

# Brain Tree

## Current Events



**01 June, 2018 – 15 June, 2018**

1. The Telangana government and Aga Khan Trust are working to restore Hyderabad's 17th century Badshahi Ashoorkhana.

400-year old Ashoorkhana was built by Muhammed Quli Qutub Shah. It was a house of mourning, where large congregations of Muslims gathered in memory of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain during the month of Muharram. During the rule of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, in 1178 Hijri (about 1764 AD), the Ashoorkhana was converted into a bandikhana. For 80 years, it was used as a stable where horses were kept, before it was restored as a place of worship by the then mutawalli Mir Nawazish Ali Khan. The building consists of a Kaman, Naqqar Khana (where ceremonial drums are beaten), Niyaz Khana (where visitors are fed), Sarai Khana (place to rest), Abdar Khana (drinking water is stored), the chabutra (platform) and a guard room.

2. Acting on the Supreme Court's direction, the Centre recently constituted a Cauvery Water Management Authority (CMA) to address the dispute over sharing of river water among Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Puducherry.
  - **Composition:** The authority would comprise a chairman, eight members besides a secretary. Out of eight members, two each will be full-time and part-time members, while the rest four would be part-time members from states.
  - **Powers:** The authority will exercise power and discharge such duty for "sufficient and expedient for securing compliance and implementation" of the Supreme Court order in relation to "storage, apportionment, regulation and control of Cauvery waters". It can also seek the help of the central government for implementation of the award and take appropriate action.

Cauvery River rises on Brahmagiri Hill of the Western Ghats in south-western Karnataka state. It flows in a south-easterly direction for 475 miles through the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Before emptying into the Bay of Bengal south of Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu the river forms a wide delta called the "garden of southern India". Its main tributaries are the Kabani (Kabbani), Amaravati, Noyil, and Bhavani rivers.

3. India recently successfully test-fired its indigenously developed nuclear capable Long Range Ballistic Missile Agni-5 from Dr Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast. It is a surface-to-surface missile which can carry nuclear warhead weighing 1.5 tonnes to a distance of over 5,000 km and is the longest missile in India's arsenal capable of reaching most parts of

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China. The missile features many new indigenously-developed technologies, including the very high accuracy Ring Laser Gyro based Inertial Navigation System (RINS), and the most modern and accurate Micro Navigation System (MINS) which improves the accuracy of the missile.

With this missile, India has joined an elite club of nations that possess the ICBM launch capability. Only the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – China, France, Russia, the United States and Britain, along with Israel, so far possess such long-range missiles.

4. The Chandrabhaga beach on the Konark coast of Odisha will be the first in Asia to get the Blue Flag certification.

#### **Blue Flag Project**

Launched in December 2017 by the Environment Ministry, the prime objective of the project is to enhance standards of cleanliness, upkeep and basic amenities at beaches. Under the project, each state or union territory has been asked to nominate a beach which will be funded through the ongoing Integrated Coastal Management Programme.

Twelve more beaches in the country are being developed by the Society for Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM), an Environment Ministry's body working for the management of coastal areas, in accordance with the Blue Flag standards.

To achieve the Blue Flag standards, a beach has to strictly comply with 33 environment and tourism-related conditions. The standards were established by the Copenhagen-based Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) in 1985. For example- a beach must be plastic-free and equipped with a waste management system. Clean water should be available for tourists, apart from international amenities. The beach should have facilities for studying the environmental impact around the area.

**Society of Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM):** established under the aegis of Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change. The main objective of the Centre is to promote research and development in the area of coastal management including addressing issues of coastal communities. It also supports implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) activities in India and implements the World Bank assisted India ICZM Project.

5. RBI is observing Financial Literacy Week in the month of June: It will focus on creating awareness among customers of banks about financial products and services, good financial practices and going digital.
6. Accusing the Centre of running an “anti-worker government”, leading trade union body AITUC has announced that it is planning to launch a nationwide campaign against the government.

The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) is the oldest trade union federations in India. It was founded in 1920 in Bombay by Lala Lajpat Rai, Joseph Baptista, N. M. Joshi, Diwan Chaman Lall and a few others. Until 1945 when unions became organised on party lines, it was the primary trade union organisation in India. Since then, it has been associated with

the Communist Party of India. AITUC is a founder member of the World Federation of Trade Unions.

7. The government has launched the 'JANAUSHADHI SUVIDHA', the Oxo-biodegradable Sanitary Napkin, under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP). The affordable sanitary napkins will now become available at over 3600 Janaushadhi Kendras functional in 33 States/UTs across India.

Jan Aushadhi Suvidha comes with a special additive, which makes Sanitary napkin biodegradable when it comes in contact with oxygen after being discarded. This would ensure 'Swachhta, Swasthya and Suvidha' for the underprivileged Women of India and go a long way in the achievement of vision of Affordable and Quality Healthcare for All.

