

CURRENT AFFAIRS : 1st May 2017 to 15th May 2017

(Sources: The Hindu, The Indian Express, Business Standard, PIB, Livemint)

GS : 2 - POLITY (BILL-ACTS)

Real estate Act will come into force

(The Hindu)

- The Real Estate Regulatory Act, 2016 (RERA) comes into force on May 1, 2017.
- It is aimed not only at bringing in more transparency and accountability but also provide mechanisms to simplify and regulate the buying and selling of all types of properties.

Key Points:

- Buyers and developers of real estate property can seek relief by approaching Real Estate Regulatory Authorities against violation of the contractual obligations and other provisions of the Act.
- The act provides for the mandatory registration of projects and real estate agents.
- The act mandates depositing 70% of the funds collected from buyers in a separate bank account for construction of the project.
- The funds could be withdrawn only for construction purposes.
- The act prescribes penalty on developers if the project is delayed. The project developers are required to disclose the project details on the website of the regulator and need to provide quarterly updates on construction progress.
- Under the act, the Regulatory authorities are required dispose of complaints in 60 days and Appellate Tribunals will be required to adjudicate cases in 60 days.

Real change around the corner

The Real Estate Regulation and Development Act aims to protect the interests of the consumer. Here's a quick take on the rules:

- All new projects are to be registered with the regulator
- All projects are to be sold only on basis of carpet area
- Licences of reselling agents can with be withdrawn in case of complaints
- Homebuyer can complain directly to the regulator
- Consumer complaints to be resolved in 60 days by the regulator
- Developer has liability for 5 years to repair structural defects
- Developer has to deposit 70% of money into the project's an escrow account
- Developer has to ensure that all points mentioned in advertisements are true
- Advance amount to be collected is capped at 10%, prior to inking agreement
- Deadline for rules, to implement provisions of the Act, to be formed by the State governments was Oct. 3 (2016)
- Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have formed draft rules. Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Gujarat have notified rules
- Act mandates that state governments should establish the Real Estate Regulatory Authority within a year from May 1, 2016
- Each Regulatory Authority to form regulations concerning day-to-day functioning within 3 months from being constituted
- Real Estate Appellate Tribunals to be formed by April 30, 2017
- Title insurance, which protects buyers against fraud, is mandatory for the builder

Developer will not be able to divert money to other projects without completing the current project

GS : 3 - ECONOMY (BANKING)

RBI asks ARCs to have a minimum net corpus of Rs. 100 crore by 2019

(Indian Express)

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has asked all the existing asset reconstruction companies (ARCs) to have a minimum net owned fund (NOF) of Rs100 crore by March 2019.
- As per the notification of RBI, the existing ARCs not meeting the minimum NOF criteria need to achieve the minimum NOF of Rs100 crore latest by 31 March 2019.

Asset Reconstruction companies (ARCs):

- ARC is a company registered under Section 3 of the Securitization and reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act, 2002.
- ARCs are regulated by the RBI.
- They are the specialised agencies with a main role of resolving the stressed assets issue of the Indian banking system.
- They are involved in buying bad loans from Indian banks to turn them around.
- Narsimham Committee – II (1998) proposed setting up of ARCs on the similar lines with that of asset management companies present globally.

GS : 3 - ECONOMY

Sebi finalizes norms for listing of green bonds

(The Hindu)

- Regulator Sebi has finalized norms for issuance and listing of green bonds, which will help in raising funds from capital markets for investment in the renewable energy space.

Green bonds:

- Green bonds are like any other debt instrument but the funds raised from such a bond sale are used exclusively for renewable energy projects.
- Green bonds enhances an issuer's reputation, as it helps in showcasing their commitment to wards sustainable development.

MISCELLANEOUS

Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvITs)

- InvITs are similar to mutual funds. While mutual funds provide an opportunity to invest in equity stocks, an InvIT allows one to invest in infrastructure projects such as road and power.
- InvITs are registered as trusts with SEBI and there are four parties — trustee, sponsors, investment manager and project manager.
- As per present regulations, InvIT investments are not open for small and retail investors. The minimum application size for InvIT units is ₹10 lakh. The main investors could be foreign institutional investors, insurance and pension funds and domestic institutional investors (like mutual funds, banks) and super-rich individuals.
- InvITs raise funds from many investors and directly invest in infrastructure projects or through a special purpose vehicle.
- Two types of InvITs have been allowed:
 1. Which invests in completed and revenue generation infrastructure projects; the other, which has the flexibility to invest in completed or under-construction projects.
 2. InvITs which invest in completed projects take the route of public offer of its units, while those investing in under construction projects take the route of private placement of units.
- Both forms are required to be listed on stock exchanges.

Maharashtra becomes First State to Use Automated Weather Stations (AWS)

- Maharashtra government has inaugurated the state's first automatic weather station at Dongargaon in Nagpur.
- The state government proposes to install such weather stations across the state on a public private partnership (PPP) mode.
- The weather stations will be helpful in measuring the wind direction, wind speed, air temperature, relative humidity and record amount of rainfall.
- The information gathered by the weather stations would be shared among the farmers by making them available on Mahavedh portal (Maharashtra agriculture weather information network) as well as on the mobile application of Skymet.
- Weather forecast firm Skymet Weather Private Ltd will be setting up these weather stations.

Indian Railways will use RFID tags to Track Wagons and Coaches

- Leveraging information technology in a big way, the Indian Railways is set to make use of the radio-frequency identification tags (RFID) for tracking of wagons, coaches and locomotives to ensure the effective and transparent functioning of the system.
- The trackside readers that will be installed at stations and other key points would read the RFID tag fitted in the rolling stocks and would transmit the wagon identity over a network to a central computer.
- RFID tags will help the railways in knowing the exact location of wagons, locomotives and coaches.

GS : 3 - ENVIRONMENT

Rajasthan to set up bustard breeding centre

(The Hindu)

- The Rajasthan government will set up India's first captive breeding centre for the great Indian bustard in an

attempt to boost the wild population of the country's most critically endangered bird, which is the State bird of Rajasthan.

Key facts:

- Its last remnant wild population of about 90 in Rajasthan accounts for 95% of the total world population.
- A state-of-the-art egg hatching centre will be raised in the Desert National Park.
- After the chicks are raised, they would be transported to the desert for reintroduction in the wild.
- Captive breeding had succeeded with houbara in UAE and great bustard in Spain.

Status

- Listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, in the CMS Convention and in Appendix I of CITES, as **Critically Endangered** on the IUCN Red List and the National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016).
- It has also been identified as one of the species for the recovery programme under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India.

GS : 2 - GOVERNANCE

Centre allows beacon use for emergencies

(The Hindu)

- The Centre has issued a notification allowing officials on **emergency and disaster management-related duties** to use beacons on top of their vehicles.
- The notification allows use of multi-coloured - **red, blue and white light** - beacons on top of official vehicles related to "**control of fire, police duty, defence forces or paramilitary forces for maintenance of law and order**".
- Officials on disaster management duties related to "natural disasters, including earthquake, flood, land slide, cyclone, tsunami, and man-made disasters such as nuclear disaster, chemical disaster and biological disaster" can use vehicles with multi-coloured beacons.
- The Transport Department of each State will need to issue a notice enlisting the list of authorities to whom the permission to use vehicles with multi-coloured lights.

GS : 3 - SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

3D printed cartilage to treat osteoarthritis

(Business Line)

- Researchers have successfully generated cartilage tissue using a 3D bioprinter, an advance that could lead to new treatments for **osteoarthritis**.

