanta or any of its subsidiaries for their shareholding in Cairn India.
 - Edinburgh-based Cairn Energy will have a 5 per cent holding in Vedanta. Cairn Energy will also get four preferential shares in the merged entity.
- The two companies announced plans of the merger in June 2016.

Comment

With this, it is expected that Vedanta Ltd will have one of the strongest balance sheets in the Indian corporate sector with flexibility to balance capital allocation to the higher return projects while providing a strong and stable dividend.

Moreover, the merger will increase the appeal of Vedanta Ltd to global investors as it simplifies the structure and increases the size of the company.

The merger will also de-risk Cairn India by providing access to a portfolio of diversified tier-I long life assets to deliver significant near term growth, while retaining the oil and gas business of Vedanta.

CBDT to issue PAN and TAN within 1 day to improve Ease of Doing Business

The Central Board of Direct Taxation (CBDT) tied up with the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) to issue Permanent Account Number (PAN) and Tax Deduction Account Number (TAN) in 1 day in order to improve ease of doing business.

Applicant companies will be required to submit a common application form SPICe (INC 32) on MCA portal. Once the data of incorporation is sent to CBDT by MCA, the PAN and TAN will then be issued immediately without any further intervention of the applicant.

The Certificate of Incorporation (COI) of newly incorporated companies will include the PAN in addition to the Corporate Identity Number (CIN). TAN will also be allotted simultaneously and communicated to the Company.

In March 2017, PAN was allotted within 4 hrs in 95.63 per cent cases and within 1 day in all cases to the newly incorporated companies.

Comment

This initiative of CBDT is expected to significantly improve the ranking of India in the Ease of Doing Business Study conducted by World Bank. It will reduce the number of processes of registration before various authorities which will simultaneously reduce the time taken for allotment of the registration number (CIN, PAN, TAN).

Earlier, CBDT also introduced the Electronic PAN Card (E-PAN) which is sent by email in addition to issue of the physical PAN Card to all applicants including individual.

Applicants will be benefited by having a digitally signed E-PAN card which they can submit as proof of identity to other agency electronically directly or by storing in the Digital Locker.

CCEA approved listing of 11 CPSEs on stock exchanges

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the listing of 11 Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) on stock exchanges.

These eleven CPSEs are:

Sl. No.	CPSEs
1.	Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL)
2.	IRCON International Limited
3	Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) Ltd.
4.	Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) Ltd.
5.	RITES Ltd.
6	Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL)
7.	Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE)

	Ltd.
8.	Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL)
9.	North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO) Ltd.
10.	MSTC Ltd.
11.	Mishra Dhatu Nigam Ltd. (MIDHANI)

Highlights of the listing of 11 CPSEs

- These 11 CPSEs will be listed through public offer of shares up to 25 per cent of Union Government's shareholding, which may include offer of fresh shares for raising of resources from market.
- The actual disinvestment in respect of each CPSE along with the mode of raising resources will be delegated for decision on a case to case basis to the Alternative Mechanism which will be headed by the Union Finance Minister.
- With a view to ensure wider participation by small investors in the CPSEs' disinvestment program, a price discount of up to 5 per cent on the issue price will be provided for the retail investors and eligible employees of 11 CPSEs .
- The CCEA has also approved reservation of shares for the eligible employees of 11 CPSEs in accordance with the extant provisions of SEBI Regulations.

Comment

Listing of these CPSEs will foster public accountability and will unlock the true value of these companies. It will help in achieving higher growth through their expansion and diversification. This will also be reflected in the performance at the sectoral level and overall economic growth.

It will promote people's ownership by encouraging public participation in CPSEs. It will also trigger multilayered oversight mechanism which will enhance shareholders' value and will promote corporate governance norms in such companies.

Moreover, through public offer, management of these CPSEs will become more accountable to its shareholders.

Schemes, committees and programmes

Union Government sets up inter-ministerial panel to monitor UDAN

The Union Government in the second

week of April 2017 set up an Inter-Ministerial Monitoring-cum-Coordination Committee to monitor the regional air connectivity scheme UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik) scheme. The scheme seeks to make flying affordable by connecting unserved and under-served airports.

