

# NEWS ANALYSIS

## For Civil Services Exams

Issue I

Jan.16-31, 2017

### CONTENTS

#### Lead Article

- *Interlinking of Rivers Programme: Necessity, Benefits and Challenges*

#### National News

- *31st Surajkund International Crafts Mela began*
- *Meghalaya's first ever Apparel and Garment Centre inaugurated at Ampati*
- *North East Investors Summit 2017 concluded in Shillong*
- *Karnataka set to celebrate Kambala festival*
- *Andhra Pradesh announced Rs 100 crore fund of funds to develop Fin Tech startups*
- *AAI launched new system to manage air traffic*
- *India celebrated 68th Republic Day*

#### International News

- *Moussa Faki Mahamat appointed Chairman of African Union Commission*
- *India ranked 79 in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index*
- *India, UAE signed 14 agreements to boost bilateral relations*
- *US President Donald Trump signed executive order to pull US out of TPP*
- *Nikki Haley confirmed as US envoy to the United Nations*

#### Economy

- *Summary of Economic Survey 2017*
- *Goods and Services Tax rollout deferred to 1 July 2017*
- *India Post got Payments Bank licence from RBI RBI to lift ATM withdrawal limit*
- *NEC and Union Ministry of Textiles sign MoU to harness the hidden potential of Cane & Bamboo*
- *Indian economy projected to grow by 7.7% in FY 2017: UNWESP report*
- *Union Government launched Rubber Soil Information System for rubber growers*

#### Schemes & Committees

- *Union Government launched Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign*
- *Union Government reconstituted committee to identify athletes under TOP Scheme*

- *Union Cabinet approves Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana 2017*
- *Union Government launches Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign*

#### Science & Technology

- *Scientists discovered oldest human ancestor*
- *ISRO successfully tested Cryogenic Engine for Upper Stage of GSLV Mk III*
- *Scientists spotted sunspot with centre twice the size of Earth*

#### Awards

- *Padma Awards 2017 announced*
- *25 children including 13 girls selected for National Bravery Awards*
- *Jacob Polley won 2016 T S Eliot Prize for Poetry*

#### Sports

- *Supreme Court appointed Committee of Administrators headed by Vinod Rai to run BCCI*
- *PV Sindhu, Sameer Verma won Syed Modi International Badminton Championships titles*
- *Saina Nehwal won 2017 Malaysia Masters Grand Prix Gold*
- *St Petersburg unveiled logo for UEFA Euro Cup 2020*
- *Dushyant Chautala appointed President of Table Tennis Federation of India*

#### Miscellaneous

- *Dharamsala declared as second capital of Himachal Pradesh*
- *P Vishwanath Shetty sworn in as Karnataka Lokayukta*
- *Anti-Leprosy Day observed on 30 January 2017*
- *30 January: Anti-Leprosy Day*
- *Miss France Iris Mittenaere wins Miss Universe 2016*
- *Dr Vijay Bhatkar appointed as Chancellor of Nalanda University*
- *7th National Voters' Day observed with theme Empowering Young and Future Voters*



**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](http://www.panaceabharti.com)**

# Lead Article

## *Interlinking of Rivers Programme: Necessity, Benefits and Challenges*

India is one of the few countries in the world gifted with considerable water resources. Being a monsoon country, the land frequently witnesses' erratic rainfall causing considerable damage to social, economic, ecological and political fabric of the nation. Recent tensions between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu over sharing of Cauvery River waters, Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal issue between Punjab and Haryana better illustrate this trend.

Similarly, in the 2015-16 season alone, while 10 major states like Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh were hardly hit by drought, cities like Srinagar, Chennai and Hyderabad were under 'submergence' due to flash floods.

Against this backdrop, the Interlinking of Rivers Programme has been given a big push by the NDA Government in order to **address twin problems of floods and droughts.**

### **What is Interlinking of Rivers (ILR) Programme?**

- The ILR Programme seeks to transfer water from surplus areas to deficit areas in the country.
- Its vision is to ensure greater equity in the distribution of water by enhancing the availability of water in drought prone and rainfed areas.
- The ILR seeks to deliver 173 billion cubic meters of water through a 12,500 km of canal network to irrigate 34 million hectares.
- It will also supply drinking water to 101 districts and five metro cities.
- The programme is divided into **two components – HRC and PRC.** The National Perspective Plan (NPP) prepared by Ministry of Water Resources identified 14 links under **Himalayan Rivers Component (HRC)** and 16 links under **Peninsular Rivers Component (PRC)** for inter basin transfer of water.
- In 2005, National Water Development Agency (NWDA) has included the intra-state rivers linking as the third component in the NPP.
- So far, NWDA has received 46 proposals of intra-state links from 9 States viz. Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Orissa, Bihar, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Chhattisgarh.

### **Some of the important projects under the ILR Programme are –**

- i. Ken – Betwa Link Project**

- ii. Damanganga – Pinjal Link Project**
- iii. Par – Tapi – Narmada Link Project**
- iv. Mahanadi – Godavari Link Project**
- v. Manas-Sankosh-Teesta-Ganga Link Project**

### **Why is it necessary?**

- **Meteorological reasons:** The average rainfall in India is about 4,000 billion cubic meters. However, most of it comes over a 4-month period – June through September.
  - The spatial distribution of rainfall is also uneven which ranges from 12 cm in Rajasthan to more than 250 cm in Meghalaya.
  - Besides, the Himalayan and Peninsular drainage systems vary considerably in terms of their flow volumes across season.
  - While Himalayan Rivers are perennial in nature, flows in Peninsular Rivers are much dependent on rainfall.
  - Coupled with the above factors, disturbances in the monsoon cycle due to the 'external' factors such as El Nino, La Nino and Climate Change made rainfall distribution inconsistent over the years leading to simultaneous occurrence of floods and droughts.
  - This geographical and time variance in availability of natural water versus the year round demand for irrigation, drinking, and industrial water creates a demand-supply gap.
  - If interlinking of rivers is implemented by connecting through canals, then such uneven water flow in different river basins will get balanced.
  - Moreover, around 65% of the flow in the rivers is untapped and goes to sea every year. Hence, it is necessary to interlink the rivers of the north with that of south.
  - **Food security:** We need to produce around 450 million tonnes of food grains per annum to cater to the nutrition requirements of over 1.5 billion in 2050.
  - To meet this challenge, irrigation potential should be expanded to 160 million hectares. It will not be possible without interlinking of rivers.
- ### **What are the legal provisions?**
- The Constitution of India envisages a greater role for States in matters relating to rivers.
  - Entry 17 of List II in the Schedule VII authorizes the States to make law for water, subject to the provisions of entry 56 of List I.
  - List I, Entry 56 authorizes the Union Government to make law for regulation and development of inter-State rivers and river valleys to the extent to which such regulation and development under the control of the Union is

declared by Parliament in the public interest.

- Article 262 of the Constitution, empowers the Parliament to make law on disputes relating to waters of inter State Rivers or river valleys.
- The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (CLNNUIW) in 1997.
- The convention is related to the use and conservation of all waters that cross international boundaries.
- However, the convention is not yet ratified. India, the USA, China, Canada and Australia are major opponents of the CLNNUIW.

#### **What were the associated developments in recent past?**

During the colonial period, British engineer Sir Arthur Cotton had sought to link the Ganga and the Cauvery to improve connectivity for navigation purposes. However, the idea was shelved due to the increased railway connectivity in the proposed areas.

In independent India, though demands for the execution of the project were raised intermittently, the establishment of NWDA is considered as a first concrete step towards realization of ILR.

#### **Some of the related developments in post-independence period are -**

- **1982:** The National Water Development Agency (NWDA) was formed as an autonomous body to carry out the water balance and feasibility studies of the ILR.
- **December 2002:** A Task Force on Interlinking of Rivers was constituted under the Chairmanship of Suresh Prabhu. The Task Force submitted its report in April 2004.
- Acting on its recommendations, a tri-partite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Union Government, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh for the execution of Ken-Betwa link project.
- **2012:** The Supreme Court directed the Union Government to constitute an experts committee to pursue the matter with state governments. However, it left the implementation of project on centre's discretion citing it to be the executive's purview.
- **April 2015:** The Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation has constituted the Task Force for Interlinking of Rivers to look into issues relating to Inter linking of Rivers (ILR).
- **March 2016:** The Government of Andhra Pradesh dedicated the Pattiseema Lift Irrigation

Project to people. The project seeks to link the two major rivers of the state – Godavari and Krishna – to benefit farmers of Krishna and Guntur districts.

• **December 2016:** The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) gave environmental clearance to the **Ken-Betwa Inter-Linking of Rivers (ILR) project. This project is the first ever inter-state river linking project in India.**

#### **What are the advantages of ILR?**

- As per an estimate, around 12% (40 million hectare) of land in India is prone to floods and around 68% of India's total area is prone to drought.
- The programme primarily solves this problem of simultaneous occurrence of floods and droughts in various parts of the country.
- The interlinking of rivers programme is expected to create 35 million hectares irrigation facility in water-scarce western and peninsular regions.
- The additional irrigation facilities will ensure achieving the government's goal of doubling farm income by 2022 through enhanced production and productivity.
- The ILR will give boost to allied sectors of the agriculture like fisheries leading to gains in employment, export earnings and social and economic infrastructure development.
- The construction of small, medium and large-scale dams is expected to generate 34000 MW of cumulative hydro power.
- The successful completion of the programme will ease pressure on ground water resources and lead to sustainable development of water-deficit areas.
- Using the resultant network of rivers, the untapped inland water navigation facilities will be utilised to provide affordable and clean freight and passenger transport infrastructure.
- The ILR will address development needs of backward regions and inter-state and intra-state social and economic disparities will be ameliorated to a great extent.
- For example, **interlinking of Godavari and Krishna rivers in Andhra Pradesh** will lead to better irrigation facilities in the Rayalseema, which is one of the most backward regions in the country.
- The ILR will prevent flow of fresh river water into sea and increase India's utilizable surface water by 25%.

