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CURTAIN RAISER: AL NAGAH 2019

Why in News?

Exercise Al Nagah III, third in the series of bilateral joint exercise between India and Oman is scheduled to be held from 12 to 25 March 2019 at Jabel Al Akhdar Mountains in Oman.

The exercise will see both the armies exchanging expertise and experience in tactics, weapon handling and firing, with an aim to enhance interoperability in counterterrorist operations in semi urban mountainous terrain.

Indo-Oman Relation:

- India-Oman bilateral security ties have continued to develop since the beginning of India-Oman Joint Military Cooperation meetings in 2006.
- Exercise Al Nagah III follows the first two joint exercises that were held in Oman in January 2015 and India in March 2017 respectively.
- Similar exercises are also in vogue between the navies and air forces of both the nations thus underscoring the growing bilateral military and strategic partnership between the two important nations of Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

The exercise will go a long way in enchaining understanding of capabilities and strengthening camaraderie between both the Armies.

Cabinet approves Measures to promote Hydro Power Sector

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved Measures to promote Hydro Power Sector. These include Declaring Large Hydropower Projects (HPO) as part of non-solar Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO)

Details:



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- i. Large Hydropower Projects to be declared as Renewable Energy source (as per existing practice, only hydropower projects less than 25MW are categorized as Renewable Energy).
- ii. HPO as a separate entity within non-solar Renewable Purchase Obligation to cover LHPs commissioned after notification of these measures (SHPs are already covered under Non-Solar Renewable Purchase Obligation).
- iii. The trajectory of annual HPO targets will be notified by Ministry of Power based on the projected capacity addition plans in hydropower sector. Necessary amendments will be introduced in the Tariff Policy and Tariff Regulations to operationalize HPO.
- iv. Tariff rationalization measures including providing flexibility to the developers to determine tariff by back loading of tariff after increasing project life to 40 years, increasing debt repayment period to 18 years and introducing escalating tariff of 2%;
- v. Budgetary support for funding flood moderation component of hydropower projects on case to case basis; and
- vi. Budgetary support for funding cost of enabling infrastructure i.e. roads and bridges on case to case basis as per actual, limited to Rs. 1.5 crore per MW for upto 200 MW projects and Rs. 1.0 crore per MW for above 200 MW projects.

Major Impact including employment generation potential:

- As most of the hydro power potential is located in the higher reaches of Himalayas and North- East Region, it will result in overall socio-economic development of the region by providing direct employment in the power sector.
- It will also provide indirect employment/ entrepreneurial opportunities in the field of transportation, tourism and other small scale businesses.
- Another benefit would be of having a stable grid considering 160 GW capacity addition by 2022 from infirm sources of power like solar and wind.

Background:

India is endowed with large hydropower potential of 1,45,320 MW of which only about 45,400 MW has been utilized so far. Only about 10,000 MW of hydropower has been added in the last 10 years.



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The hydropower sector is currently going through a challenging phase and the share of hydropower in the total capacity has declined from 50.36% in the 1960s to around 13% in 2018-19.

- Besides being environment friendly, hydropower has several other unique features like ability for quick ramping, black start, reactive absorption etc. which make it ideal for peaking power, spinning reserve and grid balancing/ stability.
- Further, hydropower also provides water security, irrigation and flood moderation benefits, apart from socio-economic development of the entire region by providing employment opportunities and boosting tourism etc.
- The importance of hydropower is increasing even more as the country has targeted to add 160 GW of intermittent Solar and Wind power by 2022 and 40% of the total capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030 to honour its Nationally Determined Contribution for Climate Change.

e-Dharti App

Why in News?

Shri Hardeep S Puri, Minister of State(I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs has launched e-Dharti app which is a new online system where all the three main modules i.e. **Conversion, Substitution and Mutation** have been made online.

Details:

- The payment system in L&DO has also been completely digitized. Work is also going on other three small modules namely Sale Permission, Mortgage Permission and Gift Permission and will be completed soon.
- The public can now submit their applications online by visiting L&DO website and are not required to visit this office for submission of them and for follow up of their applications.

About the App:

- e-Dharti Geo Portal, another important application on which L&DO has started working, is GIS based mapping of all its approx. 65000 properties.



