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National ST Commission to take action on video films of Jaravas on YouTube

Taking suo-moto cognizance of objectionable video films and pictures of protected Jarava and other tribal communities of Andaman Islands on YouTube social media platform, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribe (NCST) has initiated action on it.

- The commission has decided to take up the matter with Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Chief Secretary of A&N Island for removal of these objectionable video films from YouTube and initiate action on those who uploaded these video clips on social media platform.

Laws protecting these tribes:

As per provisions of Andaman and Nicobar Island (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956 (PAT), the Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges, Sentinelese, Nicobarese and Shom Pens have been identified as “aboriginal tribes”.

- The PAT contains the provisions of protection of these communities from the outside interference.
- Penalty provisions for promoting tourism through advertisement relating to aboriginal tribes has also been made in the year 2012.
- Whoever enters these areas in contravention of the notification under section 7 (which prohibits entry into reserve areas) for taking photographs or making videos shall be punishable with imprisonment up to three years.
- Besides, Section 3 (i) (r) of the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities Act) also accords protection.

About NCST:

NCST was established by amending Article 338 and inserting a new Article 338A in the Constitution through the Constitution (89th Amendment) Act, 2003. By this amendment, the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was replaced by two separate Commissions namely- (i) the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), and (ii) the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST).

- The term of office of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and each member is three years from the date of assumption of charge. The Chairperson has been given the rank of Union Cabinet Minister and the Vice-Chairperson that of a Minister of State and other Members have the ranks of a Secretary to the Government of India.
- NCST is empowered to investigate and monitor matters relating to safeguards provided for STs under the Constitution or under other laws or under Govt. order. The Commission is also authorized to inquire into specific complaints relating to rights and safeguards of STs and to participate and advise in the Planning Process relating to socio-economic development of STs and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union and States.
- The commission submits its report to the President annually on the working of safeguards and measures required for effective implementation of Programmers/ Schemes relating to welfare and socio-economic development of STs.

NSG organises first International Aviation Security seminar

NSG has organised the first International Aviation Security seminar. National Security Guard (NSG) has organised the seminar, with the aim of bringing all major stakeholders under one roof and facilitate them sharing views/opinion, discussions, brain storming with the matters concerning Aviation Security.
About NSG:

It is a security force of India constituted “for combating terrorist activities with a view to protect States against internal disturbances”.

- It was set up in 1984 as a Federal Contingency Deployment Force to tackle all facets of terrorism in the country.
- It is under the authority Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The force is a unique combination of personnel on deputation from Indian Army and Central Armed Police Forces.
- The two components of NSG are the Special Action Group (SAG), which consists entirely of Indian Army personnel; and the Special Ranger Groups (SRG), which comprises personnel drawn from Central Armed Police Forces and State Police Forces.
- The chief of the force designated as a Director General is an officer from the Indian Police Service.

First Maize Based Mega Food Park in Kapurthala, Punjab

The foundation stone for First Maize based Mega Food Park was recently laid in Kapurthala, Punjab. Kapurthala has been declared as a Dark Zone district where slow desertification is happening because of overexploitation of water due to cash crops. Establishment of this Mega Food Park will result in the development of this Dark Zone which includes Job opportunities, Environmental Conservation.

Significance of Maize based Mega food park:

Maize is an amazing cereal and is an alternate to Jhona (paddy) and Kanak (wheat). Maize is rich in protein, provides nutritional requirements that India needs and Maize consumes much lesser water and could contain the problem of further water depletion.

- Maize Based Mega Food Park is the first major and serious step in the history of India for containing the desertification problem of Punjab and would make farmers turn to maize cultivation which need less water for more production.
- Maize is being used by different industries for seed, starch, brewery, food additives, sweeteners etc and it is also a basic raw material to thousands of industrial products like oil, proteins, pharmaceutical, cosmetics, beverages, film, textile, gum, value added foods, paper industries, bio-ethanol etc.

About Mega Food Parks:

To give a major boost to the food processing sector by adding value and reducing food wastage at each stage of the supply chain with particular focus on perishables, Ministry of Food Processing Industries is implementing Mega Food Park Scheme in the country.

The Scheme of Mega Food Park aims at providing a mechanism to link agricultural production to the market by bringing together farmers, processors and retailers so as to ensure maximizing value addition, minimizing wastages, increasing farmers’ income and creating employment opportunities particularly in rural sector.

Mode of operation:

- The Scheme has a cluster based approach based on a hub and spokes model. It includes creation of infrastructure for primary processing and storage near the farm in the form of Primary Processing Centres (PPCs) and Collection Centres (CCs) and common facilities and enabling infrastructure at Central Processing Centre (CPC).
- The PPCs are meant for functioning as a link between the producers and processors for supply of raw material to the Central Processing Centres.
- CPC has need based core processing facilities and basic enabling infrastructure to be used by the food processing units setup at the CPC. The minimum area required for a CPC is 50 acres.
- The scheme is demand-driven and would facilitate food processing units to meet environmental, safety and social standards.
**Scheme for IPR Awareness – Creative India; Innovative India**

Taking forward the National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy 2016, a ‘Scheme for IPR Awareness – Creative India; Innovative India’ has been launched by Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) under the aegis of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion.

**Key facts:**

- The Scheme aims at raising IPR awareness amongst students, youth, authors, artists, budding inventors and professionals to inspire them to create, innovate and protect their creations and inventions across India including Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3 cities as well as rural areas in the next 3 years.
- The Scheme will conduct over 4000 IPR awareness workshops/seminars in academic institutions (schools and colleges) and the industry, including MSMEs and Startups, as also IP training and sensitization programmes for enforcement agencies and the judiciary.
- Workshops will cover all vital IP topics including international filing procedures, promotion of Geographical Indications and highlighting the ill effects of piracy and counterfeiting.

**SEBI to move against non-compliant firms**

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has initiated action against non-compliant “Exclusively Listed Companies (ELCs) on Dissemination Board (DB),” and its directors and promoters.

**Non-compliant firms:**

These are companies which were earlier listed on regional stock exchanges (RSEs) that have been de-recognised by the regulator. Such companies were allowed to be part of the national exchanges through a dissemination board but were directed to submit a plan of action for listing or providing an exit option to shareholders.

**What’s the issue?**

These firms were supposed to submit their plan of action. The deadline to submit the plan of action was extended until June 30. As per SEBI, of the 2,000 companies listed on dissemination board as on June 30, there are 536 entities that are traceable and yet not submitted a plan of action.