#### **What are the challenges?**

Though the interlinking of river programme is the

most ambitious anti-poverty measure ever conceptualised by the Indian Government, it has attracted a lot of criticism due to a wide range of social, political, economic and environmental costs associated with it. Some of them are -

- As per an estimate, the project needs an investment to the tune of Rs 11 lakh crore (9% of Gross National Income) over a period of ten years. This huge investment can't be met by the government without cutting on social sector spending and increase in taxes.
- Further, the Union Government and State Governments will be in a tussle over expenditure share threatening federal polity.
- The recent disagreement between the NITI Aayog and the Union Ministry of Water Resources over the share of Madhya Pradesh in the execution of Rs 10000 crore Ken-Betwa river linkage project better illustrate this situation.
- The feasibility of the project has not been studied in detail, nor have its economic, social and ecological implications. Majorly, there is no social impact assessment done on the displaced people.
- There is a disagreement within the expert community over deciding the "surplus" and "deficit" criteria.
- Another major issue vis-a-vis river linking is that water is a state subject. States that have surplus water are not ready to forego their water resources due to political and administrative reasons.
- The Himalayan Rivers are cross-border in nature. The Ganga, Brahmaputra and Indus river systems of Himalayas belong to China, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Bhutan and Bangladesh.
- Hence, any changes made by India to these natural river courses will be met with stiff resistance from the neighbouring countries.

#### **What is the way forward?**

Water is the essence of life. It is something that cannot be created by man. Therefore, the management of available water resources is essential to meet the demands of growing population. Towards this endeavour, the government has initiated the ILR Programme.

**For its timely implementation, the following aspects should be taken care of -**

- As pointed out by the Draft National Water Framework Bill, 2016, equity component of access to water should be given prime importance while choosing the beneficiaries of the programme.
- There is a considerable disagreement between

the states on the ILR. While Tamil Nadu is in its favour, Assam, Kerala and Sikkim may oppose it due to the loss of water resources.

- Hence, it is the responsibility of the Union Government to build consensus on the programme in order to avoid strains in federal relations. For this, the Parliament is the most appropriate platform.
- Principles of surplus should be laid down instead of legal definition of surplus which has different perspective among stakeholders and environmentalists.
- Necessary legal framework should be prepared in the form of MoUs and agreements to ensure cooperation of neighbouring countries that have sovereign rights over the Himalayan river waters.

## *National News*

### *31st Surajkund International Crafts Mela began*

The 31st Surajkund International Crafts Mela is began in Faridabad, Haryana. The event inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Haryana, Manohar Lal. This year Jharkhand has been chosen as the theme state and the partner nation will be Egypt.

#### **Key Highlights**

- Help desks have been set up by the organisers at all the six entry gates, in order to make it easy for the public to obtain all relevant information.
  - Along with this, the organisers have also deployed a team of volunteers called Mela Mitra to assist and guide visitors in case of any emergency.
  - This year's edition is also being termed as 'Cashless Mela', as all stakeholders have been given the option of opting for cashless transactions.
  - The public can buy the entry tickets to the mela online.
  - The 15-days long event will witness participation from over 400 artists who will exhibit the art, culture, handicrafts, heritage and cuisine of their respective states.
  - Besides this, the mela will also see participation from over 21 countries.
  - Among the installations at the mela is an 18-foot tall statue of Birsa Munda, greatest freedom fighter of Jharkhand.
- Organisers are expecting over 15 lakh visitors this year and elaborate arrangements have been made

to accommodate such a huge number.

### ***Meghalaya's first ever Apparel and Garment Centre inaugurated at Ampati***

Smriti Zubin Irani, Union Textiles Minister, along with Mukul Sangma, Chief Minister of Meghalaya, inaugurated the first ever Apparel and Garment Making Centre in the north-eastern state. The Centre was inaugurated near Ampati in South West Garo Hills.

The Chief Minister of Meghalaya has laid the foundation stone for the Centre in 2015. Its construction was completed by NBCC in a record time of less than two years.

#### **Highlights of the Apparel and Garment Centre**

- The Union Ministry of Textiles will implement projects worth Rs. 70 crore in sericulture and weaving sectors for Meghalaya.
- Around Rs. 32 crore has been sanctioned for the state of Meghalaya for promotion of handlooms.
- The Apparel and Garment Making Centre covers an area of 45000 square feet.
- It has been set up at Hatisil near Ampati.
- The Centre has been set up at a cost of approximately Rs. 14.26 crore.
- It has been set under the North East Region Textiles Promotion Scheme (NERTPS) of the Ministry of Textiles.
- The Centre consists of three units. Two of these units accommodate 105 sewing machines each. The third one houses seventy machines.

### ***North East Investors Summit 2017 concluded in Shillong***

The North East Investors Summit 2017 was concluded in Shillong, Meghalaya. It was inaugurated by the Union Textiles Minister Zubin Irani.

#### **Highlights of North East Investors Summit 2017**

- It was the first ever investors summit exclusively for the North Eastern Region (NER).
- It was organized jointly by the Union Ministry of Textiles and the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) in association with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CII).
- The primary objective of the summit was to showcase the NER as a global destination for investment.
- The summit also explored the possibility of bringing in the convergence of efforts of various

central Ministries and North Eastern States to attract investment in the NER.

- The Summit was attended by all the North Eastern States, Export Promotion Councils, industries from North Eastern Region and leading investors across the country.
- The entire textile value chain from fibre to garment, including raw materials, was represented in the summit.
- The summit witnessed the participation of over 400 delegates from across the country.
- During the summit, 15 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed among local entrepreneurs, institutes and State Governments.

#### **Background**

- Due to its inherent strength for skilled work force and locally available raw materials, the North Eastern Region has huge potential for investments, particularly in the field of textiles and handicrafts.
- In order to leverage this potential, the Union Ministry of Textiles is implementing projects worth Rs. 1,050 crore for handlooms, handicrafts, sericulture, apparel, garmenting and technical textiles sectors.
- Similar initiatives were launched by other line Ministries to boost investments in the NER.
- However, this information is mostly in silos and does not provide a comprehensive picture to the investors about the opportunities in the region.
- The North East Investors Summit 2017 was held to address this concern.

### ***Karnataka set to celebrate Kambala festival***

Kambala festival was in news in January 2017 as the Indian state of Karnataka is all set to celebrate the festival. Kambala is an annual buffalo race held traditionally under the patronage of local landlords and households in the state.

The buffalo race in Karnataka takes place annually between November and March. The places where the festival takes place are Baradi Beedu, Kolatta, Majalu, Bolantur, Kamalakettu, Puttur and Uppinagadi.

The two-day celebration starts with a display of the participating buffaloes with their respective farmers. During the festival, when the fields are wet, the buffaloes are made to race on the tracks, guided by the farmer. Each team consists of two buffaloes and a farmer who controls the buffaloes. Two teams are made to race down two mushy paddy fields to conclude on the fastest team. The winner of the race is

awarded with a coconut and other gifts.

### **Origin of the Kambala festival**

- The origin of the Kambala can be traced back to more than a thousand years. During the early days of the festival, it was known as Karaga celebrations.
- It is believed that the festival was started by the Hoysala Kings. According to beliefs, the Kings started the festival to see if the buffaloes could be trained and used during wartime. The Kings were amazed to see the speed of the buffaloes and started racing them against one another. This, gradually, led into a sport for the royals.
- As per another belief, the origin of the festival lies in the farming community of Karnataka. The belief states that the celebrations are dedicated to Lord Kadri Manjunatha, an incarnation of Lord Shiva. It was celebrated to please the Gods for a good harvest.

### **Ban on the festival**

- The festival has been criticised by animal lovers and various lawsuits were filed by animal welfare organizations for banning the sport.
- In 2014, the Supreme Court of India ordered a ban on Kambala and Jallikattu.
- There has been a request to remove the ban on Kambala, following a government order to remove the ban on Jallikattu in January 2017.

### ***Andhra Pradesh announced Rs 100 crore fund of funds to develop Fin Tech startups***

The Government of Andhra Pradesh announced a Rs 100 crore fund of funds to develop financial technology (Fin Tech) startup ecosystem in the State. The announcement was made by State's special Chief Secretary JA Chowdary.

### **About the Fin Tech Fund**

- The fund will be managed professionally by a venture capital firm.
- The fund seeks to strengthen the industry-academia-government partnership in order to develop skilled human resources in the Fin Tech sector.
- The focus of this fund of funds is to develop Vishakapatnam as a global FinTech hub.

### **Some of the recent initiatives of AP Government in Fin Tech sector are -**

- The Government of Andhra Pradesh identified as the Fin Tech sector as one of the promising industry to generate employment in the coming years.
- Accordingly, in December 2016, the State

Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS).

- The MoU seeks to explore projects of mutual interest on innovative technologies such as digital payments and blockchain (database) technology.
- The MoU also facilitates collaboration on the development of education programmes and curricula on Fin Tech.
- A decision was also taken to develop the Vizag Fintech Valley in Vishakapatnam.
- In the proposed Fin Tech Valley, all the necessary digital infrastructure will be developed to boost the Fin Tech sector in the city.
- In the short-term, the objective is to develop 100 start-ups and up to 15 global companies with their centres of excellence housed in the Vizag Fintech Valley.
- A high-level advisory board will be set up to advise the Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on the policies related to Fin Tech sector. The advisory board will consist of Fin Tech industry executives.
- The government is planning to hold a global Fin Tech competition with a high prize-money in October 2017.

