

**NATIONAL****NGT penalises Delhi govt.for not curbing air pollution**

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) directed the Delhi government to deposit an environmental compensation of Rs. 25 crore with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for failing to curb air pollution in the national capital. A Bench, headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel, said that in case the government failed to comply with the orders, a sum of Rs. 10 crore a month would be levied.

**National Green Tribunal (NGT)**

NGT was established in 2010 under National Green Tribunal Act,2010 for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources. It specialises in adjudicating on matters relating to environment, forests and harm to people or property due to neglect of environmental obligations of infrastructure projects. New Delhi is Principal Place of Sitting NGT. Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai are other regional sitting of Tribunal.

**INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL****Qatar to quit OPEC from next year:**

Qatar is withdrawing from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) as of January 2019. The decision came after Qatar, one of OPEC's smallest producers but the world's largest liquefied natural gas exporter, reviewed ways to enhance its role internationally and plan long-term strategy, including focusing on its gas industry.

Since June 2017, OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia — along with three other Arab states — has cut trade and transport ties with Qatar, accusing the country of supporting terrorism and its regional rival Iran. Qatar denies the claims, saying the boycott hampers its national sovereignty.

**OPEC:** The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a group of oil-producing nations that was first established in Baghdad, Iraq, in 1961. OPEC is one of the most powerful international organizations in the world and was a major player in the shift towards state control over natural resources.

**World Customs Organization Summit :**

80th Session of the Policy Commission of the World Customs Organization (WCO) was held recently in Mumbai. The Session was organized by the WCO and hosted by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).

**WCO:** The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.

As the global centre of Customs expertise, the WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.

The WCO has divided its Membership into six Regions. Each of the six Regions is represented by a regionally elected Vice-Chairperson to the WCO Council.

**ECONOMY****Whatsapp seeks RBI nod to expand its payment services**

WhatsApp Chief has written to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), seeking a formal nod to expand payments services to all its 200 million users in India. The messaging app, which has drawn fire from the government over spread of fake messages on its platform, continues to wait for a regulatory clearance to launch full-fledged payments operations in India, months after its 'testing' amassed

nearly one million users, and almost two years since it first began discussions with the government on its payments services plans.

When contacted, a WhatsApp spokesperson said the platform is working closely with the Indian government, National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), and multiple banks, including payment service providers to expand the feature to more people and support the country's digital economy.

### **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**

NPCI is the umbrella organisation for all retail payments system in India. It is being promoted by the Reserve Bank of India. It was founded in 2008 as a not-for-profit organisation registered under section 25 of the Companies Act, 2013. It has successfully played pioneering role in development of a domestic card payment network called RuPay, reducing the dependency on international card schemes.

## **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

### **SoYuz Spacecraft :**

A Soyuz rocket carrying Russian, American and Canadian astronauts took off from Kazakhstan and has reached orbit, in the first manned mission since a failed launch in October.

Soyuz:

- The Soyuz (SAW-yooz) is a Russian spacecraft. Astronauts and cosmonauts travel to the International Space Station on the Soyuz.
- The Soyuz transports crews to the International Space Station and returns them to Earth after their missions.
- The Soyuz is like a lifeboat for the space station. At least one Soyuz is always docked at the space station. If there is an emergency, the station crew can use the Soyuz to return to Earth.
- The Soyuz is the only means of reaching the ISS since the U.S. retired the space shuttle in 2011.

### **International Space Station:**

The International Space Station is a large spacecraft in orbit around Earth. It serves as a home where crews of astronauts and cosmonauts live. The space station is also a unique science laboratory. It orbits Earth at an average altitude of approximately 250 miles. It travels at 17,500 mph. This means it orbits Earth every 90 minutes. NASA is using the space station to learn more about living and working in space. These lessons will make it possible to send humans farther into space than ever before.

The ISS programme is a joint project among five participating space agencies: NASA, Roscosmos, JAXA, ESA, and CSA. The ownership and use of the space station is established by intergovernmental treaties and agreements. The station is divided into two sections, the Russian Orbital Segment(ROS) and the United States Orbital Segment (USOS), which is shared by many nations.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **Indian Pavillion at COP-24 themed as “One World One Sun One Grid”**

The Union Environment Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan participated in the inauguration of Indian Pavilion at the 24th meeting of Conference of Parties (COP-24) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held at Katowice, Poland.

India's leadership in global climate action has been recognized and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been bestowed with “Champion of Earth Award” this year by the United Nations in promoting International Solar Alliance and resolve to make India plastic free by 2022.

**‘Champions of the Earth award’:** Launched in “Champions of the Earth”, the UN’s highest environmental honour, celebrates outstanding figures from the public and private sectors and from civil society whose actions have had a transformative positive impact on the environment. In 2018, the award was received by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron for their leadership in promotion of solar energy.

**COP 24:** COP24 is the informal name for the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The COP takes decisions to ensure effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention and regularly reviews the implementation of these provisions.

**UNFCCC:** UNFCCC is an international environmental treaty, entered into force on 21 March 1994 with an aim To prevent ‘dangerous’ human interference with the climate system. Now, it has near-universal membership.

**Afloating Solar Plant in Uttar Pradesh:**

A 50MW floating solar plant will be set up in the country’s largest reservoir Rihand dam in Sonbhadra district in UP.

**Floating solar plants:**

- Floating solar plants are considered an alternate option to tackle land availability issues. The concept involves setting up solar panels on floats placed on dams, lakes and similar water bodies.
- Floating solar makes intuitive sense in geographies with high land costs and poor availability. Floating solar is a definite reprieve for states that are a significant market for more renewable energy but with little land to spare, as is the case with Uttar Pradesh.
- The global floating solar market is driven by Asian countries, with China and Japan being home to bulk of the existing operational capacity of 259 MW.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**International Day of Persons with Disabilities:** The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is observed every year on December 3 to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development. The theme for 2018 is - “Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”.

**Indian Navy Day** : Indian Navy Day is observed annually on 4 December to celebrate magnificence, achievements and role of naval force of the country. This year it was 47th Navy Day. It commemorates launch of Operation Trident by Indian Navy against Pakistan on 4th December, 1971. During 1971 India-Pakistan war, Indian Navy had played significant role in bombing of Karachi harbour, the stronghold of Pakistani Navy. In this attack, Indian Navy sank four Pakistani vessels and ravaged Karachi harbour fuel fields.

**SHINYUU Maitri 18:** First India, Japan air exercise begins in Agra. The first bilateral air exercise SHINYUU Maitri-18 between Japanese Air Self Defence Force (JASDF) and Indian Air Force (IAF) began at Air Force Stati on Agra. The theme of this exercise is joint Mobility/Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) on Transport aircraft.

**Indian Navy to conduct TROPEX Exercise to test robustness of coastal security apparatus:**

Indian Navy will conduct its flagship largescale coastal defence exercise Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise (TROPEX) from January to March 2019 to test robustness of entire coastal security apparatus. As part of TROPEX, Indian Navy will conduct large-scale coastal defence exercise ‘Exercise Sea Vigil’. This exercise will involve all stake holders across mainland and island territories. It will see participation of all operational ships, submarines and aircraft as well as units of Indian coast guards (ICG), Indian Army and Indian Air Force (IAF)