Key facts:

- In future, it should be possible to use 3D bioprinting to generate cartilage based on a patient's own, "backed-up" stem cells.
- This bioprinted tissue can be used to repair cartilage damage, or to treat osteoarthritis, in which joint cartilage degenerates and breaks down.
- The team used cartilage cells harvested from patients who underwent knee surgery, and these cells were then manipulated in a laboratory, causing them to rejuvenate and revert into "**pluripotent" stem cells** — cells that have the potential to develop into many different types of cells.
- The stem cells were then expanded and encapsulated in a composition of nanofibrillated cellulose and printed into a structure using a 3D bioprinter.
- Following printing, the stem cells were treated with growth factors that caused them to differentiate correctly, so that they formed cartilage tissue.
- Each individual stem cell is encased in nanocellulose, which allows it to survive the process of being printed into a 3D structure.

GS : 2 - GOVERNANCE

"One IP- Two Dispensaries" and "Aadhaar Based Online Claim Submission" Schemes on International Labour Day

(PIB)

- Under One IP- Two Dispensaries scheme ESIC has given an option to an Insured Person (IP) to choose two dispensaries, one for self and another for family through an employer.

- This will benefit all IPs, especially migrant workers who are working in other than home State, while their families are living in their native States.

Aadhaar based Online Claim Submission scheme:

- Under Aadhaar based Online Claim Submission scheme all EPF Members who have activated their UAN and seeded their KYC (Aadhaar) with EPFO will be able to apply for PF final settlement, Pension withdrawal benefit and PF part withdrawal from the their UAN Interface directly.

GS : 3 - SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Now, a portal to check radiation levels of mobile towers

- To clear 'myths and misconceptions' about radiation from mobile phone towers, the government launched a portal, '**Tarang Sanchar**', to allow people to check electro magnetic radiation (EMF) compliance status of mobile towers.
- Detailed information about any tower site, if requested, will be sent on email to the users. Additionally, any person can request for EMF emission measurement at a location by paying a nominal fee of ₹4,000 online, the **Department of Telecom (DoT)**, which has launched the portal.
- The tests will be conducted by the local Telecom Enforcement Resource and Monitoring (TERM) field unit of DoT and the test report will be provided on request.

MISCELLANEOUS

Prakash Javadekar Launches VIDYA VEERTA ABHIYAN

- The Minister for Human Resource and Development has launched Students for soldiers- a nationwide **Vidya – Veerta Abhiyan** to encourage Universities and educational institutions across the country to display portraits of Param Veer Chakra-decorated soldiers.
- Last year, the HRD Ministry had also unveiled Veergatha books on the 21 Param Veer Chakra awardees for educating school children about the sacrifices made by the Param Veer Chakra awardees.
- The Param Veer Chakra (PVC) is India's highest military decoration awarded to officers or enlisted personnel from all branches of the Indian military for displaying distinguished acts of valour during wartime.

Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)

- Government of India has approved the introduction of a new credit linked subsidy programme called Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) by merging the two schemes that were in operation till 31.03.2008, namely **Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY)** and **Rural Employment Generation Programme (REGP)** for generation of employment opportunities through establishment of micro enterprises in rural as well as urban areas.
- PMEGP is a central sector scheme **administered by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME)**.
- At the national level, the Scheme is being implemented by **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)**, a **statutory organization** under the administrative control of the Ministry of MSME as the single **nodal agency**.
- At the State level, the Scheme will be implemented through State KVIC Directorates, State Khadi and Village Industries Boards (KVIBs) and District Industries Centres (DICs) and banks.
- The Government subsidy under the Scheme will be routed by KVIC through the identified Banks for eventual distribution to the beneficiaries / entrepreneurs in their Bank accounts.

Eligibility

- Individuals **above 18 years of age**
- **VIII Std.** pass required for project above Rs.10.00 lakhs in manufacturing and above Rs. 5.00 lakhs for Service Sector
- Self Help Groups and Charitable Trusts
- Institutions Registered under Societies Registration Act- 1860
- Production based Co-operative Societies

Salient features of the scheme

- The Scheme is implemented through KVIC and State/UT Khadi & V.I. Boards in Rural areas and through District Industries Centres in Urban and Rural areas in ratio of **30:30:40 between KVIC / KVIB / DIC** respectively.
- No income ceiling for setting up of projects.
- Assistance under the Scheme is available **only to new units to be established**.
- Existing units or units already availed any Govt. Subsidy either under State/Central Govt. Schemes are not eligible.
- Any industry including Coir Based projects excluding those mentioned in the negative list.
- Per capita investment should not exceed **Rs. 1.00 lakhs in plain areas and Rs. 1.50 lakhs in Hilly areas**.
- Maximum project cost of **Rs. 25.00 lakhs in manufacturing sector and Rs. 10.00 lakhs in Service Sector**.

Food fortification

- As defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), fortification refers to "the practice of deliberately increasing the content of an essential micronutrient, ie. vitamins and minerals (including trace elements) in a food irrespective of whether the nutrients were originally in the food before processing or not, so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and to provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health", whereas enrichment is defined as "synonymous with fortification and refers to the addition of micronutrients to a food which are lost during processing".

Food for thought

Fortification of eatables is aimed at fighting malnutrition

What it means

Fortification is the addition of key vitamins and minerals, such as iron, iodine, zinc, Vitamins A & D, to staple foods such as rice, milk and salt to improve their nutritional content



- The nutrients may or may not have been originally present in the food before processing
- It is a simple, proven, cost-effective and complementary strategy in use across the globe
- The draft Food Safety and Standards Regulations, 2016, prescribe the standards for fortification of salt, oil, milk, and rice

SpaceX makes first U.S. military launch

(The Hindu)

- SpaceX has blasted off a secretive **U.S. government satellite**, known only as **NROL-76**, marking the first military launch for the **California-based aerospace company** headed by billionaire tycoon **Elon Musk**.
- The payload for the **National Reconnaissance Office**, which makes and operates **spy satellites** for the United States, soared into the sky atop a **Falcon 9 rocket**.

GS : 1 - ART AND CULTURE

A festival of drums with a message

(The Hindu)

- The banks of the Bharathapuzha at Perumparamba, near Edappal, are set to reverberate with the sounds of the largest traditional percussion ensemble in Kerala.
- Exponents of 'panchavadyam', 'thayambaka', 'melappadam', 'villinmel thayambaka', 'mizhavu' and 'thudikottu', besides other instruments will be there at the event.

Panchavadyam:

- Literally meaning an orchestra of five instruments, is basically a temple art form that has evolved in Kerala.
- Of the five instruments, four - timila, maddalam, ilathalam and idakka - belong to the percussion category, while the fifth, kombu, is a wind instrument.
- Panchavadyam is characterised by a pyramid-like rhythmic structure with a constantly increasing tempo coupled with a proportional decrease in the number of beats in cycles.

Thayambaka:

- It is a type of solo chenda.
- A Chenda is a cylindrical wooden drum, and has a length of two feet and a diameter of one foot.
- It is a performance that developed in Kerala, in which the main player at the centre improvises rhythmically on the beats of half-a-dozen or a few more chenda and ilathalam players around.

Mizhavu:

- Mizhavu is a big copper drum played as an accompanying percussion instrument in the Koodiyattam and Koothu, performing arts of Kerala.
- It is played by the Ambalavasi Nambiar community.
- After 1965, the cast barrier having broken, anyone can play mizhavu in koodiyattam.

Koodiyattam:

- It is a form of Sanskrit theatre traditionally performed in the state of Kerala.
- It is officially recognised by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.
- It is the only surviving specimen of the ancient Sanskrit theatre.
- It finds several mentions in ancient sangam literature.