**SEBI’s powers to punish non-compliant firms:**

SEBI can bar such promoters and companies from accessing the securities market for a period of 10 years apart from freezing the shares held by promoters and directors. The regulator can even attach the bank accounts and other assets of promoters and directors to compensate the investors.

**Background:**

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is the regulator for the securities market in India. It was established in the year 1988 and given statutory powers on 12 April 1992 through the SEBI Act, 1992.

**Important functions performed by SEBI:**

- Approve by-laws of stock exchanges.
- Require the stock exchange to amend their by-laws.
- Inspect the books of accounts and call for periodical returns from recognized stock exchanges.
- Inspect the books of accounts of financial intermediaries.
- Compel certain companies to list their shares in one or more stock exchanges.
- Register brokers.
Centre eases pre-merger filing norms

In a move that is likely to boost mergers and acquisitions (M&A) in the country, the Centre has done away with the thirty-day time period to submit before the Competition Commission of India (CCI) an application for pre-merger clearance.

- As per the latest notification, every person or enterprise who is a party to a combination is exempted from giving notice within thirty days. This new provision (exemption from the 30-day time period) will be valid for five years starting June 29, 2017.
- The notification means that parties can make a CCI application at any time in course of an acquisition but cannot effect or close an acquisition before obtaining the CCI’s approval.

Background:

The earlier norms had specified that an application to obtain the CCI’s prior approval for an acquisition, merger or amalgamation had to be filed within thirty days of: board approval of the proposed merger or amalgamation by each of the respective parties; execution of any agreement or other document of a binding nature conveying a decision to acquire shares, control, voting rights or assets; execution of any document by the acquiring enterprise conveying a decision to acquire shares, control, voting rights or assets, in case the acquisition is without the consent of the enterprise being acquired; or date of the public announcement under India’s takeover regulations applicable to acquisitions of listed entities.

Significance of this move:

- It will give parties the liberty and flexibility to decide at what stage they want to make the CCI filing, depending on the deal parameters and commercial terms.
- Besides, this will specifically benefit large, multi-jurisdiction transactions where parties may be burdened with regulatory requirements in several jurisdictions and, therefore, need more time to assess the Indian law implications and prepare a comprehensive CCI application.

G20 Summit

12th G20 Summit was recently held at the German city of Hamburg.

- The theme chosen for this year’s G20 Summit is “Shaping an Inter-connected World”.
- Issues like free and open trade, migration, sustainable development and global stability came up during the discussions.

Action agenda at G20 to counter terrorism:

India’s PM presented an 11-point action agenda for counter-terrorism at the summit. The agenda includes:

- Detriment action against nations supporting terrorism must be made compulsory, such nations should be barred from G20.
- G20 nations must exchange lists of suspected terrorists and their supporters.
- Legal processes such extradition should be simplified and expedited.
- Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism should be adopted soon.
- UNSC resolutions and other international processes should be effectively implemented.
- G20 nations should give emphasis to de-radicalisation programmes and exchange best practices.
- Terror financing should be curtailed by means of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and other means.
- Weapons and Explosive Action Task Force (WEATF) should be constituted on lines of FATF so that source of weapons to the terrorists is stopped.
- G20 nations should cooperate in cyber security, with a focus on terrorist activities.
- National Security Advisors on Counter Terrorism mechanism should be constituted.
G20:

The ‘Group of Twenty’ is made up of 19 countries and the European Union. The countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the UK and the US.

The G20, with its ministerial-level beginnings in 1999, first met for a summit in 2008 in Washington to discuss ways to achieve balanced and sustainable world economic growth.

RBI considering setting up a Public Credit Registry

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may consider setting up a Public Credit Registry (PCR), which will be an extensive database of credit information for India that is accessible to all stakeholders.

What is a PCR:

Generally, a PCR is managed by a public authority like the central bank or the banking supervisor, and reporting of loan details to the PCR by lenders and/or borrowers is mandated by law. The contractual terms and outcomes covered and the threshold above which the contracts are to be reported vary in different jurisdictions, but the idea is to capture all relevant information in one large database on the borrower, in particular, the borrower’s entire set of borrowing contracts and outcomes.

Advantages of having a PCR:

A PCR, if put in place will help in credit assessment and pricing by banks; risk-based, dynamic and countercyclical provisioning at banks; supervision and early intervention by regulators; understanding if transmission of monetary policy is working.

How exactly a public credit registry can help in India?

- Firstly, it is required to improve the credit culture in our country. It has been demonstrated in the ‘Doing Business 2017’ report that credit information systems impart transparency in the credit market, following which access to credit improves and delinquencies decrease. At present, several Indian banks burdened with mounting NPAs appear less confident in taking credit decisions. A transparent public credit registry would help the bankers to rely on objective data for making credit decisions and also enable them to defend their actions with market evidence when subjected to scrutiny.
- Secondly, large borrowers get a preference in credit markets due to their existing credentials in the public space. They have established credit history, brand value, and supply of collateral. In contrast, small and marginal aspirants, start-ups, new entrepreneurs, and small businesses in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector are disadvantaged as they lack many of those desired qualifications for credit. Transparency of credit information would serve as a “reputational collateral” for such borrowers. This would not only help promote financial inclusion, but also reward the good borrowers thereby imparting credit discipline.
- Thirdly, public credit registers in many countries have gone beyond the credit relationship of borrowing entities with financial institutions. They tap other transactional data of borrowers including payments to utilities like power and telecom for retail customers and trade credit data for businesses.
- Finally, public credit registry can have a profound impact for regulatory purposes. In its absence, only fragmented images are available of credit behaviour and indebtedness. PCR will help in getting to a complete picture that is necessary for supervisors and policy makers to assess credit risk of the entire system.

UNESCO puts Hebron on endangered heritage list, outraging Israel:

The U.N. cultural agency has declared the old city in the West Bank town of Hebron as a Palestinian world heritage site, a decision that outraged Israeli officials who say the move negated the deep Jewish ties to the biblical town and its ancient shrine.
The move was the latest chapter in Israel’s contentious relationship with UNESCO, an agency it accuses of being an anti-Israeli tool that makes decisions out of political considerations.

