

# Brain Tree

## Current Events



### 16<sup>th</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> January - 2019

1. The government is set to present its last Budget on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019.

Conventionally, a government at the end of its term has gone in for a **vote on account** rather than a full Budget. A vote on account, also known as **interim Budget**, essentially means that the government seeks the approval of Parliament for meeting expenditure for the first four months of the fiscal year (April-March) — paying salaries, ongoing programmes in various sectors etc — with no changes in the taxation structure, until a new government takes over and presents a full Budget that is revised for the full fiscal. The reasoning is that there is little time to get approvals from Parliament for various grants to ministries and departments, and to debate these as well as any provisions for changes in taxation. Further, **Article 266** of the Constitution of India mandates that Parliamentary approval is required to draw money from the Consolidated Fund of India. **Article 114 (3)** of the Constitution stipulates that no amount can be withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund without the enactment of a law.

2. A crocodile species, **Crocodylus palustris**, is being removed from the **Narmada**

The mugger crocodile, also called marsh crocodile or broad-snouted crocodile, is a species (*Crocodylus palustris*) native to freshwater habitats from southern Iran and Pakistan to the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka. It has come to the centre of renewed attention in Gujarat, where the Forest Department has started evacuating muggers from two ponds on the Sardar Sarovar Dam premises on the Narmada, to facilitate a seaplane service at the Statue of Unity.

Already extinct in Bhutan and Myanmar, the mugger has been listed as **vulnerable** on the **IUCN Red List** since 1982. In India, it is protected under **Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**. Among the six schedules in the Act, Schedule I and part II of Schedule II provide the highest degrees of protection to listed species, with the most stringent penalties for offenders.

Vadodara, 90 km from the Narmada dam, is the only city in the country where crocodiles live in their natural habitat amidst human population. Crocodiles from the Vishwamitri river, where they number around 300, often enter people's homes, are captured. Most of these crocodiles are thereafter released in the Narmada dam waters, away from human habitats.

Crocodiles are valued for their skin and flesh. In some cases, they are also worshipped, including in the Narmada. In idols of the Narmada Goddess, a crocodile is her vehicle; there is an idol on the premises of the Narmada Dam. Goddess Khodiyar Maa, who is worshipped by a section of Gujaratis, is also seen riding a crocodile as a symbol of her supremacy over land and water.

3. **Caesium-137**, a radioactive isotope that was lost and found in Andhra Pradesh.

Caesium-137 (atomic mass 137) is a heavier, radioactive isotope of Caesium (Cs) whose most stable form is Cs-133. Silvery white, soft, and malleable, Cs-137 is one of the very few metals that exist in liquid form at room temperature.

Cs-137 is most commonly produced as a byproduct in fission reactions of uranium and plutonium in nuclear plants or nuclear explosions. It is, thus, part of the spent fuel. One of the biggest contaminations of Cs-137 happened during the Chernobyl accident of

1986, when about 27 kg of the metal entered the atmosphere. Cs-137 has a half-life of about 30 years.

It decays through the emission of beta particles (a high-energy electron or positron, or positive electron) and gamma rays (a form of electromagnetic radiation like X-rays). Any danger from Cs-137 emanates from these natural emissions of beta particles and gamma rays.

Cs-137 is used in a variety of measuring instruments in the construction and other industry such as in well-logging devices in the drilling industry for the characterisation of rocks.

4. The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** has released a list of **Ten threats to global health in 2019**

The report states that **Air Pollution** is the gravest risk, with nine out of 10 people breathing polluted air across the world. India, with 18% of the world's population, sees a disproportionately high 26% of the global premature deaths and disease burden due to air pollution.

**Non Communicable disease** such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease cause over 70% of deaths worldwide — including 15 million premature deaths of people ages 30-69. Initial data from the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) health coverage programme has confirmed this trend — until December 8, 22% of claims had been sanctioned for angioplasty, and 9% for coronary artery bypass graft. India's current estimated cancer burden — over 1.5 million new cases — is predicted to nearly double in 20 years with age-adjusted mortality rates of 64.5 per 1,00,000 people.

WHO estimates 40% of the world is at risk of **dengue**, with around 390 million infections annually.

According to the WHO, the epidemic of **HIV/AIDS** continues to rage with nearly a million people dying every year. India is a stakeholder in the WHO's 90-90-90 target for HIV elimination. (By 2020, 90% of people living with HIV will know their status, 90% of people diagnosed with HIV will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy, and 90% of people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression.)