The average price of sanitary napkins available in the market today is around Rs. 8 per pad, whereas now with the launch of the SUVIDHA napkins at Rs. 2.50 per pad,

'Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana' is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. Of India, to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses through special kendra's known as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra. Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra (PMBJK) have been set up to provide generic drugs, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs.

8. International Air Transport Association (IATA) recently castigated India for taxing international tickets, as it asked governments to facilitate the growth of worldwide connectivity by avoiding creeping re-regulation, maintaining the integrity of global standards and addressing a capacity crisis. The government had announced the implementation of the GST from July 1, 2017.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is the trade association for the world's airlines, representing some 280 airlines or 83% of total air traffic. Formed in April 1945, it is the successor to the International Air Traffic Association, which was formed in 1919.

IATA supports airline activity and helps formulate industry policy and standards. It also provides consulting and training services in many areas crucial to aviation.

It is headquartered in Montreal, Quebec, Canada with Executive Offices in Geneva, Switzerland.

9. **Operation Nistar:** It is an evacuation of 38 Indian nationals stranded on the Yemeni island of Socotra in the aftermath of cyclone Mekenu.
10. The Centre has decided not to file any "counter-affidavit" on Article 35A, which has been challenged in the Supreme Court through a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petition. The Supreme Court has scheduled further hearing for August 6.
- The petition says Article 35 A is against the "very spirit of oneness of India" as it creates a "class within a class of Indian citizens". Restricting citizens from other States from getting employment or buying property within Jammu and Kashmir is a violation of fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution.

- Also, the parliamentary route of lawmaking was bypassed when the President incorporated Article 35A into the Constitution. Article 368 (i) of the Constitution empowers only Parliament to amend the Constitution.

Article 35A is a provision in the Constitution that empowers the Jammu and Kashmir legislature to define permanent residents of the state. It was added through the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954, issued under Article 370.

Article 35A empowers Jammu and Kashmir legislature to define “permanent residents” of the state along with their special rights and privileges. This Article has an intricate relationship with Article 370.

Jammu and Kashmir Assembly defined Permanent Resident as a person who was a state subject on May 14, 1954 or who had been a resident of the state for 10 years and has “lawfully acquired immovable property in the state.”

A person who is not a permanent resident of Jammu and Kashmir is not allowed to buy or own properties in the state or vote in state Assembly election or contest election to the state Assembly. An outsider cannot get a job in the Jammu and Kashmir government.

11. The Eleventh edition of Geo Intelligence Asia 2018 was held in New Delhi. The theme was : **‘GeoSpatial: A Force Multiplier for Defence and Industrial Security’**. It is organised by GeoSpatial Media and Communication with Directorate General of Information System as Knowledge Partners and Military Survey as Co-organisers. The seminar brings together the military, security officials including BSF and Police Forces, Government and industry together to examine the latest technology solutions and on the critical role of geospatial technology in military and security applications.
12. 2018 IBSA Ministerial meet was recently held in Pretoria, South Africa. The outcome of this meeting was a document titled IBSA Declaration on South-South Cooperation. This document calls for contribution of each of the member of IBSA forum to contribute to greater understanding of development cooperation as a common endeavour of the global south

IBSA was formalized by the Brasilia Declaration of 6 June 2003. IBSA is a coordinating mechanism amongst three emerging countries, three multi ethnic and multicultural democracies, which are determined to:

- Contribute to the construction of a new international architecture.
- Bring their voice together on global issues.
- Deepen their ties in various areas.

13. The NITI Aayog is working on a roadmap for full-scale implementation of methanol economy in the country in near future, which would not only curb pollution, but reduce India’s dependence on oil imports as well.

Methanol can be used as an energy producing fuel, transportation fuel and cooking fuel, cutting down India’s oil import bill by an estimated 20% over the next few years. Unlike CNG, using methanol as a transportation fuel would require minimal alteration in the vehicles. Methanol is a clean-burning fuel that produces fewer smog-causing emissions —

such as sulphur oxides (SO<sub>x</sub>), nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) and particulate matter — and can improve air quality and related human health issues.

Methanol is most commonly produced on a commercial scale from natural gas. It can also be produced from renewable sources such as biomass and recycled carbon dioxide. As a high-octane vehicle fuel, methanol offers excellent acceleration and power. It also improves vehicle efficiency.

**14.** Australia-based Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), has released the 12th edition of the Global Peace Index (GPI).

