KSG

CURRENT CONNECT
AUGUST - 17

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ABOUT CURRENT CONNECT

It gives us immense pleasure to present an innovative approach to master current affairs. Current is a passing wind and diverse issues happen at the same time. It is to an extent chaotic. Newspapers, magazines and various other sources report the *chaos per se*.

With our experience of current affairs we have tried to give "the current" a medium to travel. It is the syllabus of the UPSC with their components that are the medium through which the "Current is **Passed" to t**he readers.

Ever since the new syllabus of the UPSC came into existence current has been gaining significance both at prelims as well as mains examination. This book is meant to cover current affairs and related questions arising from those events. We have not only covered the current events for their factual contents but also presented it in such a way that any question asked from that topic gets covered. Moreover, topics are also "peppered" with the relevant facts/key concepts that are related to the theme.

We have also given questions for practice both, subjective and objective, so that candidates are oriented to the examination mode. It is a collection covering myriad source yet in a manageable size.

To use this book we recommend you to master the components of general studies (GS) syllabus as broken into rows and columns (provided in the beginning after preface). Each cell comprising of the portion of GS becomes the connect for the current and every news subsequently covered guides the reader to the address of the syllabus. It is logical to expect that same issue may be connected to more than one topic of the syllabus.

Further, the news also has some additional vistas opened for the readers by adding a box w**ith a title "pepper it with" where** we expect the students to build further around the theme.

Team KSG

S.N.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
GS-I	Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.	Indian history significant events, person alities, issues and the Freedom Struggle	Post indepe ndence issues, National boundary and disputes	Indian society features, issues, globalization and diversity	Women - issues and developments	Urbanization – problems and remedies	Distribution of industries and resources – India and world	Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc			
GS-II	Indian constitution- Amend ments, acts and bills.	Legislative, executive and judicial processes.	Constitutional, non constitutional, judicial, quasi judicial, administrative and other types of bodies.	Federal structure and local bodies. Their powers and functions.	Government policies and various governance issues like transparency, accoun tability and – governance	Committees and schemes.	Non government issues, self help groups and role of civil society	Vulnerable sections of our society and social sector issues and initiatives.	International Relation-India and other countries, various Indian and international agreements, effects of other countries on India and international institutions.		
GS-III	Various measures to boost Indian economy- planning, policies, management.	Government budgeting and issues related to budget.	Agricul ture, animal husbandry and transport	Food security- measures to boost food security and food processing. Issues related to land- land reforms	Industries and infrastr ucture-their growth and investment model	Space and technology, IT space, robotics and computer	Disease, biotechnol- ogy and human welfare	Innovations, intellectual property, Awards, POI and other import ant aspects of S&T	Environ ment and disaster; government initiatives, various judgment, pollution, degradation and conservation efforts	Internati- onal agreements and works of various international bodies, awards, effort by individuals and misc.	Challenges to internal security, Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate. Cyber security; moneylaunderi- ng and its prevention.
GS-IV	Ethical issues related to family society, education, Corruption etc.	Ethics in public and private admini stration	Issues	Related laws and rules	Governance/e- Govern ance	Ethics in interna- tional issues	Person alities and their teachings	Other import ant topics			
Mis.											

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RajyaSabha passes RTE amendments

In News

The RajyaSabha unanimously passed the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2017, which aims to provide a two-year window to around 11 lakh private and government teachers to get prescribed minimum qualifications for appointment.

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Key Highlights of Bill

- The Bill allows provision that those teachers who do not possess the minimum qualifications as on March 31, 2015 will acquire the minimum qualifications within a period of four years i.e. by March 31, 2019.
- Under the Act, if a state does not have adequate teacher training institutions or sufficient number of qualified teachers, the provision to possess minimum qualifications is relaxed for a period not exceeding five years i.e. till March 31, 2015.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> National Policy for Children, National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) 2016, Art 39-E, Art 45

- New Bill allows state to do away with no-detention policy. The appropriate Government may allow schools to hold back a child in the fifth class or in the eighth class or in both classes, in such manner and subject to such conditions as may be prescribed, if he fails in the re-examination.
- No child shall be expelled from a school till the completion of elementary education.

