

Brain Tree

Current Events



16 November, 2018 – 30 November, 2018

1. Sentinelese tribe, ancient tribe that has resisted contact with the outside world.

The Sentinelese tribe are a **pre-Neolithic tribe**, who live in isolation in the North Sentinel Island of Andaman and Nicobar and are one of the last tribes that remain disconnected with the outside world. While little remains known about the primitive tribe, it is believed that they have inhabited the island for nearly 60,000 years. The population of the tribe could range anywhere between 40 and 500.

The Sentinelese have remained hostile from the time efforts began to reach out to them in 1967. The government gave up in the mid-1990s, and in order to safeguard their health and sovereignty, decided that no one could enter a 5-km buffer zone around their island, which was already out of bounds.

Due to their isolation, it is unlikely the Sentinelese have immunity against even common diseases. A large chunk of the population of the 10 Great Andamanese tribes was wiped out after the indigenous peoples caught syphilis, measles, and influenza on an epidemic scale following contact with the early settlers.

The Sentinelese and other aboriginal tribes of the archipelago are protected under the **Andaman and Nicobar (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956**. Under the **Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963**, the Andaman & Nicobar Islands are a "Restricted Area" in which foreigners with a restricted area permit (RAP) can stay on 13 islands, and make day visits to another 11.

2. NASA's InSight Lands on Mars

InSight, (short for **I**nterior Exploration using **S**eismic **I**nvestigations, **G**eodesy and **H**eat **T**ransport) is the first outer space robotic explorer to study in-depth the "inner space" of Mars i.e. its crust, mantle, and core. Studying Mars' interior structure may answer key questions about the early formation of rocky planets in our inner solar system - Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars - more than 4 billion years ago, as well as rocky exoplanets. InSight also measures tectonic activity and meteorite impacts on Mars today.

The InSight Mars lander has two science objectives

- i. **Formation & Evolution:** Understand the formation and evolution of terrestrial planets through investigation of the interior structure and processes of Mars.
- ii. **Tectonic Activity:** Determine the present level of tectonic activity and meteorite impact rate on Mars.

3. The government empowers heads of public sector banks to directly request the authorities for issuance of look-out circular against willful defaulters and prevent them from fleeing from the country.

The recommendations were a part of the committee headed by financial services secretary Rajiv Kumar. The committee had representation from the RBI, the ministries of home and external affairs, the ED and the CBI.

According to Reserve Bank of India guidelines a willful default is deemed to have occurred if the borrower has defaulted in meeting its payment / repayment obligations to the lender even when it has the capacity to honour the said obligations. Also if the borrower has utilised the finance from the lender for the specific purposes for which finance was availed of but has diverted the funds for other purposes is considered to be willful default.

4. The Cabinet recently approved the sale of 'enemy shares'

As per the **Enemy Property Act, 1968**, 'enemy property' refers to any property that was belonging to a person who migrated from India to an enemy country when a war broke out.

After the war with China and Pakistan in 1962 and 1965, the government took over the properties, under the **Defence of India Act**, from persons who migrated to these countries. The confiscated property included both movable and immovable properties — securities, jewellery, land, and buildings. Later in 1968, the Enemy Property Act was enacted to regulate such properties and entrusted with the Custodian of Enemy Property. Now, for the first time, the government has decided to sell the property held in the form of shares ('enemy shares') which are lying with the custodian. It expects to use the proceeds from sale for development and social welfare programmes.

5. A Chinese scientist claims to have produced the **world's first genetically modified babies**

A scientist of the Southern University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen, China, says he used human embryos modified with the gene-editing technique CRISPR to create twin girls, named **Lulu and Nana**. He stated that his team performed gene surgery on embryos created from their parents' sperm and eggs to protect the children from the **Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)**, which causes AIDS. The children's father is HIV-positive.

CRISPR-Cas9 is a **genome editing tool**, a unique technology that enables geneticists and medical researchers to edit parts of the genome by removing, adding or altering sections of the DNA sequence. It is faster, cheaper and more accurate than previous techniques of editing DNA and has a wide range of potential applications. It is currently the simplest, most versatile and precise method of genetic manipulation.

The CRISPR-Cas9 system consists of two key molecules that introduce a change (mutation) into the DNA. These are an enzyme- called Cas9. This acts as a pair

of 'molecular scissors' that can cut the two strands of DNA at a specific location in the genome so that bits of DNA can then be added or removed.

