

# NEWS ANALYSIS

## For Civil Services Exams

Issue II

April 16-30, 2017

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## Lead Article

### *Sukma Naxal Attack: Did intelligence failure lead to death of 25 CRPF Jawans?*

The recent Sukma Naxal Attack in which 25 CRPF Jawans sacrificed their lives has broken the silent ceasefire that existed between the Naxalites and Paramilitary Forces.

The Sukma Maoist Attack of 24th April is the bloodiest since 2010 and raised some serious questions regarding the policy, perspective and the direction that Anti-Naxal operations have been given in the last two years by the Modi Government.

Was it an intelligence failure, policy change or any other loophole that caused the death of our Jawans is a question that is on the minds of every Indian. Here we shall try to analyse this questions while also looking at possible reactionary measures that are at hand for the Modi Government to react to it.

#### **About the attack**

The attack took place on personnel of the 74th Battalion of the CRPF. At the time of the attack, the soldiers were guarding road workers in the Sukma district, which is located at a distance of 400km from Raipur, the capital of Chhattisgarh. Reports suggest that the Naxals fired from hilltops at the group of soldiers. The jawans tried to retaliate but didn't succeed because the Naxals were using residents of Burkapal village as human shields.

#### **What went wrong?**

The question that arises is was it the lack of coordination between the locals of the area and the central police as well as the intelligence which led to this attack. Or did the union government's claim that Maoists problem will end in half a decade instigate the attack.

The answer for the two questions lies in the in-depth analysis of the Sukma Naxal attack.

The answer to the first question can be seen in the non-cooperation by the villagers of the area, mainly Burkapal hamlet, who once shared a friendly relationship with the CRPF Jawans. Earlier, the villagers were acting as informers for CRPF's anti-Naxal operations.

Reports suggest that the villagers, who once acted as informers for the security forces, had distanced themselves from the forces after their village head Madhvi, who was acting as a helping hand for

CRPF, was killed two months back by the Naxalites.

Answer of the second question lies in the massive attack where the rebels or the Maoists reacted with full capacity to prove their existence and strength.

Reports suggest that earlier, Home Minister Rajnath Singh in his statement in the Parliament informed that due to operations of the security forces around 135 Maoists were killed and about 700 were arrested in 2016. He also said that nearly 1200 rebels had surrendered to the forces.

In response to this, the Sukma attack was orchestrated by the Maoists putting their full strength on display. With this, they have sent a strong message to the government that they may be weaker than the forces but their resolve to fight against them will never die.

#### **Maoists and the reason for their fight**

The left-aligned Maoists or rebels who have been fighting against the union/state government for more than three decades say that they are fighting for the rights of tribal people as well as landless farmers. Their fight is against the mining in the mineral-rich region. In short, their fight is for a greater share of wealth as well as jobs for Adivasis - the indigenous people. Currently, it is believed that Maoists are present in about 19 to 20 states of India and are most active in few states like Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Odisha and Bihar.

#### **Maoist attacks and its timeline during the decade**

- March 2017: Maoist rebels killed 11 paramilitary policemen in Chhattisgarh.
- May 2013: About 30 people, including tribal leader Mahendra Karma, were killed in Bastar region of Chhattisgarh.
- April 2010: At least 76 CRPF personnel killed in Dantewada region of Sukma
- May 2010: About 36 security personnel were killed near Dantewada
- June 2010: At least 27 soldiers killed in Narayanpur district
- March and July 2007: 55 security personnel killed in Bastar and other 23 policemen were killed in the region respectively

#### **Condemnation**

The ambush of the security personnel has drawn condemnation from different sections of the society including the politicians, public as well as different countries like Israel.

The Indian National Congress (INC) has termed the incident as an unfortunate event and has asked

the union government led by Narendra Modi to initiate appropriate counter action.

Besides, Israel has condemned the Naxalite attack and emphasised on deepening cooperation with India to combat terrorism. While delivering a lecture on 'India-Israel- Enduring Partnership' at the Nehru Memorial Museum in New Delhi, Israeli envoy, Daniel Carmon said terrorism is one of the challenges India and Israel are facing. He added there is a new battlefield, an asymmetric warfare which the security forces have to face.

#### **What can be done?**

Instead of the actions or attempts by the security forces or talks at the political level, the government should come up with the real solution under which they (the underprivileged sections including Adivasis) are made a part of the development and provided jobs.

## *National News*

### ***Uma Bharti has launched Water Conservation Programme for Bundelkhand***

Uma Bharti, the Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation launched 'Jal Sanrakshan Karyakram- Bundelkhand', an extensive water conservation programme at Bandri, Sagar in Madhya Pradesh.

The program aims to focus on the drought-prone areas of Bundelkhand, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Marathwada and Koraput in Odisha.

The minister had revealed earlier while making the announcement in New Delhi that her Ministry has prepared a master plan for the artificial discharge of ground water in the Bundelkhand region.

#### **Key Details**

- The Water Resources Ministry has identified around 1100 percolation tanks, 14000 small check dams or Nala bunds and 7200 Recharge pits/shafts in Bundelkhand.
- It has also proposed the construction of 234 wells in five districts of Bundelkhand in UP including Hamirpur, Jalaun, Banda, Mahoba and Chitrakoot and 259 wells in six districts of Bundelkhand in MP, as a part of ground water exploration.

• Besides this, the Ministry has also adopted new initiatives under National Ground Water Management Improvement Schemes (NGMIS) to improve ground water conditions in stressed blocks and ensure sustainability of the resource both quantitatively and qualitatively.

• Six districts covering an area of 11851 sq km in UP's Bundelkhand region and five districts covering an area of 8319 sq km in MP's Bundelkhand region have been considered under the initiative.

Further, the Ministry would be preparing an Incentivization Scheme for Bridging Irrigation Gap (ISBIG) scheme to complete Command Area Development and Water Management (CADWM) works and to correct the system deficiencies in the canal network to bridge the gap between Irrigation Potential Created and Irrigation Potential Utilised and to provide assured supply of water to every farm field among other things.

The scheme is expected to benefit Jhansi, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Lalitpur and Banda districts in UP's Bundelkhand region and Tikamgarh and Datia districts in MP's Bundelkhand region.

### ***Union Government launched MSEFC Portal and MyMSME Mobile App***

Union Minister for Urban Development, Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation M Venkaiah Naidu launched Micro and Small Enterprises Facilitation Council (MSEFC) portal and MyMSME Mobile App.

Both the portals were launched as a part of Digital India Initiative from the perspective of the MSME Sector in the country.

#### **Highlights of the MSEFC Portal**

- Micro and Small Enterprises Facilitation Council (MSEFC) portal will facilitate implementation of delayed payment provisions of the MSME Act 2006 and also assist in monitoring delayed payment cases.
- With the access to this platform, micro and small enterprises will be able to file their delayed payment related grievances online.
- The grievance filed will be communicated through email and SMS to the parties involved.
- It will also help officers of the Ministry of MSME as well as the State Government concerned in monitoring the progress of cases both at the State and National levels. Till now, 3690 cases involving an amount of Rs1660 crore are being considered by various MSEFCs.
- In fact, the online portal will be of great help to

start-ups since delayed payment is probably the single biggest problem for start-ups.

#### **Highlights of the MyMSME mobile app**

- MyMSME mobile app provides information on all schemes implemented by the Ministry of MSME at one place which will do away with the practice of searching multiple windows for help or information.
- With the help of app, Ministry of MSME will be providing one single window to MSMEs to access information on all schemes implemented by the Ministry and as well as apply for any of them.
- MSMEs can also lodge grievances pertaining to Ministry of MSME through this app.
- This mobile app has enabled the MSME Sector to usher in the era of M-Governance (Mobile Governance) from e-Governance.