**Antimicrobial resistance** has also been placed in the list. The report notes that India, China, and the Russian Federation accounted for 47% of the global incidence of MDR/RR (rifampicin resistant) TB in 2016. India now has an AMR policy but implementation is poor.

The report states that the **reluctance or refusal to vaccinate** despite the availability of vaccines threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccine-preventable diseases. It is estimated that vaccination currently prevents 2-3 million deaths a year, and a further 1.5 million could be avoided if global coverage of vaccinations improved.

Further, the report states that the world will face another **influenza pandemic**. However, it also noted that it is hard to predict when it will be triggered again and how severe it will be. It went on to note that combination of challenges such as drought, famine, conflict, and population displacement — which it terms as **Fragile Settings** — is likely to cause massive distress. Moreover, the problem is likely to be exacerbated due to **inadequate Primary Healthcare facilities**, especially in emerging countries like India.

While India has been spared **Ebola** so far, the WHO prioritises research & development for several **haemorrhagic fevers, Zika, Nipah, and SARS**.

5. The **Corruption Perceptions Index 2018** was released by **Transparency International**.

The index ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople, on a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. More than two-thirds of countries score below 50 on this year's CPI, with an average score of just 43.

Denmark is the least corrupt country followed by New Zealand; while Somalia, Syria and South Sudan are the most corrupt countries in the world.

**India** improved its ranking on the 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) by three points and moved to **78th position** with a **score of 41**. India ranked at 81st place on the Corruption Perceptions Index 2017.

6. The Ministry of Women and Child Development celebrated **National Girl Child Day** 2019 on January 24, 2019 with the Theme “**Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow**”.

On the same occasion the Ministry observed the anniversary of the Beti Bachao Beti Padoo Scheme. The theme focused on the objective of **generating awareness on the issue of declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and creating a positive environment around valuing the girl child**.

The Ministry compiled 38 Innovative Activities from Districts to set an example for other Districts and was released in the form of a booklet titled ‘**Innovations under BBBP**’. These activities were categorised on 5 themes - Survival, Protection, Education, Participation and Valuing Girls.

The **Beti Bachao Beti Padoo Scheme** was launched in January 2015 ' to prevent gender biased sex selective elimination, ensure survival and protection of the girl child. The scheme was launched by the government in the backdrop of declining the Child Sex Ratio (CSR). As per the 2011 census, the CSR reduced from 927 in 2001 to 918 in 2011.

At the Central level, the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development is the nodal ministry for the programme and the National Task Force headed by Secretary of MWCD monitor the scheme. At the State level, Chief Secretaries head the State Task Force (STF) with representation of Department of Women and Child Development, Health and Education to monitor the implementation of the scheme. The District Collectors and Deputy Commissioners (DCs) lead and coordinate action of all departments for implementation of BBBP at the District level.

7. The Supreme Court ruled that it would take an ‘in-chamber’ decision on listing of a petition challenging the constitutional validity of **Article 35-A**.

The Article 35-A was added to the Indian Constitution (**Appendix II**) through a Presidential Order - The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954. **It provides special rights and privileges to permanent residents of Jammu and Kashmir**.

Article 35A appears in the Constitution as an “appendix” and not as an amendment, as per the procedure prescribed in the Article 368 of the Indian Constitution. A case was filed in the Supreme Court 2014 seeking the removal of Article 35A.

Attorney General had told the Supreme Court that Union government was not keen on filing an affidavit in the Article 35A case, instead the government wants a 'larger debate'.

8. The annual meet of **World Economic Forum (WEF)** began on January 22, 2019 in Davos, Switzerland with the theme '**Globalisation 4.0: Shaping a Global Architecture in the Age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution**'.

The World Economic Forum is an international organisation for public-private cooperation. Established in 1971 as a not-for-profit foundation, the WEF is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The Forum engages the foremost political, business and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas. It is guided by a Board of Trustees, which oversees the Forum’s work in promoting true global citizenship.