About Hebron:

- Hebron is part of the West Bank, a territory captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war. The international community considers it to be occupied.
- Palestinians claim the West Bank is an integral part of a future independent state, a position that is widely backed internationally. Israel says the territory’s fate, along with other core issues like security, should be resolved in negotiations.
- Both Jews and Muslims revere the same site in Hebron as the traditional burial place of the biblical patriarchs and matriarchs — Jews call it the Tomb of the Patriarchs, while for Muslims it is the Ibrahimi Mosque

At 399 ppm, India matches the world in atmospheric carbon dioxide levels

The first-ever picture of atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration over India shows that it is way above the safety mark and in line with what has been observed in other parts of the world.

Key facts:

- It’s generally been agreed that for every million gas molecules in the atmosphere, anything beyond 350 carbon dioxide molecules, is considered unsafe.
- These concentrations are likely to trap enough heat to trigger extreme climate events the world over and it would become progressively harder, and costlier, to suck out the excessive CO2.
- In 2015, the global average was 400 ppm, according to reports from Mauna Loa.
- In India, that year, according to a report published in the latest issue of *Current Science*, the average CO2 level was 399 parts per million (ppm).
- Southern India and the western coast saw concentrations between 395 ppm and 400 ppm while the central and northern regions registered between 400 and 405 ppm.

Probable reasons

There could be a few possible reasons like lack of a CO2 sink, point sources like forest fires or biomass burning or an urban source, and gaseous transport from neighbouring regions based on prevailing weather conditions
The Supreme Court has given the central government six months time to demonstrate the gains of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana on the ground level.

Background:

Expressing concern over the suicides, the SC had early this year asked the government to come up with a concrete road map to eliminate the reasons for the agrarian crisis. A PIL had sought the top court’s intervention in Gujarat where between 2003 and 2012, 692 farmers had allegedly committed suicide. The PIL is seeking compensation to the families of the debt-ridden farmers who had committed suicide because of serious financial difficulties.

- The PIL filed in 2013 had originally dealt with farmer suicides only in Gujarat where, according to the plea, 692 farmers had committed suicide between 2003 and 2012. But in January this year, the Supreme Court expanded the ambit of the petition to cover the whole country.
- Incidents of debt-ridden farmers committing suicides have seen a rise. Several state governments have written off loans as farmers battle mounting debts, failing crops and crashing prices. According to the NCRB’s 2014 report, 5,650 farmers had committed suicides in that year. Maharashtra reported the highest suicides at 2,568 followed by Telangana with 898 and Madhya Pradesh with 826.
Efforts by government in this regard:

- The government informed the court that various schemes have covered about 40% farmers so far and the government will ensure that it reached at least half of India’s farmers by 2018-19. The court recorded that out of total 5.34 crore, 12 crore farmers were covered under the government schemes.
- Efforts are also being taken at multiple levels to ensure protection to farmers. Almost 30% farm land has been covered under the crop insurance scheme and the figure will substantially rise by the end of 2018.
- The government has also acknowledged that there were deficiencies in making the schemes fully operational.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana:

The scheme aims to reduce the premium rates to be paid by the farmers so as to enable more farmers avail insurance cover against crop loss on account of natural calamities.

- Under the scheme, farmers will have to pay a uniform premium of 2% for all kharif crops and 1.5% for all rabi crops. For annual commercial and horticultural crops, farmers will have to pay a premium of 5%. The remaining share of the premium, as in previous schemes, will continue to be borne equally by the Centre and the respective state governments.
- Under PMFBY, there will no upper limit on government subsidy and even if balance premium is 90%, it will be borne by the government. Earlier, there was a provision of capping the premium rate which resulted in low claims being paid to farmers. This capping was done to limit government outgo on the premium subsidy. This capping has now been removed and farmers will get claim against full sum insured without any reduction.
- Under the scheme, the use of technology will be encouraged to a great extent. Smart phones will be used to capture and upload data of crop cutting to reduce the delays in claim payment to farmers. Remote sensing will be used to reduce the number of crop cutting experiments.
- The new Crop Insurance Scheme will also seek to address a long standing demand of farmers and provide farm level assessment for localised calamities including hailstorms, unseasonal rains, landslides and inundation.

Garib Nawaz Skill Development Centres:

- The government is planning to establish Garib Nawaz Skill Development Centres in 100 districts of the country.
- These centres will effectively ensure employment oriented skill development of youth belonging to Minority communities.
- In next six months, Garib Nawaz Skill Development Centres, providing job oriented skill training in various fields, will be established in Hyderabad, Noida, Lucknow, Jaipur, Nagpur, Aurangabad, Bhopal, Indore etc.

India slaps to be 4th largest investor into UK:

India has slipped by one spot to become the fourth-largest foreign investor into the UK. India shares the fourth spot with Australia and New Zealand, which also set up 127 projects collectively. The US remains on the top, investing in 577 projects in the UK, with China (including Hong Kong) remaining in second place with 160 projects.

Odisha develops drought monitoring system, model for flood forecast

The Odisha government has developed a Real Time Flood Forecasting Model for the entire Mahanadi river basin and set up a State Drought Monitoring Centre (SDMC).

- This flood forecasting model will help in accomplishing better flood control and its management through early warning systems in the Mahanadi basin
- It has special relevance and greater significance in the context of climate change
The model is supported by the State Climate Change Innovation Programme
The state has 11 river basins and the Mahanadi basin is the largest inter-state river basin.

**Weekly monitoring**

Data on weather condition, rainfall and humidity of soil at field level would be recorded every week of the year.

Weekly report on the condition of paddy fields would also be collected

This apart, damage caused due to drought would be assessed after analysing these reports

**EC to launch Facebook drive on 1 July to call new voters for online registration**

The Election Commission will launch a special drive to enrol new electors, and has collaborated with Facebook to launch a 'voter registration reminder' on 1 July.

- The reminder will be sent out in 13 Indian languages - English, Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu, Assamese, Marathi and Oriya.
- By clicking on the 'register now' button, people will be directed to the national voters' services portal (nvsp.in) which will guide them through the registration process.

**Govt. unveils new hydrocarbon policy**

Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan have introduced a new oil and gas block licensing policy that is expected to open up 2.8 million square kilometres of sedimentary basins to exploration and production activities.

- The OALP, a part of the government’s Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP), gives exploration companies the option to select the exploration blocks on their own, without having to wait for the formal bid round from the Government.

  The company then submits an application to the government, which puts that block up for bid.