#### ***India Post released commemorative postage stamp on coffee as fragrance stamp***

The India Post released a Commemorative Postage Stamp on Coffee as a Fragrance Stamp in Bengaluru. The stamp was jointly released by Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman and Union Minister of State for Communications Manoj Sinha.

After releasing the postage stamp, Nirmala Sitharaman thanked the department of Posts for releasing the stamp and printing one lakh stamps in the denomination of Rs 100. These fragrance stamps will be available for sale at Bengaluru GPO, Mysuru, Mangaluru and Belgaum Philately Bureaus and other head post offices in the state from the date of its release.

She also said that such cross coordination between the Coffee and Postal Departments would go a long way in promoting coffee for which India was known as a major producer of specialised flavours of the beverage bean.

At present, the coffee is being planted in non-traditional areas like parts of hilly Odisha, Araku in Andhra Pradesh and other places in North India. Sitharaman also urged the coffee board to brand the Indian coffee in the lines of tribals in Araku who had opened sleek outlets in Paris and garnered much-wanted attention for the Indian Coffee.

In 1973, Bhutan became the first country to release aromatic stamps and was followed by countries like New Zealand, Thailand and Switzerland. However, India joined the league of countries with aromatic stamps in 2006 by launching Rs 15 sandalwood-scented stamp.

About 30 lakh of these stamps were sold out within 15 days. Later in 2007, India Post released rose-scented stamps priced at Rs 5; these stamps were released in four varieties of flower namely Neelam, Jawahar, Delhi Princess and Bhim. In 2008, the rose scented stamps were joined by the jasmine fragrance.

#### ***SC sets 25% of net salary of husband for maintained to an estranged wife***

The Supreme Court (SC) of India in April 2017 set a benchmark for maintenance to be paid by a husband to his estranged wife. The Court said that twenty-five percent of his net salary should be paid for maintenance by a husband to his estranged wife. It said that this twenty-five percent of his net salary might constitute a just and proper amount as alimony.

According to media reports, a bench of Justice R Banumathi and Justice MM Santanagoudar directed a resident of West Bengal to set aside twenty-five percent as maintenance for his former wife and their son. The man who earns Rs 95527 a month was directed to set aside Rs 20000 for the wife. The court also turned down the man's plea that the amount was excessive.

The court said the amount of maintenance or permanent alimony must be sufficient to ensure that a woman lived with dignity after separating from her husband.

#### **About the plea**

In his plea to the Supreme Court, a man from West Bengal challenged an order of the Calcutta High Court in which he was directed to pay Rs 23000 per month to his former wife.

#### **The Supreme Court's take on the plea**

The apex court in its direction said that there was nothing wrong in the order of the high court; however, it reduced the sum by Rs 3000 on the ground that the man had remarried and was responsible for his new family.

Reports suggest that the former couple has been fighting a legal battle over maintenance since 2003, the year when the district court fixed the amount at Rs 4500. Later the high court enhanced the amount to Rs 16000 per month and Rs 23000 per month in 2015 and 2016. The sum was increased as the former husband's salary went up to Rs 95527 from Rs 63842 per month.

Earlier in its 2016 judgement, the Supreme Court pronounced that "A Hindu woman's right to maintenance is a personal obligation so far as the

husband is concerned, and it is his duty to maintain her even if he has no property. It is well settled that under the Hindu Law, the husband has got a personal obligation to maintain his wife and if he is possessed of properties then his wife is entitled to a right to be maintained out of such properties".

It seems that the decision of the apex court has an inclination towards protecting the claims of women in matrimonial disputes that affects the financial status of the couple.

### ***Supreme Court approved e-auction of Taj Mansingh Hotel in Delhi***

The Supreme Court (SC) approved the e-auction of Taj Mansingh Hotel in Delhi. A bench of Justices P C Ghose and R F Nariman allowed New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) to e-auction the property.

The bench rejected the claim of Tata group-owned Indian Hotels Co. Ltd (IHCL) over the property. The auctioning the Taj Mansingh Hotel property was stiffly opposed by Tata group-run Indian Hotels Company Ltd which manages the hotel.

In an earlier hearing, the Supreme Court asked NDMC to reconsider its decision for the e-auction as the IHCL had approached SC against a Delhi High Court's ruling that allowed for the auction of Taj Mansingh Hotel.

However, on 27 October 2016 hearing, a division bench denied IHCL's claim to right of first refusal on the auction and called for the bidding. It allowed IHCL to participate in the bid and also match the highest offer.

#### **Background**

NDMC and IHCL had entered into an agreement in 1976 to construct and run a five-star hotel in one of the prime locations of Delhi that is Mansingh Road. This licence operated for a period of 33 years from late 1976 and concluded in 2011. However, NDMC declined to renew the IHCL licence for 30 years.

### ***Union Cabinet approved to introduce Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill 2017 in Parliament***

The Union Cabinet gave its ex-post facto approval for introduction of Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill 2017 and National Commission for Backward Classes (Repeal) Bill, 2017 in the Parliament.

Moreover, the Cabinet also approved retention of posts/incumbents and office premises

that are held by the existing National Commission for Backward Classes.

### **Provisions of the Constitution (One Hundred Twenty-third Amendment) Bill, 2017**

- It calls for constitution of a Commission under Article 338B for socially and educationally backward classes by name of National Commission for Backward Classes.
- It provides for insertion of Clause (26C) under Article 366 with modified definition of socially and educationally backward classes.

### **Provisions of National Commission for Backward Classes (Repeal) Bill, 2017**

- It calls for repealing the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993 along with Savings Clause.
- It mentions the dissolution of the National Commission for Backward Classes with effect from the date when the Union Government may implement it. The National Commission for Backward Classes was constituted under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the Act.
- It provides for appropriation of the sanctioned 52 posts of the existing National Commission for Backward Classes in the proposed National Commission for Backward Classes to be constituted under Article 338B.
- It provides for retention of the office premises of the existing National Commission for Backward Classes at Trikut-1, Bhikaiji Cama Place, New Delhi by the National Commission for Backward Classes to be constituted under Article 338B.

#### **Comment**

The proposed National Commission for Backward Classes (Repeal) Bill, 2017 is necessary in view of setting up of the National Commission for Backward Classes by insertion of Article 338B of the Constitution. It will certainly provide for overall welfare of socially and educationally backward classes.

It will also enable effective continuity in the functioning of the National Commission for Backward Classes under Article 338B.

### ***SC restored trial against L K Advani, M M Joshi and Uma Bharti in Babri Masjid demolition case***

The Supreme Court (SC) restored criminal conspiracy trial against senior BJP leaders L K Advani, M M Joshi, Uma Bharti and other senior BJP leaders in the Babri Masjid demolition case.

The ruling was made by a bench comprising Justices P C Ghose and R F Nariman. The bench also ordered that separate trial courts at

Rae Bareilly and Lucknow should be clubbed and conducted in the capital of Uttar Pradesh only and directed that trials should be completed in two years.

### **Highlights of the SC orders**

- It ruled that there will be no fresh trial because of framing of conspiracy charges against senior BJP leaders.
- However, Rajasthan governor Kalyan Singh, who enjoys Constitutional immunity, can be tried only after he ceases to hold the office.
- The trial will proceed on a day-to-day basis and will not be adjourned on any ground. Moreover, the judges presiding over the case will not be transferred till the trial is concluded and judgment is pronounced.
- The adjournment would take place only if the trial court judge feels that it was impossible to proceed and fix the next date of hearing after recording the reasons for the adjournment.
- It also directed probe agency CBI to ensure that prosecution witnesses appear on each and every date for recording of evidence in the case and the trial court should start the proceedings within one month.