9. Union Home Minister approves report on use of **space technology in border management**

The key aim is to strengthen island and border security and facilitate the development of infrastructure in border and island areas. The task force consulted all stakeholders including Border Guarding Forces (BGFs), ISRO, National Security Council Secretariat

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(NSCS) and Ministry of Defence (MoD) to finalise the report. The report has identified the following areas for the use of space technology: **Island development; Border Security; Communication and Navigation; GIS and Operations Planning System; Border Infrastructure Development.**

In short term, the report proposes to meet the immediate needs of BGFs through procurement of high-resolution imagery and the hiring of bandwidth for communications. In the medium term, one satellite will be launched by ISRO for the exclusive use of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Over the long term, the Home Ministry will develop ground segment and network infrastructure to share satellite resources by user agencies, develop a Central Archival Facility for storing various imagery resources and dissemination of the same to user agencies.

The deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) in remote areas will be also coordinated by satellite communications. Besides, the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) -based GPS will provide navigation facilities for operational parties in high altitude, remote and difficult borders and naxal areas.

10. The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the **2019 Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms**, replacing the existing CRZ norms of 2011.

The new CRZ norms, issued under Section 3 of the **Environment Protection Act, 1986**, aim to promote sustainable development based on scientific principles taking into account the natural hazards such as increasing sea levels due to global warming.

The norms also seek to conserve and protect the environment of coastal stretches and marine areas, besides livelihood security to the fisher communities and other local communities in the coastal area.

11. India celebrated its **9th National Voters Day** with the theme “**no voter to be left behind**”. The theme was selected keeping in mind the upcoming Lok Sabha elections this year.

It is celebrated every year on January 25, the day the Election Commission of India was founded, to promote people’s participation in elections by encouraging and felicitating young voters and to increase voter enrollment. It is organized to spread awareness among voters for promoting informed participation in the electoral process.

12. The central banks of the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** and Saudi Arabia have launched a common (**digital currency called ‘Aber’**),

“Aber,” the project, which was first announced in December 2017, is aimed at using blockchain technology to create a cryptocurrency that would help facilitate cross-border payments between Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

SAMA and the UAE Central Bank said that they will be launching a pilot project to study the practical application of the cryptocurrency and determine its impact on the reduction of remittance costs. The pilot will also allow them to consider using the cryptocurrency as an additional reserve system for the domestic central payments settlement system in case of their disruption for any reason.

13. **Womaniya on GeM** has been launched by the **Government eMarketplace (GeM)** to enable women entrepreneurs and self-help groups to sell different products at the platform.

Government e Marketplace is a 100% government owned company, under the aegis of Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry for procurement of common use goods and services by Government ministries, departments and CPSEs. It aims to enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement of goods and services and eliminate corruption.

14. The **United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** has named the Brazilian city of **Rio de Janeiro** as the **World Capital of Architecture for 2020**.

Rio will be the first city to receive the title under a programme launched together by UNESCO and the **International Union of Architects** in November 2018. The city beat Paris and Melbourne to get the position.

With the recognition as the World Capital of Architecture, the city will hold a series of events under the **theme “All the worlds. Just one world,”** and promote the internationally agreed 2030 Agenda for **Sustainable Development’s 11th Goal:** “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.” The city would also be hosting the 27th edition of the International Union of Architects’ World Congress in July 2020. The World Congress takes place every three years.

UNESCO, the UIA and local institutions would be organising activities to promote projects involving architects and urban planners as well as policymakers, social institutions and professionals from other sectors including artists and writers in an open and creative space of dialogue and innovation.

**15. The Government constituted a Standing Committee headed by NITI Aayog to oversee the drug pricing regime.**

The Standing Committee on Affordable Medicines and Health Products will be headed by NITI Aayog Member (Health). The members of the Committee will be Chief Economic Adviser, Secretary of Department of health research, Director General of Health Services, Vice-Chairperson of National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) and Joint Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion.

The **National Pharmaceuticals Pricing Authority (NPPA)** was established as an autonomous regulator in 1997 to oversee and set the prices of drugs and products on the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM), which is prepared by the Health Ministry, and set price caps.

The constitution of the Committee is seen as a move that would curb the powers of the National Pharmaceuticals Pricing Authority (NPPA) when it comes to regulating the prices of medicines in the country.

**16. The Global Risks Report 2019 has been released by the World Economic Forum (WEF).**

Based on the work of the **Global Risk Network**, the report describes changes occurring in the global risks landscape from year to year and identifies global catastrophic risks. It is intended to raise awareness about the need for a multi-stakeholder approach to the mitigation of global risk.