RTE Act provides for :

- Right of children to free and compulsory education till completion of elementary education in a neighbourhood school
- It specifies the duties and responsibilities of appropriate Governments, local authority and parents in providing free and compulsory education, and sharing of financial and other responsibilities between the Central and State Governments.

> **About RTE**
> The Constitution (86th Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards.

- It provides for appointment of appropriately trained teachers.
- It provides for development of curriculum in consonance with the values enshrined in the Constitution
- It provides for rational deployment of teachers by ensuring that the specified pupil teacher ratio is maintained for each school

Committee under Justice B N SriKrishna help to draft Data Protection Bill

In News

Justice B N Srikrishna, former judge of the Supreme Court of India will head a Committee of experts which has been formed to deliberate on a data protection framework for the country.

Key Highlights

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- The government led ten-member committee will "identify key data protection issues in India and recommend methods of addressing them."
- **As per Government order/suggestion "To** make specific suggestions for consideration of the Central Government on principles to be considered for data protection in India and suggest a draft Data Protection Bill**".**
- The ministry of electronics and IT shall in consultation with the Chairperson and members, collect necessary information and provide it to the Committee within 8 weeks to enable it to start its deliberations

What is Regulation (EU) 2016/679?Protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and the free movement of such data in order to unify and strengthen it for their data protection.
- It allows European Union (EU) citizens to better control their personal data. It also modernises and unifies rules allowing businesses to reduce red tape and to benefit from greater consumer trust.
- The general data protection regulation (GDPR) is part of the EU data protection reform package, along with the data protection directive for police and criminal justice authorities.

Need for Data Protection
1. The Government of India needs to spread awareness of the growing importance of data protection in India. The need to ensure growth of the digital economy while keeping personal data of citizens secure andprotected is of utmost importance.
2. Lawfulness, fairness and transparency. There should be a general policy of openness about developments, practices and policies with respect to personal data
3. Personal data should be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes.
4. Collection of Personal Data should be adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed. This is also known as The Principle Of Data Minimization.
5. The agency collecting personal data should ensure accuracy of data-delete/rectify inaccurate data. Data Quality Principle entails that personal data should be relevant to the purposes for which they are to be used.
6. A Data Controllershould be accountable for complying with measures which give effect to the principles stated above.Data protection rules should be applicable to all entities and persons handling personal data – both private and public sector bodies

It can be seen from above that protection of personal data and Right to privacy are intrinsically linked. Only a strong emphasis on the right to privacy can ensure that personal data is not shared or leaked incessantly without any checks. It is duty of the State to ensure individual autonomy.

One of the most important piece of legislation protecting our data at present is the Information Technology Act (hereinafter IT Act). The IT Act makes hacking and tampering with computer source an offence and penalizes unlawful access to data.Every reasonable step should be taken to ensure that personal data personal data is secure and the data controller/processor are held accountable for every breach.Complaint mechanisms need to be defined to address the plight of user/customers.

National Commission for Backward Classes (Repeal) Bill, 2017

In News
The Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017 was introduced in LokSabha by the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment. It seeks to grant the National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC)

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constitutional status, at par with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.The bill was passed in LokSabha but was not passed in RajyaSabha as it requires two-third majority of those present and voting.

Constitutional status to National Commission for Backward Classes

The NCBC is a body set up under the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993. It has the power toexamine complaints regarding inclusion or exclusion of groups within the list of backward classes, and advise the central government in this regard. The Bill seeks to establish the NCBC under the Constitution, and provide it the authority to examine complaints and welfare measures regarding socially and educationally backward classes.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Privacy Bill, IT Act, Aadhaar Bill, UIDAI server

Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the NCBC will have the powers of a civil court while investigating or inquiring into any complaints. These powers include: (i) summoning people and examining them on oath, (ii) requiring production of any document or public record, and (iii) receiving evidence.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> USTTAD, NAI UDAAN, MANAS, LEARN&EARN, Merit-cum-Means Scholarship Scheme