### ***AAI launched new system to manage air traffic***

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) on the occasion of 68th Republic Day, launched the Central - Air Traffic Flow Management (C-ATFM), a system designed to cut flight delays. The launch was marked by AAI chairman Guruprasad Mohapatra, who opened the dedicated C-ATFM facility at Delhi's new Air Traffic Services Complex. This system will be implemented by the authority itself at all the major airports and it will go on to cover the entire Indian airspace.

### **Highlights of the Central - Air Traffic Flow Management (C-ATFM)**

- The C-ATFM system, mainly, aims to address the balancing of capacity against the demand to achieve optimum utilization of the major resources like airports, airspace and aircraft at every Indian airport.
- This service basically relies on a number of supporting systems, processes and operational data for efficient management of air traffic flow across the country.
- Once implemented fully, the system will lead to annual fuel savings of around Rs 1680 crore by reducing fuel burn while hovering or waiting to

land.

- This will also accrue benefits in terms of reduced carbon foot print, fuel savings and economic benefits to the air travellers as well.
  - It displays weather information along with the static information about airports, air spaces and air routes.
  - It processes the demand and capacity information and then provides decision making tools to the ATFM flow managers for collaborative decision making.
  - The decision making will be done in consultation with airlines, military and airports operators to facilitate the regulated flow of traffic in each airport in India.
- The flight delays at Indian airports have become prevalent and passengers get troubled regularly by long waits to take off and land. Mumbai, in particular, has become a black spot for flight delays due to air traffic congestion, followed by other busy airports like Delhi.

### ***India celebrated 68th Republic Day***

Republic Day was celebrated across the nation. This was the 68th Republic Day of India. The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the UAE Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan was the Chief Guest at the 68th Republic Day parade. First Republic Day was celebrated on 26 January 1950 to mark the enforcement of the Constitution of India that declares India as – “ Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic.”

#### **Main Highlights of 2017 Republic Day Parade**

- Republic Day Parade on Rajpath witnessed tableaux from 17 States and six Ministries of the Central Government.
- The tableaux showcased varied themes starting from country’s rich cultural heritage and development.
- The tableaux also showcased nation’s progress in key areas like IT, women, empowerment and environment protection.
- A contingent of National Security Guard (NSG) participated in the Republic Day parade for the first time.
- The NSG was formed in 1984 following the Operational Bule Star and assassination of Indira Gandhi.
- A contingent of the UAE Presidential Guard also participated in the parade. The parade was led by a UAE band consisting of 35 musicians. They presented a ceremonial salute to President Mukherjee and the visiting dignitary Sheikh

Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

#### **List of Tableaux from 17 States**

STATE	Tableau Theme
Odisha	Dola Jatra
Arunachal Pradesh	Yak Dance
Maharashtra	Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak
Manipur	Lai Haroba
Gujarat	The Art and Life Style of Kutch
Lakshadweep	An unexplored Tourist Destination
Karnataka	Folk Dances
NCT of Delhi	Model Government School of Delhi
Himachal Pradesh	Chamba Rumal
Haryana	Beti Bachao – Beti Padhao
West Bengal	Sharod Utsav
Punjab	Jago Aaiya
Tamil Nadu	Karakattam
Goa	Musical Heritage of Goa
Triupura	Hojagiri
Jammu and Kashmir	Winter Sports at Gulmarg
Assam	Kamakhya Temple

## ***International News***

### ***Moussa Faki Mahamat appointed Chairman of African Union Commission***

Chad's Moussa Faki Mahamat was elected as the Chairman of the African Union (AU) Commission.

Mahamat was elected through a voting held at the bloc's headquarters in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

Mahamat defeated favourites Amina Mohamed of Kenya and Senegal's Abdoulaye Bathily after seven rounds of voting.

The Chadian diplomat succeeds South Africa's Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the first woman to lead the AU.

#### **About Moussa Faki Mahamat**

- Moussa Faki Mahamat is served as the Prime Minister of Chad from 24 June 2003 to 4

February 2005.

- He is a member of the ruling Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS).
- He belongs to the Zaghawa ethnic group.
- From 2007 to 2008, he served as the President of the Economic, Social, and Cultural Council.
- Since April 2008, he has been serving as the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

#### **About African Union Commission**

- The African Union Commission acts as the executive/administrative branch or secretariat of the AU.
- It is headquartered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- The Commission is somewhat analogous to the European Commission.
- Thomas Kwasi Quartey is the Deputy Chairman of the Commission.

#### ***India ranked 79 in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index***

Transparency International released the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2016. The Index measured the perceived levels of public sector corruption in 176 countries and territories across the world.

While Denmark was adjudged as the most corruption-free country among the surveyed countries, Somalia in Sub Saharan African Region was placed at the bottom of the CPI.

The CPI 2016 declared India as the 79th cleanest country among the 176 countries surveyed.

Compared to the CPI 2015, which was released by the Transparency International (TI) on 27 January 2016, India bettered its position by 3 ranks. The CPI 2015 placed India at the 76th position.

#### **Some of the measures initiated by the Union Government to curb corruption in public life are –**

- The Government decided to roll out the Goods and Services Tax (GST) from 1 July 2017 onwards. It is considered as the biggest taxation reform in independent India.
- The GST is expected to break the unholy nexus between the corrupt bureaucrats and businessmen.
- In November 2016, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced demonetization all Rs 500 and Rs 1000 banknotes.
- A series of measures were announced by the Union Ministry of Finance and the RBI to encourage digital financial transactions and to track money laundering activities.

#### **About Corruption Perceptions Index**

- It is prepared by the Transparency International (TI), a global coalition against corruption. The TI is based in Berlin, Germany.
- The CPI 2016 is the 22st edition of the annual index. The CPI is based opinions of experts on public sector corruption.
- The CPI ranks countries on the basis of the corruption perception score, which is measured on the scale of 0 – 100.
- A score of 0 means highly corrupt country, while a score of 100 means very clean country.

#### ***India, UAE signed 14 agreements to boost bilateral relations***

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed 14 agreements to boost bilateral relations. The agreements were signed after successful talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the UAE Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

The crown prince is the chief guest of Republic Day celebrations on 26 January 2017.

Some of the agreements signed are –

- Agreement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the field of defence industry
- MoU on institutional cooperation on maritime transport
- MoU on mutual recognition of certificates of competency
- MoU on bilateral cooperation in the road transport and highways sector
- MoU on cooperation in prevention and combating of human trafficking
- MoU on agriculture and allied sectors
- MoU for cooperation in programme exchange
- Agreement on oil storage and management
- MoU on cooperation in energy efficiency services
- MoU on trade remedial measures to promote cooperation in areas of mutual interest

#### ***US President Donald Trump signed executive order to pull US out of TPP***

Donald Trump, President of the United States of America, signed an executive order to formally pull the country out of the negotiating process of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

The TPP was one of the major international trade initiatives of Barack Obama. The partnership was aimed at setting trade rules for the 21st century and binding US allies against growing Chinese economic clout.

The Obama administration considered the TPP a companion agreement to the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, a broadly similar agreement between the US and the European Union.

Though the agreement was negotiated under former President Obama; however, it was never ratified by the Congress.

Trump, during his presidential election campaign, had vowed to withdraw the US from the TPP which he argued was harmful to American workers and manufacturing.

### **What is Trans-Pacific Partnership?**

• The Trans-Pacific Partnership was a trade agreement between Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States of America and Vietnam.

• The agreement initially began with the P4 trade agreement between just four nations, i.e., Brunei, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore, that came into effect in 2006.

• Under the TPP, tariffs on US manufactured goods and almost all US farm products would have gone almost immediately.

• After seven years of negotiations, the finalized proposal of the Partnership was signed on 4 February 2016 in Auckland, New Zealand.

• However, the agreement cannot be ratified at present due to the withdrawal of the USA from the agreement.

• The agreement includes measures to lower both non-tariff and tariff barriers to trade, and establish an investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism.

### ***Nikki Haley confirmed as US envoy to the United Nations***

The United States Senate confirmed Nikki Haley as the next Ambassador to the United Nations (UN).

With this, **she will become the first Indian-American to serve on a Cabinet rank position in any presidential administration.**

The Senate approved Haley, the South Carolina Governor, on a 96-4 vote. Senate Foreign Relations Committee had earlier approved Haley's nomination as the next US Ambassador to the UN.

Haley is expected to be sworn in shortly. She will replace Samantha Power at the United Nations.

### **About Nikki Haley**

• Nikki Haley is an American politician.

• From January 2011 to January 2017, she served

as the 116th Governor of South Carolina.

• Prior to her tenure as governor, she served a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives.

• She was the first female Governor of South Carolina and the second Indian American, after Bobby Jindal, to serve as a governor in the United States.

• On 12 January 2016, she delivered the official Republican response to President Barack Obama's final State of the Union address.

• On 20 January 2017, President Donald Trump sent her nomination for Ambassador to the United Nations to the Senate.

## ***Economy***

### ***Summary of Economic Survey 2017***

The Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley presented the Economic Survey 2017 in the Parliament. The survey observed that the Indian Economy has sustained a macro-economic environment of relatively low inflation, fiscal discipline and moderate current account deficit coupled with broadly stable rupee-dollar exchange rate.

### **Highlights of Economic Survey 2016-17**

• **Macro economy:** As per the advance estimates released by the Central Statistics Office, the growth rate of GDP at constant market prices for the year 2016-17 is placed at 7.1 per cent, as against 7.6 per cent in 2015-16.

• This estimate is based mainly on information for the first seven to eight months of the financial year.

• For 2017-18, it is expected that the growth would return to normal as the new currency notes in required quantities come back into circulation and as follow-up actions to demonetisation are taken.

• On balance, there is a likelihood that Indian economy may recover back to 6.75 per cent to 7.5 per cent in 2017-18.

• **Fiscal:** Indirect taxes grew by 26.9 per cent during April-November 2016.