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- Through this application each and every Government property under L&DO, whether it is allotted or still lying vacant, is proposed to be mapped on a portal called "e-Dharti Geo Portal".
- Through this portal the Lessee of the property will be able to see the basic details of his/her property along with map showing its location.
- The Lessee can also be issued a Property Card from this office about his property if he asks for it.
- This application will not only benefit public but the Government also in getting to know the actual status of its vacant properties, whether there is any encroachment on the said property, etc.
- The action already taken and the proposed ones will go a long way in streamlining the working of the office making it more public friendly, accountable, efficient and transparent.

Mobility Solutions get a boost

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved:

- i. Setting up of a National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage, to drive clean, connected, shared, sustainable and holistic mobility initiatives;
- ii. Phased Manufacturing Programme (PMP) valid for 5 years till 2024 to support setting up of a few large-scale, export-competitive integrated batteries and cell-manufacturing Giga plants in India.
- iii. Creation of a PMP valid for 5 years till 2024 to localize production across the entire Electric Vehicles value chain.

Both PMP schemes will be finalised by the National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage.

National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Storage:

Composition:

- The multi-disciplinary "National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage" with an Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee will be chaired by CEO NITI Aayog.



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- The Steering Committee will be comprised of Secretaries from Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Ministry of Power, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Heavy Industry, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, and Director General, Bureau of Industrial Standards.

Role:

- The Mission will recommend and drive the strategies for transformative mobility and Phased Manufacturing Programmes for EVs, EV Components and Batteries.
- A Phased Manufacturing Program (PMP) will be launched to localize production across the entire EV value chain. The National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage will determine the contours of PMP, and will finalise the details of such a program.
- The details of the value addition that can be achieved with each phase of localisation will be finalised by the Mission with a clear Make in India strategy for the electric vehicle components as well as battery.
- The Mission will coordinate with key stakeholders in Ministries/ Departments and the states to integrate various initiatives to transform mobility in India.

Roadmaps:

- A phased roadmap to implement battery manufacturing at Giga-scale will be considered with initial focus on large-scale module and pack assembly plants by 2019-20, followed by integrated cell manufacturing by 2021-22.
- Details of the PMP for Batteries shall be formulated by the Mission. The Mission will ensure holistic and comprehensive growth of the battery manufacturing industry in India.
- The Mission will prepare the necessary roadmap that will enable India to leverage upon its size and scale to produce innovative, competitive multi-modal mobility solutions that can be deployed globally in diverse contexts.
- The Mission will define the roadmap for transformative mobility in "New India" by introducing a sustainable mobility ecosystem and fostering Make-in-India to boost domestic manufacturing and employment generation in the country.

Impact:

- The Mission will drive mobility solutions that will bring in significant benefits to the industry, economy and country.



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- These solutions will help improve air quality in cities along with reducing India's oil import dependence and enhance the uptake of renewable energy and storage solutions.
- The Mission will lay down the strategy and roadmap which will enable India to leverage upon its size and scale to develop a competitive domestic manufacturing ecosystem for electric mobility.
- The actions in this regard will benefit all citizens as the aim is to promote 'Ease of Living' and enhance the quality of life of our citizens and also provide employment opportunities through 'Make-in-India' across a range of skillsets.

Background:

- During the Global Mobility Summit held in September 2018, Prime Minister had outlined the vision for the future of mobility in India based on 7 C's which are Common, Connected, Convenient, Congestion-free, Charged, Clean and Cutting-edge mobility. Mobility has the potential to drive the economy forward and positively impact the lives of citizens both in urban and rural areas.
- Affordable, accessible, inclusive and safe mobility solutions are primary strategic levers for rapid economic development and improving 'Ease of Living'.
- Shared, connected and clean mobility solutions are increasingly becoming the key principles of effective mobility solutions across the world.
- Given its commitment to climate goals, India needs to adopt effective strategies to place itself as a key driver of the mobility revolution in the world.

Star rating programme launched

Context:

Ministry of Power, Government of India expanded its ambitious Standards & Labelling (Star Rating) program for Energy Efficient for Appliances to cover the



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Microwave Ovens and Washing Machines (with revised parameters) in the country.