The second is a piece of RNA called guide RNA (gRNA). This consists of a small piece of pre-designed RNA sequence (about 20 bases long) located within a longer RNA scaffold. The scaffold part binds to DNA and the pre-designed sequence 'guides' Cas9 to the right part of the genome. This makes sure that the Cas9 enzyme cuts at the right point in the genome.

Though currently unproven and extremely risky, gene editing holds the potential to solve many problems such as curing diseases, stopping inherited diseases in its tracks, saving endangered species and even resurrecting extinct species

6. President has appointed Sunil Arora as the new Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)

The Chief Election Commissioner heads the Election Commission of India, a body constitutionally empowered to conduct free and fair elections to the national and state legislatures and of President and Vice-President of India.

The President of India appoints the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners, based on the recommendation of the Prime minister.

The Election Commissioners have a tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. They enjoy the same official status, salary and perks as available to Judges of the Supreme Court of India and High court and draw salary from Consolidated Fund of India, similar to Chief Justice of India.

The ECs can be removed only by a process of impeachment. However, no EC has been removed so far.

7. The President of India has appointed Arvind Saxena as the new Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

The UPSC was established under **Article 315** of the Constitution of India. It comprises Chairman and ten Members, who are appointed and removed by the President. The term of the members and the chairman is six years or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. The commission reports directly to the President and can advise the government through him, although such advice is not binding on the government.

Under Article 320 of the Constitution of India, the Commission is, inter-alia, required to be consulted on all matters relating to recruitment to civil services and posts. The functions of the Commission under Article 320 of the Constitution are:

- i. Conduct examinations for appointment to the services of the Union.
- ii. Direct recruitment by selection through interviews.
- iii. Appointment of officers on promotion / deputation / absorption.
- iv. Framing and amendment of Recruitment Rules for various services and posts under the Government.
- v. Disciplinary cases relating to different Civil Services.
- vi. Advising the Government on any matter referred to the Commission by the President of India.

8. China Develops '**Artificial Sun**' that is hot enough for a **nuclear fusion reaction**.

China's Hefei Institutes of Physical Science announced that its **Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST)** reactor, an "artificial sun" designed to replicate the process our natural Sun uses to generate energy has successfully reached a temperature of 100 million degrees Celsius. Now that China's "artificial sun" is capable of heating plasma to the necessary temperature, researchers can focus on the next steps along the path to stable nuclear fusion.

Nuclear fusion is a nuclear reaction that occurs when hydrogen, deuterium and tritium are combined, thus forming a heavier nucleus. Then the nucleus absorbs energy in the form of gamma rays and kinetic energy of the emitted particles. The nucleus made by fusion is heavier than either of the starting nuclei. However, it is not as heavy as the combination of the original mass of the starting nuclei. This lost mass is changed into lots of energy.

9. Union Cabinet approved development of the **Kartarpur corridor** from **Dera Baba Nanak** village in Gurdaspur, Punjab to **Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur in Pakistan**.

The Kartarpur Corridor is a proposed border corridor between India and Pakistan, connecting the Sikh shrines of Dera Baba Nanak Sahib in Punjab, India and Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur in Punjab, Pakistan. The proposed corridor is intended to allow religious devotees from India to visit the Gurdwara in Kartarpur, 4.7 kilometres from the Pakistan-India border, without a passport or visa.

Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur is built on the historic site where **Guru Nanak** settled and assembled a Sikh community after his missionary travels. The present gurdwara is built on the site where Guru Nanak died on 22 September 1539.

Pilgrimages between India and Pakistan are governed by the **1974 Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines**, which includes a list of shrines in Pakistan and India open for visitors from the other country, and for which visas are required. However, the Kartarpur Corridor may require a different treaty.

10. **Global nutrition report 2018** reveals that **one-third of the world's stunted children are in India**.

The Global Nutrition Report was conceived following the first Nutrition for Growth Initiative Summit (N4G) in 2013 as a mechanism for tracking the commitments made by 100 stakeholders spanning governments, aid donors, civil society, the UN and businesses.

The Global Nutrition Report is the world's leading report on the state of global nutrition. It is data-led and produced independently each year to cast a light on where progress has been made and identify where challenges remain. The report aims to inspire governments, civil society and private stakeholders to act to end malnutrition in all its forms. It also plays the important role of helping hold stakeholders to account on the commitments they have made towards tackling malnutrition.

11. India and China sign protocol to amend the existing **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA)**. The agreement incorporates changes required to implement treaty related minimum standards under the Action reports of **Base Erosion & Profit Shifting (BEPS)**

Double tax is the tax paid more than once in two different countries on same income earned. DTAA is an agreement between two countries with an objective to avoid taxation of the same income in both countries.