• The strong growth in revenue expenditure during April-November 2016 was boosted mainly by a 23.2 per cent increase in salaries due to the implementation of the Seventh Pay Commission and a 39.5 per cent increase in the grants for creation of capital assets.

• **Prices:** The headline inflation as measured by Consumer Price Index (CPI) remained under

control for the third successive financial year.

- The average CPI inflation declined to 4.9 per cent in 2015-16 from 5.9 per cent in 2014-15 and stood at 4.8 per cent during April-December 2015.

- Inflation based on Wholesale Price Index (WPI) declined to (-) 2.5 per cent in 2015-16 from 2.0 per cent in 2014-15 and averaged 2.9 per cent during April-December 2016.

- Inflation is repeatedly being driven by a narrow group of food items. Among them, pulses continued to be the major contributor of food inflation.

- **Trade:** Trade deficit declined to USD 76.5 billion in 2016-17 (April-December) as compared to USD 100.1 billion in the corresponding period of the previous year.

- The current account deficit (CAD) narrowed in the first half (H1) of 2016-17 to 0.3 per cent of GDP from 1.5 per cent in H1 of 2015-16 and 1.1 per cent in 2015-16 full year.

- Robust inflows of foreign direct investment and net positive inflow of foreign portfolio investment were sufficient to finance CAD.

- In H1 of 2016-17, India's foreign exchange reserves increased by USD 15.5 billion on Balance of Payments (BoP) basis.

- During 2016-17 so far, the rupee has performed better than most of the other emerging market economies.

- **External Debt:** At end-September 2016, India's external debt stock stood at USD 484.3 billion, recording a decline of USD 0.8 billion over the level at end-March 2016.

- India's key debt indicators compare well with other indebted developing countries and India continues to be among the less vulnerable countries.

- **Agriculture:** Agriculture sector is estimated to grow at 4.1 per cent in 2016-17 as opposed to 1.2 per cent in 2015-16.

- **Industry:** Growth rate of the industrial sector is estimated to moderate to 5.2 per cent in 2016-17 from 7.4 per cent in 2015-16.

- During April-November 2016-17, a modest growth of 0.4 per cent has been observed in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

- The eight core infrastructure supportive industries, viz. coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilizers, steel, cement and electricity registered a cumulative growth of 4.9 per cent during April-November 2016-17 as compared to 2.5 per cent during April-November 2015-16.

- **Services:** Service sector is estimated to grow at 8.9 per cent in 2016-17, almost the same as in 2015-16.

- The payouts of the Seventh Pay Commission are estimated to push up the growth in services.

- **Social Infrastructure, Employment and Human Development:** The Parliament has passed the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

- The Act aims at securing and enhancing the rights and entitlements of Persons with disabilities.

- The Act proposed to increase the reservation in vacancies in government establishments from 3 per cent to 4 per cent for those persons with benchmark disability and high support needs.

### ***Goods and Services Tax rollout deferred to 1 July 2017***

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council decided to rollout the nationwide GST on 1 July 2017. The decision was taken at the 9th meeting of the council held in New Delhi.

The meeting was attended by the Chairperson of the GST Council and the Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and finance ministers of States.

### **Outcomes of the GST Council meeting**

- The GST Council agreed to defer the implementation of the GST by three months to 1 July 2017. The scheduled date for the rollout of the tax was 1 April 2017.

- The bills related to the GST rollout will be discussed by the GST Council at its next meeting on 18 February 2017.

- After the approval of the GST Council, the bills will be introduced in the Parliament and State legislatures.

- The Union Government agreed to the States' demand of horizontal split with regard to taxpayers.

- States will have powers to assess and administer 90% of taxpayers with less than Rs 1.5 crore annual turnover. The rest of the taxpayers will be under the Union Government's purview.

- States and the Union Government will control and administer the taxpayers with more than Rs 1.5 crore annual turnover in 50:50 ratio.

- States will have the power to levy tax on economic activity within the 12 nautical miles of territorial waters. This decision is very significant because the territorial waters are under the control of the Union Government.

### **About GST Council**

- President Pranab Mukherjee gave his assent to

the Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016 in September 2016.

- The Act, amended various provisions of the constitution paving way for the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) across the country.
- As per Article 279A (1) of the amended Constitution, the GST Council has to be constituted by the President within 60 days of the commencement of Article 279A.
- Consequently, a notification was issued on 10 September 2016 regarding the formation of the GST Council.
- The Council is the apex body that takes decisions on all important decisions related to the GST, including items and rates.
- The Union Finance Minister is the Chairperson of the council.
- The Union Minister of State, in-charge of the Revenue in the Finance Ministry, and the Minister in-charge of finance or taxation or any other Minister nominated by each State Government are the members of the council.

### ***India Post got Payments Bank licence from RBI***

India Post got the licence from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to work as a Payments Bank. Following this, India Post Payments Bank Limited commenced its operations officially.

Under the Department of Posts (Union Ministry of Communications and Information Technology), India Post became the third entity after Bharti Airtel and Paytm to receive final payments bank licence to roll-out banking operations commercially.

### **Highlights of the India Post Payments Bank Limited**

- India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) commenced its operations by rolling out pilot services in Raipur and Ranchi.
- The bank will offer an interest rate of 4.5 per cent on deposits of up to Rs 25000; 5 per cent on deposits of Rs 25000 - 50000 and 5.5 per cent on deposits of Rs 50000 - 100000.
- The paid up equity of the new bank is Rs 800 crore, of which the government has already infused Rs 275 crore.
- The idea behind setting up IPPB is to have a branch in every district and make 3 lakh postmen come alive in payment bank function.
- Around 1000 ATMs of India Post will now be transferred to IPPB.

### **About Payments banks**

- The new model of Payments Bank allows mobile firms, super market chains and others to cater to banking requirements of individuals and small businesses.
- It will be set up as a differentiated bank and will confine its activities to acceptance of demand deposits, remittance services, Internet banking and other specified services.
- Payments banks can accept deposits up to Rs 1 lakh per account from individuals and small businesses.
- They can issue ATM/debit cards but not credit cards.
- They can also issue other prepaid payment instruments.
- Non-resident Indians (NRIs) are not be allowed to open accounts in payment banks.

### **Background**

Presently, the department of post has an existing network of around 155000 post offices. India Post plans to open over 650 new branches for the payment bank.

In 2015, the RBI granted in-principle approval to 11 entities, including the Department of Posts, to set up payments banks and proposed to give such licences on tap basis in future.

Following this, Airtel launched its commercial operation across India with an investment of Rs 3000 crore and is offering interest rate of 7.25 per cent on deposits. While, Paytm rolled out payments bank with an initial investment of about Rs 400 crore.

### ***RBI to lift ATM withdrawal limit***

The Reserve Bank of India will lift restrictions on daily withdrawal of money from ATMs (automated teller machines).

The announcement was made through a circular issued on 30 January 2017. According to the notice, the decision was taken after a review of the pace of remonetisation.

### **Key Highlights**

- RBI has asked all banks to set their own daily limit as they did before the demonetisation of old high denomination currency notes on 8 November 2016.
- The RBI will also be removing all limits on cash withdrawals from current accounts, cash credit accounts and overdraft accounts.
- The weekly limit of Rs 24000 on savings bank accounts will continue to hold for now but is under consideration for withdrawal in the near future.
- Along with this, the RBI has also urged all

banks to encourage their constituents to move towards digitisation of payments and switch the mode of payment from cash mode to non-cash mode.

### **Comment**

The Indian government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced sudden demonetisation of Rs 500 and 1000 notes on 8 November 2016, causing the whole nation to go into a panic mode. The new currency inflow was expected to fall back into normalcy post December 2016, after the completion of the time given to submit the old currency notes.

Though in January the daily withdrawal limit was raised to 4500 from 2500, the cash struggle continued. The current decision hopes to bring huge relief to common people and small businesses.

### ***NEC and Union Ministry of Textiles sign MoU to harness the hidden potential of Cane & Bamboo***

The North Eastern Council (NEC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) of the Union Ministry of Textile in Shillong to harness the hidden potential of Cane and Bamboo of North Eastern Region (NER). The MoU was signed by Ram Muivah, Secretary of NEC and Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) Alok Kumar.

#### **Highlights of the MoU**

- It will provide a push for the integrated and inclusive development of Cane & Bamboo Sector of NRE through skilled manpower, marketing support, technology dissemination and institutional support.
- This will altogether mobilise the masses and promote Bamboo sector as a whole throughout the country.
- The NEC and the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) will promote Cane and Bamboo Technology Centre (CBTC) of Assam and the Bamboo & Cane Development Institute (BCDI) of Tripura as the Centres of Excellence in South East Asia.
- CBTC will be transformed into a Regional Centre of Excellence and the BCDI will be converted as a separate entity under the name Indian Institute of Bamboo Technology (IIBT).
- CBTC and BCDI will also collaborate for Institutional support for bamboo sector and will generate awareness among the masses about

possibilities of sustainable utilisation of the raw materials.

- CBTC and BCDI will serve as a platform for generating and exchanging the knowledge base on the product development in Cane and Bamboo through the Discipline of Product Design and Innovation.
- The collective knowledge base of the sector will be made available through library resources, multimedia, publications and online resources.
- The Discipline of Bamboo and Cane product Innovation will also be helpful in defining the criteria for Industry standards and certification in terms of Quality.
- Moreover, in order to establish the presence of bamboo and cane as economically strong industry, education will also be imparted to Craftsmen, Designers, Farmers and Management professionals.

### ***Indian economy projected to grow by 7.7% in FY 2017: UNWESP report***

India's economic growth is projected to reach 7.7 per cent in the Financial Year (FY) 2017 and 7.6 per cent in FY 2018 amid strong private consumption, as per the 2017 Report of United Nations World Economic Situation and Prospects (UNWESP) that was released on 18 January 2017.

