

# Brain Tree

## Current Events



### 01 December, 2018 – 15 December, 2018

1. A reported titled “**Children, HIV and AIDS: The World in 2030**” was released on World Aids day on 1<sup>st</sup> of December by UNICEF.

The reported stated that in the South-Asia the number children under the age of 5 who were newly diagnosed with HIV in 2017 fell by 43% compared to 2010, marking a decrease greater than the 35% recorded globally. However, India contains the highest number of people aged 0-19 years living with HIV in South Asia. Further it noted that India accounted for an estimated 120,000 cases in 2017.

The report also indicated a decline in AIDS-related deaths and deceleration in new infections, but acknowledged that the rate of decrease is not fast enough to achieve the target to eradicate AIDS by 2030.

2. UN launches new framework to combat international terrorism

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres launched a new framework titled ‘**UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact**’ to combat international terrorism and coordinate efforts across the peace and security, humanitarian, human rights and sustainable development sectors. The framework is an agreement between the UN chief, 36 organizational entities, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organization to better serve the needs of member states when it comes to tackling the scourge of international terrorism.

As per the framework the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Task Force will replace the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, which was established in 2005. It will strengthen UN system-wide coordination and coherence of counter-terrorism efforts.

The 2018 Global Terrorism Index released by the Institute for Economic and Peace, had indicated that despite a 27 per cent fall in the number of deaths from acts of terrorism worldwide, the impact of terrorism remains widespread, with 67 countries experiencing deadly attacks, which is the second highest recorded number of countries in the past twenty years.

3. Qatar announces its withdrawal from the OPEC. It plans to focus its efforts on the development and increase of its natural gas production.

OPEC was founded in 1960 by Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, and Venezuela. Qatar joined in 1961. OPEC is a cartel of 15 countries that produce about 45% of the world’s oil and contain over 80% of its “proven” reserves. The main aim of the OPEC is to coordinate and unify the petroleum policies of its Member Countries and ensure the stabilisation of oil markets in order to secure an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consumers

Qatar's oil production is around 600,000 barrels per day, making it the world's 17th largest producer of crude. It also only holds around two percent of the world's global oil reserves.

Qatar said that it would now focus on the production of Liquefied Petroleum Gas. Currently, Qatar is the world's biggest supplier of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), producing almost 30 percent of the world total. Qatar also shares the world's largest known natural gas field, the **'North Field'** with Iran.

Qatar is India's major LNG supplier and a major Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) in Indian equities markets. It has committed over Rs 40,000 crore to the Bharatmala road projects in India and is open to further investments. Once Qatar pulls itself out of the OPEC, it will have freedom to decide and fix the prices of LNG without any pressure of the Gulf nations. This would directly benefit India.

This move by Qatar comes in the backdrop of Saudi Arabia, along with three other Arab states, cutting trade and transport ties with Qatar and, accusing the country of supporting terrorism and its regional rival Iran. However, Qatar denied the claims.

4. The Supreme Court approved **Witness Protection Scheme 2018**, noting that one of the main reasons for witnesses to turn hostile is that they are not accorded appropriate protection by the State.

The Witness Protection Scheme 2018 was drawn up by the central government with inputs from 8 states/Union Territories, legal services authorities of five states and open sources including civil society, three high courts as well as from police personnel. The scheme was finalised in consultation with National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).

The important features of the Scheme include identifying categories of threat perceptions, preparation of a 'Threat Analysis Report' by the head of the police, protective measures such as ensuring that the witness and accused do not come face to face during probe, protection of identity, change of identity, relocation of witness, witnesses to be apprised of the scheme, confidentiality and preservation of records, recovery of expenses etc.

The programme identifies three categories of witnesses as per threat perception

- i. Cases where threat extends to life of witness or family members during investigation, trial or even thereafter.
- ii. Cases where the threat extends to safety, reputation or property of the witness or family members during the investigation or trial.
- iii. Cases where the threat is moderate and extends to harassment or intimidation of the witness or his family members, reputation or property during the investigation, trial or thereafter.