Base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) refers to tax avoidance strategies that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules to artificially shift profits to low or no-tax locations. BEPS is of major significance for developing countries due to their heavy reliance on corporate income tax, particularly from multinational enterprises.

12. NITI Aayog has constituted the '**Himalayan State Regional Council**' to ensure sustainable development of the Indian Himalayan region.

The Council has been constituted to review and implement identified action points based on the Reports of five Working Groups, which were established along thematic areas to prepare a roadmap for action. These Working Groups were tasked with preparing a roadmap for action across five thematic areas namely,

- i. Inventory and Revival of Springs in Himalayas for Water Security,
- ii. Sustainable Tourism in Indian Himalayan Region,
- iii. Shifting Cultivation: Towards Transformation Approach,
- iv. Strengthening Skill & Entrepreneurship Landscape in Himalayas, and
- v. Data/Information for Informed Decision Making.

The Himalayan States Regional Council will be the **nodal agency for the sustainable development in the Himalayan Region** which consists of the twelve States namely Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, two districts of Assam namely Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong and Darjeeling and Kalimpong in West Bengal.

13. Indian Council of **Medical Research (ICMR)** has released Antimicrobial Stewardship Guidelines

Since the inappropriate use of antibiotics is rampant in India, there is an urgent need to improve antibiotic use in hospitals. To ensure judicious use of antibiotics in healthcare facilities, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) released the Antimicrobial Stewardship Guidelines to advise hospitals in setting up **Antimicrobial Stewardship Programmes (AMSP)** for the purpose.

Antimicrobial resistance occurs when microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change in ways that render the medications used to cure the infections they cause ineffective. When the microorganisms become resistant to

most antimicrobials they are referred to as “superbugs”. Antimicrobial resistance occurs naturally but is facilitated by the inappropriate use of medicines,

14. Ahead of the UN climate conference in Poland next month, the BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) group recently met to put pressure on developed countries to meet pre-2020 climate efforts, and to progressively and substantially scale up their financial support for future action, so that the world may be able to achieve more before the first **Global stocktake** in 2023.

‘Global stocktake’ refers to a proposed five-yearly review of the impact of countries’ climate change actions. Under the Paris Agreement, every country must present a climate action plan in five-yearly cycles.

Under the Paris Agreement, the first global stocktake will happen in 2023. It will assess whether the net result of the climate actions being taken was consistent with the goal of keeping the increase in global average temperature from pre-industrial times to within 2 degree Celsius. The stocktake will help the world determine whether it needs to do more and how much more.

While every country is required to participate in the global stocktake, the exercise will not assess whether actions of any individual country are adequate or not, instead it will only make an assessment of the collective efforts of the world. The stocktake will not go into who should do how much and will rather focus on what needs to be done, but the stocktake will cover not only the results of actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also the actions being taken to adapt to the effects of climate change as well. It will also include an assessment of whether developed countries are offering adequate help to developing countries by providing money and technology, as mandated by the Paris Agreement.

15. The International Space Station turns 20 years old

The International Space Station is an orbiting laboratory and construction site that synthesizes the scientific expertise of 16 nations to maintain a permanent human outpost in space. The station has been under construction since November of 1998. The first piece of the International Space Station was launched in November 1998. A Russian rocket launched the Russian Zarya control module. More pieces were added over the next two years before the station was ready for people to live there. The first crew arrived on November 2, 2000. People have lived on the space station ever since. The International Space Station may be completed by the end of this decade. When construction is finished, six crew members will be able to live and work

16. Cabinet approves extension of the term of the Commission to examine the issue of **Sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes** in the Central List till 31st May 2019.

The five-member panel, constituted in October 2017, was to complete its task of sub-categorizing 5000-odd castes in the central OBC list so as to ensure more equitable distribution of opportunities in central government jobs and educational institutions.

The Commission was set up under **Article 340** of the Constitution that was used to establish the landmark Mandal Commission more than two decades ago which recommended 27 per cent reservation for socially and educationally backward classes in higher education and government jobs. It was observed that over the years the benefits of this reservation were cornered mostly by the dominant OBC groups. The National Commission for Backward Classes had in 2015 noted that “unequals cannot be treated equally” and recommended that OBCs be categorised into extremely backward classes, more backward classes and backward classes.

