



C.A From Apr 25th to may 1st 2018

General Studies-1

Buddha Jayanti:

Why in News?

The Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) will celebrate the auspicious Buddha Jayanti-2018 by showcasing various facets of Buddhist traditions.

In 2015, Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi had announced that the Buddha Jayanti day will be commemorated and celebrated as an annual event by the nation.

Buddhism and India:

Buddhist thought has been integral to the Indian concept of Dharma, as Buddha is remembered most for his notion of Karuna (*Compassion*).

Buddhism has thrived in the Indian Himalayas, from Arunachal Pradesh in the east to Ladakh in the west.

Also, there are communities in India that trace their origin to the Shakya clan of Buddha and the Maurya clan of Samrat Ashok.

UN has also officially recognized the importance of this auspicious day in 1999, considering the contemporary relevance of Buddha's teachings of compassion and humanism in these modern times.

'Buddha dharma' is also the common thread running through many south Asian countries and connecting these countries and most others in Asia to India.

MoU to promote Krishna Circuit

The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) and the Indian Yoga Association (IYA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) today to facilitate interaction and cooperation between the two organisations to promote wellness, spiritual and cultural tourism in the Krishna Circuit.

The two organisations have joined hands to provide a holistic tourism experience to domestic and international travellers looking for some spiritually invigorating and cultural experiences.

Twelve destinations have been identified for development under Krishna circuit namely Dwarka (Gujarat), Nathdwara, Jaipur & Sikar (Rajasthan), Kurukshetra (Haryana),



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Mathura, Vrindavan, Gokul, Barsana, Nandgaon & Govardhan (Uttar Pradesh) and Puri (Odisha) under Swadesh Darshan Scheme..

About Swadesh Darshan Scheme:

The Tourism Ministry had launched 'Swadesh Darshan' scheme with an objective to develop theme-based tourist circuits in the country. These tourist circuits will be developed on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.

Features of Swadesh Darshan Scheme:

- The scheme is 100% centrally funded for the project components undertaken for public funding.
- To leverage the voluntary funding available for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Central Public Sector Undertakings and corporate sector.
- Funding of individual project will vary from state to state and will be finalised on the basis of detailed project reports prepared by PMC (Programme Management Consultant).
- A National Steering Committee (NSC) will be constituted with Minister in charge of M/O Tourism as Chairman, to steer the mission objectives and vision of the scheme.
- A Mission Directorate headed by the Member Secretary, NSC as a nodal officer will help in identification of projects in consultation with the States/ UTs governments and other stake holders.
- PMC will be a national level consultant to be appointed by the Mission Directorate.



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Electoral Bond Scheme 2018

Why in News?

Government of India has notified the Electoral Bond Scheme 2018 vide Gazette Notification.

About Electoral Bonds:

- As per provisions of the Scheme, Electoral Bonds may be purchased by a person, who is a citizen of India or incorporated or established in India.
- A person being an individual can buy Electoral Bonds, either singly or jointly with other individuals.
- Only the Political Parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (43 of 1951) and which secured not less than one per cent of the votes polled in the last General Election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State, shall be eligible to receive the Electoral Bonds.
- The Electoral Bonds shall be encashed by an eligible Political Party only through a Bank account with the Authorized Bank.
- It may be noted that Electoral Bonds shall be valid for fifteen days from the date of issue and no payment shall be made to any payee Political Party if the Electoral Bond is deposited after expiry of the validity period.

The Electoral Bond deposited by an eligible Political Party in its account shall be credited on the same day.

Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)

Why in News?

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare organized a National consultation with States/UTs to seek feedback on draft guidelines for implementing PMRSSM, on 23rd April, 2018 at New Delhi. The workshop was attended by CEOs of the State Health



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Agency, State Nodal Officers and Senior IT officials of the state agencies. Most of the States participated in the consultations, except for few like Delhi & West Bengal.

About the Yojana

The Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) aims at correcting the imbalances in the availability of affordable healthcare facilities in the different parts of the country in general, and augmenting facilities for quality medical education in the under-served States in particular. The scheme was approved in March 2006.

The first phase in the PMSSY has two components - setting up of six institutions in the line of AIIMS; and upgradation of 13 existing Government medical college institutions.

In the second phase of PMSSY, the Government has approved the setting up of two more AIIMS-like institutions, one each in the States of West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh and upgradation of six medical college institutions

In the third phase of PMSSY, it is proposed to upgrade the following existing medical college institutions namely

- Government Medical College, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh
- Government Medical College, Rewa, Madhya Pradesh
- Government Medical College, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh
- Government Medical College, Dharbanga, Bihar
- Government Medical College, Kozhikode, Kerala
- Vijaynagar Institute of Medical Sciences, Bellary, Karnataka
- Government Medical College, Muzaffarpur, Bihar

The states were divided into three sub groups to ensure detailed deliberations and seek in-depth inputs on the draft set of guidelines.