- The new policy will open up 2.8 million square kilometres of sedimentary basins for exploration and eventual production.
- The new policy environment has already started attracting investment into India’s upstream sector, which could help reduce imports and increase the share of gas in the country's energy mix

**INTERNATIONAL**

**Mauritius keeps tax treaty with India outside purview of MLI**

Mauritius has notified 23 of its tax treaties for modification by OECD’s Multilateral Instrument (MLI) to implement tax treaty-related measures to prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS). However, it has kept its double taxation avoidance treaty with India out of the purview of the global agreement that seeks to prevent companies from avoiding taxes.

- The move to exclude India is expected to address the concerns of overriding impact of MLI on the revised tax treaty between India and Mauritius.

**Implications of this move:**

- Mauritius’ move to keep the bilateral tax treaty with India outside the covered agreements for MLI would mean that the terms of MLI would not apply to any transaction entered between tax residents of India and Mauritius.
- This also indicates that the tax treaty related BEPS measures will not impact investments in India routed through Mauritius, particularly the grandfathering of investments provided through the amendment to the bilateral tax treaty in May 2016.

**Know about MLI:**

The multilateral instrument (MLI) is a legal instrument designed to prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) by multinational enterprises.

- BEPS refers to *tax avoidance strategies that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules to artificially shift profits to low or no-tax locations.*
- The MLI allows jurisdictions to transpose results from the OECD/G20 BEPS project, including minimum standards to implement in tax treaties, to prevent treaty abuse and “treaty shopping”, into their existing networks of bilateral tax treaties in a quick and efficient manner.
- It was developed through inclusive negotiations involving more than 100 countries and jurisdictions, under a mandate delivered by G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors at their February 2015 meeting.
- **The OECD is the depository of the MLI** and is supporting Governments in the process of signature, ratification and implementation.

**NATIONAL**

**President unveils online education portal Swayam**

President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee recently launched the SWAYAM, the portal that takes high quality education to the doorstep of everyone and the SWAYAM Prabha – the 32 DTH channels operationalised for telecasting high quality educational content free of charge using the GSAT-15 satellite transponders.

**What you need to know about Swayam?**

With the launch of SWAYAM, India has become one of the few countries in the World which has **its own online interactive learning platform that provides, not only video lectures, reading material but also assignments/quizzes that could end up in securing credits after completing the assessment system.**

- More than 400 Courses are available on SWAYAM covering all the engineering and non-engineering subjects at undergraduate and post-graduate levels.
- The UGC has already issued Regulation that allows transfer of credits earned through the courses done through SWAYAM into the academic record of the students.
- It is now possible for the students and others to take courses of the prestigious IITs or IIMs without formally studying there.

The platform has been **constructed by Microsoft** with totally indigenous efforts.

**What you need to know about Swayam Prabha?**

The SWAYAM Prabha channels are available for free for anyone who has a set top box to receive either DD Free Dish or DishTV. These channels transmit 4 hours of fresh content every day, and contain lectures from the best teachers in the Country. There is no monthly charge for viewing these channels. These channels include the IIT-PAL channels which were intended to help students taking the prestigious JEE examination, taught by the IIT faculty.

**India ranks 23rd in second Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) 2017**

The UN telecommunications agency, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), recently released its second edition of the **Global Cybersecurity Index (CGI)** which ranks countries of the world depending on their national policy against cybercrime — which ascertains there cybersecurity commitment.
What you need to know about the Global Cyber security index?

The Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) is a multi-stakeholder initiative to measure the commitment of countries to cybersecurity. Cybersecurity has a wide field of application that cuts across many industries and sectors. Each country’s level of development will therefore be analyzed within five categories: Legal Measures, Technical Measures, Organizational Measures, Capacity Building and Cooperation.

Performance of India:

The index has placed India at a high 23rd position. India is ranked 23rd on the index with a score of 0.683 and has been listed in the “maturing” category. Maturing category refers to 77 countries that have developed complex commitments to cyber security and engage in cyber security programmes and initiatives.

“Programme 17 for 17”:

- It is a 17 point action plan for 2017 – for building digital campuses and high quality education.
- The action plan covers measures like universal adoption of digital education, digital financial transactions in the campuses from the current academic year.
- It was adopted at the end of the recently concluded National Convention of Vice Chancellors of all Universities in the Country, and Heads of IISc/IITs/IIMs/NITs/IIITs.

Ahmedabad gets World Heritage City tag:

The 606-year-old walled city of Ahmedabad, which was founded by Sultan Ahmed Shah, has become India’s first World Heritage City. The World Heritage Committee (WHC) of UNESCO announced this. Ahmedaba is recognized the city as the cradle of India’s non-violent freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi.

- The decision was taken during the ongoing 41st session of the World Heritage Committee in the Polish city of Krakow, which acknowledged the preservation efforts made by the city in keeping its historical fabric intact.
- The city’s historic characteristics include densely-packed traditional houses (‘pols’) in gated traditional streets (‘puras’) with features such as bird feeders, public wells and religious institutions.
- The Walled City of Ahmedabad will now join the likes of Paris, Cairo, and Edinburgh. Of the 287 World Heritage Cities across the globe, only two were hitherto on the Indian subcontinent: Bhaktapur in Nepal and Galle in Sri Lanka. The Unesco tag will add immense brand value to the city and boost tourism.

Saint Mother Teresa’s blue-bordered sari an Intellectual Property:

The famous blue-bordered sari of Mother Teresa, who has been canonised as Saint Teresa of Calcutta by the Vatican, has been recognised as an Intellectual Property of the Missionaries of Charity. The Trade Marks Registry, Government of India, has granted the registration of the trade mark for that pattern of blue border of sari.

Experts for steps to limit tobacco availability:

After the release of the results of the Global Adult Tobacco Survey-2 (GATS-2), experts in Rajasthan have urged the State government to take steps to limit availability of tobacco products to save public health.

- The second edition of GATS, conducted between August 2016 and February 2017, revealed that tobacco use across the country decreased by 6% from 34.6% in 2009-10 to 28.6% in 2016-17.
- 19% of men and 2% of women currently smoke tobacco.
About:

- GATS, a global standard for systematically monitoring adult tobacco use, was conducted by the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry with technical assistance from WHO and Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

Railways announces Vistadome trains in Kashmir Valley
Aiming to provide a delightful travelling experience to the picturesque Kashmir Valley here, the Railways announced a Vistadome train which would also serve Kashmiri Wazwan cuisine to tourists.

- Kashmiri cuisine would make it to the catering list of the railways.
- Vistadome trains have glass roofs and walls so that tourists can take in the view.

