

# Brain Tree

## Current Events



**16 January to 31 January - 2018**

1. India's **National Knowledge Network** and Sri Lanka's **LEARN** have now been linked with each other through high capacity internet. This dedicated high speed internet connectivity will boost the collaboration among the academic institutions of India and Sri Lanka.

### Backgrounder

NKN aims to connect all universities, research institutions, libraries, laboratories, healthcare and agricultural institutions across the country. It enables collaboration among researchers from different educational networks such as TEIN4, GARUDA, CERN and Internet2. It also enables sharing of scientific databases and remote access to advanced research facilities. The leading mission oriented agencies in the fields of nuclear, space and defence research are also part of NKN.

2. The Joint military exercise '**Vajra Prahar**' will be held at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) in Seattle. The exercise will mainly focus on special operations in urban areas.

### Backgrounder

'**Vajra Prahar**' is an **Indo-US Special Forces joint training exercise** conducted alternately in India and the US.

The aim of the exercise is to promote military relations between the two countries by enhancing interoperability and mutual exchange of tactics between Special Forces. The objectives of the joint training is to share the best practices between the two armies and to develop joint strategies by sharing expertise of conducting operations in a counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism environment, while capitalising on the rich repository of experiences of each other armies.

3. The conflict between **Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra** over the sharing of the **Mahadayi (Mandovi) river** has escalated.

### Backgrounder

The Mahadayi river (80-km-long) originates in the forests of the Western Ghats at Devgaon in northern Karnataka, enters Goa and drains into the Arabian Sea.

Karnataka seeks to divert water from tributaries of the river through the Kalasa-Bhanduri Nala project towards the parched Malaprabha river basin (a tributary of River Krishna), which is being strongly opposed by Goa. This has led to a long-drawn farmers' agitation in

*Training Tomorrow's Administrators*

1 / 8

*TODAY*

Karnataka, which has been revitalised as the State goes to the polls later this year.

Goa's main contention is that Karnataka cannot divert water from an already-deficit Mahadayi basin to the Malaprabha river basin: 115 tmcft was available in the basin, while the requirement for the three States is 145 tmcft. It has said that any attempt to divert water from one river basin to the other will cause irreparable environmental damage. Karnataka claims 199.6 tmcft is available and the river is water-surplus. Of this, Karnataka wants 24.15 tmcft.



4. The **Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE)** has decided to launch ‘**Operation Digital Board**’ (**ODB**) in all schools in **five years** to improve the quality of education. ODB will be undertaken jointly by Centre, State, CSR, and community. Students will be empowered with 360 degree information and interesting learning experience and, teacher accountability will also increase.

#### **Backgrounder**

CABE is the highest advisory body to advise the Central and State Governments in the field of education. The Central Advisory Board of Education, the oldest and the most important advisory body of the Government of India in education.

**Chairman** - Union Minister of Human Resource Development and the **Vice- Chairman**, Minister of State for Human Resource Development.

#### **Functions of the CABE -**

- i. To review the progress of education.
- ii. To appraise the extent and manner in which the education policy has been implemented by the Central and State Governments, and other concerned agencies, and to give appropriate advice in the matter.
- iii. To advice regarding coordination between the Central and State Governments / UT Administrations, State Governments and non-governmental agencies for educational development in accordance with the education policy.
- iv. To advise, suo-motu, or on a reference made to it by the Central Government or any State Government or a Union Territory Administration or any educational question.

5. Bangladesh, India and Nepal have agreed on the text of the operating procedures for passenger vehicle movement in the sub-region under the **Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA)**.

BBIN had signed a framework MVA in June 2015 to enable movement of passenger and cargo vehicles across borders among the four countries. Bhutan has not yet ratified the pact. However, Bhutan has given its consent for the BBIN MVA to enter into force amongst the other 3 countries.

The main objective of the agreement is to provide seamless people-to-people contact and enhance economic interaction by facilitating cross border movement of people and goods.