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0

Human Resource Development Ministry today launches Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 in New Delhi.

Addressing the launching ceremony at AICTE headquarters through video message, Minister of Human Resource Development Shri Prakash Javadekar said that the students are the real agents of change who can develop, empower and brighten the future of the country.

About the abhiyan:



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Unnat Bharat Abhiyan is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, with the intention to enrich Rural India.

The knowledge base and resources of the Premier Institutions of the country are to be leveraged to bring in transformational change in rural developmental process.

It also aims to create a vibrant relationship between the society and the higher educational institutes, with the latter providing the knowledge and technology support to improve the livelihoods in rural areas and to upgrade the capabilities of both the public and private organisations in the society.

IIT Delhi has been designated to function as the National Coordinating Institute for this programme and the Ministry intends to extend the coverage to all the reputed Higher Educational Institutes, in a phased manner. Each selected institute would adopt a cluster of villages / panchayats and gradually expand the outreach over a period of time.

Benefits of the Abhiyaan:

Institutes through their faculty and students, will carry out studies of living conditions in the adopted villages, assess the local problems and needs, workout the possibilities of leveraging the technological interventions and the need to improve the processes in implementation of various government schemes, prepare workable action plans for the selected villages.

Such knowledge inputs would make their way into the development programmes in rural areas.

The Institutes would be expected to closely coordinate with the district administration, elected public representatives of panchayat / villages and other stakeholders and will become very much a part of the process of development planning and implementation.

Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation

Why in News?

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, today chaired his twenty-fifth interaction through PRAGATI - the ICT-based, multi-modal platform for Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation.

The 25 PRAGATI meetings have seen a cumulative review of 227 projects with a total investment of over Rs. 10 lakh crore. Resolution of Public Grievances has also been reviewed across a range of sectors.



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About PRAGATI:

PRAGATI is a unique integrating and interactive platform. The platform is aimed at addressing common man's grievances, and simultaneously monitoring and reviewing important programmes and projects of the Government of India as well as projects flagged by State Governments.

The PRAGATI platform uniquely bundles three latest technologies: Digital data management, video-conferencing and geo-spatial technology.

It is a three-tier system (PMO, Union Government Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries of the States);

- Prime Minister will hold a monthly programme where he will interact with the Government of India Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries through Video-conferencing enabled by data hand geo-informatics visuals.

It also offers a unique combination in the direction of cooperative federalism since it brings on one stage the Secretaries of Government of India and the Chief Secretaries of the States.

Prime Minister will hold a monthly programme where he will interact with the Government of India Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries through Video-conferencing enabled by data and geo-informatics visuals.

Issues to be flagged before the PM are picked up from the available database regarding Public Grievances, on-going Programmes and pending Projects.

The system will ride on, strengthen and re-engineer the data bases of the CPGRAMS for grievances, Project Monitoring Group (PMG) and the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

PRAGATI provides an interface and platform for all these three aspects.

It will also take into consideration various correspondences to PM's office by the common people or from high dignitaries of States and/or developers of public projects.

It is also a robust system for bringing e-transparency and e-accountability with real-time presence and exchange among the key stakeholders.

The system has been designed in-house by the PMO team with the help of National Informatics Center (NIC)



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Van Dhan Scheme launched by PM to help increase tribal income through Value Addition

The Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi launched the Van Dhan Scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs and TRIFED on 14th April, 2018 during the celebrations of Ambedkar Jayanti at Bijapur, Chattisgarh.

Emphasizing the important role of value addition in increasing tribal incomes, he stated that Van Dhan, Jan Dhan and Gobar-Dhan Schemes had the potential to change the tribal-rural economic system.

All these three schemes in tandem need to be promoted for this purpose by the State Governments.

About Van Dhan Scheme:

Under Van Dhan, 10 Self Help Groups of 30 Tribal gatherers is constituted.

They are then trained and provided with working capital to add value to the products, which they collect from the jungle.

Working under the leadership of Collector these groups can then market their products not only within the States but also outside the States.

Training and technical support is provided by TRIFED.

It is proposed to develop 30,000 such centres in the country.

Value addition assumes critical importance in ensuring remunerative prices to the tribals in this approach.

Three stage value addition would be the corner stone for enhancing incomes of the tribals under the scheme.

