

Brain Tree

Current Events



16th to 30th April, 2018

1. UN has launched road safety trust fund aimed at spurring action to help save lives in road accidents.

United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund aims to accelerate progress in improving global road safety by bridging the gaps in the mobilization of resources for effective action at all levels. The Fund will mobilize resources from governments, intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations, the private sector, philanthropic organizations and individuals. **UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)** will be the secretariat for the Trust Fund. The Trust Fund will support efforts along the five pillars of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety, which include strengthened road safety management capacities, improved safety of road infrastructure and broader transport networks, enhanced safety of vehicles, improved behavior of road users and improved post-crash care.

Misc. Facts:

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by United Nations Member States in 2015, contains targets on road safety in two of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals:

- Goal 3: “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”.
- Target 3.6: By 2020, halve the number of global deaths from road traffic accidents.
- Goal 11: “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”.

2. India is planning to coordinate with China and other Asian countries to voice against the “Asian Premium” being charged by the **Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)**

Asian Premium is the extra charge being collected by OPEC countries from Asian countries when selling oil. The premium is determined in large part by the **Official Selling Prices (OSPs)** set by Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait, which supply about 15 percent of the world’s crude among them. They set

Training Tomorrow’s Administrators

1 / 12

TODAY

differential prices against benchmarks on a monthly basis, adjusting them to account for regional variations.

The **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** is a permanent, intergovernmental Organization, created at the Baghdad Conference in September 1960, by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. Currently, the Organization has a total of 14 Member Countries. Headquarters: Vienna, Austria (Originally Geneva, Switzerland)

3. Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) is set to take up the role of the market regulator for the natural gas sector.

The **Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB)** was constituted under The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board Act, 2006. The idea is to create an ecosystem where the competing buyers would be able to buy gas from competing sellers and transport the same from gas source to the place of their requirement by getting a non-discriminatory access to the pipeline capacity. This end-to-end solution would reduce customer risk and enhance customer confidence on gas as an alternate fuel and feed. The board has also been mandated to regulate the refining, processing, storage, transportation, distribution, marketing and sale of petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas excluding production of crude oil and natural gas so as and to ensure uninterrupted and adequate supply of petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas in all parts of the country.

4. Wiesbaden Conference 2018 was recently held in India. Representatives from the 39 countries, as well as experts from the UNSC 1540 Committee and UN Office for Disarmament Affairs in New York, participated in the conference. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in cooperation with Germany and the **United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)** hosted the conference. **Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)** was the industry partner for the event. The title of the Conference is **'Securing Global Supply Chains through Government-Industry Partnerships towards Effective Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1540'**. The conference provides an opportunity to participants to share experiences on their export control systems and to identify legal and technical assistance, action plans and challenges in the national implementation of UNSC 1540.

The UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) establishes legally binding obligations on all States to adopt and enforce appropriate and effective measures to prevent the proliferation to non-State actors of nuclear, chemical,

and biological weapons and their delivery systems. It requires, therefore that States implement appropriate and effective measures to prevent non-state actors such as terrorists, from obtaining access to weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Resolution includes three primary obligations

- i. All States are prohibited from providing any form of support to non-state actors seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction, related materials, or their means of delivery.
- ii. All States must adopt and enforce laws criminalizing the possession and acquisition of such items by non-state actors, as well as efforts to assist or finance their acquisition.
- iii. All States must adopt and enforce domestic controls over nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, their means of delivery, and related materials, in order to prevent their proliferation.

Wiesbaden is the capital of state Hesse in central Germany. It is situated on the right bank of Rhine River and on the foot of Taunus Mountains.