About the Programme:

- The Star Labelling Programs has been formulated by Bureau of Energy Efficiency.
- The program will now include these two appliances for grant of Star Rating in terms of their energy performance. Initially, the program for above two appliances will be implemented on a voluntary basis and will be valid up to 31st December 2020.
- "This initiative will promote advancement of technology and energy efficiency in Microwaves Ovens which is becoming a popular household gadget.
- Estimated savings of over 3.0 Billion Units of electricity at consume-end through adoption of Star Rated Microwave Ovens and Washing Machines by 2030. This would be equivalent to Green House Gases (GHG) reduction of 2.4 Million-ton of CO₂ by the year 2030 through these initiatives.

Unlocking NATIONAL Energy Efficiency potential (UNNATEE):

- Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) has developed a national strategy document for accelerating energy efficiency in India.
- The strategy document titled UNNATEE (Unlocking NATIONAL Energy Efficiency potential) describes a plain framework and implementation strategy to establish a clear linkage between energy supply-demand scenarios and energy efficiency opportunities.
- The document offers a comprehensive roadmap to address India's environmental and climate change mitigation action through energy efficiency measures.
- This exercise is first of its kind, clearly delineating the energy efficiency targets for the respective demand sectors upto the state levels.



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About BEE

- The BEE is a statutory body under the Ministry of Power, Government of India.
- It assists in developing policies and strategies with the primary objective of reducing the energy intensity of the Indian economy.
- BEE coordinates with designated consumers, designated agencies, and other organizations to identify and utilize the existing resources and infrastructure, in performing the functions assigned to it under the Energy Conservation Act.



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India Cooling Action Plan Launched

India is one of the first countries in the world to develop a comprehensive Cooling Action plan which has a long term vision to address the cooling requirement across sectors and lists out actions which can help reduce the cooling demand.

Cooling requirement is cross sectoral and an essential part for economic growth and is required across different sectors of the economy such as residential and commercial buildings, cold-chain, refrigeration, transport and industries

About the plan:

- Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan released the India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP) today in a function in New Delhi.
- The thrust of the India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP) is to look for synergies in actions for securing both environmental and socio-economic benefits. "
- The overarching goal of ICAP is to provide sustainable cooling and thermal comfort for all while securing environmental and socio-economic benefits for the society. This will also help in reducing both direct and indirect emissions/
- India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP) provides an integrated vision towards cooling across sectors encompassing *inter alia* reduction of cooling demand, refrigerant transition, enhancing energy efficiency and better technology options with a 20 year time horizon.

Aims of Plan:

The India Cooling Action seeks to

- (i) reduce cooling demand across sectors by 20% to 25% by 2037-38,
- (ii) reduce refrigerant demand by 25% to 30% by 2037-38,
- (iii) Reduce cooling energy requirements by 25% to 40% by 2037-38, (
- iv) recognize "cooling and related areas" as a thrust area of research under national S&T Programme,
- (v) training and certification of 100,000 servicing sector technicians by 2022-23, synergizing with Skill India Mission. These actions will have significant climate benefits.



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Twin Success for Guided PINAKA

Defence Research and Defence Organisation (DRDO) today successfully test fired the Guided PINAKA from Pokhran ranges.

The weapon system is equipped with state-of-the-art guidance kit comprising of an advanced navigation and control system.

The indigenously developed Guided Pinaka by DRDO will significantly boost the capability of the artillery to make precision hits.

About Pinaka:

- **Pinaka** is a [multiple rocket launcher](#) produced in India and developed by the [Defence Research and Development Organisation](#) (DRDO) for the [Indian Army](#).
- The system has a maximum range of 40 km for Mark-I and 75 km for Mark-II,^[4] and can fire a [salvo](#) of 12 [HE](#) rockets in 44 seconds.
- The system is mounted on a [Tatra](#) truck for mobility. Pinaka saw service during the [Kargil War](#), where it was successful in neutralising enemy positions on the mountain tops
- It has since been inducted into the Indian Army in large numbers.
- As of 2014, about 5,000 missiles are being produced every year while an advanced variant is under development with enhanced range and accuracy.
- As of 2019, an upgraded guided missile version of the system has also been test-fired, with a range of over 70 km

The Nice Agreement on the International classification of goods and services for the purposes of registration of marks

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the proposal for accession of India to

- (i) The Nice Agreement concerning the International classification of Goods and Services for the purposes of registration of marks,



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(ii) The Vienna Agreement establishing an International Classification of the figurative elements of marks, and

iii) The Locarno Agreement establishing an International classification for industrial designs.