Koothu:

- Koothu is an informal dance structure, which originated in Tamil land.
- The performances generally depict scenes from ancient epics like Ramayana, Mahabharatha and other classical epics.
- There are traditionally no dialogues, instead only songs.

GS : 3 - SCIENCE AND TECH

Indian Army successfully test-fires advanced Block-III version of Brahmos cruise missile (Indian Express)

- The Indian Army, adding another feather to its cap, successfully test-fired an advanced version of the Brahmos land-attack cruise missile in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- The test firing of the block-III version of the missile demonstrated the weapon’s unmatched lethality of hitting the centre of a designated target with “bull’s eye” precision.

Brahmos Missile:

- The Brahmos is a supersonic cruise missile developed by a joint-venture between Russia’s Mashinostroyeniya and India’s Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- It operates on ‘fire and forget principal’ and is capable of being launched from land, sea, sub-sea and air against sea and land targets.
- It is capable of carrying a warhead of 300 kilogram and has top supersonic speed of Mach 2.8 to 3 (that is roughly three times the speed of sound).
- It is a two-stage missile, the first one being solid and the second one ramjet liquid propellant.
- It is hailed as the world’s fastest anti-ship cruise missile in operation.
- After India has become the member of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 2016, India and Russia have proposed to jointly develop a new generation of Brahmos missiles with a range of 600-km plus and capability to strike the targets with pinpoint accuracy.

GS : 3 - INFRASTRUCTURE

World’s Highest Railway Bridge to Come up Over Chenab River

- World’s highest railway bridge which will be 35 metres taller than the Eiffel Tower is to come up over the Chenab River in Jammu and Kashmir at a cost of around Rs. 1,100 crore in around two years from now.
- The bridge will connect Bakkal (Katra) and Kauri (Srinagar).
- The bridge will be a part of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail link project.
- The new railway bridge will be of an arch-shaped structure in hostile terrain.

GS : 2 - GOVERNMENT POLICIES

‘Skill councils have conflict of interests’ (The Hindu)

- The Government may soon review the public report of Sharda Prasad committee, that suggested the challenges in vocational education and training system of the country and convergence, synergy and rationalization of sector skill councils (SSCs).

sector skill councils(SSC):

- Sector Skill Councils are set up as autonomous industry-led bodies by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).
- They create Occupational Standards and Qualification bodies, develop competency framework, conduct Train the Trainer Programs, conduct skill gap studies and Assess and Certify trainees on the curriculum aligned to National Occupational Standards developed by them.

MISCELLANEOUS

Albino Orangutan

- A rare albino orangutan has been rescued on the Indonesian part of Borneo island where villagers were keeping the white-haired, blue-eyed creature in a cage.
- Native to Indonesia and Malaysia, orangutans are currently found in only the rainforests of Borneo and Sumatra.
- The Bornean orangutan (has three subspecies), which along with the Sumatran orangutan are Asia’s only great apes, is classified by the IUCN as “critically endangered”.

Vidya-Veerta Abhiyan

- Universities and educational institutions across country will soon have a “wall of heroes”, depicting portraits of soldiers who showed extraordinary courage in defending the nation.
- The Ministry of HRD has launched “Vidya, Veerta Abhiyan” to encourage varsities to display portraits of Param Veer Chakra-decorated soldiers.

GS : 2 - GOVERNANCE

Swachh Survekshan 2017: Indore cleanest city, Bhopal at no 2, Gonda dirtiest

(Indian Express)

- Indore has been declared the cleanest city in India among 434 cities surveyed for the government cleanliness ranking by the Quality Council of India, according to the Swachh Survekshan 2017 report.

Key facts:

- Madhya Pradesh’s capital — Bhopal — came second.
- Mysuru, which had topped the list in 2016, came fifth this year.
- State-wise, Gujarat has the highest number, with 12 of its cities among the top 50 clean cities followed by Madhya Pradesh with 11 and Andhra Pradesh with eight.
- Union Territory Chandigarh, which had stood second last year, slipped to the eleventh position this year.

GS : 1 - INDUSTRIES (GEOGRAPHY)

Cabinet clears National Steel Policy that favours Indian steelmakers

- The cabinet cleared wide-ranging economic measures on Wednesday, including a national steel policy that favours domestic manufacturers in government projects.

Highlights:

- All government tenders will give preference to domestically manufactured iron and steel products. There will be a condition in it (tender) so that the surplus capacity is consumed.
- Indian steel makers who import raw materials or intermediate products can claim the benefits of the domestic procurement provision if they add a minimum of 15% value to the product.
- The policy has a waiver for specific kinds of steel not manufactured in the country, or where domestic makers can’t meet the quality standards required by a project.
- The National Steel Policy 2017 aims to make India self-sufficient in steel production. It projects crude steel capacity of 300 million tonnes (mt), production of 255mt and per capita consumption of 158kg of finished steel by 2030-31, as against the current consumption of 61kg.
- The policy also envisages adequate local manufacturing to meet the demand for high-grade automotive steel, electrical steel, special steels and alloys for strategic applications by the same year. It also sees an increase in domestic availability of washed coking coal so as to reduce import dependence on coking coal from about 85% to

around 65% by 2030-31.

- India is the third largest producer of steel globally.

GS : 2 - GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Cabinet approves New Central Sector Scheme – SAMPADA

(PIB)

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for re-structuring the schemes of the **Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI)** under **new Central Sector Scheme – SAMPADA (Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters)** for the **period 2016-20** coterminous with the 14th Finance Commission cycle.
- The objective of SAMPADA is to supplement agriculture, modernize processing and decrease agri-waste.
- SAMPADA is an **umbrella scheme** incorporating ongoing schemes of the Ministry like **Mega Food Parks, Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure, Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure, etc.** and also new schemes like **Infrastructure for Agro-processing Clusters, Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages, Creation / Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities.**
- The SAMPADA is a comprehensive package to give a renewed thrust to the food processing sector in the country.
- The implementation of SAMPADA will result in creation of modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management from farm gate to retail outlet.
- Government has taken various other measures to boost food processing sector as follows:
 - (a) To provide impetus to investment in food processing and retail sector, govt. has allowed **100% FDI** in trading including through e-commerce, in respect of food products manufactured and / or produced in India.
 - (b) The govt. has also set up a **Special Fund of Rs. 2000 crore** in **NABARD** to make available affordable credit at concessional rate of interest to designated food parks and agro processing units in the designated food parks.
 - (c) Food and agro-based processing units and cold chain infrastructure have been brought under the ambit of **Priority Sector Lending (PSL)** to provide additional credit for food processing activities and infrastructure thereby, boosting food processing, reducing wastage, create employment and increasing farmers' income.

GS : 2 - ECONOMY

Package to resolve NPAs gets Cabinet nod

(The Hindu)

- The government cleared a package to resolve the persistent rise in non-performing assets that are plaguing public sector banks and denting credit growth.

Key facts:

- The package, which includes an ordinance to amend the **Banking Regulation Act of 1949** to empower the Reserve Bank of India to take more actions to check bad loans, is learnt to have been cleared by the government during the meeting of the Union Cabinet on Wednesday.
- The economic survey of 2016-17 has pointed out the **twin balance sheet problem** — that is, stressed companies on one hand and NPA-laden banks on the other and advocates that a centralised **Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency (PARA)** be established to deal with the problem of bad loans.