5. A new Commonwealth Innovation Index has been launched as part of a new Commonwealth Innovation Hub. The index has been created in partnership with the United Nations **World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)** and its annual **Global Innovation Index (GII)**. It is aimed at providing a tool that allows member states, organisations and citizens to benchmark themselves against 53 countries of the Commonwealth, with the new innovation hub offering a dedicated online space for Commonwealth countries to showcase what they have to offer and share with other members. The index is topped by the UK, Singapore and Canada. India is ranked 10th.
6. Law commission favors simultaneous elections in Centre and States. Draft white paper suggests constitutional amendments to meet objective. Suggestions made by the commission:
 - Citing no-confidence motion and premature dissolution of the House, the commission said that parties that introduce no-confidence motion should simultaneously give suggestion for an alternative government.
 - Suggested relaxing the anti-defection law in the tenth schedule, to prevent a stalemate in case of hung Lok Sabha/assemblies.
 - In case of mid-term elections, the New Lok Sabha or assembly would only serve the remainder of the term of the previous Lok Sabha/Assembly and not fresh term.

Training Tomorrow's Administrators

3 / 12

TODAY

- It also suggested that the Prime Minister/Chief Minister should be "elected" to lead by the full House like the Lok Sabha Speaker.

Law Commission: It is an executive, advisory body established by an order of the government of India that works under the Ministry of Law and Justice. Its major work is legal reform. Membership primarily comprises of legal experts who are entrusted a mandate by the government

The first Law commission was established in 1834 by the Charter Act of 1833. After that, three more Commissions were established in Pre-independent India. The first Law commission of Independent India was established in 1955

7. The Archaeological Survey of India in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Madras will use the Ground Penetrating Radar(GPR) to map the area around the Bagh-e-Naya Quila, inside the Golconda Fort.

Ground Penetrating Radar Is a geophysical method that uses radar pulses to image the subsurface. This nondestructive method uses electromagnetic radiation in the microwave band of the radio spectrum and detects the reflected signals from subsurface structures.

8. 18th April was celebrated as World Heritage Day. The theme for 2018: Heritage for Generations.
9. Earth Day was celebrated on 22nd April with the theme: **End Plastic pollution.**
10. World Immunization Week is celebrated from 24th- 30th of April by the World Health Organization (WHO) in order to increase awareness about vaccination. Theme: "Protected together, "Vaccines Work".

The Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP) – endorsed by 194 Member States of the World Health Assembly in May 2012 – aims to prevent millions of deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases by 2020 through universal access to immunization. Despite improvements in individual countries and a strong global rate of new vaccine introduction, all of the GVAP targets for disease elimination—including measles, rubella, and maternal and neonatal tetanus—are behind schedule.

11. The Ministry of Urban Affairs has launched the first workshop on star rating of garbage-free cities under the Swachh Bharat Mission.
 - 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 such as Door to Door Collection, bulk generator compliance, source segregation, sweeping, scientific processing of waste,

Training Tomorrow's Administrators

4 / 12

TODAY

scientific land filling, plastic waste management, construction and demolition management, dump remediation & citizen grievance redressal system etc.

- Cities will need to get themselves certified every year to retain their star-status.
- Cities may self-declare themselves as 1-star, 2-star or 4-star, MoHUA will carry out an additional verification through an independent third party to certify cities as 3-star, 5-star or 7-star.

12. Cybersecurity Tech Accord: A group of 34 major tech companies, including Cisco, Facebook, Microsoft, HP, RSA, and Oracle, have signed the Cybersecurity Tech Accord. This accord promises to establish partnerships to share vulnerabilities, provide consumers with better ways to protect themselves, and refuse to assist governments in carrying out state sponsored cyberattacks.

13. The Union HRD Ministry has launched “Study in India” programme to attract students from countries in South Asia, South-East Asia, Middle East and Africa to come and study in India.

14. The Centre has set up a Defence Planning Committee (DPC) chaired by National Security Advisor (NSA) to facilitate “comprehensive” planning for the defence forces besides focusing on military doctrines to deal with emerging security challenges.

The committee will comprise:

- i. National Security Advisor (NSA).
- ii. Foreign secretary.
- iii. Chairman of chiefs of staff committee.
- iv. The Army, Navy and Air Force chiefs.
- v. Secretary (expenditure) in the Finance Ministry.