The bench also asked all states and Union Territories to set up **vulnerable witness deposition complexes**, as required by the Scheme, by the end of 2019. These rooms will be equipped with facilities to prevent the accused and witness coming face to face. The expenses for the programme will be met from a Witness Protection Fund to be established by states and Union Territories.

5. According to the latest annual report of the **Global Carbon Project**, the carbon dioxide emissions from India are set to rise by 6.3% in 2018 over 2017.

According to the report, the carbon dioxide emissions in India, which is already the third-

biggest emitter of the world, in 2018 is likely to be 6.3 per cent more than in 2017, and expected to touch 2.62 billion tonnes. Globally, the CO2 emissions this year is likely to touch 37.12 billion tonnes, which is 2.7 per cent more than the previous year.

Further the report states that China continues to remain the largest emitter of the world, with its emissions in 2018 likely to reach 10.3 billion tonnes, an increase of 4.7 per cent from last year. Emissions from the US, the second-biggest emitter, were likely to reach 5.4 billion tonnes, a rise of 2.5 per cent from previous year.

The report noted that growth in global CO2 emissions could put the Paris Agreement goal of keeping the global rise in temperatures to within 2 degree Celsius of pre-industrial times in jeopardy.

6. The Opposition has pressed for a **Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)** probe into the Rafale deal.

A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) is set up to examine a particular bill presented before the Parliament, or for the purpose of investigating cases of financial irregularities in any government activity. The JPC, an ad-hoc body, is set up for a given period of time and is aimed at addressing a specific issue.

In order to set up a JPC, a motion is passed in one House and supported by the other House. The committee's members are decided by Parliament. The number of members can vary. There are twice as many Lok Sabha members as the Rajya Sabha.

A JPC is authorised to collect evidence in oral or written form or demand documents in connection with the matter. The proceedings and findings of the committee are confidential, except in matters of public interest. The government can take the decision to withhold a document if it is considered prejudicial to the safety or interest of the State.

So far, the Joint Parliamentary Committees have been set up seven times to probe various matters including the Bofors Contract in 1987, irregularities in securities and banking transactions in 1992, 2G spectrum scam in 2011, VVIP Chopper Scam in 2013. The last time a committee was set up in 2015 for the purpose of examination of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Second Amendment) Bill

7. The Supreme Court asks the Government to increase the Pension amount for senior citizens and take steps to set up at least one old age home in each district.

The Court expressed concern over the plight of elders in the society particularly those who have been deserted by their family members.

Currently, under the **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme**, the pension is fixed at Rs200 per month for those between the age of 60 and 79 and Rs 500 Per month for persons above 80 years of age. The court observed that the amount was fixed in 2007 when the scheme was launched by the government and has not been revised since then.

Further, the Court also directed the Centre to compile data on the number of old age homes in each district and the medical and geriatric care facilities available to senior citizens in each district. This is in concurrence with the **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act**, under which states must set up one old age home in each district.

The number of elderly persons was recorded at 10.38 Crore in 2011. It is projected that the number of people above 60 years age would increase to 14.3 Crore by 2021 and 17.3 Crore

by 2026.

8. The 2018 Global Nutrition Report (GNR) has been released

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 2018 report states that the Global burden of malnutrition remains unacceptably high and progress unacceptably slow.

The report noted that **India holds almost a third (31%) of the global burden for stunting**, the prevalence of which differs from state to state. As per the UNICEF, stunting, or low height for age, is caused by long-term insufficient nutrient intake and frequent infections. Further it also noted that India is also among the countries with more than a million children who are overweight. As part of the report, a case study in Rajasthan found that key areas of infant and young child feeding and micronutrient supplementation were underfunded.

9. The ninth edition of the **Admiral's Cup Sailing Regatta**, the biggest military sailing competitive event in the world as far as the number of participating countries are concerned, was held at Indian Naval Academy (INA), Ezhimala in Kerala. A total of 32 teams, including 30 from foreign countries took part in the event.

10. The **International Day of Persons with Disabilities** was observed on December 3 with the theme **"Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality"**.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities was instituted by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1992. It aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

11. Indian Finance Ministry has issued a discussion paper criticizing the accounting methods used by developed **countries** to report on the climate finances that have flown from the developed countries to the developing countries.