The report ranks the top 10 risks by likelihood

1. Extreme weather events.
2. Failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation.
3. Major natural disasters.
4. Massive incident of data fraud/theft.
5. Large scale cyberattacks.
6. Man-made environmental damage and disasters.
7. Large-scale involuntary migration.
8. Major Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse.
9. Water crises.
10. Asset bubbles in a major economy.

The report notes that for the third year in a row Environmental risks dominate the global risks landscape in terms of impact and likelihood. Further it notes that Geopolitics and geo-economic factors, such as uncertainty and nationalism are fueling risks. For top business leaders, cyber risk concern is rising globally and is the highest ranked threat.

The report warns that the global risks are intensifying, however our capacity to respond to them is declining.

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17. Tripura has launched the **Sustainable Catchment Forest Management (SCATFORM) project** with the assistance of JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency).

The SCATFORM project will address issues such as forest cover loss and forest degradation have been mainly caused by shifting cultivation, which increases soil erosion risks on hill slopes especially in upper catchment areas. The project aims to the improve quality of forest in the catchment area by sustainable forest management, soil and moisture conservation and livelihood development.

It would be implemented mainly in upper catchments where forest degradation and soil erosion are severe and livelihood improvement needs are high.

The activities undertaken under the project involves promotion of bamboo plantation, agroforestry based livelihood, eco-tourism development, development of value addition for bamboo and other **Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP)** in order to create alternate livelihood opportunities for local communities.

80 per cent of the cost will be contributed by JICA and the rest would be funded by the state and central governments.

18. Indian Space Research Organization (**ISRO**) has announced **Young Scientist Programme**.

The programme aims to inculcate and nurture space research fervour in young minds.

It would be a one month programme. The students will be exposed to the practical experience of building small satellites. Students who have cleared 8th standard passed will be given lectures and access to research laboratories. 3 students from each of the 29 States and 7 Union Territories will be selected for the Young Scientist program.

19. India's second defence industrial corridor has been inaugurated.

The corridor is the second defence corridor being set up by the government to support various defence manufacturing units. The first one is being established in Uttar Pradesh.

The corridor is also referred to as the **Tamil Nadu Defence Production Quad** as the nodal cities form a quadrilateral with one of them at the centre.

The key aim behind setting up defence industrial corridors is to ensure connectivity among various defence industrial units. The development of the defence corridor will help facilitate a well-planned and efficient industrial base that will lead to an increased defence production in the country.

20. **Flamingo Festival** was recently held at **Pulicat lake**

Flamingo Festival is held every year to promote tourism in Pulicat and Nellapattu. It is being organised for the past 12 years.

The **Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary** is considered one of the biggest habitat for pelicans and other birds. It is located about 20 km north of the Pulicat Lake on the Andhra Pradesh-Tamil Nadu border, the sanctuary is spread in about 459 hectares.

The **Pulicat lake** is the **second largest brackish water lake or lagoon in India, after Chilika Lake**. It straddles the border of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu states with over 96% of it in Andhra Pradesh. The lake encompasses the Pulicat Lake Bird Sanctuary. The barrier island of Sriharikota separates the lake from the Bay of Bengal and is home to the Satish Dhawan Space Centre. Two rivers which feed the lagoon are the Arani river at the southern tip and the Kalangi River from the northwest, in addition to some smaller streams. The Buckingham Canal, a navigation channel, is part of the lagoon on its western side.

21. To celebrate the 150th anniversary of the organization of the periodic table, UNESCO has launched the **International Year of The Periodic Table**.

Periodic table of the elements, in chemistry, the organized array of all the chemical elements in order of increasing atomic number—i.e., the total number of protons in the atomic nucleus. When the chemical elements are thus arranged, there is a recurring

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pattern called the “**periodic law**” in their properties, in which elements in the same column (group) have similar properties. (See Figure 1.) The initial discovery, which was made by Dmitry I. **Mendeleev** in **1869**, has been of inestimable value in the development of chemistry.

The known elements can be laid out into rows and columns, with those lining up in the same column sharing characteristics, like a chemical family.

Mendeleev had only 61 known elements at the time to sort, but by the early years of the 20th century chemists had identified 85 of these fundamental building blocks of the universe, all falling neatly into place in the framework.