As per the report, in 2016, the world economy expanded just by 2.2 per cent, which was the slowest rate of growth since the Great Recession of 2009.

However, the report forecasts World gross product to expand by 2.7 per cent in 2017 and by 2.9 per cent in 2018.

#### **Highlights of the report**

- According to the report, the moderate improvement expected for the FY 2017-18 is an indication of economic stabilization.
- Developing countries continue to be the main drivers of global growth, as they accounted for about 60 per cent of the world's gross product growth in 2016-18.
- East and South Asia remain the world's most dynamic regions which got benefitted from robust domestic demand and supportive macroeconomic policies.
- It projects that growth in the developed economies will slightly improve in 2017, but weak investment and policy uncertainty may continue to constrain economic activity.
- GDP growth in the least developed countries (LDCs) is projected to remain below the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target of at least 7 per cent.

- The report also highlights that under the current growth trajectory, nearly 35 per cent of the population in LDCs may remain in extreme poverty by 2030.
- The report highlights some positive developments related to environmental sustainability as the level of global carbon emissions slowed down in two consecutive years.
- It depicts a high degree of uncertainty in the international policy environment and elevated foreign currency-denominated debt levels.
- The report also hints for greater international policy cooperation and coordination, particularly in the areas of trade and investment.

#### **India's position in the report**

- During the FY 2016-17, India positioned itself as one of the most dynamic emerging economies.
- India's growth is expected to reach 7.7 per cent in 2017 and 7.6 per cent in 2018.
- Investment demand is expected to pick up slightly in the country supported by monetary easing, government efforts towards infrastructure investments and public-private partnerships.
- In all, South Asia exhibited the fastest growth among all the regions, even as the global economy was trapped in slow economic growth.

#### ***Union Government launched Rubber Soil Information System for rubber growers***

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched the Rubber Soil Information System (RubSIS) in New Delhi.

The RubSIS recommends application of an appropriate mix of fertilizers to the specific plantations of rubber growers depending upon their soil nature.

The RubSIS was developed by the Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII) in collaboration with three agencies. **The agencies are -**

1. Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management, Kerala
2. National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)
3. National Remote Sensing Center of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)

The RRII is a research and development agency. It works under the Rubber Board.

#### **Features of RubSIS**

- The RubSIS brings soil data to the fingerprints of rubber growers and recommends the optimal

mix and quantities of chemical fertilizers that his/her holding requires.

- It is a cost effective tool for sustainable and scientific management of rubber growing soils.
- It helps in preventing indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers and soil degradation.
- The adoption of RubSIS will result in reduction in the cost of production of rubber, increase in productivity and reduction in environmental pollution.
- In the first stage, the scientific and user friendly online fertiliser recommendation system will serve farmers in Kerala's Kottayam district. Kottayam is the largest rubber growing district in India.
- The services of RubSIS will be extended to the entire traditional rubber growing region - Kerala and Tamilnadu – by the end of 2017.

#### **About Rubber Board**

- The Rubber Board is a statutory body. It was constituted by the Union Government under the Rubber Act, 1947 for the overall development of the rubber industry in the country.
- It works under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- Its headquarters is located in Kottayam, Kerala.
- Its chairman is appointed by the Union Government under the Rubber Rules, 1955.

## ***Schemes & Committees***

#### ***Union Government launched Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign***

The Union Government launched nationwide Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign (SLAC). The Campaign was launched on the occasion of Anti-Leprosy Day.

The Anti-Leprosy Day is observed annually in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi to commemorate his selfless efforts and care for the people affected by leprosy.

#### **About Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign**

- The Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign aims at communicating the importance of early detection and treatment of leprosy.
- Under the campaign, nationwide Gram Sabhas will be organised in cooperation and coordination with allied sector of health department/ministries.
- The SLAC aspires to promote community participation to reorient the delivery of the service of diagnosis and treatment of leprosy in its early

stages.

- The Campaign will be conducted as an annual activity during the fortnight beginning from 30 January 2017 till 13 February 2017.

### **About Leprosy Disease**

- Leprosy is also known as Hansen's disease (HD).
- It is a chronic infection caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium leprae* and *Mycobacterium lepromatosis*.
- Symptoms that develop include granulomas of the nerves, respiratory tract, skin and eyes.
- The disease results in a lack of ability to feel pain. Weakness and poor eyesight are also associated with the disease.

### **Union Government reconstituted committee to identify athletes under TOP Scheme**

The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Youth Affairs and Sports Vijay Goel reconstituted Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Committee.

The primary objective of the reconstituted TOP Committee is to identify and support potential medal prospects for 2020 and 2024 Olympic games under the Target Olympic Podium Scheme.

For the reconstituted committee, Abhinav Bindra was appointed as the chairman.

**Members of the committee are –**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Who is he/she?</b>
Anil Khanna	Sports Administrator
Prakash Padukone	Renowned Ex Badminton Player and Coach
Karnam Malleshwari	Olympic Medalist
P T Usha	Renowned Olympian
Murlidhar Raja	Sports Administrator
Anjali Bhagwat	Renowned Shooter
Rekha Yadav	Secretary, Railway Sports Promotion Board
Dr S S Roy	ED (Teams), Sports Authority of India
Inder Dhamija	Joint Secretary (Sports)

Inder Dhamija will act as the Member Secretary of the reconstituted committee.

### **About Target Olympic Podium Scheme**

- It was formulated within the overall ambit of National Sports Development Fund (NSDF).
- Its objective is to identify and support potential

medal prospects for 2016 and 2020 Olympic games.

- Under the scheme, the selected athletes are provided with financial assistance so that they will get customized training in institutes having world class facilities.
- The reconstituted committee under the chairmanship of Abhinav Bindra will select the candidates.
- Benchmark for selection of athletes under the scheme is in relation to international standards.

### **Union Cabinet approves Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana 2017**

The Union Cabinet, presided by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, gave its post-facto approval for launching of Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana 2017 (VPBY 2017).

The Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana 2017 is a part of Union Government's commitment for financial inclusion and social security.

### **Key highlights of the Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana 2017**

- The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) will implement the VPBY 2017 during the current financial year.
- The scheme aims at providing social security during old age and protecting elderly persons aged 60 years and above against a future fall in their interest income due to uncertain market conditions.
- It will provide an assured pension based on a guaranteed rate of return of 8 per cent per annum for ten years.
- The scheme also has an option to opt for pension on a monthly/quarterly/halfyearly and annual basis.
- The difference between the return generated by LIC and the assured return of 8 per cent per annum will be borne by Government of India as subsidy on an annual basis.
- The scheme is proposed to be open for subscription for a period of one year from the date of launch.

### **Union Government launches Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign**

The Union Government on 30 January 2017 launched nationwide Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign (SLAC). The Campaign was launched on the occasion of Anti-Leprosy Day.

The Anti-Leprosy Day is observed annually in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi to commemorate his selfless efforts and care for the

people affected by leprosy.

### **About Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign**

- The Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign aims at communicating the importance of early detection and treatment of leprosy.
- Under the campaign, nationwide Gram Sabhas will be organised in cooperation and coordination with allied sector of health department/ministries.
- The SLAC aspires to promote community participation to reorient the delivery of the service of diagnosis and treatment of leprosy in its early stages.
- The Campaign will be conducted as an annual activity during the fortnight beginning from 30 January 2017 till 13 February 2017.

### **About Leprosy Disease**

- Leprosy is also known as Hansen's disease (HD).
- It is a chronic infection caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium leprae* and *Mycobacterium lepromatosis*.
- Symptoms that develop include granulomas of the nerves, respiratory tract, skin and eyes.
- The disease results in a lack of ability to feel pain. Weakness and poor eyesight are also associated with the disease.

## ***Science & Technology***

### ***Scientists discovered oldest human ancestor***

Scientists from the UK, China and Germany have recently discovered a balloon-like sea creature called *Saccorhynchus*, the earliest known ancestor of humans. The findings were published in the journal *Nature* in January 2017. The fossilised traces of this 540 million year old creature are exquisitely well preserved. This microscopic sea animal is the earliest known step on the evolutionary path that led to fish and humans.

#### **About *Saccorhynchus***

- *Saccorhynchus* is the most primitive example of a category of animals called deuterostomes which are common ancestors of a broad range of species including vertebrates.
- *Saccorhynchus* was about a millimetre in size and is thought to have lived between grains of sand on the sea bed.
- Its body was symmetrical, which is a characteristic inherited by many of its evolutionary descendants, including humans.
- It was also covered with a thin, relatively

flexible skin and muscles.

- It probably used to move by contracting its muscles and got around by wriggling.
- The most striking feature is its large mouth, relative to the rest of its body. It probably ate by engulfing food particles or even other creatures.
- However, the researchers could not find any evidence of anus in the creature, which suggests that it consumed food and excreted from the same orifice.
- The conical structures on its body might have allowed the water that it swallowed to escape and so these structures might have been the very early version of gills.

#### **Background**

To the naked eye, the fossils look like tiny black grains, but under the microscope, the level of detail was jaw-dropping. *Saccorhynchus* will render remarkable insights into the very first stages of the evolution of a group that led to the fish and then to human beings.

Until now, the deuterostome groups discovered were from between 510 to 520 million years ago.

### ***ISRO successfully tested Cryogenic Engine for Upper Stage of GSLV Mk III***

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully ground tested its indigenously developed Cryogenic Upper Stage for GSLV Mk III rocket.

The cryogenic upper stage, designated as C25, was tested for 50 seconds at ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC) at Mahendragiri in Tamil Nadu demonstrating all the stage operations. It was the first test in a series of two tests. The second test is planned for flight duration of 640 seconds.

This first flight stage for GSLV Mk III D1 mission is in an advanced stage of realisation. It is scheduled to launch GSAT-19 during first quarter of 2017.