GS : 2 - INFRASTRUCTURE

Chenab to get tallest rail bridge

(The Hindu)

- The Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir will be spanned by the **world's highest railway bridge** that is expected to be 35 metres taller than Paris' Eiffel Tower.
- Designed to withstand wind speeds of up to 260 km per hour, the 1.315-km- long "engineering marvel" will connect Bakkal (Katra) and Kauri (Srinagar).
- The bridge forms a crucial link in the 111-km stretch between **Katra and Banihal**, which is part of the **Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail link project.**

Blast-proof structure

- The bridge will be made of 63-mm thick special blast-proof steel as the region is prone to frequent terror attacks. Its concrete pillars will be designed to withstand explosions.

MISCELLANEOUS

Andhra Pradesh’s Banganapalle mango gets Geographical Indication tag

- The Registrar of Geographical Indications Registry (RGIR) has granted Banganapalle the GI status on a six-year-old application from Andhra Pradesh’s horticulture department.

Extra Neutral alcohol or ENA

- The Extra Neutral alcohol or ENA is a high distilled alcohol without any impurities and others destined to be used in the high cosmetic industry, perfumeries as well as for the production of alcoholic beverages such as whisky, vodka, gin, cane, liqueurs and alcoholic fruit beverages and aperitifs.
- The Patna High Court has set aside the Bihar government’s decision to ban production of Extra Neutral Alcohol (ENA) by several distillery and liquor companies in the State.

GS : 3 - GEOGRAPHY (CROPPING PATTERN)

Banganapalle mango gets GI tag

(The Hindu)

- The succulent Banganapalle mango has received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag, making **Andhra Pradesh** the proprietor of the variety known for its sweetness.

Key points:

- Banganapalle mangoes have been grown for over 100 years in Andhra Pradesh.
- It is also known as Beneshan, Baneshan, Benishan, Chappatai and Safeda.
- The fruits can retain their quality under cold storage even up to three months.
- The prominent characteristic of Banganapalle mangoes is that their skin has very light spots, stone is oblong in shape and has very thin seed with sparse and soft fibre all over.

GI tag:

- A GI tag indicates that the product comes from a specific region.
- GI is covered under the Intellectual Property Rights and the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.
- A GI tag certifies the origin of a product or produce from a region as the quality or other features of the product is attributable only to the place of its origin.
- The tag helps farmers or manufacturers to get a better price in the market.

GS

eVIN Project of Health Ministry becomes global best practise in immunisation

(Business Standard)

- Members of a five-country international delegation interacted with the Health Secretary to learn more about the global best practice of eVIN (electronic vaccine intelligence network) project of the Health Ministry and to understand how it is being implemented in the country and the ways in which it be replicated in their own countries.
- Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal and Thailand are mulling to replicate India’s immunisation project.

Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN) Project:

- eVIN is an indigenously developed technology system in India that **digitizes vaccine stocks** and **monitors the temperature of the cold chain through** a smartphone application.
- The eVIN is presently being implemented across twelve states in India.
- eVIN aims to support India’s ‘**Universal Immunisation Programme**’ by providing real-time information on vaccine stocks and flows, and storage temperatures across all cold chain points in states.
- The project is being implemented by **the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.
- eVIN project focus on three things – technology, governance and human resources.

GS : 3 - ECONOMY

Union Cabinet clears Ordinance to tackle Bad Loans

(The Hindu)

- The Union Cabinet has cleared an ordinance that seeks to amend the Banking Regulation Act to give more powers to Reserve Bank of India to deal with non-performing assets (NPAs) in the banking sector.
- Amendments will empower RBI to act against loan defaulters and defaulting companies under the bankruptcy code.
- Amendments will enable RBI to set up multiple oversight committees to deal with NPAs.
- Amendments will be made to make sure that bankers opting for resolution of bad debts are ring-fenced from any regulatory backlash.
- The NPAs would be resolved faster as the bankruptcy code provides for a time-bound winding up of companies and recovery of secured loans.

MISCELLANEOUS

Agni-II Ballistic Missile

- Agni-II missile is a **nuclear-capable, surface-to-surface** missile which forms a part of India's strategic forces arsenal for nuclear deterrence with a range of **over 2000 km**. It can carry a payload of 1000kg.
- It is equipped with an advanced high accuracy navigation system and guided by a novel state-of-the-art command and control system.
- It is powered by a **solid rocket propellant system** and already been inducted into the army.

GS : 3 - SCIENCE AND TECH (SPACE)

India launches South-Asia satellite

(The Hindu)

- The "South Asia satellite" for use by countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) region has been launched.
- During the 2014 SAARC summit that held in Nepal, the plan for the satellite was announced and subsequently all SAARC countries have joined it **except Pakistan**.
- Hence, the beneficiaries of the satellite will be Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives.
- The **total cost of launching the satellite would be** met by the Government of India.

Key points:

- The 2,230 kg satellite called GSAT-09 has been built by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- It has 12 Ku-band transponders.
- The satellite was launched from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota using a Geostationary Launch Vehicle (GSLV) Mk-II launch vehicle.
- It will have a mission life of over 12 years.
- The launch vehicle, **GSLV-F09** is about 50m tall and is the 11th flight of the GSLV.
- Also, the launch is GSLV's fourth consecutive flight with the indigenous Cryogenic Upper Stage (CUS) engine.
- The satellite will provide a full range of applications and services in the fields of telecommunication and broadcasting applications, namely, Television, Direct-to-Home (DTH), Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSATs), Tele-education, Telemedicine and Disaster Management Support.
- The participating countries would be made responsible for the content generation and its use.

GS : 3 - SECURITY

Entire Assam declared 'disturbed'

(The Hindu)

- The Centre has declared the entire State of Assam a "disturbed" area under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act for three more months, citing various violent activities by insurgent groups ULFA, NDFB and others.
- The Ministry said there were 75 incidents of violence in Assam in 2016 in which 33 people, were killed.

What are 'disturbed' areas?

- The state or central government considers those areas as 'disturbed' "by reason of differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities."

GS : 3 - SCIENCE AND TECH

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and Phage therapy for Antibody resistance

(Indian Express)

- Phage therapy has been emerged as a new counter measure for Antibody resistance.
- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the ability of a microbe to resist the effects of medication previously used to treat them.
- Resistance arises through one of three ways: natural resistance in certain types of bacteria, genetic mutation, or by one species acquiring resistance from another.

New therapy:

- Bacteriophage therapy or simply phage therapy holds promise as an alternative treatment option.
- Bacteriophages are viruses that infect and kill bacteria.
- The revitalisation of phage therapy has received increased global attention since the appearance of multidrug-resistant bacteria.
- The most striking advantage of bacteriophage therapy is the ability to tailor treatment accurately to kill the pathogenic bacteria provided the diagnostic procedures are highly accurate.

MISCELLANEOUS

Facebook Launches 'Express Wi-Fi'

- Facebook has launched its "Express Wi-Fi" commercially in India.
- The service is now available via 700 hotspots across four states of Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Meghalaya.
- "Express Wi-Fi" services are currently active in Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania.
- "Express Wi-Fi" services will complement mobile data offerings by providing a low-cost, high bandwidth service allowing users to get online for accessing apps, downloading contents amongst other things at affordable rates.
- Anyone will be able to access the Express Wi-Fi network by signing up with an Express Wi-Fi retailer and purchasing a daily, weekly or monthly data pack.
- They will then be allowed to start browsing by connecting to the Express Wi-Fi hotspot.