Purpose:

- Accession to the Nice, Vienna and Locarno Agreements will help the Intellectual Property Office in India to harmonise the classification systems for examination of trademark and design applications, in line with the classification systems followed globally.
- It would give an opportunity to include Indian designs, figurative elements and goods in the international classification systems.
- The accession is expected to instill confidence in foreign investors in relation to protection of IPs in India.
- The accession would also facilitate in exercising rights in decision making processes regarding review and revision of the classifications under the agreement.

MCA releases national guidelines on responsible business conduct

Ministry of Corporate Affairs has revised the National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Environmental and Economic Responsibilities of Business, 2011 (NVGs) and formulated the National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct (NGRBC). These guidelines urge businesses to actualise the principles in letter and spirit.

These principles are:

1. Businesses should conduct and govern themselves with integrity in a manner that is Ethical, Transparent and Accountable.
2. Businesses should provide goods and services in a manner that is sustainable and safe
3. Businesses should respect and promote the well-being of all employees, including those in their value chains.



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4. Businesses should respect the interests of and be responsive to all their stakeholders.
5. Businesses should respect and promote human rights.
6. Businesses should respect and make efforts to protect and restore the environment.
7. Businesses, when engaging in influencing public and regulatory policy, should do so in a manner that is responsible and transparent.
8. Businesses should promote inclusive growth and equitable development.
9. Businesses should engage with and provide value to their consumers in a responsible manner.

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs is also in the process of developing India's National Action Plan on Business & Human Rights (NAP) in consultation with various Ministries and State Governments by 2020.

A Zero Draft of India's NAP demonstrating implementation of the three pillars of UNGPs has also been released and uploaded on the website of the Ministry.

Closing ceremony: Indo-Bangladesh joint Military Exercise Sampriti - 2019

Exercise Sampriti-VIII, a joint Indo-Bangladesh military exercise which witnessed participation of a company group of 9th Battalion the Rajputana Rifles from the Indian Army and the Company of 36 East Bengal Battalion, Bangladesh Army concluded at Tangail, Bangladesh on 14 March 2019.

About the Exercise:

- The exercise was the 8th edition in the Sampriti series, which started in 2009.
- Exercise Sampriti strengthens and broadens interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies.



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- It is the fourth Indo-Bangladesh exercise at Tangail, Bangladesh and compliments number of other exchanges and exercise between the two forces.
- The commanders and staff officers of both sides were exercised to work in close coordination to receive and collate intelligence and to issue suitable operational orders to the joint field training components who executed these orders on ground in simulated realistic situations.

A magnificent parade and the customary exchange of mementos marked the successful completion of Indo-Bangladesh joint exercise.

FinTech Conclave 2019

Why in News?

NITI Aayog is organising a day-long FinTech Conclave at Dr. Ambedkar International Center, New Delhi tomorrow on 25th March, 2019.

The objective is to shape India's continued ascendancy in FinTech, build the narrative for future strategy and policy efforts, and to deliberate steps for comprehensive financial inclusion, The Conclave will be featuring representatives from across the financial space – central ministries, regulators, bankers, startups, service providers and entrepreneurs.

Government of India's efforts focused on Digital India and developing India Stack including Voluntary Aadhaar for financial inclusion have evoked significant interest from various stakeholders in the area of Financial Technology (FinTech).

Background:

- India is one of the fastest growing FinTech markets globally and industry research has projected that USD 1 Trillion or 60% of retail and SME credit, will be digitally disbursed by 2029.
- The Indian FinTech ecosystem is the third largest in the globe, attracting nearly USD 6 billion in investments since 2014.
- The Indian FinTech industry is creating cutting edge intellectual property assets in advanced risk management and artificial intelligence that will propel India forward in the global digital economy while simultaneously enabling paperless access to finance for every Indian.



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Coffee Board Activates Blockchain Based Marketplace in India

Commerce Secretary, Dr. Anup Wadhawan, launched blockchain based coffee e-marketplace through video conferencing in New Delhi today.

This pilot project will help integrate the farmers with markets in a transparent manner and lead to realisation of fair price for the coffee producer.

Coffee in India:

- India is the only country in the world where entire coffee is grown under shade, handpicked and sun dried.
- It produces one of the best coffees in the world, produced by small coffee growers, tribal farmers adjacent to National Parks and Wild Life Sanctuaries in the Western and Eastern Ghats, which are two of the major bio-diversity hot spots in the world. `
- Indian coffee is highly valued in the world market and sold as premium coffees. The share of farmers in the final returns from coffee is very meagre.