Duties of the panel

- The panel would be responsible for coordination among stakeholders, including state governments, for "time-bound" implementation of the scheme.
- It will also monitor the schemes of promotion of regional connectivity by way of revival of unserved and under-served airports/airstrips and RCS-UDAN.
- The Inter-Ministerial Monitoring-cum-Coordination Committee will be chaired by Civil Aviation Secretary.
- The Committee would have representations from the ministries of finance, defence, home as well as petroleum and natural gas.
- Airports Authority of India (AAI) Chairman, representatives from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), BCAS (Bureau of Civil Aviation Security) apart from officials of airlines and states concerned would also be part of the panel.

The UDAN scheme

- UDAN is regional Air Connectivity Scheme, which seeks to make flying affordable by connecting unserved and under-served airports.
- Under the scheme, the Union Civil Aviation Ministry has awarded 128 routes connecting 70 airports to 5 airlines.
- In the flights operated under air connectivity scheme, around 50 per cent of the seats will have a fare cap of Rs 2500 per seat/hour.
- The operators of such flights will be extended viability gap funding for which money is partly raised through a levy imposed on flights operating in major routes.

Reliance Jio launched Dhan Dhana Dhan offer

Reliance Jio Infocomm launched Dhan Dhana Dhan offer just a day after withdrawing its summer surprise.

The Dhan Dhana Dhan offers its prime members 1GB data per day at 4G speeds for 84 days for Rs 309. The charge for the three-month unlimited data plan is Rs 6.

The firm withdrew its Summer Surprise offer of free services owing to a directive from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.

Under the plan, Jio Prime members

recharging for the first time with Rs 303 or higher were offered complimentary data services for three months.

Highlights of the Dhan Dhana Dhan offer

- The plan starts with Rs 309 all unlimited plan which provides unlimited SMS, calling and data for three months on first recharge.
- There is a Rs 509 unlimited plan for customers with high data usage. It offers unlimited SMS, calling and data (2GB a day at 4G speeds) for three months on the first recharge.
- Customers who were unable to subscribe to Jio Prime for any reason, can continue to do so by paying Rs 408 or Rs 608 to avail these benefits.
- The recharge can be done immediately and the plan will come into effect after 15 April 2017, when the deadline for Jio Prime membership comes to an end.
- Once the recharge is done, one can use Reliance Jio services for 84 days.

Union Government launched Aadhaar Seeding Application

Bandaru Dattatreya, the Minister of State for Labour and Employment, launched Aadhaar Seeding Application.

The Application aims efficient service delivery and widening the reach of Employees Provident Fund (EPF) benefits.

The Application was launched at the 217th special meeting of the Central Board of Employees Provident Fund (CBEPF/ EPFO) in New Delhi.

Key highlights of Aadhaar Seeding Application

- The Aadhaar Seeding Application is developed by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation with support of the Common Service Centers (CSC) and CDAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing).
- The Application is developed in pursuance of the government's policy for optimum use of information technology for efficient service delivery and widening the reach of benefits to people.
- With the implementation of the Application, Provident Fund member or pensioner can walk in any of the field offices of EPFO or CSC outlets with UAN and Aadhaar and seed the Aadhaar with the UAN.

About Employees' Provident Fund Organisation

- The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation is tasked to assist the Central Board of Trustees, a statutory body formed by the Employees'

Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.

- The organisation is under the administrative control of the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.
- It assists the Central Board in administering a compulsory contributory Provident Fund Scheme.
- The Provident Fund Scheme is a pension scheme and an insurance scheme for the workforce engaged in the organized sector in India.
- The EPFO's apex decision making body is the Central Board of Trustees (CBT).
- On 1 October 2014, PM Narendra Modi launched Universal Account Number for Employees covered by EPFO to enable PF number portability.

Union Cabinet approved implementation of Target Plus Scheme under Foreign Trade Policy 2004-09

The Union Cabinet approved the implementation of Supreme Court's Judgment dated 27 October 2015 regarding the implementation of Target Plus Scheme (TPS) under Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2004-09.

As per the Supreme Court's Judgment, the revenue implication under the TPS is about Rs 2700 crore. The claims which were denied as a result of retrospective notification will be now settled as per direction of the Supreme Court.