The grass root level procurement is proposed to be undertaken through Self Help Groups associated with implementing agencies. Convergence and Networking with other Govt. departments/scheme shall be undertaken to utilise the services of existing SHGs like Ajeevika, etc.

The stock after primary processing shall be supplied by these SHGs to the State Implementing Agencies or direct tie up for supply to corporate secondary processor.

For creation of secondary level value addition facility at district level and tertiary level value addition facility at State level, Big Corporates shall be involved under PPP model.



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About Van Dhan Vikas Kendra

The establishment of “Van Dhan Vikas Kendra” is for providing skill upgradation and capacity building training and setting up of primary processing and value addition facility.

This first model Van DhanVikas Kendra in Bijapuris being implemented for training of 300 training beneficiaries with a total outlay of Rs.43.38 lakhs for training, providing equipments & tools for primary level processing and infrastructure & building for housing the Kendra.

The Van Dhan Vikas Kendras will be important milestone in economic development of tribals involved in collection of MFPs by helping them in optimum utilization of natural resources and provide sustainable MFP-based livelihood in MFP-rich district

Zonal Council

Why in News?

The 23rd meeting of the Western Zonal Council was held at Gandhinagar, Gujarat today under the Chairmanship of the Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Ministers of Maharashtra and Gujarat, Ministers of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa and Administrator of the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli, and senior officers from Central and State Governments.

5 five Zonal Council:

- The Northern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh.
- The Central Zonal Council, comprising the States of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
- The Eastern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, and West Bengal.
- The Western Zonal Council, comprising the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli.
- The Southern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

Composition:



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- Chairman – The Union Home Minister is the Chairman of each of these Councils.
- Vice Chairman – The Chief Ministers of the States included in each zone act as Vice-Chairman of the Zonal Council for that zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of one year at a time.
- Members- Chief Minister and two other Ministers as nominated by the Governor from each of the States and two members from Union Territories included in the zone.
- Advisers- One person nominated by the Planning Commission (which has been replaced by NITI Ayog now) for each of the Zonal Councils, Chief Secretaries and another officer/Development Commissioner nominated by each of the States included in the Zone.
- Union Ministers are also invited to participate in the meetings of Zonal Councils depending upon necessity.

World Press Freedom Index

World Press Freedom Index for the year 2018 has been released.

About the Index:

Published every year since 2002 by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the World Press Freedom Index is an important advocacy tool based on the principle of emulation between states.

Parameters of Measurement:

The Index ranks 180 countries according to the level of freedom available to journalists and pluralism, independence of the media, quality of legislative framework and safety of journalists in each country.

It does not rank public policies even if governments obviously have a major impact on their country's ranking. Nor is it an indicator of the quality of journalism in each country.

Press freedom map:

The press freedom map, which is distributed in print and digital versions, offers a visual overview of the situation in each country in the Index. The colour categories are assigned as follows: good (white), fairly good (yellow), problematic (yellow), bad (red) and very bad (black).

Press Freedom Index 2018- Highlights:



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- In this year's index, Norway is first for the second year running, followed — as it was last year — by Sweden.
- India has dropped from rank 136 last year to rank 138 this year. India fared poorly on indicators such as hate speeches, attacks on journalists on social media, trolling them and targeting their reputation.
- SAARC nations: Afghanistan (118), Bhutan (94), Nepal (106), the Maldives (120), and Sri Lanka (131), all performed better than India; with Pakistan (139) and Bangladesh (146) performing worse.
- North Korea continues to rank last.

First Woman Lawyer to be Appointed As Supreme Court Judge:

Senior lawyer Indu Malhotra will be the first woman lawyer to be directly appointed as a Supreme Court judge.

Key facts:

Of the top court's 24 judges, only one is a woman, Justice R Banumathi. She was elevated to the top court in August 2014. Justice Banumathi was the sixth woman to become a Supreme Court judge. Justice Fathima Beevi was the first in 1989

Adopt a Heritage Scheme:

Why in News?

The Dalmia Bharat group, under the memorandum of understanding, would maintain the monument and build basic infrastructure around it and has committed a sum of ₹25 crore for the purpose over a period spanning five years.

About The Project:

In response to certain reports appearing in the media regarding Adopt a Heritage Scheme, the Ministry of Tourism has clarified that the "Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan", is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), and State/UTs Governments.

The Project aims to develop synergy among all partners to effectively promote "responsible tourism".

It aims to involve public sector companies, private sector companies and corporate citizens/individuals to take up the responsibility for making our heritage and tourism



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more sustainable through **development, operation and maintenance of world-class tourist infrastructure and amenities at ASI/ State heritage sites and other important tourist sites in India.**

They would become **'Monument Mitras' through the innovative concept of "Vision Bidding"**, where the agency with best vision for the heritage site will be given an opportunity to associate pride with their CSR activities.