Functions

- Prepare drafts of national security strategy and doctrines, international defence engagement strategy and roadmap to build defence manufacturing ecosystem.
- Work on strategy to boost defence exports, and prioritised capability development plans for the armed forces.
- Analyse and evaluate all relevant inputs relating to defence planning and foreign policy imperatives besides focusing on defence acquisition and

infrastructure development plans including the 15-year-long integrated perspective plan.

- Work on development of Indian defence industry and technology advancements.

- 15.** Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) NASA's planet-hunting satellite was recently launched on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Cape Canaveral, Florida. It will look for planets orbiting the brightest stars in Earth's sky. This will help astronomers better understand the structure of other solar systems and provide insights into how our own solar system formed. TESS will occupy a never-before-used orbit high above Earth. The elliptical orbit, called P/2, is exactly half of the moon's orbital period; this means that TESS will orbit Earth every 13.7 days. Its closest point to Earth (67,000 miles or 108,000 kilometers) is about triple the distance of geosynchronous orbit, where most communications satellites operate.
- 16.** Seven parties moved to impeach the Chief Justice of India. The move was dismissed by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

Article 124(4) says that "A Judge of the Supreme Court shall not be removed from his office except by an order of the President passed after an address by each House of Parliament supported by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting has been presented to the President in the same session for such removal on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity."

Article 124(5), says that "Parliament may by law regulate the procedure for the presentation of an address and for the investigation and proof of the misbehaviour or incapacity of a Judge under clause (4)

Process:

- 100 Lok Sabha MPs or 50 Rajya Sabha MPs is the minimum number of signatories required to issue the notice.
- The notice has to be handed over to the Speaker if it is from the Lok Sabha or to the Vice-President if it is in the Rajya Sabha.
- If and when the motion is admitted, the speaker or the Chairman will have to constitute a three-member committee to investigate the charges levelled against the Supreme Court Judge. The committee will consist of a senior Supreme Court Judge, a High Court Judge and a 'distinguished jurist' appointed by the President of India.

- The committee will frame the charges, obtain a written statement from the judge in his defence and give an opportunity to the judge to adduce evidence or cross-examine witnesses. The panel will have the powers of a civil court in respect of summoning people for an examination on oath and production of documents.
- The committee will submit the report to the Speaker/Chairman. If it contains a finding that the judge is not guilty, there shall be no further action.
- If the committee finds the judge guilty of one or more charges, its report and the impeachment motion will be taken up by the House.
- The motion has to be passed by both Houses with a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting and a majority of the total membership of the house.
- If both Houses pass the motion, an address for the judge's removal will be presented to the President in the prescribed manner by each House of Parliament in the same Session in which the motion has been adopted.

- 17.** The Union Health Ministry is ready to roll out a Rs 500 crore-three-year comprehensive integrated national action plan to check morbidity and mortality due to Viral Hepatitis

Inflammation of liver is usually referred as hepatitis. Viral hepatitis is a widespread infectious disease normally caused by the hepatitis viruses A, B, C, D and E. The condition can progress to liver fibrosis (scarring), cirrhosis or liver cancer. It can be caused by any of the known five hepatotropic viruses, namely — hepatitis A, B, C, D and E which are highly divergent in their structure, epidemiology, mode of transmission, incubation period, signs/symptoms, diagnosis, prevention and treatment options.

- 18.** Pune hosted the 12th edition of the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF) meeting. The Forum was attended by meteorologists from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. This was the sixth SASCOF meeting hosted by India. It is a platform where members discuss some of the common weather and climate-related matters.
- 19.** The Union Cabinet has approved the Finance Ministry's proposal of promulgating the Fugitive Economic Offenders Ordinance, 2018

A Fugitive Economic Offender is a person against whom an arrest warrant has been issued in respect of a scheduled offence and who has left India so as to

avoid criminal prosecution, or being abroad, refuses to return to India to face criminal prosecution. A scheduled offence refers to a list of economic offences contained in the Schedule to this Ordinance.