India's First Private Sector Small Arms Manufacturing Plant

- India's first private sector small arms manufacturing plant has been inaugurated in Madhya Pradesh to supply world class weapons to the armed forces in line with the India's defence indigenisation programme.
- The plant is a joint venture between India's Punj Lloyd and Israel Weapon Systems.

The US' Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system

- THAAD is operational in South Korea to guard against missile threats emanating from North Korea.
- Salient Features THAAD, is a missile defence system capable of intercepting and destroying short and medium-range ballistic missiles in their final flight phase.
- Each THAAD system consists of interceptors, launchers, a radar, a fire control unit and support equipment.
- Its role is to simply track and destroy missiles.

GS : 3 - DISASTER MANAGEMENT

50 school students fall ill after chemical leak

(The Hindu)

- Over 500 students, nine teachers and a security guard, were admitted to various hospitals after they inhaled poisonous fumes from a chemical spill near their schools.
- The chemical had spilled from a container 400 metres from their schools near the Inland Container Depot (ICD) in southeast Delhi's Tughlaqabad.

- The container full of **2-chloro-5-chloromethylpyridine** used in the **manufacture of pesticides**

GS : 3 - SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

India's first BIO-CNG fuel plant inaugurated at Pune

- India's first BIO-CNG fuel plant was inaugurated in Pune, Maharashtra.
- The plant has been commissioned by city-based Primove Engineering Private Limited, and will use agricultural residue to generate CNG that can be used as fuel in automobiles.

What is Bio-CNG?

- BIO-CNG is the purified form of biogas from which all the **unwanted gases are removed** to get more than **93 per cent of pure methane gas**.
- In its composition and energy potential it is exactly similar to the commercially available natural gas.

A century of looking at our closest star, the sun

- Every day, since 1904, staff at the **Kodaikanal Solar Observatory in Tamil Nadu** have aimed their telescope at the sun, freezing the images of its disc.
- This data, spanning a hundred years and more, has now been digitised by astrophysicists from the **Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru**, and opened up to the public.

Achievements:

- It also throws light on major events that had an impact on the earth's magnetic field. While 'spectroheliograms' were taken at the Kodai observatory since 1902, it was in 1909 that the data was used to discover the Evershed effect – that gases in sunspots flowed radially outwards.
- The discovery by John Evershed put the KSO at par with the best observatories in the world. But its importance eventually declined as it was not upgraded or maintained.
- The 100-year data is unique also for its three sets of images, taken using different filters – **White light, H-alpha and Calcium-K**. It is known that the **sun has a layered structure**, and each of the data sets exposes a different layer.
- Under white light filtering, the sun's photosphere and the sunspots are visible, while the Calcium-K light can show layers some 2,000 km above this, in the chromosphere.
- The H-alpha images show up layers a little above the Calcium-K images. Features called "filaments" which are related to large expulsions of material from the sun's surface can be viewed in the Calcium-K sets.

European XFEL generates its first laser beam

- The European XFEL is going to be the world's biggest X-ray laser when it launches in September, but the science team is already celebrating as the device just completed its last major test, shining its powerful X-ray beam for the first time.

Key facts:

- The facility is **3.4 kilometers** (2.1 miles) long and produces X-rays through the **acceleration of electrons**, the so-called **synchrotron radiation**.
- The tiny particles are first pushed to almost the speed of light in a 2.1-kilometer (1.3-mile) accelerator tunnel and then 17,290 permanent magnets with alternating poles get them on a slalom course, forcing them to release short X-ray bursts.
- These X-rays have a wavelength of 0.8 nanometers, about the width of an atom and 500 times smaller than visible light. Their size makes the European XFEL an important instrument, as it can create pictures and movies with atomic resolution.
- Powerful X-ray lasers around the world have already been used to look at **biological and chemical reactions**, peering futher and further into the **nano** world.

MISCELLANEOUS

World Water Council

- The World Water Council is an international think tank founded in 1996, with its headquarters in **Marseille, France**.

- It has 341 members (March 2017) which include organizations from the UN and intergovernmental organizations, the private sector (construction, engineering and manufacturing companies), governments and ministries, academic institutions, international organizations, local governments, and civil society groups.
- Founders and constituent members of the World Water Council include the **International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature(IUCN), the International Water Association (IWA), Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux, the United Nations agencies UNDP and UNESCO, and the World Bank.**
- Its stated mission is "to promote awareness, build political commitment and trigger action on critical water issues at all levels, including the highest decision-making level, to facilitate the efficient conservation, protection, development, planning, management, and use of water in all its dimensions on an environmentally sustainable basis for the benefit of all life on earth."
- Every third year the World Water Council organizes the World Water Forum in close collaboration with the authorities of the hosting country.
- The Forum is the largest international event in the field of water.
- 1st World Water Forum took place at **Marrakesh, Morocco in 1997.**
- The upcoming **8th World Water Forum will** take place in **Brasilia, Brazil**, from 18 to 23 March 2018 under the overarching theme 'Sharing Water'.

CRPF Command Shifted from Kolkata to Chhattisgarh

- The strategic anti-Naxal operations command headquarters of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has been shifted back from **Kolkata to Raipur.**

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

- It replaced Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000,
- It provides that juveniles in conflict with Law in the age group of **16-18, involved in Heinous Offences, can be tried as adults.**

Kolkata doctor gets Asian Award

- Dr Jack Preger, the city of joy's 'Pavement Doctor', has become the first living westerner to be honoured at the Asian Awards.
- The award was in recognition of his extraordinary service in helping the poorest of the poor in Kolkata for past 38 years.
- It is the first time that a living person, not of Asian origin, has been honoured at the awards, though Mother Teresa had received a posthumous award last year.

GS : 3 - SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

A way to use water to convert methane into methanol

- A team of researchers from the Paul Scherrer Institute and ETH Zurich, both in Switzerland, has developed a one-step process that uses water to convert methane to methanol.

Why to convert?

- Methane has been identified as a greenhouse gas, one that is perhaps more of a problem even than carbon dioxide because it traps more heat (some studies have suggested 25 times as much)—fortunately, not nearly as much of it is emitted by humans into the atmosphere. It makes its way into the atmosphere due to animal flatulence and some industrial processes. It is also a byproduct at gas wells, where it is generally burned.
- Methanol, on the other hand, has been considered a good alternative to gasoline for use in automobile engines.
- It is currently made using a variety of techniques and basic materials including coal, natural gas and even municipal waste.
- One approach is to use high-pressure and high-temperature oxidation of the gas, but most consider such methods too technically challenging to use in places such as drilling sites.
- In this new effort, the researchers describe a simpler way to make methanol **using water (as an oxidant instead of oxygen) and methane.**

Process:

- In their process, water is used to oxidize methane over a bed of copper containing zeolite—the unique structure of the mineral lets the water behave as an oxidant.
- The team claims the process is 97 percent efficient, emitting only methanol and hydrogen. The method, the researchers note, is simple and easy enough that it could be used at drilling sites and the resulting methanol could be used as a liquid fuel or as an ingredient in making resins or plastics.
- The hydrogen could be used in any number of ways, including in fuel cells.

MISCELLANEOUS

Japan seeks Unesco status for sacred men-only island

- A small Japanese island which refuses access to women is to be nominated by the government as a future Unesco World Heritage site.
- Okinoshima, a sacred island off the coast of southern Kyushu, is one of five sites from the area that will reportedly be included in the government's bid for 2017 World Heritage status.
- The island, which covers less than 0.3 square miles, has long been famed in Japan as home to a sacred Munakata Taisha shrine, where fishermen would visit to pray for safety as far back as the fourth century.
- Perhaps most controversially, women have never been allowed to set foot on the island, which is owned by Munakata Taisha shrine and is widely respected by locals as a sacred place where Shinto gods reside.