They would also get limited visibility in the premises and the Incredible India website.

Benefits of Project:

The aim is enhancement of tourist experience and promotion of the incredible heritage sites to bring them on tourism map.

The project primarily focusses on providing basic amenities that includes cleanliness, public conveniences, drinking water, ease of access for differently abled and senior citizens, standardized signage, illumination and advanced amenities such as surveillance system, night viewing facilities, tourism facilitation center and an enhanced tourism experience that will result in more tourist footfalls, both domestic and foreign.

Gobar-Dhan Yojana Launched

Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation, Sushri Uma Bharti, today launched the GOBAR (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources - DHAN scheme at the National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) Auditorium, Karnal in the presence of the Chief Minister of Haryana, Shri Manohar Lal Khattar.

What is the GOBAR-Dhan Yojana?

The Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBAR-DHAN) scheme was first announced by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley during his budget speech on February 1. The scheme would focus on managing and converting cattle dung and solid waste in farms to compost, biogas and bio-CNG. It will help in keeping the village clean while increasing the income of farmers and cattle herders

Aims:

The scheme aims to positively impact village cleanliness and generate wealth and energy from cattle and organic waste.

The scheme also aims at creating new rural livelihood opportunities and enhancing income for farmers and other rural people.



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Under GObar-Dhan, cooking gas would be provided to rural habitations and technical support would ensure that the schemes functioned on a sustainable basis.

Benefits of the scheme:

- This is hugely helpful for the country as India is home to the highest cattle population in the world, close to 300 million in number, with a daily output of 3 million tonnes of dung.
- The Scheme will encourage the farmers to consider dung and other waste not just as a waste but as a source of income.
- It will provide many benefits to the rural people. It will be easier to keep the village clean and sanitized, livestock health will improve and farm yields will increase.
- Biogas generation will increase self-reliance in energy utilized for cooking and lighting.
- Farmers and cattle herders will be helped in augmenting their income. There will be novel opportunities for newer jobs linked to waste collection, transportation, biogas sales etc.
- The scheme also provides a stable fuel supply in the market for oil companies and accessible credit in the market through government schemes and banks for entrepreneurs.

About ODF-Plus:

The Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) comprises two main components for creating clean villages – creating open defecation free (ODF) villages and managing solid and liquid waste in villages.

With over 3.5 lakh villages, 374 districts and 16 States/UTs of the country being declared ODF, the stage is set for ODF-plus activities, including measures to enhance solid and liquid waste management.

The GOBAR-DHAN scheme, with its focus on keeping villages clean, increasing the income of rural households, and generation of energy from cattle waste, is an important element of this ODF-plus strategy.

The scheme envisages the implementation of 700 bio-gas units in different states of the country in 2018-19.



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Swachh Bharat Summer Internship Launched

Following the Prime Minister's clarion call on 2nd October 2014 for each individual to devote at least 100 hours to Swachhata through the year, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) in association with Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) has launched the Swachh Bharat Summer Internship – a novel and first of its kind initiative.

About the Internship:

Under the internship, all interns who complete at least 100 hours of sanitation related work in villages would be given a Swachh Bharat certificate.

Those who complete the internship with additional, specified outputs would also gain 2 curriculum credits specially allowed by UGC.

Additionally, top performers would receive awards at the College and University / District (NYKS), State and National Level.

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Atal New India Challenge

The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) under the NITI Aayog shall be launching the Atal New India Challenge on Thursday, 26th April 2018.

Under the Atal New India Challenge, which shall be run in collaboration with five ministries, AIM will invite prospective innovators/MSMEs/start-ups to design market-ready products, using cutting edge technologies or prototypes across 17 identified focus areas such as Climate Smart Agriculture, Smart Mobility, Predictive Maintenance of Rolling Stock, Waste Management etc.

Applicants showing capability, intent and potential to productize technologies will be awarded grants up to Rs. One crore.



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This grant will be further supplemented by mentoring, handholding, incubating and other support as needed at various stages of commercialisation, while generating wider deployment for the product.

About AIM:

Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) including Self-Employment and Talent Utilization (SETU) is Government of India's endeavour to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Its objective is to serve as a platform for promotion of world-class Innovation Hubs, Grand Challenges, Start-up businesses and other self-employment activities, particularly in technology driven areas.