Since the mid-1930s chemists have learned to control nuclear reactions to generate their own elements (in effect, achieving transmutation and the dreams of the alchemists). So far, 24 elements have been artificially crafted; extending the bottom row of the periodic table with new creations. These elements do not exist naturally on Earth – their atomic nuclei are so swollen and unstable that they rapidly undergo radioactive decay or nuclear fission to break down again to other elements. The last, element 118, was only formally named in November 2016: **ognesson**.

**International Union of Pure Applied Chemistry (IUPAC)** is responsible for maintaining the periodic table. IUPAC is an international federation of National Adhering Organizations that represents chemists in individual countries. It is a member of the **International Council for Science**. Established in 1919 as the successor of the International Congress of Applied Chemistry for the advancement of chemistry. Headquarters of IUPAC is in Zürich, Switzerland.

**22. “The Future of Rail” Report has been released by the International Energy Agency (IEA).**

The report examines how the role of rail in global transport might be elevated as a means to reduce the energy use and environmental impacts associated with transport.

The report states that Rail is among the most energy efficient modes of transport for freight and passengers – **while the rail sector carries 8% of the world’s passengers and 7% of global freight transport, it represents only 2% of total transport energy demand.**

The report goes on to note that today, three-quarters of passenger rail transport activity takes place on electric trains, which is an increase from 60% in 2000 – the rail sector is the only mode of transport that is widely electrified today. This reliance on electricity means that the rail sector is the most energy diverse mode of transport.

Further, it notes that the regions with the highest share of electric train activity are Europe, Japan and Russia, while North and South America still rely heavily on diesel.

The report notes that most conventional rail networks today are located in North America, Europe, China, Russia, India, and Japan. These regions make up about 90% of global passenger movements on conventional rail with India leading at 39%, followed by China at 27%.

The report notes that the India’s railway system has played a fundamental role in the country’s development, transporting people and goods throughout its vast territory, integrating markets and connecting communities. Rail passenger traffic in India has increased by almost 200% since 2000 and freight traffic by 150%, yet latent demand for mobility in India remains huge. In fact, rail activity in India is set to grow more than any other country. Today, the conventional rail system in India comprises a total route length of almost 68000 km. Metro systems exist in 10 Indian cities. A further 600 km of metro lines are planned for the next few years. However, India does not have any high-speed rail though in 2015 India and Japan signed an agreement to develop a high-speed rail line connecting the cities of Ahmedabad and Mumbai, to come into operation in 2023.

Seven other high-speed lines are currently under consideration. Once completed, they would connect the four cities that constitute the Golden Quadrilateral (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai) plus other intermediate cities.

**International Energy Agency (IEA)** was established in 1974 as per framework of the OECD with its headquarters in Paris, France. The IEA works to ensure reliable, affordable and clean energy for its 30 member countries and beyond. It is guided by four main areas of focus: **energy security, economic development, environmental awareness and engagement worldwide** IEA mandate focusses on the “3Es” of effectual energy policy i.e. - **Energy security; Economic development; Environmental protection.**

A candidate country must be a member country of the OECD. But all OECD members are not IEA members (Ex:Chile, Iceland, Israel, Latvia and Slovenia). To become member a candidate country must demonstrate that it has - crude oil and/or product reserves equivalent to 90 days of the previous year’s net imports, to which the government has immediate access (even if it does not own them directly) and could be used to address disruptions to global oil supply; a demand restraint programme to reduce national oil consumption by up to 10%; legislation and organisation to operate the **Co-ordinated Emergency Response Measures (CERM)** on a national basis; legislation and measures to ensure that all oil companies under its jurisdiction report information upon request; measures in place to ensure the capability of contributing its share of an IEA collective action.

Some of the other reports by the IEA include - Global Energy & CO2 Status Report; World Energy Outlook; World Energy Statistics Report; World Energy Balances; Energy Technology Perspectives.

**23. Punit Goenka is the new chairman of Broadcast Audience Research Council of India (BARC):**

BARC is a collaborative Industry Company founded in 2010 by stakeholder bodies that represent Broadcasters, Advertisers, and Advertising and Media Agencies.

BARC India was set up as per guidelines of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India. Promoters of BARC India are Indian Broadcasting Foundation, Indian Society of Advertisers and Advertising Agencies Association of India.