The Target Plus Scheme (TPS) 2005-06 was already implemented partially.

Key Highlights

- Benefit will be extended throughout the country as per provisions of the TPS Scheme under Foreign Trade Policy 2004-09.
- The guidelines and modalities for processing the claims will be worked out by the DGFT HQs in consultation with Department of Revenue.
- The claims will be settled within one year from now.

The corrective measures regarding TPS will bring an end to multiple pending litigations with the Government and the claims under the TPS will be issued as per original provisions under Foreign Trade Policy.

Science and Technology

Belle-II detector integrated with

SuperKEKB accelerator

The High Energy Accelerator Research Organization (KEK) successfully completed the "roll-in" of the Belle II detector.

The term "roll-in" refers to the operation of moving the entire Belle II detector system, following the completion of the assembly and integration of the various components, from its assembly area to the beam collision point.

The completion is an important milestone for the international Belle II collaboration and the SuperKEKB accelerator.

About Belle-II

- The Belle II experiment is an international collaboration with 23 member nations hosted by KEK in Tsukuba, Japan.
 - The experiment explores the mysteries of the beginning of the universe.
 - The detector mainly measures elementary particle interactions artificially created with the upgraded SuperKEKB accelerator.
 - The total weight of the detector is about 1400 tons.
 - Compared to the previous Belle experiment, Belle II will allow for the collection of much larger data samples with much improved measurement precision.
 - More than 700 researchers from the 23 member countries and regions around the world will participate in the Belle II experiment.
- #### **India's participation in Belle-II**
- Belle-II has a significant Indian participation on experimental as well as theoretical sides.
 - The fourth layer of the six-layer, highly sensitive particle detector, which is at the heart of Belle-II, has been built by Indian scientists, led by Tariq Aziz and Gagan Mohanty, who are with the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai.
 - Indian scientists from the IIT Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Guwahati and Hyderabad, Panjab University, Institute of Mathematical Sciences (Chennai), Punjab Agricultural University, Malaviya National Institute of Technology (Jaipur), Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (Mohali) are also participating in the research.

Defence

Indo-Mongolia Joint Military Exercise Nomadic Elephant 2017

The joint military training exercise of India and Mongolia has begun recently in

Mizoram. The 14-day long exercise began on 5 April 2017 and will end on 18 April 2017.

Highlights of Nomadic Elephant 2017

- It is the twelfth edition of the Indo-Mongolia joint military exercise Nomadic Elephant.
- It is being conducted at the Indian Army’s elite Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School Vairengte in Mizoram.
- The exercise is aimed at training the troops in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations (CICT Ops) under the United Nations mandate.
- In the exercise, the Indian Army is represented by a contingent comprising of three officers, four JCOs and 39 soldiers of the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles.
- The Mongolian Army is represented by 9 officers and 36 soldiers of the elite 084 Special Forces Task Battalion.
- The focus of the exercise is to enhance the interoperability between the two armies in adverse operational conditions.
- The exercise covers key areas like convoy protection, drills related to room intervention, ambush as well as counter-ambush drills.

Some of the recent joint exercises of the Indian Armed Forces are –

- On 20 March 2017, the Indo-Nepal joint military exercise Surya Kiran XI concluded at Pithorgarh in Uttarakhand.
- On 19 March 2017, the Indo-Oman joint military exercise Al Nagah-II 2017 concluded at Bakloh in Himachal Pradesh.
- On 28 December 2016, the Indo-Maldives joint military exercise EKUVERIN concluded at Kadhdhoo in Maldives.

Awards

National Hindi Sevi Samman Awards for the year 2015 announced

N.K. Pandey, Director of the Central Hindi Institute, announced the names of 26 writers from different categories for the prestigious Hindi Sevi Samman Awards for the year 2015.

The Hindi Sevi Samman Awards were instituted by Central Hindi Institute, Agra in 1989.