The **Green Climate Fund (GCF)** was set up in 2010 under the UNFCCC's financial mechanism to channel funding from developed countries to developing countries to allow them to mitigate climate change and also adapt to disruptions arising from a changing climate.

In 2016, developed countries published a road map to \$100 billion, which claimed that public climate finance levels had reached \$41 billion per year in 2013-14. In 2015, India had disputed this figure arguing it was only \$ 2.2 billion. The 2017 numbers also tell a similar story. Only around 12% of total pledges to climate funds have actually materialised into disbursements.

The paper argues that the definition of climate finance in the UNFCCC has remained "imprecise and incomplete." The total pledges to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the largest multilateral fund, was a meagre \$10.3 billion. Further, most of the total climate finance has flowed into mitigation (a reference to preventing carbon dioxide from being emitted). The growth in the reported climate specific finance actually slowed down from 24% between 2014 and 2015 to 14% between 2015 and 2016.

12. The Supreme Court asks the Centre and states to maintain transparency in appointments of Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and Information Commissioners (IC). The bench also directed the states to fill up vacancies in the State Information Commissions (SICs) to reduce the pendency of cases.

The CIC is the highest appeal body available to applicants seeking information under the RTI Act, 2005. As per the act The Central Information Commission consists of the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and a maximum of 10 Central Information Commissioners.

The Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners are appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of The Prime Minister, who is the Chairperson of the committee, The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.

The Act provides that the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners should be persons of eminence in public life with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass media or administration and governance. Further, it provides that Chief Information Commissioner or an Information Commissioner shall not be a Member of Parliament or Member of the Legislature of any State or Union Territory as the case may be, or hold any other office of profit or connected with any political party or carrying on any business or pursuing any profession.

The term of office for an Information Commissioner is five years from the date on which he/she enters office and is not be eligible for reappointment

The salaries and allowances payable to and other terms and conditions of service of an Information Commissioner are the same as that of an Election Commissioner.

13. The National Centre of Coastal Research (NCCR) has released a report on beach pollution in India.

The NCCR conducted a qualitative analysis of the litter on six different beaches on the eastern and western coasts. The study notes that beach pollution is on rise in the country.

It stated that tourism and fishing are the biggest culprits, contributing most of the plastic litter on beaches. Most of the litter consisted of plastic bottles, cutlery, and thermocol. Further, it found that plastic litter from tourism alone accounted for 40%-96% of all beach litter. While fishing nets were a major contributor, processing of fish on the beach also produced a lot of litter. Other than the plastic litter dropped by tourists, similar waste from creeks and inlets made its way into the sea in the monsoon.

The report also noted that the proportion of biomedical litter was high in urban areas,

14. Indian Council of Medical Research has released its first comprehensive estimates of deaths, disease burden, and life expectancy reduction associated with air pollution in each state of India.

The estimates show that one in every eight deaths in India can be attributed to air pollution, which now contributes to more disease burden than smoking. It pointed out that the average life expectancy in India would have been 1.7 years higher if the air pollution level were less than the minimal level.

The report states that in 2017, air pollution accounted for 12.4 lakh deaths in India, which included 6.7 lakh deaths due to outdoor particulate matter air pollution and 4.8 lakh deaths

due to household air pollution. Over half of the deaths due to air pollution were in persons less than 70 years of age. With 18% of the global population, India suffered 26% of premature mortality and health loss attributable to air pollution globally. Moreover, it noted that around 77% of India's population is exposed to outdoor air pollution levels above the National Ambient Air Quality Standards safe limit.

States in east and north India had some of the highest levels of both ambient particulate matter and household air pollution, especially Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand. Delhi, Haryana, and Punjab in north India had some of the highest ambient particulate matter pollution exposure in the country.

However, the report recognizes the increasing public and policy attention to control air pollution in India.

**15.** The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister has approved the Agriculture Export Policy, 2018.

The Cabinet has also approved the proposal for establishing a Monitoring Framework at Centre with Ministry of Commerce as the nodal Department with representation from various Ministries, agencies and representatives of concerned State Governments to oversee the implementation of the Policy.