#### **About Cryogenic Engine C25**

- Cryogenic engines are generally used in the upper stage of a rocket launch as they offer maximum thrust to a launcher vehicle.
- The development of C25 cryogenic stage began after receiving approval of GSLV Mk III, ISRO's next generation launch vehicle that is capable of launching heavy four tonne class spacecraft in Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit.
- C25 stage was conceptualised by Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) with the help of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC) and Sathish Dhawan

Space Centre (SDSC).

• GSLV Mk III vehicle consists of two solid strap-on motors, one earth storable liquid core stage and the other cryogenic upper stage.

• C25 stage is the most powerful upper stage developed by ISRO and uses Liquid Oxygen and Liquid Hydrogen propellant combination.

• This stage is capable of carrying 27.8 tons of propellants loaded in two independent tanks.

Generally, the development of a cryogenic stage has some unique design challenges as it has liquid Oxygen stored at -195 deg C and liquid Hydrogen stored at -253 deg C in its tanks.

To store these cryogenic fluids, special multi-layer insulation is provided for the tanks and other structures.

### **Scientists spotted sunspot with centre twice the size of Earth**

Scientists and researchers from European Southern Observatory (ESO) spotted the dark and contorted centre of a sunspot which is nearly twice the diameter of the Earth.

Researchers were able to spot this sunspot using Atacama Large Millimetre/submillimetre Array (ALMA) antennas located in Atacama Desert of northern Chile.

This discovery will be of great help for the astronomers to probe the physics of the nearest star.

#### **The Finding**

• Using ALMA antennas capabilities, astronomers imaged the millimetre wavelength light emitted by the Sun’s chromosphere which lies just above the photosphere that forms the visible surface of the Sun.

• They produced the images to study solar activity at longer wavelengths of light that are typically available to solar observatories on Earth.

• Scientists were able to observe an enormous sunspot using two of ALMA’s receiver bands at wavelengths of 1.25 millimetres and three millimetres.

• The images captured will help to reveal differences in temperature between parts of the Sun’s chromosphere and also understanding the heating and dynamics of the chromospheres.

#### **About Sunspots**

• Sunspots are darker and cooler areas on the surface of the sun in a region called the photosphere which has temperature of 5800 degrees Kelvin.

• They can be very large up to 50000 kilometres in diameter and have temperatures of about 3800

degrees Kelvin.

• Generally, they are dark in comparison with the brighter and hotter regions of the photosphere surrounding them.

#### **Background**

Throughout the ages, astronomers have studied the Sun and probed its dynamic surface and energetic atmosphere in varied ways and using many methodologies.

However, in order to achieve a fuller understanding, it was required to study the Sun across the entire electromagnetic spectrum including the millimetre and submillimetre portion that only ALMA could observe.

## **Awards**

### **Padma Awards 2017 announced**

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) announced the winners of the Padma Awards 2017. The list comprises of 7 Padma Vibhushan, 7 Padma Bhushan and 75 Padma Shri Awardees. 19 of the awardees are women and the list also includes 5 persons from the category of foreigners, NRIs, PIOs and 6 posthumous awardees.

#### **List of Padma Vibhushan Awardees**

Name	Field	State
K J Yesudas	Art-Music	Kerala
Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev	Others-Spiritualism	Tamil Nadu
Sharad Pawar	Public Affairs	Maharashtra
Murli Manohar Joshi	Public Affairs	Uttar Pradesh
Prof. Udipi Ramachandra Rao	Science & Engineering	Karnataka
Late Sunder Lal Patwa (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	Madhya Pradesh
Late PA Sangma (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	Meghalaya

#### **About Padma Awards**

• Padma Awards are one of the highest civilian Awards of India. The awards are conferred in three categories namely - Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.

• The awards are given in various disciplines or fields of activities including art, social work,

public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc.

- Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service, while Padma Bhushan is awarded for distinguished service of high order.
- Padma Shri honours are conferred for distinguished service in any field.
- The awards are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year.
- These awards are conferred by the President of India at ceremonial functions which are held at Rashtrapati Bhawan usually around March/April every year.

Priyanka Chopra wins People's Choice Awards for Favourite Dramatic TV Actress

Priyanka Chopra on 18 January 2017 won the Favourite Dramatic TV Actress at the 43rd People's Choice Award. She won the honour for her role in the American drama TV series *Quantico*.

This is the second People's Choice Award for Chopra. She had won her first award in 2016 in the 'Favourite Actress in a New TV series' category for her role in *Quantico*.

Major wins at the 43rd People's Choice Award

Award	Winner
Favourite Movie	Finding Dory
Favourite Action Movie	Deadpool
Favourite Comedic Movie	Bad Moms
Favourite Dramatic Movie	Me Before You
Favourite Movie Actor	Ryan Reynolds
Favourite Movie Actress	Jennifer Lawrence
Favourite Action Movie Actor	Robert Downey Jr.
Favourite Action Movie Actress	Margot Robbie
Favourite TV Show	Outlander
Favourite Network TV Comedy	The Big Bang Theory
Favourite Premium Series Actor	Dwayne Johnson
Favourite Premium Series Actress	Sarah Parker Jessica
Favourite Male Singer	Justin Timberlake
Favourite Female Singer	Britney Spears

### About People's Choice Awards

- The People's Choice Awards is an American awards show.
- It recognizes the people and the work of popular culture, voted on by the general public.
- It has been held annually since 1975.
- The creator of the award show was Bob Stivers, who produced the first show in 1975.

### 25 children including 13 girls selected for National Bravery Awards

Twenty five children, 12 girls and 13 boys, have been selected for the national bravery awards 2016. Four of the awards will be given posthumously. Every winner of the award will receive their awards from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

These winners of the national award will participate in the parade of republic day. Later, the President Pranab Mukherjee will host a reception in their honour.

The coveted Bharat award will be conferred on 8-year-old late Kumari Tarh Peju of Arunachal Pradesh, who sacrificed her life while saving two of her friends from drowning.

### List of selected children for National Bravery Awards 2016

- Geeta Chopra Award: It will be conferred on Tejasweeta Pradhan, (18-year-old) and Shivani Gond (17-year-old) both from West Bengal. They displayed immense courage in helping the police and the NGO in uncovering an International sex racket leading to the arrest of the mastermind in Delhi.
- Sanjay Chopra Award: It will be conferred on Master Sumit Mangain (15-year-old) of Uttarakhand who displayed outstanding bravery in fighting a leopard to save his cousin.
- Babu Gaidhani Award: The award will be conferred on Late Km. Roluahpuii, (13-year-old) of Mizoram, Master Tushar Verma (15-year-old) of Chhattisgarh and Late Km. H Lalhriatpuii (14-year-old) of Mizoram. Roluahpuii sacrificed her life in her bold and selfless act of saving two girls from drowning. Tushar Verma, risked his life and extinguished a fire in his neighbour's shed and saved many cattle. Lalhriatpuii sacrificed her life in an effort to save her cousin in a car accident.

Other recipients are

- Late Km. Payal Devi (Jammu & Kashmir)
- Master Praful Sharma (Himachal Pradesh)

- Master Akshit Sharma, Km. Akshita Sharma, Master Naman (all from Delhi)
- Master Sonu Mali (Rajasthan)
- Km. Nisha Dilip Patil (Maharashtra)
- Km. Anshika Pandey (Uttar Pradesh)
- Km. Siya Vamansa Khode (Karnataka)
- Master Adithyan M.P. Pillai, Master Binil Manjaly, Master Akhil K. Shibu and Km. Badarunnisa K.P. (all from Kerala)
- Master Tankeswar Pegu (Assam)
- Km. Neelam Dhruv (Chhattisgarh)
- Master Moirangthem Sadananda Singh (Manipur)
- Master Thanghilmang Lunkim (Nagaland)
- Master Mohan Sethy (Odisha)

### ***Jacob Polley won 2016 T S Eliot Prize for Poetry***

Poet Jacob Polley won the 2016 T.S. Eliot prize for his collection, 'Jackself.' The award ceremony was organised at the Wallace Collection Gallery in London.

Polley is the 23rd winner of the prestigious USD 24000 award.

*Jackself* is a sequence of narrative poems partly inspired by his childhood in Cumbria, England. The book was chosen from a 10-strong shortlist that included *Measures of Expatriation* by Vahni Capildeo, winner of the 2015 Forward prize, and *Falling Awake* by Alice Oswald, previous T S Eliot prize winner.

Ruth Padel, one of the judges of the panel, stated that *Jackself* was "a firework of a book; inventive, exciting and outstanding in its imaginative range and depth of feeling."

The coveted award was founded by T.S. Eliot's widow Valerie in 1993. T.S. Eliot was one of the 20th century's major poets.

#### **About Jacob Polley**

- Jacob Polley is an English poet from United Kingdom.
- His first four books of poems are *The Brink*, *Little Gods*, *The Havocs* and *Jackself*.
- Born in 1975, he obtained his masters in Creative Writing from Lancaster University in 1997.
- In 2002, he won an Eric Gregory Award and the BBC Radio 4/Arts Council 'First Verse' Award.
- His first book, *The Brink*, was shortlisted for the 2003 T.S. Eliot Prize, the Forward Prize and the John Llewellyn Rhys prize.

- His first novel titled *Talk of the Town* was published in June 2009. The book won the 2010 Somerset Maugham Award.
- His third poetry book, *The Havocs*, won the 2012 Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize. It was also shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best Collection and for the T.S. Eliot Prize.

## ***Sports***

### ***Supreme Court appointed Committee of Administrators headed by Vinod Rai to run BCCI***

The Supreme Court (SC) appointed former Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) Vinod Rai as the head of four-member Committee of Administrators to run Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

The other three members of the Committee are noted historian **Ramachandra Guha**, former Indian women's cricket team captain **Diana Edulji** and IDFC Limited's Managing Director **Vikram Limaye**.