### **Background**

The verdict came on a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) plea challenging the order of Allahabad High Court for quashing the conspiracy charge against Advani and others in May 2010. The Allahabad High Court ruled in favour of the conspiracy charges being dropped against the veteran BJP leaders.

The bench had earlier reserved the order on April 6 after the CBI and other petitioners had sought the restoration of conspiracy charge against the senior Bharatiya Janata Party and Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders.

### **Comment**

At first, there were two sets of cases relating to the Babri Masjid demolition on 6 December 1992. The first involved unnamed 'karsevaks', the trial of which is taking place in a Lucknow court, while the second set of cases relate to the BJP leaders in a Rae Bareilly court.

The Lucknow court is hearing the case against unknown 'karsevaks' who were in and around the Babri Masjid when it was pulled down.

CBI had charged Advani and 20 others under sections 153A (promoting enmity between classes), 153B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration) and 505 (false statements, rumours etc circulated with the intent to cause

mutiny or disturb public peace) of the IPC.

### ***Government banned red beacons on all VIP vehicles, including PM's, emergency services exempt***

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided to ban the use of red beacons symbols on the vehicles of VIPs. The decision says that Ministers and officials in the Central government will not be able to use red beacons on their official vehicles from 1 May 2017.

The ban does not exempt even vehicles of the country's top dignitaries such as the President, Prime Minister and the Chief Justice of India. However, a certain category of institutions is exempted from the ban and they are ambulances and vehicles of the fire service, police, and army. They will be allowed to use blue flashing beacons to cut through traffic.

During the cabinet meet the Rule 108 (I) and 108 (II) of the Motor Vehicles Act that allows central and state governments to permit red beacons for dignitaries was scrapped. As per the existing norms, the President, Vice President and Prime Minister along with several dignitaries like the Lok Sabha Speaker, Chief Justice of India, Chief Ministers, Governors, Chief Justices of High Courts, Supreme Court judges and Leader of Opposition were allowed red beacons.

The move is aimed at eradicating VVIP culture in the country and was taken with the spirit of new India where every Indian is special and a VIP.

Earlier, the Supreme Court of India had asked all state governments to restrict the list of VIPs who are allowed beacons on their vehicles. After which some state governments barred the use of red beacons. Example, after winning the assembly elections, Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab namely Yogi Adityanath and Captain Amarinder Singh respectively decided to remove beacons from the vehicles of ministers as well as government vehicles. Even, they ordered that the beacons will not be available on the vehicles of the Chief Ministers.

### ***Railways Ministry launched first-ever train with glass roof coaches on Visakhapatnam-Araku route***

Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu flagged-off first-ever train with glass roof coaches on Visakhapatnam-Araku route through video conferencing from Bhubaneswar.

The see-through Vistadome coach on Visakhapatnam-Kirandul passenger train was launched with an aim to provide a delightful travelling experience of the picturesque Araku valley .

### **Highlights of the Vistadome coach on Visakhapatnam-Araku route train**

- This specially-designed Vistadome air-conditioned coach is claimed to be a first-of-its-kind on Indian Railways.
- It has large glass windows and an observation lounge that offer passengers a panoramic view of the sites along the 128-km rail route from Visakhapatnam to Araku valley hill station.
- A unique feature of this Rs 3.38 crore 40-seat coach is the double-wide reclining passenger seats that can be rotated 360 degrees for a better sightseeing experience.
- The coach also has a glass-domed ceiling, automatic sliding doors and a multi-tier luggage rack.
- Coaches also feature LED lights, rotatable seats, GPS based info system, etc.
- Tourists will get to experience the breath-taking Anantagiri ghat section, Lambasingi, Borra caves and the tunnels along the route from the Vistadome coach, unlike the cramped train compartments.
- Currently, only one coach is attached to the train on a trial basis while one more will be attached later.

## ***International News:***

### ***German lawmakers approved package of security measures, partially ban burqa***

The lawmakers of Germany approved a package of security measures that aims at preventing extremist attacks. In this regard the lawmakers also partially banned the full-face burqa, the Islamic veil.

The new law on facial coverings falls short of a total ban in public places demanded by right-wing parties, like that in effect in neighbouring France since 2011.

#### **Key facts of the new laws**

- The prohibition will apply to public servants - including election officials, military and judicial staff -- performing their duties.
- People will also be required to remove facial coverings in order to match them with their

identity papers.

- It talks about the use of electronic ankle bracelets, if approved by a judge, for people deemed a security threat, in federal police cases – like known Islamic radicals considered potentially violent by security services.
- Under another new measure, Germany will implement EU rules on the exchange of flight passenger data to counter terrorism and serious crime. And physical attacks on police, emergency services and military personnel on duty will in future be punished more severely, with up to five years' jail.

#### **Why the new laws came into existence?**

The new laws follow several jihadist attacks, including a truck rampage through a Berlin Christmas market that claimed 12 lives, and come ahead of September elections. The incident that occurred on 19 December 2017 was claimed by the Islamic State group.

### ***El Salvador become first country to ban metals mining***

El Salvador in April 2017 became the first country in the world to ban metal mining. The El Salvador unicameral legislature passed the ban with support from a sweeping coalition. The law was favoured by nearly 80 percent of the El Salvadorian population.

The law bans "*prospection, exploration, exploitation, extraction or processing of metallic minerals in El Salvador.*"

The law entered into force after being signed by President Salvador Sanchez Ceren.

#### **Background**

- After the Salvadoran Civil War (15 October 1979 to 16 January 1992), the government began trying to rebuild the large-scale mining industry.
- The country received a flurry of exploration permit applications, when global gold prices began to climb in the early 2000s.
- The Pacific Rim Mining Corporation proposed plans for a mine named El Dorado to be built in the basin of the Rio Lempa—El Salvador's primary source of drinking water.
- In the 1990s, rapid industrialization and population growth in the country caused extreme environmental degradation.
- By the early 2000s, more than 90% of the country's ground water was chemically contaminated and no amount of boiling, filtering or chlorination would make it potable.
- Later, anti-mining movement began in the country which resisted the El Dorado mine and

mining in general. Local and international groups united to form *The National Roundtable Against Metal Mining* in El Salvador.

- In May 2007, the El Salvadorian Catholic Church joined the country's anti-mining movement. The Catholic Church publicly denounced mining, claiming "no material advantage can be compared to the value of human life."
- In March 2008, NRA President Antonio Saca instituted a nationwide moratorium on metal mining permits.

### ***UAE's first solar-powered gas station opened in Dubai***

The Emirates National Oil Company (ENOC) opened United Arab Emirates' first solar-powered gas station.

The ENOC states that the country's first solar-powered gas station signifies country's increased focus on maintaining the highest standards of sustainability and clean energy.

The station goes in line with the great strides made by the Emirate of Dubai to turn itself into a hub for renewable energy as part of the Dubai 2020 Vision. The Vision plans make the emirate the smartest and the most sustainable in the world.

#### **Key highlights**

- The service station lies on Dubai's main Sheikh Zayed Road thoroughfare.
- It is covered with solar panels that can generate up to 120 kilowatt hours.
- It generates about 30 percent more energy than the station needs. The excess power is directed back into the city's electric grid.
- The new development fits within the pioneering initiatives launched by ENOC nationwide over the past period in alignment with the government plans to.
- The services station is planned to reduce CO2 emissions by 195 million metric tonnes annually.
- It will also wield a number of energy consumption reduction techniques.

### ***China banned 'Muhammad', 'Jihad', and 'Medina' as baby names***

The Chinese government in April 2017 prohibited parents from choosing baby names like Islam, Medina, Jihad and Quran for their children, thereby strengthening its hold on Muslims living in western China.