The objectives of the Agriculture Export Policy are-

- To double agricultural exports from present ~US\$ 30+ Billion to ~US\$ 60+ Billion by 2022 and reach US\$ 100 Billion in a few years thereafter, with a stable trade policy regime.
- To diversify our export basket, destinations and boost high value and value added agricultural exports including focus on perishables.
- To promote novel, indigenous, organic, ethnic, traditional and non-traditional Agri products exports.
- To provide an institutional mechanism for pursuing market access, tackling barriers and deal with sanitary and phyto-sanitary issues.
- To strive to double India's share in world agri exports by integrating with global value chain at the earliest.
- To enable farmers to get benefit of export opportunities in overseas market.

**16.** Exercise Hand-in-Hand between armies of India and China was held in Chengdu, China

Exercise Hand-in-Hand is conducted annually as a pact of military diplomacy and interaction between the armies of India and China. The aim of the exercise is to promote relation between the armies of both countries. The exercise involves tactical level operations in an International Counter Insurgency/Counter Terrorist environment under U.N. mandate.

The exercise was last held in 2016, it was suspended in 2017 amid heightened tensions between the two countries following a standoff between the two armies on the Doklam plateau, a strategic piece of territory in Bhutan.

17. Sahitya Academy has announced names of 24 poets and authors who will be conferred the prestigious 2018 Sahitya Akademi Award in 24 different Indian languages.

Sahitya Academy is literary honour that is conferred annually on Indian writers for their outstanding works of literary merit. It was established in 1954. It is conferred annually on writers of outstanding works in one of the twenty-four major Indian languages (22 Scheduled Languages+ English and Rajasthani).

18. Former Indian diplomat, Preeti Saran has been elected unopposed to an Asia Pacific seat on the United Nation's **C**ommittee on **E**conomic, **S**ocial and **C**ultural **R**ights (**CECSR**).

The CECSR was set up in 1985 by the **E**conomic and **S**ocial **C**ouncil (**ECOSOC**) of the United Nations. It was constituted with an aim to monitor on its behalf the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which has been ratified by 169 countries. The countries that are parties to the covenant are required to submit reports to the ICESCR every five years on how they protect the economic, social and cultural rights. The committee examines each report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of concluding observations.

The Members of the ICESCR serve in their personal capacities as experts and do not represent their countries even though they may be nominated by their own nation. The CECSR meets in Geneva and holds two sessions per year, consisting of a three-week plenary and a one-week pre-session working group.

19. M.S. Swaminathan calls GM crops a failure

A research paper co-authored by leading agriculture scientist M.S. Swaminathan 'Modern Technologies for Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security', is a review of crop development in India and transgenic crops — particularly Bt cotton, the stalled Bt brinjal as well as DMH-11, a transgenic mustard hybrid.

According to the paper Genetically Modified such as Bt Cotton have failed as a sustainable agriculture technology and has, therefore, also failed to provide livelihood security for cotton farmers who are mainly resource-poor, small and marginal farmers.

The paper also raises questions on the genetic engineering technology itself on the grounds that it raises the cost of sowing. Also, the insertion of foreign genes (in the plant) could lead to molecular and cellular events not precisely understood.

Prof. Swaminathan, credited with leading India's Green Revolution, has in recent years advocated 'sustainable agriculture' and said the government should only use genetic engineering as a last resort. He emphasised that genetic engineering technology is supplementary and must be needbased. Only in very rare circumstance (less than 1%) may there arise a need for the use of this technology

20. China has launched **Chang'e-4**, a first probe ever to explore the far side of the Moon

The Moon's orbit is tidally locked to the Earth, which means that it rotates once as it circles the planet. As a result, Earth-bound observers always see the Moon's same face, and observers on the Moon watch the Earth spin in a fixed position above them. While slight eccentricities in the Moon's position relative to the Earth mean that slightly more than half its surface can be seen during the course of a year, most of the far side is never visible. In 1959 the Soviet

Union's Luna 3 probe made the first circumnavigation of the Moon and beamed back the first pictures of its far side.

Though the far side of the moon has been mapped, no space probe has ever reached that part of the moon's surface because of communication difficulties.