The awardees in different categories include:

Ganga Sharan Singh Award: For work in the field of promotion and training of Hindi

- S. Shesharatnam
- M. Govind Rajan
- Harmahendra Singh Bedi
- H. Subadani Devi

Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Award: For work in the field of journalism and creative literature

- Baldev Bhai Sharma
- Rahul Dev

Atmaram Award: For work in the field of Science and Technology literature and Machinery growth

- Girish Chandra Saxena
- Phani Bhushan Das

Subramanyam Bharti Award: For work for promotion of Hindi in constructive or criticism way

- Surya Prasad Dixit
- Chandrakanta

Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan Award: For work in the field exploration and research as well as for description on its journey

- Chitra Mudgal
- Jai Prakash Kardam

Dr. George Grierson Award: Awarded to people of foreign origin for promotion and training of Hindi outside India

- Fujii Takeshi (Japan)
- Gabriela Nik Ilieva (New York)

Padmabhushan Dr. Moturi Satyanarayan Award: Awarded to people of Indian origin for promotion and training of Hindi outside India

- Pushpita Avasthi (Netherlands)
- Padmesh Gupt (London)

President Pranab Mukherjee present SCOPE Awards

President Pranab Mukherjee presented the Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) Awards during the 8th Public Sector Day function that was held in New Delhi.

SCOPE Awards for Excellence and Outstanding Contribution to the Public Sector Management were instituted in the year 1996-97 and are given in the Institutional & Individual Categories.

Winners of the SCOPE Excellence Awards 2014-15

Award	Winner
SCOPE Excellence Award – Individual Leadership Category-I (Maharatna/Navratna)	Anoop Kumar Mittal, CMD, NBCC (India) Limited

The National Geoscience Awards includes one Award for Excellence, one Young Scientist Award and nineteen individual and/or team awards in 16 fields of geosciences.

Complete list of awardees

PSEs)	
SCOPE Excellence Award – Individual Leadership Category-II (Miniratna I & II PSEs)	A.K. Jain, MD, Rajasthan Electronics & Instruments Limited
SCOPE Excellence Award – Individual Leadership Category-III (Other Profit Making PSEs)	K.S. Popli, CMD, Indian Renewable Energy Dev. Agency Limited
SCOPE Excellence Award for Outstanding Woman Manager in PSEs	Pooja Kapoor, Head, Business Development, WAPCOS Limited
SCOPE Excellence Award – Institutional Category I (Maharatna & Navratna PSEs)	Rural Electrification Corporation Limited & National Aluminum Company Limited
SCOPE Excellence Award – Institutional Category II (Miniratna I & II PSEs)	ONGC Videsh Limited & Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited
SCOPE Excellence Award – Institutional Category III (Other Profit Making PSEs)	Electronics Corporation of India Limited
SCOPE Excellence Award – Special Institutional Category (Turnaround)	Goa Shipyard Limited

Award	Winner	Type of Awards
Mineral Discovery & Exploration (excluding fossil fuels) of economic and/or strategic importance and application of innovative techniques	Chittaranjan Dash Dinesh Kumar Thawait Rohan Das Shamiuddin Ahmad	Team Award
Coal, Lignite and Coal Bed Methane Discovery & Exploration of Economic and/or strategic importance and application of innovative techniques	Amit Soni Manju S Kailash Chandra Sahoo Sayan Kahali	Team Award
Groundwater Exploration (including project development, hydrogeological studies and management of groundwater resources)	Dr. Pradeep Kumar Naik	Individual Award
Mining Technology (including development and application of new methods and technologies, research & development, conservation of mineral resources, systematic mine planning, mine safety, mine fires, mine hazards, mine reclamation & rehabilitation)	Laxman Singh Shekhawat, Hindustan Zinc Limited, Udaipur Dr. Santosh Kumar Ray, CSIR- Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research, Dhanbad	Individual Award
Sustainable Mineral Development (including mine closure, project development, institutional development and capacity building)	Dr. Ebhin Reginald Masto, CSIR- Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research, Dhanbad	Individual Award
Basic Geo-sciences (including Stratigraphy, Structural Geology, Palaeontology, Geomorphology, Economic Geology, Geodynamics, Petrology and Geochemistry including Mineralogy, Geochronology and	Dr. Santanu Banerjee, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay	Individual Award

President Pranab Mukherjee conferred National Geoscience Awards 2016

Pranab Mukherjee, the President of India, conferred the National Geoscience Awards 2016 in Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi.