Composition and service conditions

Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the NCBC will comprise of five members appointed by the President. Their tenure and conditions of service will also be decided by the President through rules

Functions
1. investigating and monitoring how safeguards provided to the backward classes under the Constitution and other laws are being implemented,
2. inquiring into specific complaints regarding violation of rights, and

> The approval is for the proposal to bring about a Constitutional Amendment namely the Constitution (One Hundred Twenty-third Amendment) Bill, 2017. :
> a. Constitution of a Commission under Article 338B for socially and educationally backward classes by name of National Commission for Backward Classes; and
> b. Insertion of Clause (26C) under Article 366 with modified definition viz. "socially and educationally backward classes" means such backward classes as are so deemed under Article 342A for the purpose.

3. advising and making recommendations on socio-economic development of such classes. The central and state governments will be required to consult with the NCBC on all major policy matters affecting the socially and educationally backward classes

Flexi pool- **NITI Aayog's brainchild**

In news
NITI Aayog to create flexi pool of 100 officers/advisors.

Background

NITI Aayog is the premier policy 'Think Tank' of the Government of India, providing both directional and policy inputs. While designing strategic

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and long term policies and programmes for the Government of India, NITI Aayog also provides relevant technical advice to the Centre and States.

At **the core of NITI Aayog's creation are two hubs** – Team India Hub and the Knowledge and Innovation Hub. The NITI Aayog hasproposed to create a third division namely Flexi Poolof nearly 100 experts at the rank of advisors, deputy advisors, joint advisors, senior advisors, senior research officers and economic officers, who can be either hired on deputation or can be a direct recruitment on contract.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Art 309, Flexi Pool Rules 2017.

In exercise of the powers conferred by the provision to article 309 of the Constitution, the

President hereby makes the following rules, regulating the method of recruitment to the Flexi pool posts of Adviser/Sr. Adviser in the NITI. These rules may be called the NITI Aayog, Adviser Recruitment (Flexi
Pool) Rules, 2017.
The main objective of Flexi pool will be to provide their expert assistance and service to tackle the rising workload from the Prime Minister's Office.

e-RaKAM portal

In news
The government recently launched a portal, e-RaKAM, to provide a platform to sell agricultural produce.
Key Highlight
E-RaKAM is a first-of-its-kind initiative that leverages technology to connect farmers of the smallest villages to the biggest markets of the world through internet and e-RaKAMcentres

- E-RaKAM is developed by MSTC Limited and supported by marketing & logistics partner CRWC Limited.
- E-RaKAM is a digital initiative bringing together the farmers, FPOs, PSUs, civil supplies and buyers on a single platform to ease the selling and buying process of agricultural products
- farmers would be paid through e-Payment directly into their bank accounts.

PEPPER IT WITH
APMC, MSP, Price
Deficiency Payment

National Biopharma Mission

About

The National Biopharma Mission has been launched by the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology. This is an Industry-Academia mission to accelerate biopharmaceutical development in India that has been approved by the Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs.

As approved by cabinet under this mission "Innovate in India **(i3)" Empowering biotech** entrepreneurs & accelerating inclusive innovation will be implemented at a total cost of Rs. 1500 crore for a period of five years and 50% of the grant will be arranged through the World Bank loan.

The programme will specifically focus on the development of new vaccines, bio-therapeutics, diagnostics and medical devices to better address the rising burden of diseases in the country.

PEPPER IT WITH
CGHS Cards, Pharmacy Act, 1948, Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Regulations, 2011,

The Mission Programme of Department of Biotechnology, will be implemented by Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) a Public Sector Undertaking of the Department.