Commerce Min releases report on export promotion schemes
The commerce ministry released a report on export promotion schemes, which is expected to serve as a handy tool for stakeholders in evaluation of the foreign trade policy.

- It contains information on key parameters under various export promotion schemes in the form of data tables, visual displays and data analysis.
- It was released on the occasion of the 11th ‘Statistics Day’ celebration to mark the birth anniversary of late Professor Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis.

Way ahead:
The findings show that there is “space for further improvement in cooperation” at all levels. The report advocates for encouraging governments to consider national policies that take into account cybersecurity and encourage private citizens to make smart decisions online.

INTERNATIONAL

World Petroleum Congress at Istanbul, Turkey
The 22nd World Petroleum Congress (WPC) International Conference has begun at Istanbul, Turkey. India is also taking part in the conference.

What you need to know about WPC conference?
The tri-annual WPC Conference is widely recognized as the ‘Olympics’ of the oil and gas industry.

- It attracts Ministers, CEOs of Oil and Gas MNCs, experts and academics from the hydrocarbon sectors and provides an ideal forum to showcase potential of countries’ hydrocarbon sector.
- It also provides a platform to interact with policy makers, technologists, scientists, planners and management experts.

New drugs needed against hard-to-treat gonorrhoea: UN
Antibiotic resistance is making gonorrhoea harder and sometimes even impossible to treat, according to a new warning from the World Health Organization (WHO). Therefore, a new drug may be urgently needed to treat the disease.
Background:

Nearly 80 million people are infected with the disease every year. Among these, doctors are finding more and more cases of infection untreatable by all known antibiotics.

What you need to know about Gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea, also called "the clap", is a disease caused by bacteria. Untreated, it can cause painful pelvic inflammation in women, and infertility in both genders. In extreme cases, the bacteria can spread in the blood to cause life-threatening infections in other parts of the body.

Symptoms of infection include painful urination and abnormal discharge, but many will experience no symptoms at all.

What’s the concern?

Gonorrhea resistance to penicillin and tetracycline, a common broad-spectrum antibiotic, first emerged in the 1970s in Asia, spreading to the rest of the world during the early 1980s, according to the WHO.

- Resistance to the next level antibiotic, ciprofloxacin, developed in the mid-2000s. A third generation of drugs called cephalosporins — orally-administered cefixime and injectable ceftriaxone — then came into use.
- But resistance to cefixime — and more rarely to ceftriaxone — has now been reported in more than 50 countries. These are so-called multi-drug resistant (MDR) strains.

How bacteria become resistant?

Bacteria can become resistant to drugs when people take incorrect doses of antibiotics. Resistant strains can also be contracted directly from animals, water and air, or other people. When the most common antibiotics fail to work, more expensive types must be tried, resulting in longer illness and treatment.

G-20 leaders propose Hamburg Action Plan at summit conclusion

The two-day G-20 summit that took place in Germany’s Hamburg city ended with the leaders proposing the Hamburg Action Plan to address major global challenges, including climate change, harnessing digitalisation, and to contribute to prosperity and well-being.

Highlights of the action plan:

- The leaders pledged to progress towards their joint objective in the G20, which is strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth. They resolved to tackle common challenges to the global community, including terrorism, displacement, poverty, hunger and health threats, job creation, climate change, energy security, and inequality including gender inequality, as a basis for sustainable development and stability.
- In order to improving sustainable livelihoods, the G-20 leaders collectively committed to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions through, among others, increased innovation on sustainable and clean energies and energy efficiency, and work towards low greenhouse-gas emission energy systems.
- The Leaders of the other G-20 members also agreed that the Paris Agreement is irreversible reiterated the importance of fulfilling the UNFCCC commitment by developed countries in providing means of implementation including financial resources to assist developing countries with respect to both mitigation and adaptation actions in line with Paris outcomes.
- The leaders stressed on the importance of harnessing the benefits of globalisation, reaffirm the importance of transparency for predictable and mutually beneficial trade relations, harness digitalisation to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The leaders underlined to boost employment by improving sustainable global supply chains, which have been recognised as an important source of job creation and balanced economic growth.
The leaders resolved to make a resilient global financial system in agreed international standards, to support sustainable growth.

The G-20 leaders also called for safeguarding against health crises and strengthening health systems. The leaders called on the United Nations to keep global health high on the political agenda and strive for cooperative action to strengthen health systems worldwide, including through developing the health workforce.

The leaders also stressed on combatting Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR), which is a growing threat to public health and economic growth.

**122 countries adopt global treaty banning nuclear weapons**

A global treaty banning nuclear weapons was recently adopted at the United Nations. The treaty was adopted by a vote of 122 in favour with one country — NATO member The Netherlands voting against — while Singapore abstained.

**Key facts:**

- Led by Austria, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa and New Zealand, 141 countries joined in drafting the treaty that they hope will increase pressure on nuclear states to take disarmament more seriously.
- The treaty prohibits a full range of nuclear-weapon related activities, such as undertaking to develop, test, produce, manufacture, acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as well as the use or threat of use of these weapons.
- None of the nine countries that possess nuclear weapons — the United States, Russia, Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel — took part in the negotiations or the vote.
- Even Japan — the only country to have suffered atomic attacks, in 1945 — boycotted the talks as did most NATO countries.

**Why is it being opposed?**

Nuclear powers argue their arsenals serve as a deterrent against a nuclear attack and say they remain committed to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). They said a purported ban on nuclear weapons that does not address the security concerns which continue to make nuclear deterrence necessary cannot result in the elimination of a single nuclear weapon and will not enhance any country’s security, nor international peace and security.

**INDIA**

**Committee formed to study legalities for separate State flag**

- The Karnataka State government has constituted a nine-member committee headed by Principal Secretary, Department of Kannada and Culture, to study and submit a report to the government on the possibility of “designing a separate flag for Karnataka and providing it a statutory standing.”

**Constitutional and legal position of the State having its own flag:**

- **R. Bommai v/s Union of India (Supreme Court 1994) case verdict:**
  - The Supreme Court has declared that federalism is a basic feature of the Constitution and States are supreme in their sphere.

**Inference:**

- This being the Constitutional position, there is no prohibition in the Constitution for the State to have its own flag. However, the manner in which the State flag is hoisted should not dishonour the national flag. It has to be always below the national flag.
- The national flag code specifically authorises use of other flags subject to the regulation by the court. So State flag is not unauthorized.
Do what you feel is good for your faith and let others do the same: Chief Justice of India

- A plea was filed before Supreme Court seeking an end to the practice of burning effigy of Ravana on the eve of Dussehra festival.
- Supreme Court dismisses the plea upholding Article 25 of the Indian Constitution.