The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has been providing technical, advisory, and financial support to the BBIN MVA initiative as part of its assistance to the **South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC)** program, a projects-based economic cooperation initiative that brings together the **BBIN countries, Maldives, Sri Lanka and more recently, Myanmar**.

6. Bangladesh and Myanmar have agreed to repatriate 650,000 **Rohingya refugees**, who fled Myanmar's crisis-hit Rakhine province in two years, according to an agreement signed between the two countries.

#### **Backgrounder**

The Rohingyas are often described as "the world's most persecuted minority". They are an ethnic group, majority of whom are Muslim, who have lived for centuries in the majority Buddhist Myanmar. But have not been recognised by the government as ethnic group.

7. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu inaugurated the third edition of the Geo-political conference, '**Raisina Dialogue**', in New Delhi. The theme of the dialogue this year is '**Managing Disruptive Transitions: Ideas, Institutions and Idioms**'.

#### **Backgrounder**

The Raisina Dialogue was born two years ago, in 2016. It is an annual geo-political event, organised by the Ministry of External Affairs and **Observer Research Foundation (ORF)**. It is designed to explore prospects and opportunities for Asian integration as well as Asia's integration with the world.

8. The government has set a deadline of February this year to operationalize the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre.

#### **Backgrounder**

The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre will be set up under the newly created **Cyber and Information Security (CIS)** division of the MHA. CIS will have four wings, namely security clearance, cybercrime prevention, cyber security and information security. The I4C will assist in centralizing cyber security investigations, priorities the development of response tools and bring together private companies to contain the menace.

9. **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)** has crossed one crore mark in antenatal check-ups.

**Backgrounder**

PMSMA was launched by the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW)**, Government of India. The program aims to provide assured, comprehensive and quality antenatal care, free of cost, universally to all pregnant women on the 9th of every month. PMSMA guarantees a minimum package of antenatal care services to women in their 2nd/3rd trimesters of pregnancy at designated government health facilities.

10. The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is hosting an event 'International Solar Alliance Forum' at the Future World Energy Summit (WFES) 2018.

**Backgrounder**

The Paris Declaration establishes ISA as an alliance dedicated to the promotion of solar energy among its member countries. The ISA's major objectives include global deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity and mobilisation of investment of over US\$ 1000 billion into solar energy by 2030. **ISA Headquarters is in Gurugram, India.**

11. The Election Commission recommended disqualification of 20 AAP MLAs for holding an 'Office of Profit'.

**Backgrounder**

Office of profit is a position in the government that can yield salaries, perquisites and other benefits.

According to **Articles 102(1)(a) and 191(1)(a)** of the Constitution, an MP or MLA is barred from holding an office of profit as it can put them in a position to gain a financial benefit. Under the **Representation of People Act**, holding an office of profit is a ground for disqualification.

The makers of the Constitution wanted that legislators should not feel obligated to the Executive in any way, which could influence them while discharging legislative functions. In other words, an MP or MLA should be free to carry out her duties without any kind of governmental pressure.

12. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has announced the **Cyber Surakshit Bharat** initiative in association with **National e-Governance Division (NeGD)** and industry partners.

**Backgrounder**

'Cyber Surakshit Bharat' was conceptualized with the mission to spread awareness about cybercrime and building capacity for safety measures for **Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs)** and frontline IT staff across all government departments, Cyber Surakshit Bharat will be operated on the three principles of Awareness, Education and Enablement. The primary objective is to keep our data safe and protected.

13. India joined the **Australia group**

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4 / 8

### **Backgrounder**

India has been admitted as the 43rd member of the Australia group. The group is an informal group of countries that keeps a tight control over exports of **chemical substances used in making chemical weapons**.

India is now a part of three of the four key export control groups of the world -**Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Wassenaar agreement** being the other two). India is not a part of Nuclear Suppliers Group.

14. Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has launched the '**Protocol for Star Rating of Garbage-Free Cities**'

The star-rating initiative, developed by the Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban will be rating cities on a 7-star rating system based on multiple cleanliness indicators for solid waste management.