A total of twenty-seven geoscientists received the prestigious National Geoscience Awards 2016, as individuals or team, for meritorious contributions in twelve fields of geosciences.

Dr. Abhishek Saha from National Institute of Oceanography was honoured with the Young Scientist Award.

The National Geoscience Awards was previously known as the National Mineral Awards. The awards were instituted by the Union Ministry of Mines in 1966. It was instituted to honour individuals and teams of scientists for their extraordinary achievements and outstanding contributions in fundamental and applied geosciences and mining and allied fields.

Isotope Geology		
Applied Geology: Engineering Geology, Geo-thermal Energy, Seismotectonics, Geo-statistics, Photo-geology and Remote Sensing and Geo-Information System(including spatial data management applications and data integration)	Dr. Atul Nanda, Engineers India Ltd. Dr. Ranjit Rath, Engineers India Ltd. Saikat Pal, Engineers India Ltd. Gopi Kannan, Engineers India Ltd. Prof. Supriyo Mitra, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Kolkata	Team Award Individual Award
Geophysics / Applied Geophysics: New Technologies in geophysical exploration, application of geophysical methods, geo-magnetism, geophysical survey techniques and instrumentation	Dr. N. Purnachandra Rao, CSIR-National Geophysical Research Institute, Hyderabad Dr. Anand Kumar Chaturvedi, AMDER, Hyderabad Markandeyulu Amulothu, AMDER, Hyderabad Dr. Veldi Ramesh Babu, AMDER, Hyderabad Shailesh Tripathi, AMDER, Hyderabad	Individual Award Team Award
Geo-Environmental Studies relating to mining, urban, industrial, coastal and desert management, paleoclimate, paleoenvironment, medical geology, climate change and studies related to their impact on ecosystem	Aradhi Keshava Krishna, CSIR-National Geophysical Research Institute, Hyderabad	Individual Award
Disaster Management	Prof. Javed	Individual

including scientific studies related to natural hazards such as earthquakes, landslides, floods and tsunamis	Husain N. Malik, IIT, Kanpur	1 Award
Ocean Development: Oceanography and Marine Geology	Dr. Pratima Mohan Kessarkar, CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography, Goa	Individual Award
Young Scientist Award	Dr. Abhishek Saha, NIO, Goa	

Sports

India's Harbhajan among 8 ambassadors for ICC Champions Trophy

Harbhajan Singh, the veteran Indian bowler was named as one of ICC's eight ambassadors for the Champions Trophy tournament, which is scheduled to be held in England from 1-8 June 2017.

He will be joining other ambassadors including Shahid Afridi, the legendary Pakistani all-rounder, Ian Bell from England, Australia's Mike Hussey, New Zealand's Shane Bond, Graeme Smith, former captain of South Africa, Habibul Bashar from Bangladesh and Kumar Sangakkara, former captain of the Sri Lankan national cricket team.

Key Highlights

- The announcement comes around 50 before the opening match of the tournament, which is scheduled to take place between England and Bangladesh at the Oval.
- Harbhajan was the member of the Indian team that shared the 2002 ICC Champions Trophy with Sri Lanka in Colombo.
- All the eight ambassadors together have played 1774 One-Day Internationals in total, scoring 51906 runs with 48 centuries and taking 838 wickets.
- The ambassadors will also be involved in the Champions Trophy Tour and will be making appearances in the UK.
- Besides this, the chosen cricketers will also contribute to the ICC editorial team, where they will be providing match previews and analysis through their exclusive columns, which would be published on the ICC's official website.

Speaking of his selection, Harbhajan stated that he was really proud of his selection as an Ambassador for a global event where his team will be the defending champion. He also added that he is confident that team India will achieve great heights.

US, Canada & Mexico make a joint bid for 2026 FIFA World Cup

The United States along with Canada and Mexico announced that they will be making a joint bid to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

If approved, it would be the first time that the World Cup would be shared by three hosts. It would also be the first tournament that would see 48 teams participating instead of the earlier 32.