21. The First **International Conference on Sustainable Water Management** was held at Mohali with the theme '**Sustainable Water Management**'.

The conference was held under the aegis of **National Hydrology Project**, Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation and was organized by **Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB)** at Indian School of Business (ISB), Mohali

The main aim is to bring advancement in water management system to further reduce flood and draughts all over the Globe

With further objectives to foster the participation of and dialogue between various stakeholders, including governments, the scientific and academic communities, so as to promote sustainable policies for water management and also to create awareness of water-related problems, motivate commitment at the highest level for their solution and thus promote better management of water resources at local, regional, national and international levels.

22. World Bank has released its report "**Regulatory Indicators for Sustainable Energy (RISE)**" 2018 on the sidelines of the 24th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24).

RISE is the first global policy scorecard of its kind, grading countries in three areas: energy access, energy efficiency and renewable energy. The report is aimed at helping governments assess if they have a policy and regulatory framework in place to drive progress on sustainable energy and pinpoints where more can be done to attract private investments.

RISE is a tool for policymakers to compare national policy frameworks for sustainable energy and identify opportunities to attract investment. RISE assesses countries' policy support for each of the three pillars of sustainable energy – access to modern energy, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. With 27 indicators covering 133 economies and representing 97% of the world population, RISE provides a reference point to help policymakers benchmark their sector policy framework against those of regional and global peers, and a powerful tool to help develop policies that advance sustainable energy goals.

23. Comptroller and Auditor General Rajiv Mehrishi has become the Vice-Chair of the UN Panel of Auditors.

The United Nations General Assembly established the United Nations Board of Auditors to audit the accounts of the United Nations Organization and its funds and programmes and to report its findings and recommendations to the UN General Assembly. For this, the Assembly appoints three members, each of whom must be the Auditor-General of a Member State.

The CAG of India has been the external auditor of various international organizations. Presently, besides being a Member of the UN Board of Auditors, he is the external auditor of the World Food Programme, World Intellectual Property Organization, International Atomic Energy Agency, UN World Tourism Organization and the International Organization for Migration. In recent past, he has been the external auditor of major UN Agencies like the

World Health Organization, Food and Agricultural Organization, International Maritime Organization, Organization for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons etc.

The Institution of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India has a history of over one hundred and fifty years and is regarded as one of the key pillars of India's democratic polity. It is one of the largest Supreme Audit Institutions in the world, with a large human resource pool which is professionally qualified in diverse fields.

**24. Global Compact for migration** was recently adopted in Marrakech

The global compact for migration is the first, intergovernmental negotiated agreement, prepared under the auspices of the United Nations, to cover all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. The global compact is non-legally binding. It is grounded in values of state sovereignty, responsibility-sharing, non-discrimination, and human rights, and recognizes that a cooperative approach is needed to optimize the overall benefits of migration, while addressing its risks and challenges for individuals and communities in countries of origin, transit and destination.

The compact:

- Aims to mitigate the adverse drivers and structural factors that hinder people from building and maintaining sustainable livelihoods in their countries of origin;
- Intends to reduce the risks and vulnerabilities migrants face at different stages of migration by respecting, protecting and fulfilling their human rights and providing them with care and assistance;
- Seeks to address the legitimate concerns of states and communities, while recognizing that societies are undergoing demographic, economic, social and environmental changes at different scales that may have implications for and result from migration;
- Strives to create conducive conditions that enable all migrants to enrich our societies through their human, economic and social capacities, and thus facilitate their contributions to sustainable development at the local, national, regional and global levels.

**25. The world's first "floating" nuclear power plant**, named Akademik Lomonosov, is being planned in Russia. It will be designed to not only maintain uninterrupted power supply in remote areas isolated from the main power distribution system but also to provide desalinated water in remote areas.

**26. The Central Ground Water Authority of the Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation** has notified revised guidelines for ground water extraction.

The revised guidelines, which will be effective from June 1, 2019, aim to ensure a more robust ground water regulatory mechanism in the country. One of the important features of the revised guidelines is the introduction of the concept of **Water Conservation Fee (WCF)**, the fee charged on extraction of ground water.