15. Banks and non-banking financial companies are due to switch to **Indian Accounting Standards (IndAS)** from 1 April 2018. However, the government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may postpone the implementation of new accounting standards for banks because of the legislative changes and additional capital requirements the process would entail.

### **Backgrounder**

IndAS govern the accounting and recording of financial transactions as well as the presentation of statements such as profit and loss account and balance sheet of a company. For long, there has been a heated debate about Indian companies moving to the globally accepted **International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)** for their accounts. But firms have resisted this shift, stating that this will lead too many changes in the capture and reporting of their numbers. Ind AS has been evolved as a compromise formula that tries to harmonise Indian accounting rules with the IFRS. Banks and non-banking financial companies currently follow Indian generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) standards.

16. Centre to declare 2018 as '**National year of Millets**'

### **Backgrounder**

Millet is a common term to categorise small-seeded grasses that are often termed nutri-cereals or dryland-cereals, and includes sorghum, pearl millet, ragi, small millet, foxtail millet, proso millet, barnyard millet, kodo millet and other millets. Nutritionally superior to wheat & rice owing to their higher levels of protein with more balanced amino acid profile

Photo-insensitive & resilient to climate change, millets are hardy, resilient crops that have a low carbon and water footprint, can withstand high temperatures and grow on poor soils with little or no external inputs. In times of climate change they are often the last crop standing and, thus, are a good risk management strategy for resource-poor marginal farmers.

17. A National Conference of the State channelizing Agencies, Public Sector Banks and Regional Rural Banks of **National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC)** was recently held.

NHFDC was set up by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment in 1997. It is registered under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956 as a Company not for profit. It is wholly owned by Government of India and has an authorised share capital of Rs. 400 crores. The company is managed by Board of Directors nominated by Government of India. NHFDC functions as an Apex institution for channelizing the funds to persons with disabilities through the **State Channelizing Agencies (SCAs)** nominated by the State Government.

18. The **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF)**, India's first sovereign wealth fund, and Dubai-based ports operator DP World Pvt. Ltd, have announced the creation of an investment platform to invest up to \$3 billion in ports, terminals, transportation and logistics businesses in India.

NIIF was set up in 2015 as an investment vehicle for funding commercially viable greenfield, brownfield and stalled projects in the infrastructure sector. NIIF will invest in areas such as energy, transportation, housing, water, waste management and other infrastructure-related sectors in India.

The corpus of the fund is proposed to be around Rs40,000 crore, with the government investing 49% and the rest to be raised from third-party investors such as sovereign wealth funds, insurance and pension funds, endowments.

19. A report titled '**Reward Work, Not Wealth**' has been released by the international rights group **Oxfam**. The report reveals how the global economy enables wealthy elite to accumulate vast wealth even as hundreds of millions of people struggle to survive on poverty pay.

Oxfam is an international confederation of charitable organizations focused on the alleviation of global poverty. Headquarters Oxford, England. The growing divide undermines democracy and promotes corruption and cronyism.

20. **Inclusive Development Index** has been released by the World Economic Forum. This Inclusive Development Index has been developed as a new metric of national economic performance as an alternative to GDP. The index takes into account the living standards, environmental sustainability and protection of future generations from further indebtedness

India is placed at the 62nd place among emerging economies much below China's 26th position and Pakistan's 47th. India was ranked 60th among 79 developing economies last year, as against China's 15th and Pakistan's 52nd position. Norway remains the world's most inclusive advanced economy.

The study found that decades of prioritizing economic growth over social equity has led to historically high levels of wealth and income inequality and caused governments to miss out on a virtuous circle in which growth is strengthened by being shared more widely and generated without unduly straining the environment or burdening future generations.

Excessive reliance by economists and policy-makers on Gross Domestic Product as the primary metric of national economic performance is part of the problem. The GDP measures current production of goods and services rather than the extent to which it contributes to broad socio-economic progress as manifested in median household income, employment opportunity, economic security and quality of life.

21. The 2018 **Environmental Performance Index (EPI)** — the green rankings was recently released on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum meet in Davos. The biennial index is prepared by Yale and Columbia Universities along with the **World Economic Forum (WEF)**.