Key Highlights

- The proposal includes the US to host 60 matches and Canada and Mexico to host 10 each.
- The final decision on who will host the event will be made in 2020.
- The chosen date is three years later than originally scheduled because of the corruption scandal surrounding the 2018 and 2022 World cup bids, which are by Russia and Qatar respectively.
- FIFA would be establishing a shortlist of bidders before the 209 member nations of FIFA who will cast a vote to decide the winner of the bid.
- The USA hosted the 1994 World cup where the tournament saw its highest average attendance.
- Mexico too has hosted the event previously that too twice in 1970 and 1986.
- Canada hosted the 2015 women's World Cup.

The joint bid comes at a time when the relationship between Mexico and the United States is strained with the new US President, Donald Trump, vowing to build a wall on the US-Mexican border.

Speaking on the bid, Sunil Gulati, the US Soccer President stated that while initially, they were looking to bid alone, they decided, in the end, to bid along with their partners in North America. In fact, he added that President Trump has been fully supportive and encouraging to have this joint bid and is especially pleased that Mexico is a part of it.

The tournament will begin with its new look with an initial round of 16 three-team groups, with 32 qualifiers going through to the knockout stage.

Lewis Hamilton won 2017 Chinese Grand Prix

Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton won the 2017 Chinese Grand Prix ahead of Sebastian Vettel and Max Verstappen. Ferrari driver Vettel came second, while Red Bull's Max Verstappen stood third in the race.

About Lewis Hamilton

- Born on 7 January 1985, Lewis Hamilton is a British Formula One racing driver.
- At present, he is racing for the Mercedes AMG Petronas team.
- He is a three-time Formula One World Champion.
- He won his first title with McLaren in 2008 before moving to Mercedes, where he won back-to-back titles in 2014 and 2015.
- His 54 Grand Prix victories is the second highest of all-time, behind only Michael Schumacher at 91.

About Chinese Grand Prix

- The Chinese Grand Prix is a round of the Formula One World Championship.
- It is currently held at the Shanghai International Circuit in Shanghai. The circuit is designed by Hermann Tilke.
- When completed in 2004, the circuit was the most expensive Formula One circuit facility, costing USD 240 million. Abu Dhabi became the most expensive at USD 6 billion when it opened in 2009.
- In 2016, the race was won by Nico Rosberg.

Indian Olympic Association granted affiliation to Boxing Federation of India

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has granted affiliation to the Boxing Federation of India (BFI). The affiliation that ended the long-standing impasse between the two bodies was granted after months of discussions.

This affiliation was informed to the BFI President Ajay Singh via letter on 8 April 2017. The letter read, "As per the directives of the International Olympic Committee vide their letter dated February 7, the IOA grants affiliation to the BFI subject to ratification by the Executive Council/General Body of the IOA".

Impasse between BFI and IOA

The two bodies had been at an impasse since the BFI took charge of the Boxing after elections which were conducted in the presence of individuals from International Boxing Association and the sports ministry.

The now resolved issue started in September 2016 when IOA had initially refused

to grant recognition to BFI stating that it still considered the now-defunct Indian Amateur Boxing Federation as the official national body for the sport. It later referred the matter to the affiliation committee following persistent requests from the BFI.

Miscellaneous

Two day Convention on World Homoeopathy Day concludes in India

A two day National Convention on World Homoeopathy Day was successfully concluded in New Delhi. The theme of the convention was 'Enhancing Quality of Research in Homoeopathy'.

As per the Ministry of AYUSH, the objective of this convention is to deliberate on the existing scenario of Homeopathy in India and other countries and develop strategies for formulating national policies.

The convention was organised by Central Council for Research in Homeopathy (CCRH), an autonomous research organization of Ministry of AYUSH. The event was organised to commemorate the 262nd birth anniversary of the founder of Homoeopathy **Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann** on the occasion of World Homoeopathy Day 2017.

Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann was a German physician, a great scholar, linguist and an acclaimed scientist. Hahnemann and his scientific aptitude helped him to discover a healing system of Homeopathy based on infallible laws of nature.

National Commission for Homoeopathy (NCH)

On the occasion, the Ministry of AYUSH announced to constitute National Commission for Homoeopathy (NCH) as the regulatory body to standardise Homoeopathy.

National Commission for Homoeopathy will have four boards, one each for regulation of undergraduate education; postgraduate education; accreditation and assessment of institutions and regulation of the practice of the profession.