The ban is a part of the government's effort to curb religious fervor in the region. Western China or the western region of Xinjiang

is home to over 10 million Uighurs, a Muslim minority group.

#### **Key Highlights**

- The government fears the region to breed Islamic extremism, violence and separatist thought.
- The minority group on the other hand states that it is the government's restrictions and strict limits imposed on speech and worship that have led to the rise of tension in the region.
- The list titled "List of Banned Ethnic Minority Names" includes over two dozen names including Mujahid, Arafat, Muhammad, Quran, Mecca, Jihad, Imam, Saddam, Hajj and Medina.
- In the case of defiance, the parents would risk losing critical benefits for their children including education and health care.

The advocates fighting for the rights of the minority group state that the ban shows the length to which the Chinese government would go to limit the civil liberties of Uighurs in the name of fighting terrorism.

According to Dilxat Raxit, a spokesman for the World Uyghur Congress (a group that advocates self-determination for Xinjiang), the Chinese policies are becoming increasingly hostile and the Uighur have to be extremely cautious if they want to give their children the names chosen by them and avoid punishment from the government at the same time.

Prior to this on 1 April 2017, the Xinjiang authorities had imposed new rules that prohibited people from sporting abnormal beards or veils in public places and also imposed punishments for refusing to watch state television or radio programmes.

### ***Ghana, Kenya and Malawi to take part in WHO malaria vaccine pilot programme***

The World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa (WHO/AFRO) announced that Ghana, Kenya and Malawi will take part in a WHO-coordinated pilot implementation programme.

The programme will make the world's first malaria vaccine available in selected areas, beginning in 2018.

The injectable vaccine, RTS,S, was developed to protect young children from the most deadly form of malaria caused by *Plasmodium falciparum*.

The vaccine will be assessed in the pilot programme as a complementary malaria control

tool that could potentially be added to the core package of WHO-recommended measures for malaria prevention.

In October 2015, two independent WHO advisory groups recommended pilot implementation of RTS,S in three to five settings in sub-Saharan Africa. The recommendation came from the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization and the Malaria Policy Advisory Committee (MPAC). The WHO formally adopted the recommendation in January 2016.

### **Key highlights**

- The WHO pilot programme will assess whether the vaccine's protective effect in children aged 5 – 17 months old during Phase III testing can be replicated in real-life.
- It will also assess the feasibility of delivering the required four doses of RTS,S, the vaccine's potential role in reducing childhood deaths, and its safety in the context of routine use.
- It will be administered via intramuscular injection and delivered through the routine national immunization programmes.

### **About RTS,S**

- RTS,S was developed by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK).
- It is the first malaria vaccine to have successfully completed a Phase III clinical trial.
- The trial was conducted between 2009 and 2014 through a partnership involving GSK, the PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative (with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation), and a network of African research sites in seven African countries.
- It is also the first malaria vaccine to have obtained a positive scientific opinion from a stringent medicines regulatory authority, the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The EMA had approved RTS,S in July 2015.

### **Why African nations were chosen for the pilot programme?**

Africa bears the greatest burden of malaria worldwide. Between 2000 and 2015, a 62 percent reduction in malaria deaths was seen yet approximately 429000 people died of the disease in 2015. Most of the deaths were recorded in Africa.

Ghana, Kenya and Malawi were selected to participate in the pilot based on the following criteria: high coverage of long-lasting insecticidal-treated nets (LLINs); well-functioning malaria and immunisation programmes, a high malaria burden even after

scale-up of LLINs, and participation in the Phase III RTS,S malaria vaccine trial.

### ***Australia unveiled major changes to citizenship process***

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced that migrants seeking Australian citizenship will have to undergo tougher tests on their English language skills and ability to demonstrate Australian values.

The move is being considered as a major overhaul of its migration process. The move will make it difficult to gain citizenship.

However, the opposition Labor Party accused Turnbull of making announcements for political gain.

### **Key fact and Changes include**

- Under the new regime, the applicants seeking citizenship should have completed four years as a permanent resident - three years longer than at present.
- The applicant will have to demonstrate his/her support for religious freedom and gender equality
- Respect for women and children as well as domestic violence will not be allowed
- Stringent tests of English under which the applicant will have to undergo a test of their ability to read, write, speak and listen English.
- They will have to provide evidence of integration into the community like school enrolment, employment history or his/her membership of community organisations.
- The applicants will be allowed to apply only three times for the citizenship and those cheating during the test will be failed automatically.

The move comes two days after Australia unveiled stricter visa requirements for skilled workers from overseas. Earlier on 18 April 2017, the Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at a press conference in Canberra announced that his government will abolish a temporary work visa facility of the country and replace it with a visa requiring better English language and work skills. This visa facility was popular among foreigners.

PM Turnbull said, the reforms will have a simple focus and that is Australian jobs and Australian values. The change was planned with an aim to attract better-skilled workers and Australians employed over cheap foreign workers brought in under the old 457 visa programme.

During the announcement, Turnbull said, people now in Australia on 457 visas will not be affected by the new arrangements.

He said, the 457 visa will be replaced by a new temporary visa and the list of occupations that qualify for a visa will be reduced from more than 200. The new visa will be limited to a two-year period and a second four-year visa will require a higher standard of English language.

## *Economy*

### ***NITI Aayog's vision: Houses, vehicles, ACs for all by 2032***

NITI Aayog, the think tank of the Union Government, came up with a vision document 2031-32 that envisages a new India. The document envisages an India where every Indian will have houses with toilets, two-wheelers or cars, air-conditioners, power and digital connectivity in next 15 years, that is, by 2032.

The glimpse of the Vision 2031-32 was presented by NITI Aayog's Vice-Chairperson Arvind Panagariya at the body's governing council chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The India 2031-32: Vision, Strategy and Action Agenda also visualises a fully literate society with universal access to health care.

#### **Key facts of NITI Aayog's Vision 2031-32 document**

- It talks about an India with modern and larger network of railways, roads, air connectivity and waterways. It talks about a clean India where every citizen will have an access to quality water and air.
- It says that the per capita income would go up by three fold to Rs 3.14 lakh in 2031-32 from Rs 1.06 lakh in 2015-16.
- It also talks about India where the gross domestic product or whose economy would rise from Rs 137 lakh crore level in 2015-16 to Rs 469 lakh crore in 2031-32.
- It also increases the central and state expenditure from Rs 38 lakh crore in 2015-16 to Rs 130 lakh crore in 2031-32, which is a rise of Rs 92 lakh crore.

Besides, the work on the Fifteen Year Vision and Seven Year Strategy document spanning 2017-18 to 2031-32 is in progress. On the other hand, the Three Year Action Agenda that covers a period from 2017-18 to 2019-20 was circulated to the members of the Governing Council, which will be finalised in coming time.

As per reports, the vision presentation aims at realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision

of a vibrant India by 2031-32.

### ***RBI issued draft guidelines for Cross Border Mergers & Acquisitions***

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued draft guidelines on cross border merger transactions in accordance with the rules notified by Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs through Companies (Compromises, Arrangements and Amalgamation) Amendment Rules, 2017.

RBI proposed these Regulations under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA).

#### **Highlights of the draft guidelines for Mergers & Acquisition**

- The draft regulations will be known as 'Foreign Exchange Management (Cross Border Merger) Regulations'.
- These guidelines are aimed at addressing the issues that may arise when an Indian company and a foreign company enter into scheme of merger, demerger, amalgamation, or rearrangement.
- These Regulations stipulate conditions that should be adhered to by the companies involved in the Scheme.
- The regulation makes reporting of any cross-border activity mandatory within 180 days from the date of sanction.

