# Brain Tree

## Current Events

### 16 July to 31 July, 2018

1. President of India nominated Ram Shakal, Rakesh Sinha, Raghunath Mohapatra and Sonal Mansingh to the Rajya Sabha.

> Under Article 80 of the Constitution, the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) is composed of not more than 250 members, of whom 12 are nominated by the President of India from amongst persons who have special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as literature, science, art and social service on the advice of the Prime Minister

2. India has become the Vice-Chair (Regional Head) of the Asia Pacific Region of **W**orld **C**ustoms **O**rganisation (**WCO**) for a period of two years, from July, 2018 to June, 2020.

> The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as the **C**ustoms **C**o-operation **C**ouncil (**CCC**) is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations. The WCO is divided into six Regions, each of which is represented by a regionally elected Vice-Chairperson.
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> Today, the WCO represents 182 Customs administrations across the globe that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade.
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> WCO has also been responsible for administering the World Trade Organization's Agreements on Customs Valuation, which provide a system for placing values on imported goods, and the Rules of Origin, which are used to determine the origin of a given commodity.

3. **IFFCO iMandi App:** an e-commerce platform launched by **I**ndian **F**armers **F**ertiliser **C**ooperative Limited (**IFFCO**) to address all needs of the farming community such as shop for agri inputs and produce, FMCG, electronics, loans, insurance etc.

> Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO): is large scale fertiliser cooperative federation in India which is registered as Multistate Cooperative Society. It is one of India's biggest cooperative society which is wholly owned by Indian Cooperatives.

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4. United Nations for first time has finalized Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration to better manage international migration, address its challenges, strengthen migrant rights and contribute to sustainable development. The agreement will be formally adopted by world leaders in Morocco in December 2018.

5. The **I**ndian **I**nstitute of **T**echnology (**IIT**)-Madras has commissioned remotely operable **L**ocal **E**lectrode **A**tom **P**robe (**LEAP**) microscope. It is the world's first remotely operable LEAP microscope. The remotely operable LEAP microscope has been developed in a collaborative exercise involving eight top research institutions in country, spearheaded by IIT-M. Other partner institutions are IITs of Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur and Ropar, International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Materials (ARCI) and Board of Research in Nuclear Sciences (BRNS).

> LEAP is high-performance microscope that can provide a precise atom-by-atom view of materials.
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> Potential applications
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> - Local Electrode Atom Probe (LEAP) allows the user to extract atoms from materials sequentially and are detected using a Time of Flight Mass spectrometer.
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> - This facility will be able to provide atomic-scale insights into metallic materials thereby impacting a wide spectrum of industries ranging from steel to automobiles and energy to transportation sector.

6. Government has decided to set up a committee under the Chairmanship of Shri Anil Swarup to suggest measures to strengthen **N**ational **C**adet **C**orps (**NCC**) and **N**ational **S**ervice **S**cheme (**NSS**). The Committee will deal with on issues like expansion, strengthening training infrastructure, rationalizing resources, reducing manpower deficiency affecting NCC and NSS. The Committee will also submit recommend for building synergies between these two institutions viz. NCC and NSS and further strengthen them for empowering the youth.

> **National Service Scheme (NSS)** is a Centrally Sector Scheme. The Scheme was launched in the year 1969 with the primary objective of developing the personality and character of the student youth through voluntary community service. The ideological orientation of the NSS is inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. The motto of NSS is "NOT ME, BUT YOU".
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> NSS is being implemented in Senior Secondary Schools, Colleges and

Universities. The design of the NSS envisages that each educational institution covered under the Scheme has at least one NSS unit comprising of normally 100 student volunteers, led by a teacher designated as Programme Officer (PO). Each NSS unit adopts a village or slum for taking up its activities.