17. Scientists consider the option of **Stratospheric Aerosol Injection (SAI)** to curb global warming

Some researchers say the geo-engineering technique known as stratospheric aerosol injection (SAI) could limit rising temperatures. Further, they state that it is relatively inexpensive, costing on average about \$2.25 billion a year over 15 years.

Under SAI tiny sulfate particles would be pumped into the stratosphere, where they would reflect a fraction of sunlight back into space before it reaches the Earth.

Since the technique is just hypothetical it has raised concerns about the negative consequences that may arise such as causing droughts or extreme weather in other parts of the world, harm crop yields as well as potential public health and governance issues. Further, it also does not address the issue of rising carbon dioxide emissions, the main greenhouse gas blamed for global warming.

18. The United Nations has announced \$9.2 million in health and nutritional aid for Venezuela.

The UN Central Emergency Response Fund is a humanitarian fund established by the United Nations General Assembly on December 15, 2005 and launched in March 2006. The fund aims to

- i. Promote early action and response to reduce loss of life;
- ii. Enhance response to time-critical requirements; and
- iii. Strengthen core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises,
- iv. Enable more timely and reliable humanitarian assistance to those affected by natural disasters and armed conflicts.

Oil accounts for 95% of the revenues generated by country of Venezuela. The 2014 Oil Crisis, wherein the price of oil dropped drastically weakened the Venezuelan currency severely. Following which the prices of basic goods and services such as those of food and medicines shot up exponentially within a short period, causing Hyperinflation. Hyperinflation is when the price of goods and services surges more than 50% in a month.

19. Government launches 'PAiSA' Portal under National Urban Livelihoods Mission.

Portal for **A**ffordable Credit and **I**nterest **S**ubvention **A**ccess (**PAiSA**), a centralised electronic platform for quicker processing of loans under the **D**eendayal **A**ntyodaya **Y**ojana - **N**ational **U**rban **L**ivelihoods **M**ission (**DAY-NULM**). All 35 States and Union Territories (UTs) & all scheduled commercial banks, RRBs and Cooperative Banks are expected to be on board the PAiSA portal the year end. The web platform was designed and developed by Allahabad Bank, the nodal bank under the scheme.

The scheme addresses the livelihood concern of the urban street vendors by facilitating with suitable space, institutional credit, and social security and skills to the urban street vendor for accessing emerging market opportunities. The mission aims to provide the shelter equipped with essential services to the urban homeless in a phased manner to reduce poverty and vulnerability of the urban poor households.

20. Inclusive Wealth Report 2018 has been released by the UN Environment and partners.

The **I**nclusive **W**ealth **R**eport (**IWR**) is a biennial effort led by the UN Environment to evaluate the capacities and performance of the nations around the world to measure sustainability of economy and wellbeing of their people. As a part of the report an Inclusive Wealth Index is also released.

The Index provides important insights into long-term economic growth and human well-being. It also measures the wealth of nations through a comprehensive analysis of a country's productive base and the country's wealth in terms of progress, well-being and long-term sustainability.

The report noted that the Inclusive wealth (IW) in 135 countries was higher in 2014 compared to the level in 1990 and the global growth rate of IW was 44% over the indicated period, which implies an average growth rate of 1.8% per year. However, during the same period the global GDP growth per year was 3.4%, which is close to twofold of the annual growth rate of growth in IW.

21. India's first Hyperspectral Imaging Satellite for advanced Earth observation, (HySIS), has been launched by ISRO.

A hyperspectral imaging camera in space can provide well-defined images that can help to identify objects on Earth far more clearly than regular optical or remote sensing cameras. HySIS is an Earth observation satellite which will provide hyperspectral imaging services to India for a range of applications in

agriculture, forestry and in the assessment of geography such as coastal zones and inland waterways. The data will also be accessible to India's defence forces which can be used for target identification, allowing identification of man-made materials, distinguishing them from natural surroundings.

- 22. Mission Raksha Gyan Shakti** has been launched to boost the Intellectual Property Rights culture in indigenous defence industry. The Directorate General of Quality Assurance (DGQA) has been entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating and implementing the programme.

The event showcased salient inventions and innovations achieved by **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**, **Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs)**, and Ordinance Factories (OFs) which have resulted in successful filing of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) applications.

According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), IPRs are the rights given to persons over the creations of their minds. They usually give the creator an exclusive right over the use of his/her creation for a certain period of time.

- 23.** Scientists have launched the largest-ever attempt to regenerate coral on the endangered Great Barrier Reef.