#### **Background**

Section 234 of the Companies Act, 2013 provides for mergers and amalgamations between Indian companies and foreign companies.

Accordingly, the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs on 13 April 2017 issued Companies (Compromises, Arrangements and Amalgamation) Amendment Rules, 2017 to operationalise this section of the act.

### ***India become world's fifth largest military spender***

India became the world's fifth-largest military spender, as per the figures released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). India spent around USD 55.9 billion for its military in the year 2016.

As per the data of SIPRI, the United States remains the world's largest military spender followed by China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia at 2nd, 3rd and 4th position respectively. The other prominent military spenders are Japan, South Korea, and Australia.

#### **Highlights of the world military expenditure as per SIPRI**

- Global military spending amounted to 2.2 per

cent of the worldwide GDP.

- Military spending as a share of GDP was highest in the Middle East and was the lowest in the Americas.
- In Asia and Oceania, military expenditure increased by 4.6 per cent in 2016, which was the result of tensions in the region such claims of territorial rights made by various countries in the South China Sea.
- The US is the top spender whose military expenditure grew 1.7 per cent between 2015 and 2016 to USD 611 billion.
- China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia stood at 2nd, 3rd and 4th position respectively in the top 5 list of military spenders.
- Saudi Arabia, which was the third largest spender in 2015, is now ranked at 4th position in 2016 with a spending of USD 63.7 billion.
- Pakistan did not figure in the list of top 15 spenders and it spent USD 9.93 billion in 2016.
- Military expenditure in Western Europe rose for the second consecutive year and was up by 2.6 per cent in 2016.

### ***I-T department launched 2nd phase of Operation Clean Money to probe 60000 people***

The Income Tax (IT) department launched the second phase of 'Operation Clean Money' to detect black money post-demonetisation. Over 60000 individuals will be investigated in the second phase.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), the policy-making body of the department, detected undisclosed income of over 9334 crore rupees between 9 November 2016 till 28 February 2017, that time of the Financial Year 2016-17 when old currency notes were banned by PM Narendra Modi.

The identification of undisclosed income was done through use of advanced data analytics, including integration of data sources, relationship clustering and fund tracking. The high risk categories identified include businesses claiming cash sales as the source of cash deposits and large cash deposits made by government employees.

### **Highlights of the 2nd phase of Operation Clean Money**

- As per CBDT, over 60000 people including 1300 high risk people were identified for investigation into claims of excessive cash sales during the demonetisation period.
- More than 6000 transactions of high value property purchase and 6600 cases of outward

remittances will be subjected to detailed investigations under the second phase.

- All the cases where no response is received shall also be subjected to detailed enquiries.

### **Background**

- The Income Tax Department (ITD) launched Operation Clean Money (OCM) on 31 January 2017 to leverage technology for e-verification of cash deposits made during the demonetization period that is from 9 November 2016 to 30 December 2016.
- It is being conducted by the Income-tax Department (ITD) through use of advanced data analytics allowing for optimization of government resources.
- The First Phase of Operation Clean Money involved e-verification of cash deposits made in the banks. The entire phase was conducted online wherein 17.92 lakh persons were identified and requested for on-line responses on such transactions.

## ***Schemes, committees and programmes***

### ***PM Narendra Modi launched UDAN scheme, flags off first UDAN flight on Shimla-Delhi route***

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched air regional connectivity scheme UDAN (Ude Desh ka Har Nagarik) during his day-long visit to Shimla. Under the scheme, the first UDAN flight was flagged off on Shimla-Delhi route.

Simultaneously, PM Narendra Modi also launched the inaugural UDAN flights on Kadapa – Hyderabad and Nanded - Hyderabad routes.

Prior to the launch of this UDAN flight, Kingfisher was the only airline that operated regular flights between Delhi and Shimla till September 2012.

### **Highlights of the UDAN flight on Delhi - Shimla route**

- This UDAN flight will be a regular flight, which will operate five days in a week.
- The flight will depart at 6.10 a.m. from Delhi and will arrive Shimla at 7.25 a.m. On the same day itself, the flight will depart at 7.45 a.m. from Shimla and will return to Delhi at 8.45 a.m.
- The airfare for this 1-hour journey of around 500 km or the airfare for 30 minute journey on a helicopter will be capped at Rs 2500.

### **Highlights of the UDAN Scheme**

- The UDAN Scheme is a key component of the National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) which was launched in June 2016.
- UDAN is a first-of-its-kind scheme which aims to stimulate regional connectivity through a market-based mechanism.
- Under the scheme, 24 airports in the western region, 17 in the northern region, 11 in the southern region, 12 in east and six in north-eastern parts of the country will be connected under this scheme.
- The government will also connect 45 unserved and under-served airports with the scheme.
- The operators are Air India subsidiary Airline Allied Services, SpiceJet, Air Deccan, Air Odisha and Turbo Megha. They would be operating 19-78 seater aircraft.
- Operators will have to provide 50 per cent of the flight capacity with a cap of Rs 2500 per hour and a minimum of five and a maximum of 13 people on helicopters with the same price cap.

#### **Comment**

With the regular plying of UDAN flight on Delhi - Shimla route, the tourism industry of the state is expected to get a boost.

Presently, the annual tourist arrival in Himachal Pradesh crosses 1.8 crore (18 million) in a year. The tourism sector contributes approximately seven per cent to the State Gross Domestic Product.

### ***Union Government took 10 new Swachh Iconic Places under Swachh Bharat Mission***

The Union Government announced 10 Swachh Iconic Places to be taken under the Phase II of Swachh Iconic Places initiative.

The announcement was made during second quarterly review meeting on the Swachh Iconic Places that was held at Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine in Katra, Jammu and Kashmir.

The aim of the Swachh Iconic Places is to make 100 places model Swachh Tourist Destinations that will enhance the experience for visitors from India and abroad.

#### **The ten new iconic places are:**

1. Gangotri
2. Yamunotri
3. Mahakaleshwar Temple, Ujjain
4. Char Minar, Hyderabad
5. Church and Convent of St. Francis of Assisi, Goa
6. Adi Shankaracharya's abode Kaladi in Ernakulam

7. Gomateshwar in Shravanbelgola

8. Baijnath Dham, Devghar

9. Gaya Tirth in Bihar

10. Somnath temple in Gujarat

#### **The ten iconic places already in Phase I are:**

1. Ajmer Sharif Dargah

2. CST Mumbai

3. Golden Temple, Amritsar

4. Kamakhya Temple, Assam

5. Maikarnika Ghat, Varanasi

6. Meenakshi Temple, Madurai

7. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, Katra, J&K

8. Shree Jagannath Temple, Puri

9. The Taj Mahal, Agra

10. Tirupati Temple, Tirumala

#### **Background**

The special clean-up initiative comes under the umbrella of the Swachh Bharat Mission. The initiative focuses on 100 iconic heritage, spiritual and cultural places in India.

The Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation is the coordinating Ministry for the initiative, in association with the Union Ministry of Urban Development, Union Ministry of Culture, Union Ministry of Tourism and the concerned State governments.

## ***Science and Technology***

### ***ISRO to improve India's communication system by launching 5 satellites***

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is going to launch five communication satellites by the end of 2017. The same was confirmed by the organisation's chairman, A S Kiran Kumar on 27 April 2017.

Kumar stated that the main aim behind the launch is to improve the communication system within the country. The specific use of the satellites would be to improve the number of available transponders for communications. The move is expected to significantly enhance India's communication capability.