Cyberattack link to glitches in RJio, NSE under probe

- Outage of Airtel network in Delhi
- Data breach of users of Reliance Jio Infocomm
- Technical glitch at the National Stock Exchange (NSE)

- India is investigating on a “possible cyber attack.”
- The Home Ministry is preparing an internal cybersecurity policy as it is required under the national plan.

2016 data breach: In 2016, security codes of around 32 lakh debit cards were breached and several users reported unauthorised transactions from locations in China.

Worrisome dependence on Chinese equipments:

- Two years ago various telecom giants had been sensitised by the Government, about the vulnerability of equipment and products imported from China.
- Both Airtel and Jio use Chinese equipment.

Ships and planes arrive, it’s days of war games

- Participants: naval forces of India, Japan and the United States.

Exercise not aimed at China

- Malabar is not to send a message to any specific country.
- The underlying theme of Malabar is to understand each other’s standard operating procedures and each other’s ways of working better, to enhance camaraderie and bonhomie.
- S. Navy officer: U.S. participation in the exercises indicated the country’s interests in maritime security in the Indo-Asia Pacific region.

Focus Areas:

The thrust of the exercise at sea this year would be on aircraft carrier operations, air defence, anti-submarine warfare (ASW), surface warfare, visit board search and seizure (VBBS), joint manoeuvres and tactical procedures.

Concrete may help curb air pollution

- Scientists found that Concrete surfaces can help tackle air pollution as it absorbs sulphur dioxide — a major pollutant.

Importance:

- The strategy of using pollution-causing material and turning it into an environmental solution could lead to new thinking in urban design and waste management.
- Concrete buildings in urban areas can serve as a kind of sponge adsorbing sulphur dioxide to a high level.
- Waste concrete coming from building demolitions can also be used to adsorb these pollutants.
**Air Pollution menace**

- According to the WHO, as many as seven million premature deaths of people worldwide may be linked to poor air quality and pollution
- Sulphur dioxide emissions are among the most common pollutants into the air globally, with power plants emitting the most sulphur dioxide.

**Basic Information:**

**Sulphur dioxide (SO2)**

- It is a toxic gas with a pungent, irritating smell.
- The SO2 is hygroscopic, when it is in the atmosphere it reacts with humidity and forms sulphuric and sulphurous aerosol acid that is later part of the so-called acid rain.

**Rajiv Kumar takes over as UP chief secretary**

Senior IAS officer Rajiv Kumar, who was sent back to his cadre state - Uttar Pradesh - before completion of his tenure as Union Shipping Secretary, today took over as the new chief secretary of the state.

A 1981-batch IAS officer, Kumar took over from Rahul Bhatnagar.

**SC stays cattle sale rules across nation**

The Supreme Court has stayed centre’s May 26th notification banning the sale of cattle in livestock markets for slaughter and religious sacrifices. The order came after the centre accepted that public outcry and objections from the states about the law’s impact on livelihoods made it realise that the rules need tweaking.

- The court was taking up a bunch of petitions challenging the amendments to the rules framed under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

**What’s the issue?**

The centre, on May 26th, notified the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Market) Rules, 2017*. The notification banned the sale of cattle in livestock market for slaughter and religious sacrifices. This had dismayed cattle traders, butchers and beef eaters. Farmers were also hit as they were also barred from selling non-milch and ageing cattle thus being deprived of their traditional incomes. Various states too opposed the notification saying that it would impact the livelihoods of many.

- The validity of the rules was challenged in various high courts and the SC. The Madurai bench of Madras HC had stayed the rules.

**Way ahead:**

The centre has acknowledged that the law needs some tweaking keeping in mind the concerns raised by various stakeholders. It has also clarified that tweaking does not mean repeal. It would shortly come out with necessary amendments.

**Earth facing sixth mass extinction**

The sixth mass extinction of life on Earth is unfolding more quickly than feared, scientists have warned. Scientists call this as a case of biological annihilation occurring globally.

- Globally, the mass die-off — deemed to be the sixth in the last half-billion years — is the worst since three-quarters of life on the Earth, including the non-avian dinosaurs, were wiped out 66 million years ago by a giant meteor impact. On an average, two vertebrate species disappear every year.
Supporting data:

- More than 30% of animals with a backbone — fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals — are declining in both range and population.
- The mammal species that were monitored have lost at least a third of their original habitat. 40% of them — including rhinos, orangutans, gorillas and many big cats — are surviving on 20% or less of the land they once roamed. The loss of biodiversity has recently accelerated.
- Several species of mammals that were relatively safe one or two decades ago are now endangered, including cheetahs, lions and giraffes. There are as few as 20,000 lions left in the wild, less than 7,000 cheetahs, 500 to 1,000 giant pandas, and about 250 Sumatran rhinoceros.
- Tropical regions have seen the highest number of declining species. In South and Southeast Asia, large-bodied species of mammals have lost more than four-fifths of their historical ranges.
- While fewer species are disappearing in temperate zones, the percentage is just as high or higher. As many as half of the number of animals that once shared our planet are no longer here, a loss described as “a massive erosion of the greatest biological diversity in the history of Earth”

Factors behind the loss?

The main drivers of wildlife decline are habitat loss, overconsumption, pollution, invasive species, disease, as well as poaching in the case of tigers, elephants, rhinos and other large animals prized for their body parts. Climate change is poised to become a major threat in the coming decades.

5 States, a UT sign pact with Centre on e-Marketplace

In a spirit of cooperative federalism, 5 States and a Union Territory (UT) have formally adopted the Centre’s initiative called the Government e-Marketplace (GeM).

- The States and the UT that signed an MoU with the Centre include Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Telangana, Puducherry and Arunachal Pradesh.

What you need to know about GeM?

It aims to ensure that public procurement of goods and services in India worth more than Rs. 5 lakh crore annually is carried out through the online platform for transparency and to eliminate corruption.

- It aims to transform the way in which procurement of goods and services is done by the Government Ministries/Departments, PSUs, autonomous bodies etc.
- DGS&D with technical support of NeGD (MeitY) has developed GeM portal for procurement of both Products & Services.
- GeM is a completely paperless, cashless and system driven e-market place that enables procurement of common use goods and services with minimal human interface.