BARC India has evolved a transparent, accurate, and inclusive TV audience measurement system on the foundation of robust and future-ready technology backbone. Together with the audience measurement system, BARC India provides a suite of Insight products designed for Broadcasters, Advertisers and Agencies. The data generated and the insights provided by BARC India aids in making efficient decision making by the stakeholders.

**24. Minimum basic income and Universal Basic Income**

The reforms since 1991 have largely bypassed agriculture and other segments of the economy that engage poor and rural Indians. While incomplete economic liberalization and technological advances have led to growth in national income, all individuals have not gained equally. The disproportionate share of gains from the reforms have gone to middle-class and rich Indians. This unevenness in development calls for a superior economic growth model. Until that happens, redistributive policy interventions such as income transfers can improve equity. Income transfers are not to be confused with doles or unemployment benefits. They are unconditional income supplements to compensate for policy failures and ease the economic anxieties of the less advantaged. Besides equity, there’s also an urgent need to address rural distress, which is largely a consequence of policy failures such as ineffective procurement and perverse trade and pricing policies that have in times of bumper harvests led to gluts, depressed market prices, and aggravated farmer losses.

Some States, Telangana and Odisha, are already experimenting in a limited way with income support schemes, focused on the farm sector, through the Rythu Bandu Scheme and KALIA Scheme.

The advantage of a minimum income guarantee is that it will also cover the urban poor, who are not covered in these schemes. While job guarantee programmes, such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, lock up beneficiaries in low-productivity work, income supplements allow them to continue to look for better employment options.

The most popular version of minimum income is one where every single citizen of a country -- regardless of her social, educational or economic standing -- gets a guaranteed monthly income. As an economic and social scheme, minimum income aims to reduce poverty, and improve working conditions of the economically weaker sections of the society. In 2016-17, the Economic Survey of India studied the idea and presented a model for **Universal Basic Income**. The basic premise of the Economic Survey's UBI was: "A just society needs to guarantee to each individual a minimum income which they can count on, and which provides the necessary material foundation for a life with access to basic goods and a life of dignity". The Economic Survey of India's model of UBI suggested providing Rs 7,620 per annum to **75 per cent of India's population**. The income was based on Tendulkar's poverty line of 2011-12 inflation-indexed to 2016-17. However, this is an expensive task.

The second such version is the **Minimum Basic Income** which targets only the poor. It will cover **22 per cent** of the population (as fixed by Tendulkar Committee) **or 29.5 per cent** (fixed by Rangarajan Committee). A minimum income guarantee programme would put less fiscal pressures, as it is a bottom-up scheme, designed to select and target an even smaller population—the most deserving of the beneficiaries from India's economically downtrodden, with poverty alleviation the primary objective. A minimum guaranteed income on par with the numbers suggested by the Economic Survey could lead to the targeted household incomes increasing by almost Rs 40,000 per annum, since the average Indian household size is approximately five.

These create a scenario where some of the clearly profligate and inefficient of the existing subsidies and welfare schemes could be rolled back, as this programme would offset the intended results of the schemes it could replace.

However, for the desired outcome of poverty eradication, it is imperative that the funds are effectively transferred to the well-defined target population, ensuring that those who are currently excluded from the existing public distribution and banking systems are fully included. This would require almost 100 per cent penetration of the unique identification, and last mile banking services.

25. Eight organizations of the **Chakma community** have submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Home Affairs seeking the **inclusion of Chin refugees** in India by further amending the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016.

The Chins are one of the major ethnic groups in Myanmar, and are mostly Christians.

The number of Chin refugees in India is at least 1.2 lakh. There are an estimated 100,000 Chins in Mizoram, which is 20% of the total Chin population in Myanmar. Manipur too has an unspecified number of Chins, who are ethnically related to the majority Mizos of Mizoram and the Kuki-Zomi groups in Manipur.

26. India's to participate in **Programme for International Student Assessment- PISA 2021**.

The agreement was signed between the **Union Human Resources Development Ministry** and **Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**.

PISA is an international assessment that measures 15-year-old students' reading, mathematics, and science literacy every three years. PISA also includes measures of general or cross-curricular competencies, such as collaborative problem solving.

India had taken part in PISA in 2009 and bagged the 72nd rank among 74 participating countries. Then the government had boycotted PISA, blaming “out of context” questions for India’s dismal performance.

Later, the HRD Ministry revisited this decision in 2016 and the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) had set up a committee to review the matter and submitted its report in December 2016. The report recommended for participation in test in 2018.