#### **Key Highlights**

- The announcement was made by the ISRO chief on the sidelines of a lecture that was organised on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of the Osmania University in Hyderabad.
- Kumar's lecture at the University included an overview of the number of satellites launched by the space organisation and the purpose of each satellite in the areas of disaster management,

weather forecasting, space exploration, education, agriculture and geo-spatial applications.

- ISRO chief also revealed that India is the only country to achieve the feat of having a large number of satellites.

- He also announced that ISRO along with the government has made it mandatory for all aircrafts to have a GPS-aided Geo Augmented Navigation (GAGAN) system by 2019 to ensure safety and precision landing.

Besides this, ISRO plans to make an inventory and site management plan for 4000 heritage sites in India. The organisation also helped India break the record for launching most satellites from a single rocket by launching 104 satellites in one go in February 2017.

### ***NASA launched Super Pressure Balloon from New Zealand***

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) successfully launched its football-stadium-sized and heavy-lift Super Pressure Balloon (SPB) from Wanaka, New Zealand.

The balloon will float for 100 or more days at 110000 feet (33.5 km) across the globe in the Southern Hemisphere's mid-latitude band. It will observe a broad swath of the Earth's atmosphere to detect the UV fluorescence from the deep space cosmic rays coming in from above.

#### **Highlights of Super Pressure Balloon**

- The Super Pressure Balloon will detect ultra-high energy cosmic particles from beyond the galaxy as they penetrate the earth's atmosphere.
- The International Extreme Universe Space Observatory on a Super Pressure Balloon (EUSO-SPB) payload is flying as a mission of opportunity.
- Also flying on the payload is a poppy in commemoration of Anzac Day, a national day of remembrance in New Zealand and Australia.
- As the balloon travels around the Earth, it may be visible from the ground, particularly at sunrise and sunset to those who live in the southern hemisphere's mid-latitudes, such as Argentina and South Africa.
- It is expected to circle the planet two or three times.

#### **About Super Pressure Balloon**

- The Balloon was developed together by NASA and Columbia Scientific Balloon Facility teams.
- NASA's heavy-lift balloons have been critical launch vehicles for testing and validating new

technologies and science instruments to assure mission success for costlier, higher-risk follow-on spaceflight missions.

- NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia manages the scientific balloon flight program with 10 to 15 flights each year from launch sites worldwide.

- Orbital ATK, which operates NASA's Columbia Scientific Balloon Facility in Palestine, Texas, provides mission planning, engineering services and field operations for NASA's scientific balloon program.

### ***First Made in India industrial robot BRABO unveiled***

TAL Manufacturing Solutions in April 2017 unveiled India's first conceptualized, designed and manufactured articulated industrial robot called BRABO.

BRABO stands for "Bravo Robot". It has been developed indigenously for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) in India.

TAL Manufacturing Solutions is a wholly owned subsidiary of Tata Motors.

#### **Key highlights of BRABO**

- The robot was designed and manufactured at the TAL's Pune factory.
- It is mainly developed to complement the human workforce.
- It also developed to repeatedly perform high volume, dangerous and time-consuming tasks ranging from handling of raw materials to packaging of finished products.
- Other than the motors and drives for the Robo-arm, which are sourced from Italy, all the other parts of the robot were indigenously manufactured in India.
- The robot has four patents registered in its name. TAL has also applied for an intellectual property certification for the robot.
- The robot is easy to install, use, program and maintain. It needs only one-time calibration. It does not require any many calibration in case of maintenance.
- It comes with low-cost power transmission system.
- It will be able to work on single phase power supply suitable for MSMEs in the country.
- It has an inbuilt programmable logic controller and comes with additional software like CAT2Motion, which can input 3D drawings and convert into the BRABO programme.
- The robot can also act as a virtual controller for simulation.

• BRABO will be priced at Rs 3 Lakh for 2kg payload, and Rs 6 Lakh for 10kg payload.

#### **How BRABO will help MSMEs in India?**

• BRABO is around 30-40 per cent cheaper than any international industrial robot with similar applications.

• The robot can be used for varied applications for tasks like pick and placement of materials, assembly of parts, machine and press tending, as a sealing application, and camera and vision-based jobs.

• Being an industrial robot, it will help in cost reduction, improved quality, increased production, and improved workplace health and safety.

## *Defence*

### ***India successfully test-fired Agni-III ballistic missile***

India successfully test-fired 3000 kilometre range Agni-III ballistic missile from Abdul Kalam Island off Odisha coast. The test was aimed at re-establishing the operational effectiveness of the weapon system.

The test was carried by the Strategic Forces Command with logistics support from Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO).

Agni-III's first user successful trial was carried out on 21 September 2012.

#### **Highlights of the Agni-III ballistic missile**

• This Surface-to-Surface nuclear capable intermediate-range ballistic missile can hit targets in the range of around 3000 km.

• The two-stage solid-propelled missile has a length of 17 metres, 2 metres diameter and its launch weight is around 50 tonnes.

• It can carry a warhead of 1.5 tonne which is protected by carbon all composite heat shield.

• It is equipped with the hybrid navigation, guidance and control systems along with advanced on-board computer.

• It was developed by the DRDO under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).

• The missile was inducted into the armed forces in June 2011.

### ***Indo-French naval exercise Varuna commenced***

The Indian Navy began a joint maritime exercise Varuna with the French Navy at the Mediterranean Sea. The exercise will conclude on

30 April 2017.

The joint maritime exercise aims at deepening combat coordination between the two navies.

Guided missile destroyer INS Mumbai, stealth frigate INS Trishul and fleet tanker INS Aditya are taking part in the Varuna exercise.

The ships are part of the Indian Navy's overseas deployment to the Mediterranean Sea and West Coast of Africa and they arrived at Toulon port on southern France's Mediterranean coast.

The Varuna series of exercises began in 2000 and have evolved into an institutionalised form of interaction between the two navies.

#### **Background**

With the establishment of strategic partnership in 1998, there has been significant progress in all areas of bilateral cooperation and exchanges including naval exercises between India and France.

The Indian Navy and the French Navy have been conducting naval exercises since 1983. Following the establishment of a strategic partnership, these exercises were christened as Varuna in 2001.

## *Awards*

### ***President conferred Jnanpith Award to poet Sankha Ghosh***

Sankha Ghosh, eminent Bengali poet and literary critic was honoured with the 52nd Jnanpith Award by President Pranab Mukherjee in New Delhi.

Speaking on the occasion, the President stated that the professor, who is a recipient of Sahitya Akademi award and the Padma Bhushan, is the most deserving recipient of this award.

Pranab Mukherjee further stated that Ghosh's literary works reflect a rare poetic style that encompasses not only a lyrical style but also a deep reflection of the social milieu. It often takes on the superficiality in the society and is almost akin to candid commentary on contemporary issues.

The President also expressed his full trust in Ghosh as a teacher of reputation and stated that the poet would have undoubtedly had a positive influence on the minds of his students, just as he enriched the minds of his

readers.

### **About Sankha Ghosh**

- Born on 6 February 1932 in Chandpur (presently in Bangladesh), Ghosh is one of the most prolific writers in the Bengali language.
- He is in fact regarded as a leading authority in his own right on the works of Rabindranath Tagore.
- He completed his undergraduate studies in Arts in the Bengali language from Kolkata's Presidency College and subsequently did his masters from the University of Calcutta.
- He previously taught at several educational institutions including in colleges affiliated to the University of Calcutta, Jadavpur University, Delhi University, Visva-Bharati University and the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies at Shimla.
- He took part in the International Writing Program's Fall Residency at the University of Iowa in Iowa City in 1967.
- His work, while conveying strong messages have noticeably avoided any sort of verbal tirade, displaying his fluid brilliance. They have all been to the point and correct.
- Some of his greatest works include Murkho baro, samajika naya, Baborer Prarthana, chapa srshti karuna and poems such as Dinaguli rataguli and Nihitapatalachaya.
- His poems have been translated into a number of Indian and foreign languages.
- He has also won a number of prestigious awards including the Narasimh Das Puraskar in 1977, Rabindra Puraskar in 1989, Kamalkumari Award in 1993, Saraswati Samman in 1998, the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1977 and the Padma Bhushan in 2011.