The Atal Innovation Mission shall have two core functions:

- **Entrepreneurship promotion** through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization, wherein innovators would be supported and mentored to become successful entrepreneurs
- **Innovation promotion:** to provide a platform where innovative ideas are generated
- Atal Tinkering Labs
- Atal Incubation Centers
- Scale-up support to Established Incubators

Cabinet approves restructured National Bamboo Mission

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi today has approved Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National Bamboo Mission (NBM) under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) during remaining period of Fourteenth Finance Commission (2018-19 & 2019-20).

The Mission would ensure holistic development of the bamboo sector by addressing complete value chain and establishing effective linkage of producers (farmers) with industry.

Beneficiaries:



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The scheme will benefit directly and indirectly the farmers as well as local artisans and associated personnels engaged in bamboo sector including associated industries.

Since it is proposed to bring about one lakh ha area under plantation, it is expected that about one lakh farmers would be directly benefitted in terms of plantation.

States/ districts covered:

The Mission will focus on development of bamboo in limited States where it has social, commercial and economical advantage, particularly in the North Eastern region and States including Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

The Mission is expected to establish about 4000 treatment/ product development units and bring more than 100000 ha area under plantation.

Impact:

Bamboo plantation will contribute to optimizing farm productivity and income thereby enhancing livelihood opportunities of small & marginal farmers including landless and women as well as provide quality material to industry.

Thus, the Mission will not only serve as a potential instrument for enhancing income of farmers but also contributing towards climate resilience and environmental benefits.

The Mission will also help in creating employment generation directly or indirectly in both skilled and unskilled segments.

Details:

The restructured NBM strives to -

(i) To increase the area under bamboo plantation in non forest Government and private lands to supplement farm income and contribute towards resilience to climate change.

(ii) To improve post-harvest management through establishment of innovative primary processing units, treatment and seasoning plants, primary treatment and seasoning plants, preservation technologies and market infrastructure.



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- (iii) To promote product development at micro, small and medium levels and feed bigger industry.
- (iv) To rejuvenate the under developed bamboo industry in India.
- (v) To promote skill development, capacity building, awareness generation for development of bamboo sector.

Details and progress of scheme if already running:

National Bamboo Mission (NBM) was initially started as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme in 2006-07 and was subsumed under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) during 2014-15 and continued till 2015-16.

Funds were released thereafter only for maintenance of bamboo plantations raised earlier under NBM, and no new work or annual action plan was initiated. Since 2006-07, an area of 3.62 lakh ha covered under bamboo plantations and 39 bamboo wholesale markets, 40 bamboo bazaars and 29 retail outlets were set up.

New Pollution Forecast System:

India is tying up with the United States and Finland to develop a pollution-forecast system that will help anticipate particulate matter (PM) levels at least two days in advance and at a greater resolution than what is possible now.

The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) will be coordinating this exercise and the plan is to have a system in place by winter, according to Madhavan Rajeevan, secretary, MoES.

Currently, the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), run out of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, serves as the apex forecaster of pollution trends in Delhi, Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad. It generates a likely air quality profile, a day in advance, for these cities. I

ITM is an organisation under the MoES.

The new system, to be jointly developed with expertise from the Finnish Meteorological Institute and the U.S.' National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, will use a different modelling approach as well as computational techniques from that employed in the SAFAR model.

Better resolution



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“SAFAR will continue to be the backbone [for pollution forecast] but this system, which will require our scientists to get special training, will use a different method of analysis. This could mean better resolution and more accurate forecasts.

A key focus would be to develop forecasts around the “stubble-burning season” that adds to Delhi’s pollution woes in the winter.

This refers to the partially-burnt straw and chaff from fields in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, when farmers are preparing their fields for the sowing season. “We hope to develop the system before this winter,” Mr. Rajeevan added.

Last week, the Union Environment Ministry released a draft of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) that aims to improve air quality monitoring in India by increasing the number of pollution monitoring stations and, incorporating it into a pollution forecast system.

Conclusion of Exercise Gaganshakti-2018

The Indian Air Force conducted pan India Exercise Gagan Shakti-2018 from 08-22 Apr 2018.

Objectives:

The aim of the exercise was real time coordination, deployment and employment of air power in a short and intense battle scenario.

For an exercise of such scale, the planning process started almost nine months back.

During Gagan Shakti-2018, IAF exercised its entire war fighting machinery to validate its concept of operations and war waging capability. The focus of the exercise was to check the viability of our operational plans and learn meaningful lesson

Exercise Gagan Shakti-2018 provided IAF with an excellent opportunity to practice its war time drills and undertake operations in realistic scenario.

Activities were undertaken in a cohesive manner to achieve the stated objectives of the Indian Air Force, in case of any contingency.

The exercise also enabled the IAF to validate operational efficacy of new platforms and refine existing Standard Operating Procedures. Joint operations with Army and Navy, conducted during the exercise, would help in achieving better operational synergy between the three services, in application of combat power.