Scientists use satellites to count endangered birds from space

- Albatrosses, one of the most iconic but also one of the most threatened groups of birds on the planet, are difficult to study in part because they breed on some of the world's remotest and most inaccessible islands.
- Scientists have now shown that the highest resolution satellite imagery is capable of "seeing" these birds from space, allowing researchers to count their numbers on remote islands directly from satellite images without ever having to go there.
- This is the first time that satellites have been used to count individual birds from space.

India to hold festival in Egypt to mark Rabindranath Tagore's birth anniversary

(Indian Express)

- India will organise a cultural festival in Egypt to mark the 156th birth anniversary of the famous Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore.
- Tagore Festival which is being organised by the Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (MACIC), the cultural wing of the Indian Embassy in Cairo.

Rabindranath Tagore:

- Rabindranath Tagore received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. He was the first non-European to win this prestigious award, in recognition for his collection of poems, 'Gitanjali'.
- Tagore is not unknown to Egypt. He visited Egypt as a young adolescent in 1878 and later as a famous poet-philosopher in 1926, when he met King Fouad and interacted with scholars in Alexandria and Cairo. His friendship with Egyptian poet Ahmed Shawki is well known and he wrote a moving eulogy on his friend's death in 1932.
- He was impressed by the strong literary trends and found great resonance in the intellectual movement in Egypt. He also wrote about the beautiful relationship between the noble Nile River and the flourishing civilization of Egyptians.
- The Tagore Festival is organised in cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, Cairo Opera House, Cultural Production Sector, Dancers' Guild and the Indian Community Association in Egypt.

GS : 3 - SECURITY

Act tough against Maoists, States told

(The Hindu)

- Home Minister asked the Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected States to take "ownership" in leading operations against the Maoists and called for an "aggressive approach" to solve the menace.
- Several States raised the issue of discontinuation of central schemes such as Special Infrastructure Scheme (SIS) and Integrated Action Plan (IAP) and a considerable reduction in central funds as an impediment to winning the

war against the Maoists.

Special Infrastructure Scheme (SIS):

- The Scheme of Special Infrastructure in Left Wing Extremism affected States was commenced in 11th five-year plan from the financial year 2008-09 with an outlay of Rs. 500 crores to cater critical infrastructure gaps of Security forces which could not be covered under any other scheme.
- The Scheme has been discontinued from Central assistance from the financial year 2015-16 as per recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission.

Integrated Action Plan (IAP)/ Additional Central Assistance (ACA) for LWE affected districts:

- The Planning Commission had commenced the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) in 2010-11 covering 60 Tribal and Backward districts for accelerated development by providing public infrastructure and services.
- This scheme of ACA was under implementation up to 2014-15 and discontinued from the central assistance from the financial year 2015-16.

GS : 2 - INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

India elected as President of UN-Habitat

(PIB)

- India has been unanimously elected as the President of the UN-Habitat.
- UN-Habitat, an organ of the United Nations' Organisation (UNO) reports to the United Nations General Assembly.
- This is only the third time that India has been elected as the President of UN-Habitat after 2007 and 1988.
- Subsequent to the election, Union Minister of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation M.Venkaiah Naidu will preside over the deliberations of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat for the next two years.

UN-Habitat:

- UN-Habitat, also known as United Nations Human Settlements Program is a UN agency responsible for sustainable urban development and human settlements.
- It was established in 1978 and has its headquarters in the UN Office at Nairobi, Kenya.
- It is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all.
- It is also a member of UNDP.
- UN-Habitat works in more than 70 countries in five continents focusing on seven areas: Urban Legislation, Land and Governance; Urban Planning and Design; Urban Economy; Urban Basic Services; Housing and Slum Upgrading; Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation; Urban Research and Capacity Development.

GS : 3 - SECURITY

The Union Home Ministry gives new Doctrine of "SAMADHAN" for use in security operations

(PIB)

- The Home Minister enunciated an operational strategy 'SAMADHAN' to fight Left Wing Extremism.
- There are 10 LWE affected states- Bihar, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Madhya Pradesh.
- As many as 12,000 citizens had lost their lives in Maoist violence over the last two decades.
- The elements of this strategy are S for Smart Leadership, A for Aggressive Strategy, M for Motivation and Training, A for Actionable Intelligence, D for Dashboard-based Key Result Areas and Key Performance Indicators, H for Harnessing Technology, A for Action Plan for Each Theatre and N for No access to Financing.
- Alongside aggressive operations, road construction works, setting up of telecommunication, power and railway facilities in the remote areas will be expedited.
- The home minister has also stressed for befitting strategies during the security operations and enhanced intelligence in tackling the Maoists.

GS : 2 - GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES (INDEXES)

Measurement of Liveability Index of Cities

- Ministry of Urban Development will launch measuring of Liveability Index of cities in the next month.

- The index will be based on indigenously evolved methodology.

KEY POINTS:

- The aim of the assessment will be to instil a sense of healthy competition among cities and towns in the country and to help them focus their attention on improving governance and infrastructure availability.
- Cities will be assessed on 15 core parameters relating to Governance, social infrastructure pertaining to education, health and safety and security, economic aspects and physical infrastructure like housing, open spaces, land use, energy and water availability, solid waste management, pollution etc.

MISCELLANEOUS

CORPAT

- CORPAT is a bilateral maritime exercise held between India and Indonesia under the broad ambit of strategic partnership.
- Both countries have been carrying out maritime exercise **twice a year** since 2002.
- The CORPAT exercise between the two navies carries search and rescue operations, institutes measures for vessels indulged in unlawful activities as well as control pollution.
- The main aim of CORPAT is to keep the vital part of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) safe and secure for commercial shipping, International trade and legitimate marine activities.

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

- WIPO is one of the 17 specialized agencies of the United Nations.
- It was created in 1967 “to encourage creative activity, to promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world.”
- It has currently 188 member states, administers 26 international treaties, and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Non-members are the states of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands, South Sudan and Timor-Leste. Palestine has observer status.
- India is a member of WIPO and party to several treaties administered by WIPO.

GS : 3 - ENVIRONMENT (BIODIVERSITY)

Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary hitches wagon to star tortoises

(The Hindu)

- An ambitious project of the Kerala Forest Department at the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary (CWS) to rehabilitate Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*) seized from smugglers has turned into a major success.
- This makes the CWS the only rehabilitation centre for star tortoises in the country.
- The CWS is the only place in Kerala where star tortoises are known to occur in the wild.

GS : 3 - ENVIRONMENT (BIODIVERSITY)

Kolar welcomes an Amur falcon

(The Hindu)

- The project has provided new evidence on altered flight patterns of the species.
- After a four-day crossing of the sea - a non-stop flight - it halted near Pune before "surprisingly" heading towards Kolar Gold Fields.
- "This is the first time one of our tagged birds with satellite tracking has gone south during this season, rather than fly across the Gangetic plains towards Nagaland, which is tracking three other falcons to better understand their migration routes.
- On their return, they fly over 5,500 km from Somalia into Northern India and then Southeast Asia.
- These birds follow rain, and air currents letting them to fly longer with little effort.

GS : 3 - SCIENCE AND TECH

India to replace Maitri station in Antarctica

(The Hindu)

- India has decided to replace the Maitri research station in Antarctica with a new one in the next three or four

years Ministry of Earth Sciences Secretary said.

- The country is poised to expand its research activity there and is procuring a ship with ice-cutting capacity, he added.

