

March – 24

TNPSC BITS

- ❖ The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has launched India's first Sign Language Dictionary of 3000 Words. The dictionary has been developed by Indian Sign Language Research & Training Centre (ISLR & TC) under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD). This dictionary is available in both print and video formats.

NATIONAL

Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017

- ❖ The Parliament has passed Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017 to empower government to fix period of maternity leave and tax-free gratuity amount with an executive order.
- ❖ The Bill seeks to amend Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 on two issues related to maternity leave and ceiling of gratuity payable to an employee.
- ❖ Gratuity is calculated based on 15 days of wages for each year of continuous and complete service, subject to a ceiling.
- ❖ The Bill allows the government to fix the period of maternity leave for female employees as deemed to be in continuous service in place of the existing 12 weeks.
- ❖ The legislation will enable the government to enhance the ceiling of tax-free gratuity to Rs. 20 lakhs from the existing Rs. 10 lakhs for employees falling under the Payment of Gratuity Act.
- ❖ The amendment to the payment of gratuity law comes in the backdrop of Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 enhancing the maximum maternity leave period to 26 weeks.

INTERNATIONAL

African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

- ❖ The 44 African countries out of 55 members of African Union (AU) have signed agreement to create African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), one of the world's largest free trade blocs.
- ❖ The agreement was signed at a summit held in Kigali, Rwanda. The signed AfCFTA agreement contains legal framework for free trade area.
- ❖ It will come into force after it is ratified by individual countries through their respective domestic processes.
- ❖ 10 countries including Nigeria, Africa's largest economy and most populous country have refused to sign the agreement.
- ❖ Once AfCFTA becomes reality, it will be largest free-trade area in terms of participating countries since the formation of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- ❖ African heads of government agreed to establish a continental free trade area in 2012 and started negotiations in 2015 to boost intra-Africa trade.

CFTA

#AUCitizen | #AFCFTA

African Union 

1 CREATE a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons and investments

2 RESOLVE the challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships and expedite the regional and continental integration processes



3 EXPAND intra African trade through better harmonization and coordination of trade across RECs and Africa

4 ENHANCE competitiveness at the industry and enterprise level

ECONOMY

World's first brass futures contracts

- ❖ The country's largest commodity exchange platform Multi Commodity Exchange of India (MCX) has launched futures trading in brass for the first time globally, which will facilitate brass stakeholders to hedge their price risk.
- ❖ It will provide its stakeholders with more organised and robust price discovery platform.
- ❖ MCX Brass futures is the first non-ferrous contract with compulsory delivery option.
- ❖ The price is quoted as per the ex-warehouse Jamnagar (delivery centre) inclusive of taxes and duties, excluding GST.

Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX)

- ❖ MCX was launched in November 2003 and operates within regulatory framework of Forward Contracts Regulation Act, 1952 (FCRA, 1952) under SEBI.
- ❖ MCX is country's first listed commodity futures exchange that facilitates online trading, and clearing and settlement of commodity futures transactions, thereby providing platform for risk management.
- ❖ Globally, MCX ranks no. 1 in silver, no. 2 in natural gas, no. 3 in crude oil and gold in futures trading.
- ❖ MCX offers futures trading in bullion, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, energy, and a number of agricultural commodities

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

BrahMos

- ❖ Supersonic cruise missile BrahMos was successfully flight-tested for the first time with indigenously developed seeker at Pokhran test range, Rajasthan.
- ❖ So far, seeker, a critical technology in missiles was imported from Russia.
- ❖ During the test missile with India-made seeker flew in its designated trajectory and target with pin-point accuracy.
- ❖ The indigenous seeker was developed by Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad, in collaboration with other DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) labs.

- ❖ The seeker technology, which determines the accuracy of a missile, is a closely guarded secret.
- ❖ BrahMos is a joint collaboration between India and Russia and the missile is capable of being launched from land, sea, sub-sea and air against surface and sea-based targets.
- ❖ The Army and Navy have already inducted the missile, while the air-launched version was test-fired for the first time in 2017 from a modified Su-30MKI aircraft.

ENVIRONMENT

Global carbon emissions

- ❖ According to International Energy Agency (IEA), the global energy-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions rose to historic high of 32.5 giga tonnes in 2017.
- ❖ This large amount of global energy-related carbon emissions comes after it was flat for three years. It was due to higher energy demand and slowing of energy efficiency improvements.
- ❖ According to preliminary estimates from the IEA Global energy demand rose by 2.1 percent last year to 14,050 million tonnes of oil equivalent, more than twice the previous year's rate, boosted by strong economic growth.

International Energy Agency (IEA)

- ❖ IEA is an inter-governmental organization established in 1974 as per framework of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- ❖ Presently it has 30 member countries including India. It is headquartered in Paris, France.
- ❖ It was established in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis after the OPEC cartel had shocked the world with a steep increase in oil prices.
- ❖ It acts as energy policy advisor to 29 member countries and also non-member countries like China and Russia.
- ❖ Its prime focus is on the "3Es" of effectual energy policy: energy security, economic development and environmental protection.

SPORTS

Junior ISSF World Cup

- ❖ Indian shooter Elavenil Valarivan shattered the qualification world record and claimed the gold medal in 10m women's air rifle event of the season's first junior ISSF (International Shooting Sport Federation) World Cup in Sydney.
- ❖ The 18-year-old Elavenil, competing in her second World Cup and first final, shot 249.8 in the women's final to claim the top individual honours. Her 631.4 in the qualification was a new world record.
- ❖ Besides her individual podium finish, Elavenil also combined with Shreya Agrawal and Zeena Khitta to claim the team gold medal.
- ❖ Arjun Babuta bagged his second junior world cup medal, claiming a bronze in men's 10m air rifle event.

IMPORTANT DAYS

International Day for Achievers – 24 March

- ❖ International Day for Achievers is observed every year on march 24.
- ❖ International Day for Achievers is celebrated to pay tribute to achievers' in any field for their outstanding achievements.

World Tuberculosis Day – 24 March

- ❖ World TB Day was observed every year on March 24 to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of tuberculosis (TB) and to step up efforts to end the global TB epidemic.
- ❖ The theme for the year 2018 is "Wanted: Leaders for a TB-free world"
- ❖ The date marks the day in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced that he had discovered the bacterium that causes TB, which opened the way towards diagnosing and curing this disease.