India is among the bottom five countries on the Index, plummeting 36 points from 141 in 2016. Overall, India (at 177) and Bangladesh (179) come in near the bottom of the rankings, with Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nepal rounding out the bottom five. Switzerland leads the world in sustainability

22. The Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with **National Informatics Centre (NIC)**, has developed a **Management Information System (MIS)** portal for submitting applications/estimates by NGOs for carrying out Anganwadi Services (ICDS) Training through AWTCs/MLTCs.

The Anganwadi Services Training Programme under the Umbrella **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)** Scheme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme and the overall administration; management and monitoring of the implementation of the Scheme are being done by the respective State Government/UT Administration.

23. In a bid to make low-cost medicines more accessible, the Health ministry is working to increase the number of AMRIT pharmacy stores by four times by this year end from the existing 111 outlets.

The flagship programme of the Union Health ministry – **AMRIT (Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment)** aims to provide affordable life-saving cancer, cardiac drugs and medical disposables. The AMRIT pharmacies offer an average discount of 63% on medicines.

24. **Bharat Parv** event is being organized by the Government of India from 26th to 31st January 2017, as part of the Republic Day Celebrations. The **Ministry of Tourism** has been designated as the nodal Ministry for the event.

Bharat Parv is a national festival showcasing the country's diverse culture, cuisines, handicrafts and catch glimpses of a progressive India. The prime objective of organizing the event is to generate a patriotic mood, promote the rich cultural diversity of the country, and ensure wider participation of the general public and to popularise the idea of "**Ek Bharat Shreshta Bharat**".

25. The **World Economic Forum (b)** has announced a new **Global Centre for Cybersecurity**. The centre will be based in Geneva, Switzerland, and will function as an autonomous organization under the auspices of the World Economic Forum. This is the first global platform for

governments, businesses, experts and law enforcement agencies to collaborate on cybersecurity challenges.

- 26.** A **traditional Indian Chhau dance** show will be staged at National Palace Museum in Taipei City as part of efforts to strengthen cultural exchanges between Taiwan and the South Asian nation.

Originating in eastern India, Chhau features dancers in colorful masks and costumes performing movements inspired by animals, birds, martial arts and tribal and folk customs. The practice was added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010. Chhau shows typically depict episodes from classic Hindu epics.

- 27.** The Centre has decided to allow small finance banks and payment banks to offer the **Atal Pension Yojana (APY)**, which is expected to not only significantly increase the coverage of the scheme but also expected to strengthen the existing channels of APY distribution.

The **APY** became operational from June 1, 2015 and is available to all the citizens of India in the age group of 18-40 years. Under the scheme, a subscriber would receive a minimum guaranteed pension of Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 per month, depending upon his contribution, from the age of 60 years. The same pension would be paid to the spouse of the subscriber and on the demise of both the subscriber and the spouse, the accumulated pension wealth is returned to the nominee.

The Central Government would also co-contribute 50% of the total contribution or Rs. 1000 per annum, whichever is lower, to each eligible subscriber account, for a period of 5 years, that is, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, to those who have joined the NPS before 31st December, 2015 and who are not members of any statutory social security scheme and who are not Income Tax payers.

- 28.** **VINBAX-2018**, a military exercise between **India and Vietnam**, was Table Top Exercise to carry out training for **Peace Keeping Operations under United Nations (UN) mandate**. It is the first military exercise between the two countries. The exercise was held in Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh.
- 29.** The Chief Justice of India has recommended impeachment of a Judge of the Allahabad High Court.

The CJI has set the process in motion with a letter to the Prime Minister for the impeachment of the judge. When the impeachment motion is moved in Parliament, an investigation is conducted. If the findings of guilt are confirmed, the impeachment motion will be put to vote for the removal of the judge by a majority.

- 30.** The Finance Ministry is planning to initiate a performance review of heads of public sector banks that are under the RBI's Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) as part of the reform process.

The PCA is invoked when certain risk thresholds are breached. There are three risk thresholds. They are based on levels of asset quality, profitability, capital and the like.