Indian Antarctic Program:

- The Indian Antarctic Program is a multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional program under the control of National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR), Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India.
- It was initiated in 1981 with the first Indian expedition to Antarctica.
- The program gained global acceptance with India's signing of the Antarctic Treaty and subsequent construction of the Dakshin Gangotri Antarctic research base in 1983, superseded by the Maitri base from 1990.
- The newest base commissioned in 2015 is Bharati, constructed out of 134 shipping containers.
- Under the program, atmospheric, biological, earth, chemical, and medical sciences are studied by India, which has carried out more than 30 scientific expeditions to the Antarctic.

MISCELLANEOUS

International Court of Justice

- The International Court of Justice commonly referred to as the World Court, ICJ or The Hague is the primary judicial branch of the United Nations (UN).
- Seated in the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands, the court settles legal disputes submitted to it by states and provides advisory opinions on legal questions submitted to it by duly authorized international branches, agencies, and the UN General Assembly.

Amur falcon

- The Amur falcon (*Falco amurensis*) is a small raptor of the falcon family.
- It breeds in south-eastern Siberia and Northern China before migrating in large flocks across India and over the Arabian Sea to winter in Southern Africa.
- Their diet consists mainly of insects, such as termites; during migration over the sea, they are thought to feed on migrating dragonflies.

Indian Navy ships; INS Karwar and Kakinada decommissioned

- Indian Naval Ships Karwar and Kakinada were recently decommissioned.
- INS Karwar (M67), was the first of the 'Natya' class minesweepers acquired from the erstwhile USSR. She was commissioned on 14 July 1986 at Riga (Russia) under the command of commander R K Sinha. The ship operated from Vishakhapatnam till 2013 after which, the ship was based at Mumbai. Manned by a crew of six officers and 90 sailors, INS Karwar had her motto 'Hamesha Tayyar'.
- INS Kakinada (M70), was the second of the same class and also commissioned at Riga on 23 December 1986. Like her sister ship, Kakinada also operated from Vishakhapatnam till 2013 before shifting base port to Mumbai.
- With the decommissioning of the two minesweepers, the Navy is now left with a fleet of four Soviet-origin minesweeping ships will also be decommissioned by the end of 2018.

GS : 3 - ECONOMY

Govt tells NGOs to open bank accounts in core banking format

- Tightening the rules for NGOs, the Home Ministry has asked as many as 5,845 organisations to open their accounts in banks having core banking facilities and furnish details for real time access to security agencies in case of any discrepancy.

KEY FACTS:

- The move came after it was detected that many NGOs have their bank accounts in cooperative banks or state government- owned apex banks or banks which **do not have core banking facilities**.
- The home ministry wants that all NGOs registered under the **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act mandatorily have their accounts in either nationalised banks or in a few private banks which have core banking facilities.**
- Under core banking system, all the branches of the networked banks are interconnected. This would allow the

security agencies to access the accounts of the NGOs on real time basis.

- The government has already cancelled registration of more than 10,000 NGOs in the last three years for allegedly non-filing of annual returns as mandated in the FCRA.

GS : 2 - GOVERNANCE

Rail regulator to define performance standards

- India's first rail regulator, **Rail Development Authority (RDA)**, would not just look at tariff structures for passenger and freight operations but also set standards of performance and efficiency that would be enforceable under the Railways Act.

Key facts:

- RDA can define standards of performance and efficiency; such standards would be notified as rules under the Railway Act to give a binding force upon acceptance
- The regulator will set "standards for efficiency and performance for consumer satisfaction in both passenger and freight" and will also be "authorised to check for deviations and suggest remedial measures."
- "The regulator will provide guidance on quantity and quality of service provided to passengers. These may include setting standards including hours of service, frequency of trains, capacity per coach, cleanliness level, and quality of water, food, furnishing and linen," .
- The resolution states that the regulator will be mandated to "suggest measures for absorbing new technologies for achieving desired efficiency and performance standards."
- The Railway Board also defined the structure of the RDA with a Chairman along with three members each for tariff, public private partnership and efficiency, standards and benchmarking.
- The regulator will, however, **not involve itself in policy making** of the Indian Railways, **operations and maintenance of the rail system, financial management, setting technical standards and compliance of safety standards.**
- It clarified that the regulator would **only make recommendations on tariff** and **not impose a tariff on the Indian Railways.**

Background:

- The Union Cabinet had last month approved setting up the rail regulator responsible for recommending **passenger fares, setting performance standards for rail operations and creating a level playing policy for private sector participation.**

GS : 2 - E-GOVERNANCE

PM launches integrated case management system of Supreme Court

(Indian Express)

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the integrated case management system of the Supreme Court in the presence of the Chief Justice of India.

Key facts:

- The new system, aimed at serving as a digital repository for case-related information, can be accessed at **www.sci.gov.in.**
- Its functions include the option of e-filing cases, checking listing dates, case status, online service of notice/summons, office reports and overall tracking of progress of a case filed with the apex court registry.
- It is also proposed that it will operate as an online gateway for payment of court fee and process fee.
- The system will help litigants access data and retrieve information online and will be a step towards a **paperless Supreme Court.**
- It will help usher transparency, reduce manipulation and help the litigant know about the progress of the case on a real time basis.
- Every central and state government department will know if they have been made party to the case and help them prepare accordingly. The court fee and process fee will be calculated online, which will help the litigant about the cost involved.

MISCELLANEOUS

PM to attend Vesak Day celebrations in Colombo

(Business Line)

- Prime Minister will travel to Sri Lanka to attend UN-recognised 14th International Vesak Day, which is celebrated to mark the birth, enlightenment and passing away of Lord Buddha.
- This is the first time that Sri Lanka will be hosting the International Vesak Day. The theme of the event is "Buddhist teachings for social justice and sustainable world peace".

In a first, transgenders get jobs at Kochi Metro

(The Hindu)

- Twenty-three of the 530 Kudumbasree workers to be posted at 11 stations in the Kochi Metro's Aluva-Palarivattom corridor will be from the transgender community.
- While better educated among the community will be posted at ticket counters, the rest will be deputed for housekeeping works at stations.
- This is the first time a government owned company has formally appointed members of the transgender community.

National Technology Day on May 11

- National Technology Day is a very special day for Indian Technology since 1999. It is so significant because India achieved a huge technological advancement on the day.
- The first, indigenous aircraft "Hansa-3" was test flown at Bangalore on this day.
- Not only this, India also performed successful test firing of the **Trishul missile** on the same day.
- India also executed three successful **nuclear tests**, carried out at **Pokhran, in Rajasthan May 11**.

NATIONAL

Telangana hosted first Videsh Sampark

Telangana hosted the first outreach program of the Ministry of External Affairs 'Videsh Sampark' to engage the State governments in creating awareness about various programmes of the Ministry.

It was inaugurated by the Minister of State for External Affairs, Gen. V.K. Singh. The conference will create awareness on the schemes regard to consular and passport services, engagement with overseas Indians, welfare and protection of overseas Indians.

Also, Telangana has become the first state in the country where the pilot 'e-Sanad' project for online attestation of documents, was rolled out.

The President Confers Florence Nightingale Awards to 35 Nurses

The **Florence Nightingale awards** are given to the outstanding nursing personnel employed in Central, State/UTs. Nurses working in Government, Voluntary Organizations, Mission institutions and the private institutions can apply with the due recommendation of concerned State Government. The Florence Nightingale Awards carries Rs.50,000/- cash, a certificate, a citation certificate and a Medal.