About World Homoeopathy Day

- Every year, 10 April is celebrated all over the world as 'World Homeopathy Day' as a tribute to Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann.
- The week following the birth date of Hahnemann, that is, 10 April- 16 April is observed as the World Homeopathic Awareness Week.
- Samuel Hahnemann is the Father of Homeopathy, Father of Human Pharmacology, Father of Nano Medicine and the Father of Infinite Dilution concept

in Chemistry.

126th Birth Anniversary of Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar observed nationwide

The 126th birth anniversary of Dr Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar, also known as Ambedkar Jayanti, was observed across the India on 14 April 2017.

Dr Ambedkar was known as the father and architect of the Indian Constitution. He was an Indian jurist, economist, politician and social reformer who inspired the Modern Buddhist Movement.

To mark Ambedkar Jayanti 2017, the Union Government launched various initiatives including a BHIM Aadhaar platform for merchants and few cashback and bonus schemes for BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money).

About Dr B R Ambedkar

- B R Ambedkar was born to a Mahar (dalit) caste family on 14 April 1891 in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh (now known as Dr Ambedkar Nagar).
 - He completed his school from Elphinstone High School and later pursued a degree in economics and political science from Elphinstone College, University of Mumbai.
 - With the help of a scholarship, he completed his Masters in Economics (Major) at Columbia University and Doctor of Science in Economics from London.
 - Throughout his life, he fought against untouchability and played a major role in Mahatma Gandhi-led Harijan movement, protesting against social injustices faced by people from backward castes.
 - On 29 August 1947, he was appointed as the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, where he was asked to write India's new Constitution, which was adopted in November 1949 by the Constituent Assembly.
 - Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet in 1951 following the stalling in parliament of his draft of the Hindu Code Bill.
 - Later, he pointed out that Hinduism is the foundation of the caste system. In 1956, he converted to Buddhism.
 - He brought the reservation law in India for the lower caste communities.
- #### **Dr Ambedkar's Contribution to Indian Constitution**
- Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar is referred to as the Father of Indian Constitution or Architect of the Indian Constitution.
 - He played a fundamental role in framing the Indian Constitution and basing it on the high pedestal of socio-politico-economic equality that

still holds relevance in the context of issues currently faced by India.

- He was a strong advocate of the parliamentary democracy since the inception of the Government of India Act, 1935. He also advocated a federal structure of the Union and States.
- He was an ardent champion of fundamental rights which is enshrined in Part-III of the Indian Constitution. The text prepared by Ambedkar provided constitutional guarantees and protections for a wide range of civil liberties for individual citizens.
- He also framed Article 32, soul of the Constitution, in the constitution which is very significant in the sense that it makes the fundamental rights justifiable. Any violation of it can lead to Supreme Court to issue directions, orders or writs.

UN chief Guterres named Achim Steiner as new administrator of UNDP

Achim Steiner was named as the new administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) by the UN chief Antonio Guterres.

Steiner, a German with extensive experience at the world organization, will succeed Helen Clark, a former New Zealand prime minister. Letter by Guterres dated 12 April 2017 said, Clark has steered the UNDP since 2009.

Steiner was chosen for the post over several other candidates including the French Environment Minister Segolene Royal. Reports suggest that the result of selection has surprised Royal because Guterres had promised a woman would take the job at UNDP. She said that Germany would have used its weight as a major UNDP donor to have Steiner chosen for the job.

About Achim Steiner

- Born on 17 May 1961, Steiner has served the United Nations at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) from 2006 to June 2016.
- Being an expert in the environmental issues and politics, Steiner had also headed the UN office in Kenya.
- Prior to joining the UNEP, Steiner has served the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as its Director General.
- He had also served World Commission on Dams as its Secretary General.
- As of September 2016, he is director of the Oxford Martin School.
- Steiner was born in Brazil in 1961 and holds German as well as Brazilian citizenship.

United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP)

Headquartered in New York City, the UNDP seeks to reduce poverty, improve social development and encourage women's empowerment. The organization advocates for change and connect countries to knowledge, resources and experience to help people build a better life.