The new Law lays down the measures to empower Indian authorities to attach and confiscate the proceeds of crime associated with economic offenders and properties of economic offenders. The Ordinance is expected to re-establish the rule of law with respect to the fugitive economic offenders as they would be forced to return to India to face trial for scheduled offences. This would also help the banks and other financial institutions to achieve higher recovery from financial defaults committed by such fugitive economic offenders, improving the financial health of such institutions.

- 20.** Committee headed by Justice Rajesh Bindal has submitted its report on legal issues related to Inter-country removal & retention of children to the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Recommendations of the Committee

- The Committee has recommended that the Government may establish an 'Inter Country Parental Child Removal Disputes Resolution Authority'.
- The Authority may be chaired by a retired High Court Judge, with Members from Legal and Social sector background along with representatives from key Ministries.
- The authority has been envisaged to provide a one window solution in cases of inter country removal and retention of Children. The Authority may examine the inter country cases of removal and retention of children vis-a-vis the cultural context, merit of the case, and the best interest of the Child

- 21.** First Ever International SME Convention-2018 was held in New Delhi. organised by the Ministry of MSME and National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) along with KVIC and Coir Board. Theme: "Business beyond Borders". It recorded participants from 31 countries. The platform facilitates exchange of relevant business partnerships and trade opportunities for India's Best Small and Medium Enterprises

- 22.** Scientists have proposed Earth Bio-Genome project, a massive project to sequence, catalog and analyze the genomes of all eukaryotic species on the planet.

The goal of the Project is to understand the evolution and organization of life on

Training Tomorrow's Administrators

8 / 12

TODAY

our planet by sequencing and functionally annotating the genomes of 1.5 million known species of eukaryotes. The project also seeks to reveal some of the estimated 10 to 15 million unknown species of eukaryotes, most of which are single cell organisms, insects and small animals in the oceans. The Project also plans to capitalize on the “citizen scientist” movement to collect specimens. The initiative is being led by a coordinating council with members from the United States, the European Union, China, Brazil, Canada, Australia and some African countries.

Potential benefits: It will serve as a vital new resource for global innovations in medicine, agriculture, conservation, technology and genomics such as developing new drugs for infectious and inherited diseases, creating new biological synthetic fuels, biomaterials, and food sources for growing human population.

- 23.** Adilabad Dokra and Warangal Durries get GI tag. Two craft forms that are unique to Telangana.

Adilabad Dokra: It is an ancient metal craft that is popular in the tribal regions. The craftsman belong to Woj community, commonly referred to as Wojaris or Ohjas. Brass is the main material that is used. An ancient casting technique called 'cire perdue' is used. Under this technique, a clay design model is made over wax threads. When the molten metal is poured into this mould. Since the mould is broken, no two sculptures are the same.

Warangal Durries: In this style of durries, weavers create beautiful patterns and dye them with vegetable colours, which are washed in flowing water after the printing process.

- 24.** The Union Home Ministry has decided to relax the six-decade-old Protected Area Permit regime from Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur for five years. Foreign tourists, except those from Pakistan, China and Afghanistan, would now be allowed to visit some of the most pristine locations of the country which, so far, were out of bounds for them without a special permit

Under the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958, all areas falling between the Inner line and the International Border of some states have been declared as protected areas. Every foreigner, except a citizen of Bhutan, who desires to enter and stay in a protected or restricted area, is required to obtain a special permit from a competent authority. In cases, where the power to issue such permits has not been delegated to a subordinate authority by the Union

government, the application for the special permit has to be referred to the Ministry of Home Affairs for prior approval, at least eight weeks before the date of the expected visit. The protected areas currently include whole of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim, besides parts of Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir. Some parts of Sikkim fall under the protected area regime while others under the restricted area.

- 25.** AFSPA revoked from Meghalaya, and in Arunachal Pradesh restricted to eight police stations bordering Assam and three districts adjoining Myanmar. Among the eight Northeast states, AFSPA is now applicable only in Nagaland, Manipur (excluding Imphal), Assam and parts of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act was enacted in 1958 to bring under control what the government of India considered 'disturbed' areas. The government (either the state or centre) considers those areas to be 'disturbed' "by reason of differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities."