Benefits of Blockchain:

- Blockchain based market place app for trading of Indian coffees is intended to bring in transparency in the trade of Indian coffee, maintain the traceability of Indian coffee from bean to cup so as the consumer tastes real Indian coffee and the grower is paid fairly for his coffee produced.
- This initiative will help in creating a brand image for Indian Coffee through traceability in reducing growers dependency on intermediaries by having a direct access to buyers for a fair price for their produce, in finding right coffee suppliers for exporters and within the stipulated time to meet the growing demands and in building a better trust and long term relationship due to increased visibility towards the traceability and transparency of the produce.

What is Blockchain?

At its most basic level, blockchain is literally just a chain of blocks, but not in the traditional sense of those words. When we say the words "block" and "chain" in



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this context, we are actually talking about digital information (the “block”) stored in a public database (the “chain”).

- “Blocks” on the blockchain are made up of digital pieces of information. Specifically, they have three parts:
- Blocks store information about transactions, say the date, time, and dollar amount of your most recent purchase from Amazon. (NOTE: This Amazon example is for illustrative purposes; Amazon retail does not work on a blockchain principle)
- Blocks store information about who is participating in transactions. A block for your splurge purchase from Amazon would record your name along with Amazon.com, Inc. Instead of using your actual name, your purchase is recorded without any identifying information using a unique “digital signature,” sort of like a username.
- Blocks store information that distinguishes them from other blocks. Much like you and I have names to distinguish us from one another, each block stores a unique code called a “hash” that allows us to tell it apart from every other block.
- Let’s say you made your splurge purchase on Amazon, but while it’s in transit, you decide you just can’t resist and need a second one.
- Even though the details of your new transaction would look nearly identical to your earlier purchase, we can still tell the blocks apart because of their unique codes.

A single block on the blockchain can actually store up to 1 MB of data. Depending on the size of the transactions, that means a single block can house a few thousand transactions under one roof.

GI Certification for five varieties of Indian coffee

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India has recently awarded Geographical Indication (GI) to five varieties of Indian coffee. They are:



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- **Coorg Arabica coffee** is grown specifically in the region of Kodagu district in Karnataka.
- **Wayanaad Robusta coffee** is grown specifically in the region of Wayanad district which is situated on the eastern portion of Kerala.
- **Chikmagalur Arabica coffee** is grown specifically in the region of Chikmagalur district and it is situated in the Deccan plateau, belongs to the Malnad region of Karnataka.
- **Araku Valley Arabica coffee** can be described as coffee from the hilly tracks of Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha region at an elevation of 900-1100 Mt MSL. The coffee produce of Araku, by the tribals, follows an organic approach in which they emphasise management practices involving substantial use of organic manures, green manuring and organic pest management practices.
- **Bababudangiris Arabica coffee** is grown specifically in the birthplace of coffee in India and the region is situated in the central portion of Chikmagalur district. Selectively hand-picked and processed by natural fermentation, the cup exhibits full body, acidity, mild flavour and striking aroma with a note of chocolate. This coffee is also called high grown coffee which slowly ripens in the mild climate and thereby the bean acquires a special taste and aroma.

The Monsooned Malabar Robusta Coffee, a unique specialty coffee from India, was given GI certification earlier.

In India, coffee is cultivated in about 4.54 lakh hectares by 3.66 lakh coffee farmers of which 98% are small farmers. Coffee cultivation is mainly done in the Southern States of India:

- Karnataka – 54%
 - Kerala – 19%
 - Tamil Nadu – 8%
- Coffee is also grown in non-traditional areas like Andhra Pradesh and Odisha (17.2%) and North East States (1.8%).
 - The recognition and protection that comes with GI certification will allow the coffee producers of India to invest in maintaining the specific qualities of the coffee grown in that particular region.
 - It will also enhance the visibility of Indian coffee in the world and allow growers to get maximum price for their premium coffee.