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India signs loan agreement with World Bank for US\$ 125 million for “Innovate in India for Inclusiveness Project”

A Loan Agreement for IBRD credit of US\$ 125 (equivalent) for the “Innovate in India for Inclusiveness Project” was signed with the World Bank .

The Objectives of the project is

- to nurture indigenous innovation, foster local product development and accelerate commercialization process by bridging critical skill and infrastructure gaps to promote affordable and innovative healthcare products generation for inclusive development and increasing competitiveness in India.
- The project would support consortia of public, private, and the academic institutions to overcome the key market failures currently holding back the development of an innovative biopharmaceutical and medical devices industry in India.
- **“Innovate in India (i3) Empowering biotech entrepreneurs & accelerating inclusive innovation”:**
- Towards strengthening the emerging biotechnology enterprise in India, Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science & Technology has initiated the Mission programme entitled: Industry-Academia Collaborative Mission for Accelerating Discovery Research to Early Development for Biopharmaceuticals - “Innovate in India (i3) Empowering biotech entrepreneurs & accelerating inclusive innovation”.
- **About National Bio pharma Mission:**
- The National Biopharma Mission is being implemented by Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) - a Public Sector Undertaking of Department of Biotechnology (DBT).
- This Mission of the Department was approved by the Cabinet in May 2017 and formally launched by Hon’ble Minister for Science & Technology on 30th June, 2017.
- The Mission has been approved at a total cost of US\$250 million for five years with 50% funding through World Bank Loan ,with an aim to make India a hub for design and development of novel, affordable and effective biopharmaceutical products such as vaccines, biologics and medical devices for combating public health concerns.
- **HARIMAU SHAKTI**



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- As part of ongoing Indo-Malaysian defence cooperation, a joint training exercise HARIMAU SHAKTI will be conducted in the dense forests of Sengai Perdik, Hulu Langat, Malaysia from 30 April 18 to 13 May 18.
- The exercise is aimed at bolstering cooperation & coordination between armed forces of both the nations and to share the expertise of both the contingents in conduct of counter insurgency operations in jungle terrain.
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- This is the first instance wherein a joint training exercise of this magnitude involving Indian and Malaysian soldiers is being organized on Malaysian soil.
- The exercise will involve a cross training phase followed by a field training phase of seven days in the jungles of Hulu Langat wherein both armies will jointly train, plan and execute a series of training activities.
- The focus will remain on tactical operations in jungle warfare. Overall, the exercise will not only provide an excellent opportunity to both the armies to hone their operational skills but will also contribute to enhance the strategic partnership between India and Malaysia.
- **Gaia satellite**
- **Why in News?**
- Europe's Gaia satellite has produced a 3-D map of more than a billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy — complete with their distance from Earth, colour, and motion through space.
- The eagerly-anticipated catalogue, published on Wednesday, was compiled from data Gaia gathered on some 1.7 billion stars from its unique vantage point in space, about 1.5 million kilometres from the earth.
- **About Gaia Mission:**
- Launched in 2013 by European Space Agency, Gaia started operating the following year, gathering data on 1,00,000 stars per minute — some 500 million measurements per day.
- Its first map was published in September 2016, based on a year's worth of observations of about 1.15 billion stars.
- Gaia also revealed the orbits of some 14,000 "solar system objects" — mapped as an intricate web of space rocks shooting around the sun.
- It represents the most accurate survey ever of asteroids in the solar system



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Navika Sagar Parikrama

Why in News?

INSV Tarini, with its team of six women officers departed Port Louis, Mauritius, for the last leg of the circumnavigation, at 1000 hours today on 26 April 2018. The vessel had entered Port Louis on 18 April 2018 for emergency repairs to her steering gear.

Navika Sagar Parikrama is a project wherein a team of women officers of the Indian Navy would circumnavigate the globe on an Indian-built sail boat **INSV Tarini**.

Key facts:

- This is **the first ever Indian circumnavigation of the globe by an all-women crew**. The project is scheduled to commence in early Sep 17.
- The project is considered essential towards promoting Ocean Sailing activities in the Navy while depicting Government of India's thrust for 'Nari Shakti'.
- The expedition has been aptly titled 'Navika Sagar Parikrama', aimed at promoting women empowerment in the country and ocean sailing by the Indian Navy.

Additional aims of the Expedition are as follows:

Nari Shakti: In consonance with the National policy to empower women to attain their full potential, the expedition aims to showcase 'Nari Shakti' on the world platform. This would also help to discard the societal attitudes and mindset towards women in India by raising visibility of participation by women in challenging environment.