- India: India has moved up four places to the 137th rank among 163 countries. The improvement is due to a reduction in the level of violent crime driven by increased law enforcement. India was also among the countries with the biggest decreases in the number of deaths.
- Global performance: Iceland remains the most peaceful country in the world, a position it has held since 2008. New Zealand, Austria, Portugal and Denmark also sit in the top five most peaceful rankings. Syria remains the least peaceful country in the world, a position it has held for the past five years. Afghanistan, South Sudan, Iraq and Somalia comprise the remaining least peaceful countries.
- Overall, the global level of peace has deteriorated by 0.27% in the last year, marking the fourth successive year of deteriorations. Ninety-two countries deteriorated, while 71 countries improved.

**15.** In a big boost to the country's space programme, the Union Cabinet has given the financial approval of Rs 10,911 crore for the launch of 30 PSLV and 10 GSLV Mk III rockets in the next four years.

Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle(PSLV) has emerged as a versatile launch vehicle to carry out Sun-Synchronous Polar Orbit (SSPO), Geo-synchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) and low inclination Low Earth Orbit (LEO) missions. It is the first Indian launch vehicle to be equipped with liquid stages. With the recent successful launch of PSLV-C41, PSLV has completed three developmental and forty three operational flights and the last forty one flights have been successful. PSLV has made the country self-reliant in the launching capability of satellites for earth observation, disaster management, navigation and space sciences.

Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) Mk III rocket is a three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle developed by ISRO. The vehicle has two solid strap-ons, a core liquid booster and a cryogenic upper stage. GSLV Mk III is designed to carry 4 ton class of satellites into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) or about 10 tons to Low Earth Orbit (LEO), which is about twice the capability of GSLV Mk II. This is India's first fully functional rocket to be tested with a cryogenic engine that uses liquid propellants — liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen

- 16.** External Affairs Minister recently undertook a train journey from Pentrich to Pietermaritzburg. It is a railway station in South Africa where a young Mahatma Gandhi was thrown out of a “Whites-only” compartment 125 years ago. On June 7, 1893,
- 17.** Indian Railways and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) have jointly launched an awareness campaign on Protection of children in contact with Railways. This is an endeavour to spread awareness about large number of vulnerable children coming in contact with Railways as passengers or abandoned, trafficked, run away children separated from their family.
- 18.** The 15th edition of the QS World University Rankings has been released by global higher education analysts QS Quacquarelli Symonds. QS ranks the world’s top 1,000 universities, across 85 countries.
- It is the only international ranking to have received International Ranking Expert Group (IREG) approval, the QS ranking is viewed as one of the three most-widely read university rankings in the world, along with Academic Ranking of World Universities and Times Higher Education World University Rankings.
  - Globally, Massachusetts Institute of Technology remains the top university for the seventh consecutive year. Stanford University, Harvard University and California Institute of Technology (Caltech) all retain their positions at second, third and fourth in the world respectively.
  - From Asia, National University of Singapore (11) Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (12) and Tsinghua University, China (17) have been ranked the best.
  - Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-B), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, and Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (IIT-D) are in the top 200. The number of Indian universities in the top 1,000 increased from 20 to 24. 9 Indian institutions have been individually ranked in the top-500 as against 6 last year. IIT-Bombay is now the top institute in the country rising 17 positions from 2018 to 162. Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore, rises 20 places to 170th. 17 of India’s 24 ranked universities improved their rank for Academic Reputation, while 13 improved their rank for Employer Reputation.
- 19.** President Ram Nath Kovind has declared Tripura’s queen variety pineapple as the “state fruit” of Tripura.
- 20.** Scientists have found widespread uranium contamination in groundwater from aquifers across 16 states in India, much above the WHO provisional standard for the country. The main source of uranium contamination was “natural,” but human factors such as groundwater table decline and nitrate pollution could be worsening the problem.

Main factors responsible for uranium contamination:

- When over-pumping of aquifers’ groundwater occurs and their water levels decline, it induces oxidation conditions that, in turn, enhance uranium enrichment in the shallow groundwater that remains.
- While the primary source of uranium is geogenic (naturally occurring),

anthropogenic (human caused) factors such as groundwater table decline and nitrate pollution may further enhance uranium mobilisation.

- Other factors include the amount of uranium contained in an aquifer's rocks; water-rock interactions that cause the uranium to be extracted from those rocks; oxidation conditions that enhance the extracted uranium's solubility in water; and the interaction of the extracted uranium with other chemicals in the groundwater, such as bicarbonate, which can further enhance its solubility.

**21.** World Oceans Day- 8 June: Action focus for 2018: preventing plastic pollution and encouraging solutions for a healthy ocean. The Ocean Conference was convened to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

**22.** World Day Against Child Labour – 12 June 2018: Theme this year: “Generation Safe & Healthy”

The International Labour Organization (ILO) launched the World Day Against Child Labour in 2002 to focus attention on the global extent of child labour and the action and efforts needed to eliminate it.

Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls on the global community to: “Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.”

**23. Lateral entry into Civil Services :** The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has invited applications for 10 senior level positions in the Departments of Economic Affairs, Revenue, Commerce and Highways among others.

The eligibility criteria includes “Individuals working at comparable levels in Private Sector Companies, Consultancy Organisations, International/Multinational Organisations with a minimum of 15 years’ experience” besides those working in central public sector undertakings, autonomous bodies, statutory organisations, research bodies and universities.

The notification specifies a minimum age of 40 years and minimum qualification of graduation from a recognised university or institute while higher qualification will be an added advantage.

The recruitment will be on contract basis for three to five years.

**24.** The Union Ministry of Culture recently introduced a new scheme called ‘**Seva Bhoj Yojna**’ to reimburse the central share of CGST and IGST on items for food/prasad/langar/bhandara offered free of cost by charitable religious institutions.

**25.** Scientists from ISRO have spotted for the first time a distant planet six times bigger than Earth and revolving around a Sun-like star about 600 light years away. With this discovery India has joined a handful of countries which have discovered planets around stars. The

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primary aim of PARAS is to search for planets around a sample of 100s of Dwarf main-sequence G,K,M type stars within a volume of 100pc using the Simultaneous ThAr calibration technique. It has wavelength coverage of 400nm to 680nm.

- 26.** Interstellar Mapping and Acceleration Probe: a science mission of NASA planned for launch in 2024 that will sample, analyze, and map particles streaming to Earth from the edges of interstellar space. The mission will help researchers better understand the boundary of the heliosphere, a sort of magnetic bubble surrounding and protecting our solar system. This is the fifth mission in NASA's Solar Terrestrial Probes (STP) Program portfolio. Another objective of the mission is to learn more about the generation of cosmic rays in the heliosphere. Cosmic rays created locally and from the galaxy and beyond affect human explorers in space and can harm technological systems, and likely play a role in the presence of life itself in the universe. The spacecraft will be positioned about one million miles (1.5 million kilometers) away from Earth towards the Sun at what is called the first Lagrange point or L1. This will allow the probe to maximize use of its instruments to monitor the interactions between solar wind and the interstellar medium in the outer solar system.
- 27.** The government has selected ten new iconic sites under Phase III of the flagship project Swachh Iconic Places (SIP) of the Swachh Bharat Mission.

**Swachh Iconic Places (SIP)** is an initiative of Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation under Swachh Bharat Mission. Initiated as a project to implement Prime Minister's vision to take iconic places and their surroundings to higher standards of Swachhata, so that all visitors benefit and also take away home the message of cleanliness, Swachh Iconic Places is now in its second phase. SIP is a truly collaborative project with three other central Ministries: Urban Development, Culture, Tourism; all levels in the concerned States and more importantly, Public Sector and Private companies as partners.

- 28.** India has extended a financial aid of about Rs 10 crore to Nepal for the construction of 2,700 shallow tube well irrigation systems to boost agricultural productivity. The assistance has been extended as part of the final payment for the Nepal-Bharat Maitri Irrigation Project.

**Maitre irrigation project:** The project was launched in January last year to boost growth to the Himalayan nation's agricultural sector through enhanced facilities. The project is aimed at installing 2,700 shallow tube wells in 12 districts of Nepal. The project would ensure all-season irrigation facility to about 8,115 hectares of farm land, augment productivity of wheat, rice and seasonal fruits, vegetables and other crops, it said. It would also uplift the socio-economic status of farming families in the 12 districts covered under the project

- 29.** India is hosting the 10th meeting of Global Alliance to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis. Theme: Celebrating progress towards elimination: Voices from the field on overcoming programme challenges.

**Global Alliance to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis** is an alliance of partners from 72 LF endemic national country programmes, NGOs, private sectors, academic and research institutes and international development agencies that assists WHO's Global Programme to

Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis

**Lymphatic Filariasis** or commonly known as Elephantiasis is one of the oldest and most debilitating neglected disease, which is currently endemic in 73 countries of the world, including India. It is a parasitic infection spread by mosquitoes. The parasites are thread-like worms (filariae) that develop in and then damage the human lymphatic system and associated tissues. It is usually contracted in childhood, often before the age of five.

The **lymphatic system** is a network of vessels and specialised tissues that are essential to the maintaining the overall fluid balance and health of organs and limbs and importantly are a major component of the body's immune defence system

30. NITI Aayog is planning to launch a Composite Water Management Index. This index is an attempt to inspire States and UTs towards efficient and optimal utilization of water, and recycling thereof with a sense of urgency. It will be a useful tool to assess and improve the performance in efficient management of water resources.