### ***Bhubaneswar become 1st Indian city to win Pierre L'Enfant Awards-2017***

Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha, was selected for the Pierre L'Enfant Planning Excellence and Achievement Awards-2017. The city was selected for the award for good and advanced town planning and engaging its residents in the planning process.

With this, Bhubaneswar became India's first city to be awarded the prestigious award instituted by the American Planning Association (APA).

Bhubaneswar will receive the APA award along with other four awardees on 8 May

2017. The awards will be conferred at an awards luncheon at the association's National Planning Conference in New York. Category-wise list of awardees

- Daniel Burnham Award for a Comprehensive Plan: Plano Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan – Plano, Texas
- National Planning Excellence Award for a Planning Landmark: Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve –Montgomery County, Maryland
- National Planning Excellence Award for Planning Pioneers: Lawrence P. Witzling, PhD, AIA, ASLA—Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Pierre L'Enfant International Planning Excellence Award: Bhubaneswar Smart City Plan – Odisha, India
- Advancing Diversity & Social Change in Honor of Paul Davidoff: Near Northside Quality of Life Agreement (QLA) 2015 – Houston, Texas

In a tweet message, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has expressed his happiness on becoming the first Indian city to receive Pierre L'Enfant Planning Awards-2017. In his tweet, he wrote, "Congratulate #SmartCityBhubaneswar on becoming 1st Indian city to win @APA\_Planning Pierre L'Enfant International Planning Excellence Award".

Notably, the American Planning Association honours comprehensive planning efforts and inspiring individuals to recognise outstanding community plans, planning programs and initiatives, public education efforts, and individuals for their leadership on planning issues.

### ***Srishti Kaur crowned Miss Teen Universe 2017***

India's Srishti Kaur was crowned Miss Teen Universe 2017. The event was held at the Ruben Dario National Theatre in Managua, Nicaragua.

Kaur, who studies in London College of Fashion, succeeds Nieves Gonzalez from Puerto Rico.

Kaur emerged victorious among 25 other contestants from around the world in the annual beauty pageant.

Canada's Samantha Pierre and Ary Trava from Mexico were the runners-up in the

event.

Kaur, a resident of Noida, won the prize for best national costume. Xirelle Agustin from the Philippines won in the Teen Popularity category, while Costa Rican Nicole Obando won the award for Teen Charm.

#### **About Miss Teen Universe**

- Miss Teen Universe is a beauty pageant for teenage from everywhere in the world.
- The Miss Teen Universe beauty pageant for teens aged 15 to 19 is held by the Miss Universe Organisation.
- It takes place once in a year.
- It is based in the contestant's physical beauty, incorporating qualities such as personality, talent, and intelligence from the young contestants.

#### ***Aamir Khan received Dinanath Mangeshkar Award 2017***

Superstar Aamir Khan was honoured with the 75th Master Dinanath Mangeshkar Award for his film Dangal, which was one of the biggest hits of 2016. The award was bestowed upon him by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat.

By receiving the award, Aamir Khan broke his own record of not being part of any awards functions. He last attended an award show 16 years ago when Lagaan film was nominated in the Best Film category at the Academy Awards.

#### **Other awardees**

- Legendary actress Vyjayanthimala Bali was also honoured with Master Dinanath Vishesh Puraskar for her achievements in Hindi cinema.
- Mohan Wagh Award for best drama was presented to Sunil Barve for Amar Photo Studio Subak Sanstha.
- Uday Nirgudkar received an award for his editorial work while Kaushiki Chakraborty was awarded for her endeavour in the field of music.
- Kapil Dev was given the award for his outstanding contribution to the Indian cricket.
- Kishore Deshpande was presented with Anadmayee Puraskar for his work in social service.
- Vishwanath Karad, Founder of Vishwashanti Kendra, was presented with Samarjit Jeevan Puraskar.
- Vijaya Rajadhyaksha was conferred with Vagvilasini Puraskar for her work in literature.

#### ***Legendary filmmaker Kasinathuni Viswanath won Dadasaheb Phalke Award 2016***

Renowned filmmaker and actor Kasinathuni Viswanath won the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for the year 2016. The award will be presented to him by President Pranab Mukherjee on 3 May 2017 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

With this, Viswanath became the 48th recipient of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, the highest recognition in Indian cinema. As a presenter of classical and traditional art, music and dance, K Viswanath has been a guiding force in the Indian film industry.

#### **About Dadasaheb Phalke Award**

- Dadasaheb Phalke Award was introduced in 1969 by the Union Government to recognise the contribution of film personalities towards the development of Indian Cinema.
- The award prize consists of a Swarn Kamal (Golden Lotus), a cash prize of Rs 10 lakh and a shawl.
- The first recipient of the award was Devika Rani who was awarded in the year 1969.

#### ***Italian mayor Giuseppina Nicolini won UNESCO Peace Prize***

The UNESCO awarded the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize to Giuseppina Nicolini, the mayor of the Italian island of Lampedusa and to the nongovernmental organization SOS Méditerranée (France). Nicolini has been bestowed for the award for her commitment to saving the lives of migrants and refugees.

Joaquim Chissano, the acting President of the Jury of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize declared, "After examining conditions around the world, the Jury of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize determined that refugees and migrants constitute one of the crucial issues of our day, notably in the Mediterranean where nearly 13,000 men, women and children have perished in shipwrecks since 2013."

Since becoming mayor in 2012, Nicolini has been recognized for her boundless humanity and unwavering commitment to refugee crisis management and integration in response to the arrival of thousands of refugees on the shores of Lampedusa and elsewhere in Italy.

SOS Méditerranée is a European organization working for the rescue of people in distress in the Mediterranean.

### **About Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize**

- The Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize was established in 1989 by a resolution supported by 120 countries. The resolution was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 25th session.
- The Prize is intended to honour living individuals and active public or private bodies or institutions that have made a significant contribution to promoting, seeking, safeguarding or maintaining peace, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitution of UNESCO.
- Past laureates of the Prize included French President François Hollande, Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter and others.

## *Sports*

### ***101-year-old Mann Kaur become world's oldest person to complete Auckland Sky Walk***

The 101-year-old athlete, Mann Kaur, became the oldest person to sky walk around Auckland's famous landmark Sky Tower.

Having set a new world record on the field, Kaur stepped out 192 metres above Auckland city to achieve the feat.

The athlete from India held her 79-year-old son Gurdev Singh's hand as she inched along the narrow platform towering high above the city centre.

On 26 April 2017, Kaur broke the Guinness World Record for javelin with a throw of 5 m 12 in her final competition at the Trusts Stadium in Waitakere, west Auckland.

Earlier on 24 April 2017, the athlete clinched the 100 metres sprint at the World Masters Games held in Auckland, New Zealand.

### **About World Masters Games**

- The World Masters Games is an international multi-sport event.
- It is held every four years.
- The event is governed by the International Masters Games Association.
- The World Masters Games is open to sports people of all abilities and most ages.
- Anyone can participate in the games so long as they are over the age of 35 though some sports

will allow athletes who are younger than that.

- Participants compete for themselves as there are no country delegations.
- In 1985, Toronto had staged the first World Masters Games.

### ***Nita Ambani made Member of IOC's Olympic Channel Commission***

Nita Ambani in April 2017 was made a member of two important commissions of the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) governing body.