About GI Tag:



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- A [geographical indication](#) (GI) is a name or sign used on certain products which corresponds to a specific geographical location or origin (e.g. a town, region, or country). [India](#), as a member of the [World Trade Organization](#) (WTO), enacted the [Geographical Indications of Goods \(Registration and Protection\) Act, 1999](#) has come into force with effect from 15 September 2003.
- GIs have been defined under Article 22(1) of the [WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights \(TRIPS\)](#) Agreement as: "Indications which identify a good as originating in the territory of a member, or a region or a locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographic origin."
- The GI tag ensures that none other than those registered as authorised users (or at least those residing inside the geographic territory) are allowed to use the popular product name.
- [Darjeeling tea](#) became the first [GI tagged](#) product in India, in 2004-05, since then by october 2018, 321 had been added to the list

PSLV-C45 successfully launches EMISAT and 28 customer satellites

India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C45) today successfully launched EMISAT and 28 international customer satellites from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR in Sriharikota. This flight marked the first mission of PSLV-QL, a new variant of PSLV with four strap-on motors.

About emisat:

- EMISAT is a satellite built around ISRO's Mini Satellite-2 bus weighing about 436 kg. The satellite is intended for electromagnetic spectrum measurement.
- The 28 international customer satellites, together weighing about 220 kg, are from four countries, namely, Lithuania (2), Spain (1), Switzerland (1) and USA (24). These foreign satellites were launched as part of commercial arrangements.



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So far, PSLV has launched 46 national satellites, 10 satellites built by students from Indian Universities and 297 international customer satellites, including the satellites launched today.

In its next mission, PSLV-C46 will launch RISAT-2B in May 2019.

About PSLV:

- **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)** is an [expendable medium-lift launch vehicle](#) designed and operated by the [Indian Space Research Organisation](#) (ISRO).
- It was developed to allow India to launch its [Indian Remote Sensing](#) (IRS) satellites into [sun-synchronous orbits](#), a service that was, until the advent of the PSLV in 1993, commercially available only from [Russia](#).
- PSLV can also launch small size satellites into [Geostationary Transfer Orbit](#) (GTO).
- Some notable payloads launched by PSLV include India's first [lunar](#) probe [Chandrayaan-1](#), India's first [interplanetary mission](#), [Mars Orbiter Mission](#) (Mangalyaan) and India's first space [observatory](#), [Astrosat](#).
- PSLV has gained credence as a small satellite launcher due its numerous multi-satellite deployment campaigns with auxiliary payloads usually ride sharing along an Indian primary payload.
- Most notable among these was the launch of PSLV C37 on 15 February 2017 successfully deploying 104 satellites in sun-synchronous orbit, tripling the previous record held by Russia for most number of satellites sent to space on a single launch.

NuGen Mobility Summit 2019

The International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) is organizing a NuGen Mobility Summit, 2019, at Manesar, NCR, from 27th to 29th November 2019.

About the Summit:



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- The objective of the Summit is to share new ideas, learnings, global experiences, innovations and future technology trends for faster adoption, assimilation and development of advanced automotive technologies for a smarter and greener future.
- This event will help in building a platform for bringing together all stakeholders in the automotive industry to understand global advancements in technologies.
- The Summit is being organized in association with SAENIS, SAE INDIA, SAE International, NATRiP, DIMTS, Department of Heavy Industry, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, SIAM and ACMA. More than 2500 participants and over 250 exhibitors are expected to take part in the Summit.
- ICAT Centre-II is under brisk renovation to create a world-class state-of-the-art facility for organizing such significant and sizeable events for the automotive fraternity.
- Several kinds of tracks such as coast down track, oval track, abs track, hill track and flood track will be available for demonstrations and events.

It provides services for testing, validation, design and homologation of all categories of vehicles and has a mission to assist the automotive industry in adopting cutting edge technologies in vehicle evaluation and component development to ensure reliability, durability and compliance to the current and future regulations in new generation mobility solutions.

Advance Pricing Agreement regime

Why in News?

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has entered into 18 APAs in the month of March 2019, which includes 03 Bilateral APAs (BAPAs).

With the signing of these APAs, the total number of APAs entered into by the CBDT in the year 2018-19 stands at 52, which includes 11 BAPAs. The total number of APAs entered into by the CBDT as of now stands at 271, which inter alia includes 31 BAPAs.