The revised guidelines provide for the:

- Encouraged use of recycled and treated sewage water by industries.

- Provision of action against polluting industries.
- Mandatory requirement of digital flow meters, piezometers and digital water level recorders, with or without telemetry depending upon quantum of extraction.
- Mandatory water audit by industries abstracting ground water 500 m<sup>3</sup>/day or more in safe and semi-critical area and 200 m<sup>3</sup>/day or more in critical and over-exploited assessment units.
- Mandatory roof top rain water harvesting except for specified industries.
- Measures to be adopted to ensure prevention of ground water contamination in premises of polluting industries/ projects.

27. Ministry of Power has launched the **ECO Niwas Samhita 2018**, an **Energy Conservation Building Code for Residential Buildings (ECBC-R)** on National Energy Conservation Day 2018.

The aim of ECO Niwas Samhita is to benefit the occupants and the environment by promoting energy efficiency in design and construction of homes, apartments and townships. The code is expected to assist large number of architects and builders who are involved in design and construction of new residential complexes in different parts of the country..

The parameters listed in the Code have been developed based on large number of parameters using climate and energy related data.

28. UK court has orders the extradition of Vijay Mallya from Britain to India to face charges of fraud filed against him.

Vijay Mallya was declared as a proclaimed offender by a special court in June 2016 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Extradition, in international law, is the process by which one state, upon the request of another, effects the return of a person for trial for a crime punishable by the laws of the requesting state and committed outside the state of refuge. Extradition is regulated within countries by extradition acts and between countries by diplomatic treaties.

In India the extradition of a fugitive from India to a foreign country or vice-versa is governed by the provisions of Indian Extradition Act, 1962. The basis of extradition could be a treaty between India and a foreign country. This act provides procedure for the arrest and extradition of fugitive criminals under certain conditions which includes receipt of the request through diplomatic channels ONLY and under the warrant issued by a Magistrate having a competent jurisdiction. Action can also be taken under the provisions of the Cr.P.C., 1973 which authorizes the police to arrest a fugitive criminal without a warrant, however, they must immediately refer the matter to Interpol Wing for onward transmission to the Government of India for taking a decision on extradition.

Currently, India has extradition treaties with 37 countries and extradition arrangements with 8 other countries.

29. FAO Council approves India's proposal to observe 2023 as International Year of Millets

World Food Programme was established in 1961 after the 1960 **Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)** Conference. It is the world's largest humanitarian organisation

addressing hunger and promoting food security. It provides food assistance to an average of 80 million people in 75 countries each year. It is headquartered in Rome. It is a member of the United Nations Development Group and part of its Executive Committee.

Millet is a common term that categorizes small-seeded grasses termed as 'Nutri-Cereals' or 'Dryland-Cereals', such as sorghum, pearl millet, ragi, small millet, foxtail millet, proso millet, barnyard millet, kodo millet and other millets. Millet is an important staple cereal crop for millions of dryland farmers across Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. They offer nutrition, income and livelihood for farmers even in difficult times. They are nutritionally superior to wheat and rice as they have higher levels of protein with more balanced amino acid profile, crude fiber & minerals such as Iron, Zinc, and Phosphorous. They can offer nutritional security and act as a shield against nutritional deficiency, especially among children and women. Millets can also help tackle health challenges such as obesity, diabetes and lifestyle problems as they are gluten free, have a low glycemic index and are high in dietary fibre and antioxidants.

30. India's heaviest and most-advanced communication satellite GSAT-11, also called the "Big Bird", was successfully launched into space on December 5, 2018 from the Spaceport in French Guiana, South America.

The satellite, weighing 5854 kg, is the heaviest Indian-made equipment that has been put into the orbit. It was developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

GSAT-11 will boost the broadband connectivity to rural and inaccessible Gram Panchayats in the country under the Bharat Net Project, which is part of Digital India Programme. The Bharat Net Project aims to enhance the public welfare schemes like e-banking, e-health, e-governance, among others. The objective of the project is to provide High Speed Internet connectivity to all Gram Panchayats by March 2019. The project is being funded by the **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)**

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