The Act empowers the governor of the state or Union territory to issue an official notification on The Gazette of India, following which the centre has the authority to send in armed forces for civilian aid. Once declared 'disturbed', the region has to maintain status quo for a minimum of three months, according to The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976.

The "Armed forces" may shoot to kill or destroy a building on mere suspicion. A non-commissioned officer or anyone of equivalent rank and above may use force based on opinion and suspicion, to arrest without warrant, or to kill. He can fire at anyone carrying anything that may be used as a weapon, with only "such due warning as he may consider necessary". Once AFSPA is implemented, "no prosecution... shall be instituted except with the previous sanction of the central government, in respect of anything done or purported to be done" under this Act.

- 26.** Diu Smart City becomes the first city in India that runs on 100% renewable energy during daytime.
- 27.** The United Nations' cultural agency has awarded the World Press Freedom prize to an imprisoned Egyptian photographer- Mahmoud Abu Zeid, known as Shawkan.
- 28.** New pollution-forecast system: The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), in collaboration with experts from the Finnish Meteorological institutione and US

Training Tomorrow's Administrators

10 / 12

TODAY

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will be developing a new system that will anticipate Particulate Matter(PM) levels at least two days in advance. Currently, the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR) serves as the apex forecaster. The World Meteorological Organization has recognised SAFAR as a prototype activity on the basis of the high quality control and standards maintained in its implementation.

29. Indo-Malaysian defence cooperation, a joint training exercise HARIMAU SHAKTI is being conducted in Malaysia.
30. Bhabha Kavach: armour panel developed by BARC. It is made using extremely hard boron carbide ceramics that is hot-pressed with carbon Nano-tubes and composite polymer.
31. World Press Freedom Index 2018 was released by Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

The Index ranks 180 countries according to the level of freedom available to journalists. It is based on an evaluation of pluralism, independence of the media, quality of legislative framework and safety of journalists in each country. It does not rank public policies even if governments obviously have a major impact on their country's ranking. Nor is it an indicator of the quality of journalism in each country. The press freedom map offers a visual overview of the situation in each country in the Index. The colour categories are assigned as follows: good (white), fairly good (yellow), problematic (yellow), bad (red) and very bad (black).

2018- Highlights

- For second year in a row Norway followed by Sweden lead the index.
- India has dropped from rank 136 last year to rank 138 this year. India fared poorly on indicators such as hate speeches, attacks on journalists on social media, trolling them and targeting their reputation.

32. In a bid to boost indigenization, the DAC has approved procurement of NAG Missile System (NAMIS)

NAG missile and the system: The NAG missile is a third generation anti-tank guided missile, which has top attack capabilities that can effectively engage and destroy all known enemy tanks during day and night. The system includes a third generation Anti-Tank Guided Missile, the NAG, along with the Missile Carrier Vehicle (NAMICA).

- 33. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**, was held in New Delhi, jointly hosted by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** and UNCCD Secretariat.

Established in 1994, the **United Nations to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)** is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. It is the only convention stemming from a direct recommendation of the Rio Conference's Agenda 21. The end goal is to protect land from over-use and drought, so it can continue to provide food, water and energy.

- 34. Central Panel flags gaps in PM's crop insurance scheme**
- The panel observed high crop insurance claims despite normal rains in the past two years, which shows the extent of risks faced by the farmers.
 - It also observed that fewer insurance companies were bidding in rained areas, which shows that they are cherry-picking low risk areas leaving out high-risk districts where farmers are more vulnerable.
 - It also noted that delay or non-payment of claims will prove to be discouraging and affect the volumes in the long run.
- 35. One reason noted by the committee was the delay by state governments in releasing their share of premium subsidy on time, which is affecting claim settlement by insurers.**
- For faster claim settlement, it suggested use of technology like high resolution satellite images to assess crop loss and the digitization of land records.
 - The committee also suggested that the government play a greater role in pricing of crop insurance instead of letting the matter be decided by the insurance or reinsurance industry.