The **National Cadet Corps (NCC)** is a youth development movement. It came into existence under the National Cadet Corps Act XXXI of 1948. It is a Tri-Services Organization, comprising the Army, Navy and Air Force, engaged in grooming the youth of the country into disciplined and patriotic citizens. It has enormous potential for nation building. The NCC provides opportunities to the youth of the country for their all-round development with a sense of Duty, Commitment, Dedication, Discipline and Moral Values so that they become able leaders and useful citizens. The NCC provides exposure to the cadets in a wide range of activities., with a distinct emphasis on Social Services, Discipline and Adventure Training. The NCC is open to all regular students of schools and colleges on a voluntary basis. The students have no liability for active military service.

7. The UNEP has entered into a partnership with Google to monitor the impacts of human activity on global ecosystems. The aim of the partnership is to develop a platform to enable governments, NGO's and the public to track specific environment-related development targets with a user-friendly Google front-end. initial focus on freshwater ecosystems including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes. These areas account for 0.01% of the world's water but provide habitat for almost 10% of the world's known species and evidence suggests a rapid loss of freshwater biodiversity. Google will periodically produce geospatial maps and data on water-related ecosystems by employing massive parallel Cloud computing technology. Satellite imagery and statistics will be generated to assess the extent of change occurring to waterbodies, and made freely accessible to ensure nations have the opportunity to track changes, prevent and reverse ecosystem loss.

8. The Transport Ministry has proposed to dispense with fitness certificate for new vehicles and make it mandatory to have vehicle tracking system and FASTags for electronic toll collection for all commercial vehicles in its draft amendment to the Commercial Motor Vehicles Act.

9. Cabinet approves Special Remission to Prisoners on the occasion of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Ministry of Home Affairs will issue advice to all States and UTs to constitute a Committee to examine the cases. State Governments will place the recommendations of the Committee before Governor

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for consideration and approval under Article 161 of the Constitution. After the approval, the prisoners will be released.

Article 161 deals with Power of Governor to grant pardons, etc, and to suspend, remit or commute sentences in certain cases. It states, the Governor of a State shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the State extends.

10. Lok Sabha has passed The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Second Amendment) Bill, 2017 to abolish the 'no detention policy' in schools.

- The Bill amends provision related to no detention policy in the parent Act to empower central or state government to allow schools to hold back child in class 5, class 8, or in both classes. It mandates conducting, regular examination in class 5 and class 8 at end of every academic year.

- In case, child fails class 5, class 8 examinations, he will be given additional instruction and opportunity for a re-examination (within two months from the declaration of the result). If child fails again in re-examination, he may be held back in class 5, class 8, or in both classes.

- The Bill empowers Union and State governments to decide whether to not hold back child in any class till completion of elementary education. Further, Union or State governments will decide manner and conditions subject to which child may be held back.

11. The Indian Air Force for the first time is participating with fighter aircraft in Exercise Pitch Black 2018. It is a biennial multi-national large force employment warfare exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). The aim of the exercise is to practice Offensive Counter Air (OCA) and Defensive Counter Air (DCA) combat, in a simulated war environment.

12. Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved renewal of appointment of Prof Anil D Sahasrabudhe as the chairman of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) till he attains the age of 65 years.

AICTE is a statutory body established in November 1945. It comes under the aegis of Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resources Development. It is a national-level council for technical education responsible for planning and coordination of technical education and management of education system in the country. It accredits graduate and post graduate

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programs at Indian institutions.

**13.** Nelson Mandela International Day 2018 marks 100 years since the birth of Nelson Mandela (18 July 1918).

The first Mandela Day was held on Mandela's 91st birthday on July 18, 2009 to promote volunteering and community service, being marked worldwide with community service events, art exhibits, fundraisers and a concert at Radio City Music Hall in New York City. The United Nations soon took interest and supported the idea of a global day honoring Mandela, it declared July 18 as Nelson Mandela International Day.

### Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela was the former President of South Africa as well as an anti-apartheid activist, philanthropist and political leader. Mandela emerged as a key leader in the resistance to racist apartheid laws, being arrested multiple times and later being sentenced to life in prison in 1964 after being trialed for conspiring to overthrow the government. Amid growing pressure both internally and throughout the world, the South African government finally released Mandela after 27 years in 1990. He soon worked alongside President F.W. de Klerk to dismantle the apartheid regime in 1991 and usher in the peaceful 1994 general election in which he was elected as the country's new president. For his efforts promoting social justice, democracy and peace, he was awarded dozens of prestigious accolades, including the Nobel Peace Prize and the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom.