27. A report titled “**A New Circular Vision for Electronics – Time for a Global Reboot**” was released by the UN at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Seven UN entities have come together to launch the report. The joint report calls for a **new vision for e-waste based on the “circular economy” concept**, whereby a regenerative system can minimize waste and energy leakage.

The report calls for systematic collaboration with major brands, small and medium-sized enterprises, academia, trade unions, civil society and associations in a deliberative process to reorient the system and reduce the waste of resources each year with a value greater than the GDP of most countries. It aims to capture the global value of materials in e-waste and create global circular value chains, use new technology to create service business models, better product tracking and manufacturer or retailer take-back programmes.

The report notes that material efficiency, recycling infrastructure and scaling up the volume and quality of recycled materials to meet the needs of electronics supply chains will all be essential for future production.

Further, the report states that if the electronics sector is supported with the right policy mix and managed in the right way, it could lead to the creation of millions of decent jobs worldwide.

28. The Union Cabinet has approved a constitutional amendment to increase the financial and executive powers of the 10 autonomous councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of the northeast.

As per the **Sixth Schedule**, the four states viz. **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram** contain the **Tribal Areas** which are technically different from the Scheduled Areas. Though these areas fall within the executive authority of the state, provision has been made for the creation of the District Councils and regional councils for the exercise of the certain legislative and judicial powers. Each district is an autonomous district and Governor can modify / divide the boundaries of the said Tribal areas by notification.

The Finance Commission would be mandated to recommend devolution of financial resources to the councils. Till now, the autonomous councils have depended on grants from Central Ministries and the State governments for specific projects.

As per the proposed amendment, at least one third of the seats would be reserved for women in the village and municipal councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura.

The amendment also provides for transfer of additional 30 subjects, including the departments of Public Works, Forests, Public Health Engineering, Health and Family Welfare, Urban Development and Food and Civil Supply to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Territorial Council and Dima Hasao Autonomous Territorial Council in Assam.

The proposed amendments provide for elected village municipal councils, ensuring democracy at the grass-roots level.

The State Election Commissions would hold elections to the autonomous councils, village and municipal councils in the areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura.

**29. Polar vortex** creates record subzero temperatures in the USA and Canada

The polar vortex is an area of low pressure surrounding both of the Earth's poles that keep the cold air trapped inside. Disturbances in the jet-stream and the intrusion of warmer air can disturb this polar vortex sending Arctic air south into middle latitudes.

There's some evidence that the jet stream, a meandering air current that flows over North America and Europe, is slowing and becoming wavier as the planet warms. The jet stream interacts with the polar vortex, helping bring numbing temperatures further south. Scientists also point to a complex sequence of events involving sea ice, which is rapidly diminishing in the Arctic. As the ice retreats, summertime heat is absorbed by the dark ocean that lies underneath. This heat is released into the atmosphere during winter, spurring winds that can disrupt the polar vortex.

**30. Earth's Magnetic North Pole rapidly moves** towards Siberia

Magnetic north is one of three "north poles" on our globe. First, is the true north, which is the northern end of the axis on which our planet turns. But our planet's protective magnetic bubble, or magnetosphere, isn't perfectly aligned with this spin. Instead, the dynamo of Earth's core creates a magnetic field that is slightly tilted from the planet's rotational axis. The northern end of this planet-size bar magnet is what's known as geomagnetic north—a point sitting off the northwest coast of Greenland that's changed position little over the last century.

Finally, there's magnetic north, what a compass locates, which is defined as the point at which magnetic field lines point vertically down. Unlike geomagnetic north, this position is more susceptible to the surges and flows in the swirl of liquid iron in the core.

The **World Magnetic Model** keeps track of the movement of the Magnetic Poles. The model is updated every five years, with the last update in 2015. Between each update, scientists check the model's accuracy against data from ground magnetic observatories and the **European Space Agency's Swarm mission**—a trio of magnetic-field mapping satellites that zip around Earth 15 to 16 times each day. Until now, this seemed sufficient to keep up with magnetic north's march toward Siberia. However, in recent times the magnetic pole seem to be moving at a much faster rate, moving at almost 50km every year.

The changes may cause major problems for aviation, navigation and migratory wildlife, such as birds, turtles and other sea creatures that use Earth's magnetic field to navigate over great distances.

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