Rai, Guha, Edulji and Limaye will function as the interim bosses of the BCCI and run its day-to-day administration until the Lodha Committee reforms are fully implemented and elections are held.

The order was given by a three-judge Bench headed by Justice Dipak Misra. The other two judges were Justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud.

#### **Key highlights of the SC order**

- The Bench rejected the suggestion of Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi to appoint Secretary of Union Sports Ministry as one of the administrators.
- The Bench states that its 18 July 2016 judgement had specifically debarred ministers and government servants from holding any office in the BCCI.
- It also ordered that the BCCI CEO would report to the Committee. Also, the CEO, with the assistance of the counsel of the Board, would apprise the administrators about the implementation of the Lodha panel recommendations accepted by the top court.
- The apex court gave four weeks time to the Committee to submit the report about the recommendations for reforms in the cricket body complied with by BCCI.

#### **Background**

The Supreme Court on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2016 had

sacked Anurag Thakur, President of BCCI, Ajay Shirke, BCCI Secretary, from their posts. The apex court stated that the duo had not complied with its 18 July 2016 order and therefore were removed from the post. The top court, in its order, had indicated that it would soon appoint a panel of administrators to carry out the reforms in the Board to make its affairs transparent.

### ***PV Sindhu, Sameer Verma won Syed Modi International Badminton Championships titles***

2016 Olympic silver medalist PV Sindhu and Sameer Verma won the men's singles and the women's singles titles respectively at the Syed Modi International Badminton Championships.

To win the title, while Sindhu defeated Indonesia's Gregoria Mariska in the summit clash in straight games 21-13 21-14, Sameer Verma defeated B Sai Praneeth 21-19 21-16.

#### **For Sindhu, it was her maiden women's singles title at the tournament.**

Overall, India won three titles out of the five events in the tournament, while the Men's Doubles title and Women's Doubles title were won by foreign nationals.

India won the Mixed Doubles title when Pranaav Jerry Chopra and N Sikki Reddy emerged champions by defeating fellow Indians Ashwini Ponnappa and B Sumeeth Reddy 22-20 21-10 in the summit clash.

In the Women's Doubles final, the Denmark duo of Kamilla Rytter Juhl and Christina Pedersen defeated the Indian duo of Ashwini Ponnappa and Sikki Reddy 21-16 21-18.

The Men's Doubles title was also claimed by Denmark. In the summit clash, Mathias Boe and Carsten Mogensen emerged winners against the Chinese Taipei pair of Lu Ching Yao and Yang Po Han in straight games 21-14 21-15.

#### **About P V Sindhu**

- Born on 5 July 1995, Pusarla Venkata Sindhu is an Indian professional badminton player.
- She received international attention as she broke into the Top 20 in the Badminton World Federation rankings released on 21 September 2012.
- On 10 August 2013, she became the first ever Indian women's singles player to win a medal at the 2013 World Championships.
- On 30 March 2015, she received India's fourth highest civilian honour, Padma Shri.
- She also became the second Indian female shuttler to win an Olympic medal after Saina

Nehwal's Bronze medal at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.

- In August 2016, she won the historic silver medal in women's singles badminton event at Rio Olympics.

### ***Saina Nehwal won 2017 Malaysia Masters Grand Prix Gold***

Saina Nehwal won the 2017 Malaysia Masters Grand Prix Gold Women's Singles title. Nehwal defeated Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong by a score of 22-20, 22-20 in a 46-minute clash.

It was Nehwal's 23rd title overall and the first after 2016 Australian Open.

On the other hand, **Men's Singles** title was won by Hong Kong's **Ng Ka Long**. **Berry Angriawan and Hardianto** clinched the 2017 Malaysia Masters Grand Prix Gold **Men's Doubles**, while **Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai** lifted the **Women's Doubles** title. **Mixed Doubles** title was grabbed by **Tan Kian Meng and Lai Pei Jing**.

The 2017 Malaysia Masters Grand Prix Gold was held at the Sibu Indoor Stadium in Sarawak, Malaysia from 17 January to 22 January 2017.

#### **About Saina Nehwal**

- Saina Nehwal has been maintaining her world ranking in the top ten since 2009.
- She has clinched over twenty international titles, which include ten Superseries titles.
- She attained the World No. 1 ranking in 2015. With that, she became India's only female player and overall the second Indian player after Prakash Padukone to achieve it.
- She represented India thrice in the Olympics, winning bronze medal in her second appearance.
- She is the only Indian to have won at least a medal in every BWF major individual event, namely the Olympics, the BWF World Championships, and the BWF World Junior Championships.
- She is the first Indian badminton player to win an Olympic medal.
- In 2006, she became the first Indian female and the youngest Asian to win a 4-star tournament.
- In 2016, she was honoured with the Padma Bhushan by the Government of India.

#### **About Malaysia Masters**

- The Malaysia Masters Grand Prix Gold began 2009.
- It is the second level tournament held after Superseries.
- The total prize money for the tournament is

USD 120000.

## ***St Petersburg unveiled logo for UEFA Euro Cup 2020***

St Petersburg, Russia's second largest city, launched an official emblem for the 2020 UEFA Euro Cup during a solemn ceremony. The city is the last of the 13 UEFA Euro 2020 host cities to unveil its host city logo. Three group stage matches and a quarter-final will take place at St Petersburg's 67800-seater stadium.

The logo sees each of the 13 host city logos feature a single bridge from St Petersburg. The bridges depict how football serves as a bridge between geographical and social divides, and unites nations and fans.

The picturesque Palace Bridge is the key element of St Petersburg's host city logo.

Russia was selected among 12 countries to host the matches of the main European football tournament in less than four years.

### **About UEFA Euro Cup 2020**

- The 2020 UEFA European Football Championship will be the 16th edition of the UEFA European Championship.
- The UEFA European Championship is the quadrennial international men's football championship of Europe, which is organized by UEFA.
- UEFA, on 6 December 2012, announced that the 2020 Finals would be held in multiple cities across Europe to mark the 60th anniversary of the tournament.
- The championship will be held in thirteen cities in thirteen different European countries during the summer of 2020.
- These thirteen cities across Europe are: Baku, Brussels, Copenhagen, London, Munich, Budapest, Dublin, Rome, Amsterdam, Bucharest, Saint Petersburg, Glasgow, and Bilbao.
- London's Wembley Stadium will host the semi-finals and final of the tournament.
- The winner of the championship will be able to participate in the 2021 FIFA Confederations Cup.
- Portugal, who won the 2016 Euro Cup, will be the defending champions of the 2020 edition.

## ***Dushyant Chautala appointed President of Table Tennis Federation of India***

Dushyant Chautala was appointed the President of the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI).

Chautala is the youngest president of the

apex body. His term, which is for four years, extends until 2021.

The appointment was made following the Annual General Body meeting.

Along with Chautala, M.P. Singh was appointed as the Secretary General, and Arun Kumar Banerjee took over as the Treasurer.

In addition, eight Vice-Presidents, four joint secretaries and five out of eight Executive Committee members, were nominated and filled as per the TTFI constitution. The other three vacant slots in the Executive Committee were left to be chosen by the new TTFI chief.

The election to all posts was conducted and supervised by Justice Ranjit Singh (Retd.) of the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

### **About Table Tennis Federation of India**

- The Table Tennis Federation of India was established in the year 1926.
- It is a founder member of the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF).
- The Table Tennis Federation of India has been at the forefront in the promotion of the game in India.
- The Federation has the affiliation of 32 state units and 37 institutions.
- It is one of the most active among all sports federations in India. India is represented through TTFI in all the major international championships like Olympics, World, Commonwealth, Asian and all Pro tours.

## ***Defence***

### ***Indian Navy's Theatre Level Exercise TROPEX 17***

The Indian Navy's annual Theatre Readiness Operational Exercise (TROPEX) began off the Western Seaboard. The exercise will be held till the fourth week of February 2017.

The last edition of the exercise was conducted in January 2015.

### **Highlights of TROPEX 17**

- Ships and aircraft of both the Western and Eastern Naval Commands are participating the exercise.
- The exercise is aimed at testing the combat readiness of the combined fleets of the Indian Navy and the assets of the Indian Air Force, Indian Army and the Indian Coast Guard.
- It will also strengthen inter-operability and joint operations in a complex environment.

- The aircraft carrier Vikramaditya, nuclear submarine Chakra, Landing Platform Dock (LPD) Jalashwa, the recently commissioned destroyer Chennai, the P-8I will participate in the exercise.
- SU-30 MKI, Jaguars, AWACS and IL-78 Flight Refuelling Aircraft of the Indian Air Force and infantry units of the Indian Army will also participate in the exercise.
- The exercise will be conducted in various phases, both in harbour and at sea encompassing the various facets of war-fighting and combat operations.
- TROPEX 17 assumes special significance in the backdrop of the current security scenario.
- The exercise will also send a strong signal to the pirates who are active in the Arabian Sea region.

### ***DRDO successfully test fired Guided PINAKA***

The Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) successfully test fired the Guided PINAKA from Launch Complex-III at ITR, Chandipur.

Guided PINAKA is the enhanced version of PINAKA Rocket Mark-II which has been equipped with navigation, guidance and control kit.

#### **Highlights of the Guided PINAKA**

- The conversion from PINAKA Rocket Mark-II to Guided PINAKA facilitated the enhancement in the range and improvement in the accuracy of PINAKA.
- The flight of this upgraded rocket was tracked and monitored by Radars, Electro Optical and Telemetry Systems at ITR Chandipur.
- The guided version of Pinaka was developed jointly by Armament Research and Development Establishment, Pune and Iimat and Defence Research and Development Laboratory, the Hyderabad-based Research Centre.
- However, ITR Chandipur provided the range and launch support for the rocket.
- It has reinforced the technological strength in converting unguided systems into weapons of high precision.
- Its first successful test flight was conducted on 12 January 2017 itself.