The plan is to grow coral larvae from the harvested eggs and return these to the areas of the reef which have been damaged by climate-related coral bleaching. Bleaching occurs when abnormal environmental conditions, such as warmer sea temperatures, cause corals to expel tiny photosynthetic algae, draining them of their colour. Corals can recover if the water temperature drops and the algae are able to recolonise them.

The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef system composed of over 2,900 individual reefs and 900 islands stretching for over 2,300 kilometres over an area of approximately 344,400 square kilometres. The reef is located in the Coral Sea, off the coast of Queensland, Australia. It was selected as a World Heritage Site in 1981.

- 24.** Azim Premji has been conferred with the highest French civilian award 'Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur' (Knight of the Legion of Honour) in recognition of his contribution to the Indian IT industry and philanthropy.

The Legion of Honour, instituted in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte, is the highest civilian award given by the French Republic for outstanding service to France, regardless of the nationality of the recipients. The President of France is the Grand Master of the Order of the Legion of Honour.

- 25.** Union Government has appointed renowned scientist Nageshwara Rao Guntur as Chairperson of Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB).

Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) was established in November 1983 to carry out regulatory and safety functions in the fields of nuclear and radiation safety on a countrywide basis. It gains its powers from the Atomic Energy Act,

1962 and Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986. Its mission is to ensure that use of ionising radiation and nuclear energy in India does not cause undue risk to health and environment.

26. The 69th Constitution Day was observed across India on November 26, 2018 to mark the adoption of the Indian Constitution by the Constituent Assembly.

The Constitution of India was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949 and it came into force on January 26, 1950. On November 19, 2015 during the year-long celebration of the 125th birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar, the Union Government declared November 26 as the Constitution Day in a gazette notification.

27. EU aims to be a **carbon neutral** economy by 2050.

The European Union urged governments, businesses, citizens and regions to join it in an ambitious plan to cut emissions and make the bloc carbon neutral by 2050. Under the climate neutral goal, the member states will submit their draft national climate and energy plans to the EU by the end of 2018.

Carbon neutrality, or having a net zero carbon footprint, refers to achieving net zero carbon emissions by balancing a measured amount of carbon released with an equivalent amount sequestered or offset. It is used in the context of carbon dioxide releasing processes associated with transportation, energy production, and industrial processes such as production of carbon neutral fuel.

The European Union (EU) is an international organization comprising 28 European countries and governing common economic, social, and security policies. Originally confined to western Europe, the EU undertook a robust expansion into central and eastern Europe in the early 21st century. The EU's members are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The EU was created by the Maastricht Treaty, which entered into force on November 1, 1993. The treaty was designed to enhance European political and economic integration by creating a single currency (the euro), a unified foreign and security policy, and common citizenship rights and by advancing cooperation in the areas of immigration, asylum, and judicial affairs.

28. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has released Global Wage Report 2018-19. As per the report, women are paid the most unequally in India, compared to men, when it comes to hourly wages for labour. On average, women are paid 34% less than men.

The report states that in advanced economies (G20), real wage growth declined from 0.9 per cent in 2016 to 0.4 per cent in 2017, meaning near stagnation. By contrast, in emerging economies and developing G20 countries, real wage growth dipped marginally from 4.9 per cent in 2016 and 4.3 per cent in 2017.

The report noted that in most countries, women and men differ significantly in respect of working time – specifically, that part-time work is more prevalent among women than among men.

International Labour Organization (ILO), specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) dedicated to improving labour conditions and living standards throughout the world. It was established in 1919. the ILO became the first affiliated specialized agency of the United Nations in 1946.

The functions of the ILO include the development and promotion of standards for national legislation to protect and improve working conditions and standards of living. The ILO also provides technical assistance in social policy and administration and in workforce training; fosters cooperative organizations and rural industries; compiles labour statistics and conducts research on the social problems of international competition, unemployment and underemployment, labour and industrial relations, and technological change (including automation); and helps to protect the rights of international migrants and organized labour.

29. Climate Vulnerable Forum meeting was held in Marshall Islands.

The Climate Vulnerable Forum is an international cooperation group of developing countries tackling global climate change. It was founded by the government of Maldives before the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. It wants to increase the accountability of industrialized nations for the consequences of global climate change.

India is one of the Observer states in the Climate Vulnerable Forum.

30. Military exercise conducted

- i. Konkan 18, a joint naval exercise between India and United Kingdom, was conducted in Goa.
- ii. Vajra Prahar, a Indo-US Special Forces joint training exercise was conducted at Mahajan Field Firing Range (MFFR), Bikaner in Rajasthan. The training exercise is conducted alternately in India and the US.

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