**14.** NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform(WEP) and Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC), Office of International Programmes (OIP) University of Delhi, had jointly organised a Two-Day International conference on "Empowering Women: Fostering Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Sustainability".

Women Entrepreneurship Platform: The initiative is aimed at building an ecosystem for women across India to realize their entrepreneurial aspirations, scale-up innovative initiatives and chalk-out sustainable, long-term strategies for their businesses. This will be done through an enabling network of industry collaborations, partnerships, mentors and peer-to-peer connect.

**15.** Scientists have created a new phase in Earth's geological history and named it **Meghalayan,** after a stalagmite from a cave in the Indian state of Meghalaya that helped define climatic events 4,200 years ago, marking the beginning of the phase that continues till today. International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) has

officially accepted the new phase. Besides, two other ages — the Middle Holocene Northgrippian Age and the Early Holocene Greenlandian Age — with beginnings defined at climatic events that happened about 8,300 years and 11,700 years ago, respectively, were also approved by the International Commission on Stratigraphy, which is responsible for standardising the geologic time scale.

**Meghalayan age:** The Meghalayan Age began with a mega global drought that devastated ancient agricultural civilisations from Egypt to China. It is part of a longer period known as the Holocene Epoch, which reflects everything that has happened over the past 11,700 years. Evidence of the climatic event has been found in sediments on all seven continents, including those from Meghalaya.

The Meghalayan is unique because it is the first interval in Earth's geological history that coincided with a major cultural event, as agricultural societies struggled to recover from the shift in climate. The droughts over a 200-year period resulted in human migrations in Egypt, Greece, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, the Indus valley and the Yangtze river valley.

**International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS):** The IUGS is an international non-governmental organization devoted to international cooperation in the field of geology. It is a Scientific Union member of the International Council for Science (ICSU), which it recognizes as the coordinating body for the international organization of science. IUGS promotes and encourages the study of geological problems, especially those of worldwide significance, and supports and facilitates international and interdisciplinary cooperation in the earth sciences. IUGS is a joint partner with UNESCO for the International Geoscience Programme (IGCP) and they also participate in the Global Network of National Geoparks (GGN).

16. Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has announced 'Padhe Bharat-Badhe Bharat' an initiative to promote reading culture among students. The initiative has been launched under 'Samagra Shiksha'.

'Padhe Bharat- Badhe Bharat': Under this initiative, government will give an annual library grant to schools to allow students widen their ambit of learning. The grant will be given to Primary to Senior Secondary levels and will vary between Rs. 5000 and Rs. 20000.

Samagra Shiksha' is an overarching programme for school education extending from Primary till class 12. The programme was introduced in the Union Budget 2018-19 with the aim to treat school education holistically without segmentation of primary and secondary education. This programme subsumes

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the three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE). It envisages the 'school' as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels.

17. The Lok Sabha has passed the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, which aims to deter fugitive economic offenders from evading the legal process by fleeing the country and remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts.

- The Bill aims to curb the practice of evading the criminal prosecution by the economic offenders who flee from the country to stay out of the jurisdiction of Indian courts.

- The Bill will give the right to the government to confiscate the property of such economic offenders in India and abroad. The Bill will also be applicable on the proxy-owned properties of the economic offenders.

- The Bill defines the economic offenders as those against whom a legal warrant has been issued, but they refuse to adhere to the summons of the legal authorities.

- The law balances itself with a provision that allows the accused to file an appeal in the High Court to state their case.

- The Bill keeps the banks and other financial institutions at the Centre and seeks to help them recover the amount. The Bill will only be used for economic offences over Rs 100 crores.

- The Bill makes provisions for a Court ('Special Court' under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002) to declare a person as a Fugitive Economic Offender.

18. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will soon release a new Rs 100 currency note with a photograph of 'Rani-ki-vav' (The Queen's Stepwell).

'Rani- ki- vav': Located in Gujarat's Patan, the 900-year-old structure is a major tourist attraction, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and was awarded as the cleanest iconic place in India in 2016. It is located on the banks of Saraswati River. It was built by the Solanki dynasty's queen Udayamati in the 11th century as a memorial to her deceased husband Bhimdev I.

Architectural significance: Rani-ki-Vav was built in the complex Maru-Gurjara architectural style. It highlights the sanctity of water as it is designed as an inverted temple under the earth's surface. The central theme is the Dasavataras, or ten incarnations of Vishnu, including Buddha. The avatars are

accompanied by sadhus, brahmins, and apsaras (celestial dancers).

19. Israel's parliament has adopted a law defining the country as the nation state of the Jewish people,

> The law speaks of Israel as the historic homeland of the Jews and says they have a "unique" right to self-determination there.
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> The legislation makes Hebrew the country's national language and defines the establishment of Jewish communities as being in the national interest. Arabic, previously considered an official language, was granted only special status.
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> It also establishes the flag, the national symbol and anthem.
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> The legislation becomes part of the country's basic laws, which serve as a de facto constitution. Israel has no constitution but instead passed over time a series of Basic Laws which have constitutional status. The nation state law is the 14th such basic law.

20. Union Home Minister has launched Student Police Cadet Programme.

> The programme seeks to build a bridge between the Police and the larger community through school students by inculcating values and ethics in them through classes in school and outside. The programme focuses on students of class 8 & 9 and special care has been taken to ensure that it does not lead to increase in the workload of the students.
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> The programme seeks to cover broadly two topics: Crime prevention and control and Values and ethics.
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> The programme shall be steered by a State level committee to be headed by the Principal Secretary, Home Department with the Principal Secretary, Education and Director General of Police as members. There shall be a similar committee at the district level headed by the District Magistrate with the District Inspector of Schools and Superintendent of Police as members

21. 10th edition of the Delhi Dialogue (DD X) was held in New Delhi. This is the first major event to be organized after the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit, that was held in New Delhi in January 2018. Theme: "Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation".

> Delhi DialogueIt is a premier annual track 1.5 event to discuss politico-security, economic and socio-cultural engagement between India and ASEAN. It has been held annually since 2009 and political leaders, policy makers, senior officials, diplomats, think tanks and academicians from both sides participate in the

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discussions pertaining to ASEAN-India relations.

22. Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan have topped the list of states with maximum solar power generation capacity approved under solar parks in India.

A solar park is a zone for the development of solar power generation projects. It provides developers an area with proper infrastructure and access to amenities for such a project.

Ministry of New and renewable Energy (MNRE) has drawn a scheme to set up number of solar parks across various states in the country, each with a capacity of Solar Projects generally above 500 MW. The Scheme proposes to provide financial support by Government of India to establish solar parks with an aim to facilitate creation of infrastructure necessary for setting up new solar power projects in terms of allocation of land, transmission and evacuation lines, access roads, availability of water and others, in a focused manner. As per the policy, these solar parks will be developed in collaboration with the State Governments. The implementation agency would be Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) on behalf of Government of India (GOI). The states shall designate a nodal agency for implementation of the solar park.

23. Public Affairs Index (PAI) 2018 has been released by the think tank Public Affairs Centre (PAC).

The index has been released regularly since 2016 by Bengaluru based Public Affairs Centre (PAC), a not for profit think tank which aims to improve governance in India. It is based on 10 themes, 30 focus subjects and 100 indicators, relying solely upon government data. It covers wide range of themes such as support to human development, social protection, essential infrastructure, women and children, crime, law and order, delivery of justice, transparency and accountability, environment, fiscal management and economic freedom.

Kerala tops the list as best-governed state in the country. Kerala has topped PAI as the best-governed state for the third consecutive year. Kerala is followed by Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka and Gujarat.

Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar ranked the lowest, indicating higher social and economic inequalities in the states.