Ambani was made as a member of the prestigious **Olympic Channel** and **Olympic Education Commission**. She replaced International Paralympic Committee President Philip Craven to be one of the 16 members of the Olympic Channel Commission headed by United States Olympic Committee Chairman Lawrence Francis Probst.

Ambani already holds the distinction of being India's first woman IOC member. She was elected as an individual member of International Olympic Committee in the year 2016. She will serve the position till she turns 70.

On the other hand, the International Olympic Committee also announced the composition of 26 commissions for the year 2017. The composition of the IOC commissions for 2017 has seen a 70 per cent increase in female participation since September 2013.

### **What is Olympic Channel?**

- The Olympic Channel is a digital channel.
- It is estimated to cost about USD 600 million over the first seven years.
- It was launched in 2016 during Rio Games.
- It aims to promote Olympic sports and values all round the year.
- The channel is based in Madrid, Spain.

### ***Esports to be a medal event at 2022 Asian Games***

The Olympic Council of Asia in April 2017 announced a partnership with Alisports to introduce esports as a demonstration sport at 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia, with full-fledged inclusion in the official sporting programme at the Hangzhou Games in 2022.

Alisports is the sports arm of Chinese online retail giant Alibaba.

The decision signifies that esports are one step closer to being featured in the Olympic Games.

The Asian Games in 2022 will be the first time that esports competitors can receive medals

at an officially recognized Olympic event.

Esports will also be as a demonstration sport at the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in September 2017. The Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games will feature Fifa 2017, MOBA games and real-time action games like StarCraft or Civilization.

However, the Olympic Council of Asia has not yet announced the specific video games that will be a part of the next two Asian Games.

### **About Asian Games**

- The Asian Games is a Pancontinental multi-sport event.
- It is held every four years among athletes from all over Asia.
- The first Asian Games were held in New Delhi, India in 1951.
- Since the 1982 Games, they have been organized by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA).
- The Games are recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).
- It is described as the second largest multi-sport event after the Olympic Games.
- The most recent games was held in Incheon, South Korea from 19 September to 4 October 2014.
- The next games will be held in Jakarta and Palembang, Indonesia from 18 August to September 2018.
- The 2022 Asian Games will be held in Hangzhou, China from 10 September to 25 September 2022.

## *Miscellaneous*

### ***International Jazz Day 2017 observed across the world***

#### **30 April: International Jazz Day**

The International Jazz Day 2017 was observed across the world with an aim to raise awareness in the international community of the virtues of jazz as an educational tool, and a force for peace, unity, dialogue and enhanced cooperation among people.

This year, musically vibrant and culturally rich city of **Havana, Cuba** was selected to serve as the **2017 Global Host City** of the Day.

The Day was attended by UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Intercultural Dialogue Herbie Hancock in Cuba.

#### **Why United Nations celebrates International**

### **Jazz Day?**

- Jazz breaks down barriers and creates opportunities for mutual understanding and tolerance;
- Jazz is a vector of freedom of expression;
- Jazz is a symbol of unity and peace;
- Jazz reduces tensions between individuals, groups, and communities;
- Jazz fosters gender equality;
- Jazz reinforces the role youth play for social change;
- Jazz encourages artistic innovation, improvisation, new forms of expression, and inclusion of traditional music forms into new ones;
- Jazz stimulates intercultural dialogue and empowers young people from marginalized societies

### **When was International Jazz Day proclaimed?**

In November 2011, UNESCO officially designated 30 April as International Jazz Day in order to highlight jazz and its diplomatic role of uniting people in all corners of the globe.

The first annual International Jazz Day was celebrated in Paris by UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Herbie Hancock.

### ***World Immunization Week 2017 observed with theme #VaccinesWork***

World Immunization Week 2017 is being observed across the globe between 24 April and 30 April 2017.

The theme for the 2017 World Immunization Week is '**VaccinesWork.**' The theme aims to raise awareness about the critical importance of full immunization throughout life, and its role in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **As part of the 2017 campaign, WHO aims to:**

- Highlight the importance of immunization as a top global health investment priority.
- Promote understanding of the action steps required to achieve the Global Vaccine Action Plan.
- Showcase immunization's role in sustainable development and global health security.

The year 2017 marks the halfway point in the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP). The GVAP was endorsed by 194 Member States of the World Health Assembly in May 2012. The GVAP aims to prevent millions of deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases by 2020 through universal access to immunization.

### **Vaccines prevent deaths**

- Between 2010 and 2015, vaccines prevented at least 10 million deaths, and many millions more lives were protected from the suffering and disability associated with diseases such as pneumonia, diarrhoea, whooping cough, measles, and polio.
- The global push to end polio has reached its final stages. Only 3 countries are still working to eradicate polio.
- Successful immunization programmes enable national priorities, like education and economic development, to take hold.

### **UNESCO to screen this Indian short film during World Press Freedom Day celebrations**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) will screen short film 'Azaad' as a part of the World Press Freedom Day celebrations.

The event, which will celebrate the principle of freedom of press, will take place in Jakarta from 1 May -4 May 2017. The event will be co-organised by the UNESCO, the Government of Indonesia, and the Press Council of Indonesia.

The theme for the 2017 World Press Freedom Day is "*Critical Minds for Critical Times: Media's role in advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies*".

#### **What 'Azaad' is about?**

- The movie Azaad is written and directed by Rahul V. Chittella, who was mentored by filmmaker Mira Nair for the film.
- The movie revolves about the **dysfunctional relationship between a father and his son**.
- It goes on talk about freedom of expression in current times and what better way to share this with journalists across the globe.

#### **About World Press Freedom Day**

- Every year, 3 May is celebrated as World Press Freedom Day.
- It celebrates the fundamental principles of press freedom as well as evaluates the freedom of press around the globe.
- The international day was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1993 following a recommendation adopted at the 26th Session of UNESCO's General Conference in 1991.

### **Veteran actor Vinod Khanna passed away**

Veteran actor Vinod Khanna passed away in Mumbai, Maharashtra. He was 70.

Khanna was reportedly battling with cancer for years.

#### **About Vinod Khanna**

- Born on 6 October 1946 in Peshawar, Vinod Khanna acted in lead roles in many superhit Bollywood movies.
- He is best remembered for his performance in films like *Mere Apne*, *Mera Gaon Mera Desh*, *Gaddaar*, *Jail Yatra*, *Kuchhe Dhaage*, *Amar Akbar Anthony*, *Rajput*, *Qurbani*, *Dayavan*, and others.
- He was popularly hailed as one of the most handsome lead actors ever in Bollywood, along with Dharmendra, Rajesh Khanna and Shammi Kapoor.
- He made his debut in Bollywood in the year 1968. He first acted in small second lead roles or negative roles.
- At the peak of his film career in 1982, he temporarily quit the film industry to follow his spiritual guru Osho Rajneesh.
- After a 5 year hiatus, he returned to the industry giving two back to back hit films *Insaaf* and *Satyamev Jayate*.
- He received the Filmfare award in the Best Supporting Actor category for *Haath Ki Safaai*. In 1999, he received the Filmfare Lifetime Achievement Award.
- In 1997, he joined the Bharatiya Janata Party.
- He was elected from Gurdaspur constituency in Punjab in the 1998 Lok Sabha poll. In 1999, he was re-elected to the Lok Sabha from the same constituency.
- In July 2002, he became the Union Minister for Culture and Tourism. Six months later, he was moved to the Union Ministry of External Affairs as Minister of State.
- In 2009, he lost out in the Lok Sabha poll. However, he was again elected for 16th Loksabaha from Gurdaspur constituency in 2014 general election.

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