Environment and Climate Change: Sailing encourages the use of environment friendly non-conventional renewable energy resources which affects the life of women. The expedition thereby aims at harnessing the energy to optimise the livelihood of the women onboard.

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

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

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



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Google to mentor Indian Start Ups

Google has introduced an India-focused mentoring programme to support start-ups addressing local problems

'Solve for India' would provide technology support for deploying artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) tools to build solutions for India in areas such as agriculture, healthcare, retail and education.

Introduced last year as an India-only pilot, the programme focuses on bringing the best of Google expertise across product and user experience design and interface. This includes access to technologies like AI and ML.

Successful Examples:

One of the firms PregBuddy is focused on creating prominence in care for expecting mothers.

FarMart, a tech-enabled agricultural machinery renting platform, enables farmers to rent out their under-utilised machinery like tractors to fellow small and marginal farmers on a pay-per-use basis.

New frog Species Discovered:

In the highland plateaus of the Western Ghats parts of Goa, scientists have identified a new species of frog called *Fejervarya goemchi* .

The new species is named after the historical name of the state of Goa where the species is discovered.

Come monsoons and many of these are large-sized terrestrial frogs sit next to water bodies making calls to attract females for mating and breeding.

Although most of these frogs are terrestrial, they need water bodies to survive.

Most *Fejervarya* species in South and South-East Asia are difficult to identify on the basis of morphology alone. The authors have used a combination of morphology, geographic distribution range and molecular methods to describe the new species.



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The scientists provide an overview of the group and recommend additional sampling across the Asian continent in a *Zoological Survey of India* report.

The new species is found in the high elevation areas of laterite plateaus, temporary water bodies and paddy fields of Goa. However, Detailed studies of this species are necessary to map its distribution range.

Asia Pacific Regional Workshop of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

The four-day Asia Pacific Regional Workshop of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), jointly hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and UNCCD Secretariat, to build the capacity of the Asia-Pacific Region to monitor and report on land degradation, concluded here today.

Earlier this week, Union Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MOEFCC) and Chair of the workshop's inaugural session, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, had highlighted the Government's commitment to the land agenda and also released the report on Study of Economics of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (EDLDD) conducted by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and commissioned by MoEFCC.

Highlights of Report:

The report has highlighted that Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD) factors had cost India about 2.54% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014-15.

The four-day Workshop (April 24-27, 2018) trained the participants in the use of an innovative land degradation monitoring tool by Conservation International, for the reporting process of UNCCD.

This can significantly increase access to large amounts of Earth observation data and make it available in a comprehensible form for decision-makers at national and state level, thereby contributing to achieving the objectives underlined in the Convention.

About UNCCD:

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the only legally binding international agreement on land issues.



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The Convention promotes good land stewardship. Its 197 Parties aim, through partnerships, to implement the Convention and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The end goal is to protect land from over-use and drought, so it can continue to provide food, water and energy. By sustainably managing land and striving to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality, now and in the future, not only will the impact of climate change be reduced, but a conflict over natural resources will be avoided.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the nodal Ministry for this Convention, as well as the other two Rio Conventions - United Nations Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, having their genesis in the Earth Summit in 1992 in Rio De Janerio, Brazil.

NAG Missiles:

Why in News?

The Defence Ministry on Friday approved military procurement worth Rs. 3,687 crore, which includes anti-tank guided missile NAG for the Army and long-range guns for the Navy.

The proposals were cleared at a meeting of the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

About NAG:

- The third-generation Fire and Forget ATGM Nag is equipped with many advanced technologies including IIR Seeker with integrated avionics, a capability possessed by few nations in the world.
- The missile is developed to support both mechanised infantry and airborne forces of the Indian Army.
- The missile incorporates an advanced passive homing guidance system and possesses high single-shot kill probability.
- It is designed to destroy modern main battle tanks and other heavily armoured targets.

Bhabha Atomic Reseach Centre (BARC) bulletproof jacket



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The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has developed a next-generation bulletproof jacket for the Indian armed forces, which is not only cheaper but also much lighter.

Bhabha Kavach, named after nuclear physicist Dr. Homi J. Bhabha, the jacket was developed at BARC's Trombay centre in response to a request from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The jacket weighs just 6.6 kg in comparison to the 17-kg jackets in use, and has passed over 30 tests carried out by certified agencies.

Bhabha Kavach is available in three variants as per the requirement of the armed forces.

The jacket is made using extremely hard boron carbide ceramics that is hot-pressed with carbon nano-tubes and composite polymer. BARC has been using boron carbide in the control rods of its nuclear reactors.