U.S. may tighten rules for foreign students

US is planning to tighten rules for foreign students. A proposal is under consideration by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

- The proposal is part of an ongoing review of the immigration policy to ensure that it “promotes the national interest, enhances national security and public safety and ensures the integrity of our immigration system.”

Current regulations:

Under current regulations, international students can stay in the U.S. as long as they are enrolled for a programme. Students who enter the U.S on F-1 visas are issued an entry document with an end date that states “duration of stay”, which is theoretically open-ended. They can stay as long as they have a valid I-20 document, which is issued by the university, with all details regarding the student’s programme of study, financing, etc.
They can also move from one programme to another and from one institution to another, by a notification to the DHS, based on a new I-20 document that the institution issues.

Implications of the new move:

Foreign students in the United States may be required to reapply every year for permission to stay in the country. It will make their visa status time-bound. The proposed measures could increase costs and paperwork for students and universities.

Implications for India:

Since the proposal requires fees to be paid each time a student reappplies, it could make the U.S. a less attractive destination for students from India.

Indians are the fastest growing group among the international student population in the U.S. There are 1,66,000 students from India pursuing higher education in the U.S. now, up from about 1,00,000 two years earlier. A large majority of them pursue science, technology, engineering, and math courses. Around 1.4 million international students are currently present in the U.S.

**Sensor network to map and predict pollution, effluents in Godavari**

A group of U.S. researchers is working on a system to map undulating pollution trends in the Godavari, India’s second longest river.

- Using a mix of methods, including satellite-monitoring, traversing stretches of the river to collect water samples and using special sensors to measure bacterial and chemical pollution, the researchers are trying to develop a cost-effective forecast system.
- Through cloud-based data collection and real-time mapping systems, the research and implementation teams intend to demonstrate the importance and value of detecting and anticipating pollutants that enter the river in the form of human waste, organic materials, and chemical contaminants.
- **The exercise is part of a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation project** to support the programme of the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) to provide city-wide sanitation improvements in urban Andhra Pradesh. Sensors to monitor river pollution are an emerging technological approach in India.
Objectives of the project:

- The long-term objective is to be able to inform State officials and citizens of a probable spike in, say, levels of dangerous microbes or effluents, similar to weather and air pollution forecasts.
- Also, it is to be able to access “raw data” that could be used to inform the efficacy of a proposed faecal sludge treatment plant and whether behavioural interventions — including incentives or punishments — to restrict activities that pollute the river could actually work.

About Godavari River:

The Godavari is the second longest river in India after the river Ganges having its source at Tryambakeshwar, Maharashtra.

- It starts in Maharashtra and flows east for 1,465 kilometres (910 mi) emptying into Bay of Bengal draining the Indian states Maharashtra (48.6%), Telangana (18.8%), Andhra Pradesh (4.5%), Chhattisgarh (10.9%), Madhya Pradesh (10.0%), Odisha (5.7%), Karnataka (1.4%) and Puducherry through its extensive network of tributaries.
- Measuring up to 312,812 km2 (120,777 sq mi), it forms one of the largest river basins in the Indian subcontinent, with only the Ganges and Indus rivers having a drainage basin larger than it in India.
- Important tributaries include Pravara, Purna, Manjira, Pranhita, Indravati and Sabari.

India to celebrate Falun Gong:

- Falun Gong, the ancient Chinese holistic system that is banned in China, will be celebrated in India on July 15 with a parade and Human Word Formation in the capital. The event would highlight the persecution against the practitioners in China. The practice is banned in China.
- Falun Gong is a Chinese spiritual practice that combines meditation and qigong exercises with a moral philosophy centered on the tenets of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance.
- The practice emphasizes morality and the cultivation of virtue, and identifies as a qigong practice of the Buddhist school, though its teachings also incorporate elements drawn from Taoist traditions.
- Through moral rectitude and the practice of meditation, practitioners of Falun Gong aspire to eliminate attachments, and ultimately to achieve spiritual enlightenment.

Pope Francis adds fourth path to sainthood:

- Pope Francis has issued an apostolic letter creating a new category — a fourth one — under which someone could possibly become a saint. The pathway focuses on people who sacrifice their lives for others.
- The category added, called an oblatio vitae or a “free offering of one’s life” as described by the Vatican, involves people who freely accept an imminent death for the good of others.
- Previously, gaining consideration for sainthood in the Catholic Church took only three routes: martyrdom (dying for your faith); living a life of heroic, Christian values; or having a saintly and devout reputation. One of the most well-known figures to take one of those paths in recent times was humanitarian Mother Teresa, who was canonized as Saint Teresa of Calcutta in 2016.

Minimum qualifications for coop. societies’ polls:

- Rajasthan has become the country’s first State to lay down the minimum educational qualifications for contesting elections to village cooperative societies and various other cooperative bodies. The State Cooperative Societies Rules, 2003, were amended for the purpose and notified.
- The educational qualifications will range from Class V to Class VIII for election as members of governing boards of dairy societies, farming societies, consumer societies, weavers’ societies, housing construction societies, urban banks, primary land development banks, credit societies, salary earners’ societies and cooperative unions.
**NATION**

**DIPP to set up India’s first TISC in Punjab**

The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, has signed an Institutional agreement with the Punjab State Council of Science and Technology to establish India’s first Technology and Innovation Support Center (TISC) at Patent Information Centre, Punjab, under the World Intellectual Property Organization’s (WIPO) TISC program.

**Key facts:**

- The Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) is designated as the National Focal Point for the TISC national network.
- As the national focal point, CIPAM shall identify potential host institutions, assess their capacities and support them in joining the TISC program.
- CIPAM will also act as the main intermediary between WIPO and TISC host institutions and coordinate all the activities of the national TISC network.
- Over 500 TISCs operate worldwide and establishing TISC in India will give the host institutions an access to the global network.

**What you need to know about TISC program?**

WIPO’s Technology and Innovation Support Center (TISC) program provides **innovators in developing countries with access to locally based, high quality technology information and related services**, helping them to exploit their innovative potential and to create, protect, and manage their Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs).

The objective of the TISC is to **stimulate a dynamic, vibrant and balanced Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) system in India to foster creativity and innovation**, thereby promoting entrepreneurship and enhancing social, economic and cultural development by establishing a network of TISCs in India.

**Services offered by TISCs include:**

- Access to online patent and non-patent (scientific and technical) resources and IP-related publications.
- Assistance in searching and retrieving technology information.
- Training in database search.
- On-demand searches (novelty, state-of-the-art and infringement).
- Monitoring technology and competitors.
- Basic information on industrial property laws, management and strategy, and technology commercialization and marketing.