GOVERNANCE

Nod for GM mustard

India's central biotech regulator, Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) has cleared the genetically modified (GM) Mustard for commercial cultivation and recommended its approval to the environment ministry.

- The GM mustard, developed by a Delhi University institution
- is only the second food crop which got its clearance from the central regulator.
- The GEAC had earlier in 2010 cleared the Bt Brinjal but the decision was not accepted by then environment minister Jairam Ramesh.
- Currently, only Bt Cotton – a non-food GM crop – is commercially cultivated in the country.

GM crop?

A GM or transgenic crop is a plant that has a novel combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology.

GEAC:

The **Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)** is the apex body constituted in the Ministry of Environment and Forests under 'Rules for Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells 1989', under the Environment Protection Act, 1986. It approves activities involving large scale use of hazardous microorganisms and recombinants in research and industrial production from the environmental angle. The GEAC is also responsible for approval of proposals relating to release of genetically engineered organisms and products into the environment including experimental field trials (Biosafety Research Level trial-I and II known as BRL-I and BRL-II).

Public affairs index

Public affairs index (PAI) for the year 2017 has been released. The PAI aims to rank the states of India objectively in the field of governance based on various focus subjects and indicators and is an initiative of the **Public Affairs Committee (PAC)**.

- The survey was based on 10 themes, 26 focus subjects and 82 indicators. The report was based on a wide range of themes such as essential infrastructure, support to human development, social protection, women and children, crime, law and order, delivery of justice, environment, transparency and accountability, fiscal management and economic freedom.
- The PAC is a not-for-profit think-tank focussed on good governance, which was established in 1994.

Election Commission of India Launches National Contact Centre

- The Commission has added another feather to its cap with the launch of National Contact Centre with a toll-free No. 1800111950.
- Now any citizen from any part of the country can call on the toll-free in English or Hindi with any query or complaint at any time of the day.
- Callers can enquire on subjects such as elections, voting dates, EPIC, electoral roll, online registration etc. and lodge a complaint by simply dialing in to the toll free no.
- The National Contact Centre is operated on a National Grievance Redressal System Software.
- This software is a single window platform to manage complaints and feedback received through calls, emails, sms and website access in an integrated and time-bound manner.

HEALTH

Pneumonia vaccine to be part of immunisation drive

- India has rolled out the long-awaited anti-pneumonia vaccine as part of the government's **Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)**.
- The vaccine will protect children against severe forms of pneumococcal disease, such as pneumonia and meningitis.
- The vaccine will give protection against 13 types of pneumococcal bacteria which cause pneumonia disease.

UIP:

Universal Immunization Programme is a vaccination program launched by the Government of India in 1985. It became a part of Child Survival and Safe Motherhood Programme in 1992 and is currently one of the key areas under National Rural Health Mission(NRHM) since 2005.

The program now consists of vaccination for 12 diseases- tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus, poliomyelitis, measles, Hepatitis B, Diarrhoea, Japanese Encephalitis, rubella, Rotavirus and Pneumonia.

ENVIRONMENT

Aquatic animal diseases revisited

The national surveillance programme for aquatic animal diseases in India, one of the largest fish disease surveillance programme implemented in the country, is all set to begin a new phase.

- A road map proposed for taking the surveillance programme to the next level includes developing disease-free zones and targeted active surveillance for fish pathogens in India. The programme is led by the ICAR-National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBFGR).

The programme includes monitoring of the disease status of susceptible populations and would provide a general picture of prevalence of diseases in the country. It will also provide a means for rapid detection of new and exotic infectious diseases through advanced diagnostic techniques; help in certifying freedom from diseases of concern

within a defined geographical area or a specific population and give boost to our aquatic animal exports.

- The programme would also result in assessing the efficiency of disease control programmes. It will also help in developing appropriately trained and dedicated personnel who can understand normal health patterns and describe the abnormalities. Finally, this programme will help in providing scientifically accurate and cost-effective information for assessing and managing risks of pathogen transfer associated with trade in aquatic animals and improve production efficiency.
- The programme is currently being implemented in 16 States and three Union Territories.

Objectives of disease surveillance programme:

- To provide means for rapid detection of new and exotic infectious disease.
- To provide evidence of freedom from diseases of concern within a defined geographical area or a specific population.
- To collect the information on distribution and occurrence of diseases of concern.
- To assess the efficiency of disease control programmes with a defined geographical area.
- To improve reporting requirements to World organization for Animal Health(OIE) and regional Quarterly Aquatic Animal Disease Reporting System and enhance compliance to OIE standards.

SECURITY

Ransomware Cyber Attack Plays Havoc

- A global cyberattack has crippled nearly hundred countries, including India.
- A cyber gang called Shadow Brokers, which is a mysterious organization is held responsible for this massive cyberattack.
- The organisation has carried out the attack by stealing a hacking tool called 'Eternal Blue' from the National Security Agency (NSA), America's powerful military intelligence unit.
- The hacking tool Eternal Blue gives unprecedented access to all computers using Microsoft Windows. It was developed by NSA to gain access to computers used by terrorists and enemy states.
- Ransomware is a type of malicious software when infected restricts the user access until a ransom is paid to unlock it.
- Hackers have spread ransomware known as WannaCry, WanaCrypt0r 2.0, WannaCry and WCry, often through emails. The files in the infected computers gets locked up in such a way that the user cannot access them anymore. It then demands payment in cryptocurrency Bitcoin to retrieve the locked files.
- Finance ministers and central bank governors of G7 nations such as the United States, Canada, Japan, France, Germany, Italy and Britain have agreed to strengthen cooperation to counter cyber threats such as the present global online attack.

INFRASTRUCTURE

World bank's Power Accessibility List

India has jumped 73 spots to be ranked 26th in World Bank's electricity accessibility list. The country was ranked 99th in 2014.

Out of the 18,452 villages which lacked electricity, over 13,000 has been provided access to electricity. In addition, a person applying for new electricity connection would be able to get the connection within 24 hours in areas where power infrastructure is available and in areas where there is no power infrastructure, electricity connection would be given in a week.

The government's rural electrification programme is on track for completion within the targeted 1,000 days.

Background :

The flagship scheme Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with an aim to provide 24x7 uninterrupted electricity supply to each rural household across the country by 2022. It aims to strengthen sub-transmission and distribution network to prevent power losses. It focuses on feeder separation for rural households and agricultural purpose. The other features include metering at all levels including at input points, feeders and distribution transformers and strengthening of Micro grid and off grid distribution network of rural electrification.

The Ministry of Power has also launched a new app, GARV-II to provide real-time data of all six lakh villages of the country. The app is envisaged to ensure transparency in the implementation of rural electrification programme.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

National Technology Day

- Based on tremendous breakthrough achievements by the country's scientists, engineers, and technicians, Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared May 11 as the National Technology Day.
- Every year since 1999, the Technology Development Board (TDB) commemorates the day by honouring technological innovations that have positively impacted the nation.
- The TDB also selects a theme for each year's event, and the 2017 National Technology Day theme is 'Technology for inclusive and sustainable growth'.

e-Krishi Samvad

e-Krishi Samvad, an online interface, was recently launched by the government.

- e-Krishi Samvad is internet-based interface and is a unique platform that will provide direct and effective solutions to the problems faced by farmers and stakeholders in the agriculture sector.
- With this, people can get the appropriate solutions from the subject matter specialists and institutes through web or SMS. Stakeholders can upload photographs related to diseases of the crops, animals or fishes for diagnostics and remedial measures instantly from the specialists.
- The platform is helpful to get information pertaining to welfare and development of agricultural stakeholders.