While the cost of a Bhabha Kavach is ₹70,000, jackets of similar strength are available in the range of ₹1.5 lakh and have to be imported.

The Great Barrier Reef

Why in News?

[Australia](#) pledged half-a-billion dollars to restore and protect the Great Barrier Reef on Sunday in what it said would be a game-changer for the embattled natural wonder.

The World Heritage-listed site, which attracts millions of tourists, is reeling from significant bouts of coral bleaching due to warming sea temperatures linked to climate change.

A study in the journal *Nature* said some 30 per cent of the reef's coral perished, the first of an unprecedented two successive years of coral bleaching along the 2,300-kilometre reef.

About the Reef:

The **Great Barrier Reef** is the world's largest [coral reef](#) system composed of over 2,900 individual reef and 900 islands stretching for over 2,300 kilometres (1,400 mi) over an area of approximately 344,400 square kilometres (133,000 sq mi).

The reef is located in the [Coral Sea](#), off the coast of [Queensland, Australia](#).



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The Great Barrier Reef can be seen from [outer space](#) and is the world's biggest single structure made by living organisms.

This reef structure is composed of and built by billions of tiny organisms, known as [coral polyps](#)

It supports a wide diversity of life and was selected as a [World Heritage Site](#) in 1981

[CNN](#) labelled it one of the [seven natural wonders of the world](#). The Queensland National Trust named it a state icon of Queensland.

US put India on Watch List

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative has once again placed India on 'Priority Watch List' in its annual Special 301 Report on the state of intellectual property protection.

Observations of Report:

The report has slammed the Indian Health Ministry for "creating uncertainty in the pharmaceutical market" by demanding that pharmaceutical companies provide details of how they were using the granted patents.

The report comes at a time when the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) has demanded elimination of 'Form 27' — a statutory requirement unique to India's patent law that mandates patent holders to declare how a monopoly is being exercised in the country.

The report called India's implementation of the patent act as restrictive. "Companies across different sectors remain concerned about narrow patentability standards, the potential threat of compulsory licensing and patent revocations, as well as overly broad criteria for issuing such licences and revocations under the India Patents Act," it says.

About the List:

The **Special 301 Report** is prepared annually by the [Office of the United States Trade Representative](#) (USTR) under [Section 301](#) as amended of the [Trade Act of 1974](#).

The reports identify [trade barriers](#) to U.S. companies and products due to the [intellectual property](#) laws, such as [copyright](#), [patents](#) and [trademarks](#), in other countries.



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Each year the USTR must identify countries which do not provide "adequate and effective" protection of intellectual property rights or "fair and equitable market access to United States persons that rely upon intellectual property rights".

Nanotechnology and it's Application:

Nanomotors and their applications in biomedicine have gained huge interest in recent times and now researchers from Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, have successfully shown how to move them around inside living cells.

The nanomotors can be used as a new imaging tool to study the organelles of the cell up-close.

The way the motor moves inside the cell and the hindered motion patterns can help us get a better understanding of the make-up of cells in the body.

"Since normal and cancerous cells have variations in the intracellular environment (pH, temperature, energy), scientists have planned to study the differences in the fluidity of the intracellular matrix using nanomotors."

100% Electrification Achieved:

Leisang in Manipur has become the last village to be added to the national power grid under the Rural Electrification Scheme.

Definition of Electrification:

The government is not considering modifying the current, much-criticised definition of an electrified village, which counts a village as electrified if at least 10% of its households have an electricity connection, according to a senior official in the Ministry of Power.

According to the definition, in place since October 1997, a village is deemed to be electrified if basic infrastructure such as a distribution transformer and distribution lines are in place in the inhabited locality, electricity is provided to public places like schools, panchayat office, health centres, dispensaries, community centres, and at least 10% of the households in the village are electrified.

"As of today in India, the rural household electrification is about 83%.

From State to State, it ranges from 47% to 100%, but on average about 83% of households are electrified.



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SAUBHAGYA Scheme:

The government had in September 2017 launched the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya), aimed at covering the last-mile connectivity of taking electricity to the household level.

The target for the scheme is March 31, 2019.

According to data from the Ministry of Power and the Central Electricity Authority, so far 84.3% of households have been electrified.

The Saubhagya scheme defines the electrification of a household as including a service line cable, energy meter, and single point wiring.

For unelectrified households in remote areas, electrification will involve the provision of power packs of 200 to 300 W (with battery bank) with a maximum of 5 LED lights, 1 DC Fan, and 1 DC power plug.

15% of the villages so far electrified have been done so using off-grid solutions such as solar, while the remaining 85% are connected to the grid.