It provides training, expert advice and grants support to developing countries, with increasing emphasis on assistance to the least developed countries.

International Day of Human Space Flight observed on April 12

12 April: International Day of Human Space Flight

International Day of Human Space Flight was observed. The day is an annual celebration of the anniversary of the first human space flight undertaken by Yuri Gagarin, a Soviet citizen.

Yuri Gagarin carried out Vostok 1 space flight on 12 April 1961, making one orbit around the Earth over 108 minutes in the Vostok 3KA spacecraft. The spacecraft was launched by Vostok-K launch vehicle. This historic event opened the way for space exploration for the benefit of all humanity.

The day is also observed as the Cosmonautics Day in Russia and some other countries.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) through its resolution A/RES/65/271 on 7 April 2011 during its 65th session proclaimed that International Day of Human Space Flight will be observed annually on 12 April.

In its proclamation, the general assembly said, "The day will be celebrated at the international level to reaffirm the important contribution of space science and technology in achieving sustainable development goals and increasing the well-being of States and peoples. It said that the day will help in ensuring the realisation of their aspiration to maintain outer space for peaceful purposes."

Background

On 4 October 1957 the first human-made Earth satellite Sputnik I was launched into outer space, thus opening the way for space exploration. On 12 April 1961, Yuri Gagarin became the first human to orbit the Earth, opening a new chapter of human endeavour in outer space.

First in the space

- 12 April 1961: Yuri Gagarin became the first human to orbit the Earth.
- 16 June 1963: Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to orbit the Earth.

- 20 July 1969: Neil Armstrong became the first human to set foot on the surface of the Moon.
- 17 July 1975: Docking of Apollo and Soyuz spacecraft in space was the First international human mission to space.
- 1984: Rakesh Sharma, the former Indian Air Force pilot, became the first person of Indian origin to travel in space. He flew in the space aboard Soyuz t-11, which was launched on 2 April 1984. He flew as part of the Intercosmos programme.
- 1997: Kalpana Chawla, an Indian American astronaut, became the first woman of Indian origin to be in space.

Pioneering HIV/AIDS researcher Mark Wainberg passes away

Renowned Canadian AIDS researcher and social activist Dr Mark Wainberg passed away in Florida, USA. He was 71.

Wainberg is believed to have drowned while on holiday with his family in Miami.

About Mark Wainberg

- Mark A. Wainberg was a Canadian HIV/AIDS researcher and HIV/AIDS activist.
- He was the Director of the McGill University AIDS Centre at the Montreal Jewish General Hospital and Professor of Medicine and of Microbiology at McGill University.
- In 1989, he and his collaborators were the first to identify the antiviral capabilities of 3TC (also called also called lamivudine) and test the drug in patients. 3TC became one of the first effective treatments for people who contracted HIV.
- In 1966, he obtained a BSc from McGill University.
- In 1972, he earned a PhD from Columbia University. He did his post-doctoral research at Hadassah Medical School of the Hebrew University.

The Flaming Tresses of Draupadi, authored by M Veerappa Moily launched

The Flaming Tresses of Draupadi: M Veerappa Moily

M. Veerappa Moily, senior Congress leader and former Chief Minister of Karnataka released a book tracing the life of Draupadi. The book was released by the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The book traces the whole life journey of the legendary Mythological character, right from her birth from the sacrificial fire to her marriage to the five Pandavas, to losing all the fortune and even honour to the Kauravas in the midst of a gambling

game and finally the great war of Kurukshetra, which ends with the victory of the Pandavas.

Key Highlights

- Originally the book has been written by Moily in Kannada and it was translated into English by D A Shankar.
- The book has been published by Rupa Publication Company.
- Moily describes the book as an autobiography of Draupadi through his eyes.
- The minister, who is currently representing the Chikballapur constituency in the 16th Lok Sabha, has written several books prior to this in both Kannada and English.
- His most ambitious piece till now has been "Shree Ramayana Mahaveshanam", which received the Moortidevi Award of the Bhartiya Jnanpith.\

Commenting on the book, Moily stated that he chose Draupadi as his central character, as he felt that she was an exemplary character for the age she lived in and the age that followed and no work according to him has been written about her that truly traced her story without bearing any gender bias.

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