**India ranks 116 out of 157 nations on SDG index**

The SDG index, that assesses the performance of countries towards achieving the ambitious sustainable development goals (SDGs), has been released for the year 2017.
Key facts on SDG index:

- The SDG Index and Dashboards Report produced by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Bertelsmann Stiftung shows that world leaders need to strengthen their joint efforts to realise the 17 global goals.
- The SDG Index and Dashboard collect available data for 157 countries to assess where each country stands in 2017 with regard to achieving the SDGs.
- The SDG Index ranks countries based on their performance across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Performance of countries:

- **Sweden leads the list**, followed by Denmark and Finland. Among the G7 countries, only Germany and France can be found among the top ten performers.
- The United States ranks 42nd on the Index, while Russia and China rank 62nd and 71st respectively.
- **India is ranked 116th** on the index with a score of 58.1, behind countries such as Nepal, Iran, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and China. Pakistan is ranked 122.
- The countries which are closest to fulfilling the goals are not the biggest economies but comparably small, developed countries.
- Many of the richest countries in the world are nowhere near achieving the global policy objectives but also deteriorate the implementation process for poorer countries because of negative spillover effects.
- One of the greatest obstacles to achieving the global goals for high-income countries are poor performances regarding sustainable consumption and production. All countries that score lowest on electronic-waste generation, for example, are high-income countries.
- Not only does a rising trend of nationalism and protectionism impede the implementation of the goals, but as the report shows, industrialised countries are not serving as role models

**SDGs:**

The SDGs are a set of 17 goals and 169 targets aimed at resolving global social, economic and environmental problems. SDGs replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were adopted in 2000. Aiming to encompass almost every aspect of human life, the main themes of the SDGs are ending poverty, tackling inequality and combating climate change.
India has contributed an additional million dollars to a UN partnership fund launched to support sustainable development projects across the developing world.

- India had made an initial contribution of a million dollars when the fund was created and the amount was allocated for the implementation of a project benefiting seven Small Island Developing States in the South Pacific.

**What you need to know about the India-UN Development Partnership Fund:**

The India-UN Development Partnership Fund was set up last month as a partnership between India and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC).

- **Managed by UNOSSC, the fund will support Southern-owned and led, demand-driven, and transformational sustainable development projects across the developing world.**

- **Focusing on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States,** United Nations agencies will implement the Fund’s projects in close collaboration with partnering governments.

- The fund, launched by Minister of State for External Affairs MJ Akbar during the Oceans Conference at the world body’s headquarters, prioritises reducing poverty and hunger, improving health, education and equality, and expanding access to clean water and energy.

- The first project under the fund was formulated by India and UNDP in consultation with the Governments of the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, the Solomon Islands and the Kingdom of Tonga.

- It will increase resilience to natural disasters in these seven Pacific island countries and contribute toward a Sustainable Development Goal of climate action.

**Know about UNOSSC:**

The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) was established to promote, coordinate and support South-South and triangular cooperation globally and within the United Nations system.

UNOSSC, hosted by UNDP since 1974, was established by the UN General Assembly with a mandate to advocate for and coordinate South-South and triangular cooperation on a global and UN system-wide basis. UNOSSC receives policy directives and guidance from the General Assembly and through its subsidiary body, the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. UNOSSC submits its strategic planning frameworks to the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS Executive Board for approval and funding. The Director reports to the UNDP Administrator and has also been appointed Envoy of the Secretary-General on South-South Cooperation.

**Tribunal prohibits dumping of waste near Ganga banks**

An area of 100 metres from the edge of the Ganga between Haridwar and Unnao has been declared a ‘No Development Zone,’ with the National Green Tribunal (NGT) recently prohibiting dumping of waste within 500 metres of the river. An environment compensation of Rs. 50,000 will be imposed on anyone dumping waste in the river.

**Key facts:**

- The NGT also directed the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments to formulate guidelines for religious activities on the ghats of the Ganga and its tributaries.

- It also directed the authorities concerned to complete projects, including a sewage treatment plant and cleaning of drains, within two years.

- The court also appointed a supervisory committee, headed by the Secretary of the Water Resources Ministry and comprising IIT professors and officials of the Uttar Pradesh government, to oversee implementation of the directions passed in its verdict. The committee is to submit reports at regular intervals.
About the National Green Tribunal (NGT):

NGT has been established under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010 for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.

- The tribunal deals with matters relating to the enforcement of any legal right relating to environment and giving relief and compensation for damages to persons and property.
- The Tribunal is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.
- The Tribunal’s dedicated jurisdiction in environmental matters shall provide speedy environmental justice and help reduce the burden of litigation in the higher courts.
- The Tribunal is mandated to make and endeavour for disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing of the same.

When DNA is the new hard drive

Scientists have successfully encoded a movie in the DNA of a living cell, where it can be retrieved at will and multiplied indefinitely as the host divides and grows. It is the latest and perhaps most astonishing example of the genome’s potential as a vast storage device.

How was the movie encoded in the cell?

- The geneticists ended up with a sequence of DNA molecules that represented the entirety of the film. Then they used a powerful **new gene editing technique, Crispr, to slip this sequence into the genome of a common gut bacteria, E. coli**.
- Despite the modification, the bacteria thrived and multiplied. The film stored in the genome was preserved intact with each new generation of progeny.

What is CRISPR?

CRISPR, short for clustered regularly interspaced short palindrome repeats, was named “2015 Breakthrough of the Year” by the U.S. journal Science.

- It allows scientists to selectively edit genome parts and replace them with new DNA stretches.
- Cas9 is an enzyme that can edit DNA, allowing the alteration of genetic patterns by genome modification.
- CRISPR is a collection of DNA sequences that direct Cas9 where to cut and paste.

‘Saraswati’, a supercluster of galaxies:

- A team of Indian scientists have discovered a previously unknown ‘supercluster’ of galaxies, some four billion light years away from Earth, and named it Saraswati. This is one of the largest known structures in the neighbourhood of the universe, 4,000 million light-years away from Earth and roughly more than 10 billion years old. Its mass extends over the scale of 600 million light years.
- **Superclusters, a group of clusters of galaxies, are the largest structures of stars, planets and other heavenly bodies in the universe, and very few of them are known.**
- A cluster could roughly have galaxies ranging from 1000 to 10,000. A supercluster could have clusters ranging from 40 to 43.