Presently, India is operating two regiments of

PINAKA and has already ordered for two more regiments. In 2016, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) cleared a proposal for six additional regiments at a cost of around Rs 14633 crore.

## ***Miscellaneous***

### ***Dharamsala declared as second capital of Himachal Pradesh***

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh declared Dharamsala town of Kangra district as the second Capital of the State.

Dharamsala is located at some 250 km from the state capital Shimla. It has its own significance and history to make it the second capital of the state.

#### **About Dharamsala**

- This announcement is significant as 25 out of 68 assembly seats of the state fall in Kangra, Una and Hamirpur districts and Dharamsala was important for lower areas of Himachal Pradesh including Kangra, Chamba, Hamirpur and Una districts.
- The people of these areas will now be benefitted of this special status as now they will no longer travel longer distance to Shimla for their work.
- Dharamsala is a city in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh and was formerly known as Bhagsu. Kangra is the largest district in the state with 15 of 68 assembly seats.
- Dharamsala's prominence is known not only in the map of India but also in the world for being the place for Dalai Lama's abode. Moreover, prominent personalities of the world visit this hilly town throughout the year.
- It also owes much of its significance to religious, natural and adventurous tourism.
- A complete Vidhan Sabha building is already existing in Dharamsala. The foundation of this building was laid during the previous tenure of Virbhadra Singh in 2006.
- This town had already witnessed 12 winter sessions of the Himachal Pradesh state assembly so far since the introduction of the practice of annual winter sojourn in 1994.
- It was also selected as one of the hundred Indian cities to be developed as a smart city under PM Narendra Modi's flagship Smart Cities Mission.

### ***P Vishwanath Shetty sworn in as Karnataka Lokayukta***

P Vishwanath Shetty, retired judge of Karnataka High Court, was sworn in as the Lokayukta of Karnataka, a seat that had been vacant since December 2015. He succeeds Y Bhaskar Rao, who left the seat in 2015.

Shetty will be responsible for clearing all the pending cases and will work to re-establish the credibility of the anti-corruption ombudsman after the disgraceful exit of his predecessor Y Bhaskar Rao.

Rao resigned in December 2015 after investigations showed that his son Y Ashwin was allegedly running threatening raids. Following this, Rao was arrested, but recently on 28 January 2017, he was granted conditional bail by the special Lokayukta Court.

#### **About P Vishwanath Shetty**

- Shetty hails from Dakshina Kannada district.
- He has previously served as the Bar council nominee in the Press Council of India.
- Justice Shetty was enrolled as an advocate in 1966 and worked as a junior advocate under then Advocate General of Karnataka Thumbe Krishna Rao till 1971.
- He was elevated as a permanent judge of the High Court of Karnataka in 1995 and served till his retirement in May 2006.
- He has been practising as a Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India since July 2006.

### ***Anti-Leprosy Day observed on 30 January 2017***

#### ***30 January: Anti-Leprosy Day***

Anti-Leprosy Day was observed across the country to spread awareness about the disease.

Annually, the day is celebrated in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi to re-memorize his selfless efforts and care for the people affected by leprosy.

Objectives of Celebrating Anti-Leprosy Day are -

- To raise awareness about the disease
- To offer help to those affected by the disease through regular and free of cost treatment they need
- To make the diseased persons psychologically strong and help them to cope up with physical impairments of skin sores and nerve damage
- To ascertain that all affected persons are getting the necessary treatment, rehabilitation and care or not
- To estimate the marked decrease or increase in the rate of spread of the disease

#### **About Leprosy Disease**

- Leprosy is also known as Hansen's disease (HD).
- It is a chronic infection caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium leprae* and *Mycobacterium lepromatosis*.
- Symptoms that develop include granulomas of the nerves, respiratory tract, skin and eyes.
- The disease results in a lack of ability to feel pain. Weakness and poor eyesight are also associated with the disease.

India's success story in eliminating Leprosy

- 1955: National Leprosy Control Programme launched
- 1983: National Leprosy Eradication Programme launched
- 1983: Introduction of Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT)
- 2005: Elimination of leprosy at the national level was achieved on 31 December 2005.
- 2012: Special action plan for 209 high endemic districts in 16 States/UTs launched
- 2016: A three-pronged strategy for early detection of leprosy cases in the community was introduced under the National Health Mission.
- 2016: A special Leprosy Case Detection Campaign was launched. As a result, more than 32000 cases were confirmed and were put on treatment.

### ***Ashok Amritraj appointed as UN in India Goodwill Ambassador for the SDGs***

Award-winning Hollywood film producer and Wimbledon tennis player Ashok Amritraj was appointed as UN in India Goodwill Ambassador for the SDGs.

In this capacity, Ashok Amritraj will work with the United Nations in India to amplify awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

#### **About Ashok Amritraj**

- He is an internationally-renowned iconic filmmaker. He has made over 100 films during the span of his 30-year extraordinary career.
- His films garnered global acclaim as well as worldwide revenues in excess of USD 2 billion.
- He has been a pioneering force in bridging the gap between India and Hollywood through film and media.
- At present, he is the Chairman and CEO of the Hyde Park Entertainment Group.
- Ashok Amritraj is also a former tennis player.
- During his 9-year career, he competed in doubles at the Wimbledon and the US Open.
- Winning the World Team Tennis Championship title with LA Strings in 1978 was one of his notable achievements in the career.

#### **About Sustainable Development Goals**

- The United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in September 2015.
- The SDGs, also known as Global Goals, build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were in force between 2000 and 2015.
- The primary objective of the SDG is to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change.

### ***Miss France Iris Mittenhaere wins***

## **Miss Universe 2016**

France's Iris Mittenaere was crowned the Miss Universe 2016. The pageant was held at the Mall of Asia Arena, Pasay, Metro Manila, Philippines. Pia Wurtzbach of the Philippines crowned her successor Iris Mittenaere at the end of the event.

Miss Haiti Raquel Péliissier was announced the first runner-up while Miss Columbia Andrea Tovar was named the second runner-up in the pageant.

India's Roshmitha Harimurthy could not even make it to the top 15.

### **About Miss Universe**

- Miss Universe is an annual international beauty pageant.
- It is run by the Miss Universe Organization.
- It was founded in 1952 by the California-based clothing company Pacific Knitting Mills, and the Miss Universe Organization.
- The current Miss Universe logo, "the woman with stars", was created in the year 1998.
- The International Pageant of Pulchritude first used the title Miss Universe in 1926. The competition was held annually until 1935. However, the Great Depression and other events preceding World War II led to its demise.
- The first Miss Universe Pageant was held in Long Beach, California in 1952. The crown was won by Finland's Armi Kuusela.

## **Dr Vijay Bhatkar appointed as Chancellor of Nalanda University**

President of India Pranab Mukherjee appointed Dr Vijay Bhatkar as the Chancellor of Nalanda University with effect from 25 January 2017.

Dr. Bhatkar will hold the office for a term of three years from the date of his appointment as provided under the Section 11 (3) of the Nalanda University Act, 2010.

### **About Dr Vijay Bhatkar**

- He is one of the most acclaimed scientists and IT leaders of India.
- He is best known as the architect of India's first supercomputer PARAM.
- He is the founding Executive Director of C-DAC, India's national initiative in super computing.
- He is credited with the creation of several national institutions like C-DAC, ER&DC, IIITM-K, I2IT, ETH Research Lab, MKCL and India International Multiversity.

### **About Nalanda University**

- The revived university is located at Rajgir in Nalanda District in Bihar.
- It is a non-state, non-profit, secular and self-governing international institution mandated to be

engaged in the pursuit of intellectual, philosophical, historical and spiritual studies.

- It was established through Nalanda University Act, 2010 and formally inaugurated on 19 September 2014.

- The President of India is the Visitor of the Nalanda University.

### **About ancient Nalanda University**

- The ancient Nalanda University was established in 427 AD during the reign of Gupta king Sakraditya.
- It was destroyed in 1193 AD by the Turkish army of the Bakhtiyar Khilji.
- Khilji was the military general of Qutb-ud-din Aibak's army.

## **7th National Voters' Day observed with theme Empowering Young and Future Voters**

### **25 January: National Voters' Day**

The 7th National Voters' Day (NVD) was observed across the country on 25 January 2017 by the Election Commission of India.

The theme for the 7th National Voters' Day is '**Empowering Young and Future Voters.**'

The Commission's objective through NVD is to increase enrolment of voters, especially of the newly eligible ones.

The National function of the NVD was held in New Delhi and presided over by President of India, Pranab Mukherjee.

### **About National Voters' Day**

- The National Voters' Day is observed every year on 25 January.
- It observed annually to mark the anniversary of Election Commission of India.
- The National Voters' Day is also utilised to spread awareness among voters regarding effective participation in the electoral process.

### **About Election Commission of India**

- The Election Commission of India is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering election processes in the country.
- It administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, state legislatures, and the offices of the President and Vice President in India.
- It operates under the authority of Article 324 of the Constitution of India.
- Under the Indian Constitution, the Commission has the powers to act in an appropriate manner when the enacted laws make insufficient provisions to deal with a given situation in the conduct of an election.

# LET US GROOM YOU FOR YOUR DREAM CAREER



**PANACEA BHARTI Institute**

- Opp. New Court, Near Bhaibala Chowk, Ferozepur Road, Ludhiana.
- PAU Gate No. 3 Road, Gobind Nagar, Ludhiana.
- SCO 37, Sector 32 Mkt. Chandigarh Road, Ludhiana

**M : 9888 405 906** [www.panaceabharti.com](http://www.panaceabharti.com)