The BAPAs entered into during the month of March 2019 were with the following treaty partners:-

- Australia – 1
- Netherlands - 1
- USA – 1



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The International Transactions covered in all these Agreements, inter alia, include the following, -

- contract manufacturing
 - provision of software development services
 - back office engineering support service
 - provision of back office (ITeS) support services
 - provision of marketing support services
 - payment of royalty for use of technology and brand
 - trading
 - payment of interest
- The progress of the APA scheme strengthens the Government's resolve of fostering a non-adversarial tax regime.
 - The Indian APA programme has been appreciated nationally and internationally for being able to address complex transfer pricing issues in a fair and transparent manner.

What is APA?

- An **advance pricing agreement (APA)** is an ahead-of-time agreement between a taxpayer and a tax authority on an appropriate [transfer pricing](#) methodology (TPM) for a set of transactions at issue over a fixed period of time (called "Covered Transactions").
- **Bilateral and multilateral APAs**
APAs are generally bi- or multilateral—i.e. they also include agreements between the taxpayer and one or more foreign tax administrations under the authority of the mutual agreement procedure (MAP) specified in [income tax treaties](#).
- The taxpayer benefits from such agreements since they are assured that income associated with covered transactions is not subject to [double taxation](#) by the IRS and the relevant foreign tax authorities.

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Her Majesty's Australian Ships(HMAS) *Canberra* (L02), a Landing Helicopter Dock, *Newcastle*(06) and *Paramatta*(154), both frigates and *Success*(OR 304), a Durance-class multi-product replenishment oiler along with HMAS *Collins*, a conventional submarine arrived Visakhapatnam to participate in the third edition of *Australia – India Maritime Exercise, AUSINDEX* on 02 Apr 19.

About the Exercise:

- The bilateral maritime exercise is aimed to strengthen mutual cooperation and enhance interoperability between the Royal Australia Navy (*RAM*) and Indian Navy (*IN*) by providing opportunities for interaction and exchange of professional views between the personnel of the two navies.
- The third edition of AUSINDEX scheduled from 02 to 14 April 19 would involve exercises in all three dimensions with focus on Anti Submarine Warfare (ASW) and shall be held in three phases.
- The number and variety of units participating in the bilateral exercise is the highest till date from both navies and signifies the importance attached to the exercise by both countries while the enhanced complexity is indicative of the interoperability between the two navies.
- The current exercise will contribute towards consolidating bonds of friendship across the seas.

Recommendations of the 33rd GST Council meeting

Real estate sector is one of the largest contributors to the national GDP and provides employment opportunity to large numbers of people. "Housing for All by 2022" envisions that every citizen would have a house and the urban areas would be free of slums.

There are reports of slowdown in the sector and low off-take of under-construction houses which needs to be addressed. To boost the residential segment of the real estate sector, following recommendations were made by the GST Council in its 33rd meeting held today:

1. GST rate:

- i. GST shall be levied at effective GST rate of 5% without ITC on residential properties outside affordable segment;



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- ii. GST shall be levied at effective GST of 1% without ITC on affordable housing properties.

1. **Effective date:** The new rate shall become applicable from 1st of April, 2019.

1. **Definition of affordable housing shall be:-**

A residential house/flat of carpet area of upto 90 sqm in non-metropolitan cities/towns and 60 sqm in metropolitan cities having value upto Rs. 45 lacs (both for metropolitan and non-metropolitan cities).

Metropolitan Cities are Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi NCR (limited to Delhi, Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurgaon, Faridabad), Hyderabad, Kolkata and Mumbai (whole of MMR).

Advantages of the recommendations made:

The new tax rate in principle was approved by the Council taking into consideration the following advantages:-

- i. The buyer of house gets a fair price and affordable housing gets very attractive with GST @ 1%.
- ii. Interest of the buyer/consumer gets protected; ITC benefits not being passed to them shall become a non-issue.
- iii. Cash flow problem for the sector is addressed by exemption of GST on development rights, long term lease (premium), FSI etc.
- iv. Unutilized ITC, which used to become cost at the end of the project gets removed and should lead to better pricing.
- v. Tax structure and tax compliance becomes simpler for builders.

The decisions of the GST Council have been presented in this note in simple language for easy understanding.

About GST Council:

- GST Council is the governing body of GST having 33 members.



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- It is chaired by the Union Finance Minister. GST Council is an apex member committee to modify, reconcile or to procure any law or act or regulation based on the context of goods and services tax in India.
- The council is headed by the union finance minister [Arun Jaitley](#) assisted with the [finance minister](#) of all the states of India.
- The GST council is responsible for any revision or enactment of rule or any rate changes of the goods and services in India