2018 PAI also included separate index on children of India, giving measure of how child-friendly each of the states are. Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram topped the index.

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24. **'Rent-a-lab' policy:** The government has proposed a new policy that could transform scientific instruments in government labs into lucrative assets generating a steady rental income. The policy is called the Scientific Research Infrastructure Management and Networks (SRIMAN).

25. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has launched the 'Remote Sensing Toolkit' to promote commercial use of satellite data. It is an online toolkit launched with an aim to make it easier for users to find, analyse and utilise the relevant satellite data for their research, business projects or conservation efforts. The toolkit provides a simple system that quickly identifies relevant sources based on user input.

26. Ministry of Earth Sciences has unveiled state-of-the-art Air Quality and Weather Forecast System– SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting) at Chandni Chowk in Delhi. It is first of its kind and most advanced system in India.

> SAFAR was developed indigenously by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune and operationalized by India Meteorological Department (IMD). It has been introduced for greater metropolitan cities of India to provide location-specific information on air quality in near real time and its forecast 1-3 days in advance for the first time in India.
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> It is integral part of India's first Air Quality Early Warning System operational in Delhi. It will monitor all weather parameters like temperature, rainfall, humidity, wind speed and wind direction. Pollutants monitored: PM1, PM2.5, PM10, Ozone, CO, NOx (NO, NO2), SO2, BC, Methane (CH4), Non-methane hydrocarbons (NMHC), VOC's, Benzene, Mercury. Monitored Meteorological Parameters: UV Radiation, Rainfall, Temperature, Humidity, Wind speed, Wind direction, solar radiation.

27. The Union Government has reduced minimum yearly deposit required under popular girl child savings scheme, Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana to Rs 250 from Rs 1,000

> Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY) is a small deposit scheme for the girl child launched as a part of the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign.
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> It is currently 8.1 per cent and provides income-tax benefit under section 80 C of the Income Tax Act,1961. Even the returns are tax free in the scheme. A Sukanya Samriddhi Account can be opened any time after the birth of a girl till she turns 10, with a minimum deposit of Rs 250 (Earlier it was Rs 1,000). In subsequent years, a minimum of Rs 250 and a maximum of Rs 1.5 lakh can be deposited during the ongoing financial year. The account can be opened in any

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post office or authorised branches of commercial banks. The account will remain operative for 21 years from the date of its opening or till the marriage of the girl after she turns 18. To meet the requirement of her higher education expenses, partial withdrawal of 50% of the balance is allowed after she turns 18.

**28.** Lok Sabha has passed Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Bill, 2017 to reduce the number of cheque dishonour cases pending in courts. The bill amends Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 to primarily address issues of dishonor of cheques and deal with unnecessary delay in disposal of such cases. The Act defines promissory notes, bills of exchange, and cheques. It also specifies penalties for bouncing of cheques, and other violations with respect to such negotiable instruments.

**29.** First meeting of India-Bangladesh Joint Committee on Border Haats was recently held in Agartala, Tripura. In the meeting both sides noted the positive impact of Border Haats on the livelihoods of the people living in areas adjoining the Haats. Extensive discussions were held on issues related to review of operations of the four functional Border Haats.

> **Border Haats**
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> They are market places organised by the two countries one day each week. It is not only a market for buying daily commodities but also a reunion spot for families living on both sides. The border haats aim at promoting the wellbeing of the people dwelling in remote areas across the borders of two countries, by establishing traditional system of marketing the local produce through local markets.
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> In addition to the four functional border haats, the government of India and the government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh have approved six more border haats: two in Tripura at Palbasti and Kamalpur and four in Meghalaya at Bholaganj, Nalikata, Shibbari and Ryngku.

**30.** Odisha Government has unveiled first-ever 'Tribal Atlas of Odisha', a compilation of demographic and cultural information of the tribal population in the state. This book will help provide comprehensive data on tribal population. It is claimed to be first-of-its-kind tribal compilation in the country. The book was published by SC and ST Research and Training Institute in collaboration with Academy of Tribal Language and Culture (ATLC).