Trade Related Entrepreneurship Development Assistance Scheme (TREAD) women entrepreneurship programme

About
- The focus of the scheme is to promote self-employment and income generation activities for women mostly from SHG groups in non-farm sector.
- There is a provision of Govt of India Grant upto 30% of Loan/credit sanctioned subject to maximum ceiling of 30 Lakhs to NGOs as appraised by Lending Institutes/Banks for undertaking capacity building

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activities such as Training, counselling, Participation in exhibitions, establishment of new SHGs etc and other components as approved by Bank/Steering Committee
- NGOs will not only handle the disbursement of such loans needed by women but would also provide them adequate counseling & training for taking up productive activities

Salient features
- ✓ Grant Credit/Loan
- ✓ Training & Counseling
- ✓ Eliciting Information on Related Needs

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> BBBP Scheme, Women Helpline, sHe box, MahilaUdyamNidhi, MahilaVikasNidh

Cultural Talent Discovery Scheme

The Government has launched a scheme namely 'National Mission on **Cultural Mapping and Roadmap'** recently with the main object ives of talent hunt as well as collection of database of artists, artisans and various art forms across the country.

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The objective of the Mission is not only to collect the database of artists, artisans and various art forms, but also to applaud new talent and protect all age group of artists by organizing activities under **'National Cultural Awareness Programme' from Block** level to National level.

Border Haats

About
- Setting up of Border Haats is one of the methods for facilitating and increasing border trade across neighbouring countries.
- The trade at border haats is permitted to be carried out in Indian Rupees/Bangladesh Taka and on barter basis, and data

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of such trade is maintained by the Haat Management Committee of the respective border haat
- Currently four Border Haats are operational along India-Bangladesh border. Two Border Haats are located in Meghalaya at Kalaichar and Balat and other two are located in Tripura at Srinagar and Kamalasagar.
- In addition to the four functional Border Haats, Government of India and **Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh have agreed to set up six more** border haats-two in Tripura and four in Meghalaya.
- Government of India has also executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Government of the Republic of Union of Myanmar under which Border Haats are to be set up at nine mutually agreed locations.

Promotion of traditional sports

Under the revamped Khelo India proposal, there is an exclusive **component called "Promotion of Rural, Indigenous and Tribal Games" for** promotion and development of traditional sports.

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The trainees and the schools adopted in the IGMA scheme are provided with the sports kit, accidental insurance including medical, stipend, annual grant to the school for purchase of equipment and for organizing competitions for scouting talent.

In order to revive such games and promote them among the masses, SAI has adopted the following indigenous games disciplines for their promotion:
a) Kalaripayatu, Kerala
b) Silambam, Tamilnadu

c) Kabaddi, Telengana
d) Archery, Jharkhand
e) Malkhamb, Maharashtra
f) Mukna, Imphal
g) Thangta, Imphal
h) Khomlainai, Assam
i) Gatka, Punjab

Indian Army Team with T90 Tanks Participates in Tank Biathlon 2017 in Russia

The Tank Biathlon commenced with the opening ceremony of International Army Games at Alabino Ranges, Russia.Nineteen nations with three crews each are competing with each other in the Stage I individual races to qualify for the Stage II which will be a relay race.

The Tank Biathlon competition is an international event conducted as part of the International Army Games held every year since 2013 at Alabino Ranges, Russia. International Army Games involve 28 events organised in five Countries i.e. Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and China. The Indian Army team has been participating in the competition for the past three years since 2014. The team stood 6th in the previous year out of the 17 countries which participated in the event in July 2016. This year, for the first time, the team would be participating with own T-90 tanks which have been shipped to Russia. The competition involves firing on tanks on the move by conventional machine guns and anti tank projectiles at a range of two kilometres, whilst negotiating rugged obstacles. The team has been selected through a rigorous selection process on the basis of technical expertise, physical fitness, mental endurance and consistency in accuracy of firing the tank weapons while driving the tanks through a replica of the original circuit in Russia, at Babina Field Firing Ranges in Central India.

Buy Rail Tickets Now and Pay Later

- A scheme of booking e-ticket online and making payment after **15 days through 'ePaylater'** has been introduced by IRCTC. Under this scheme, a customer has the option to pay after 15 days of booking an e-ticket through IRCTC website.
- **The service charge levied on using 'ePaylater' scheme is 3.50% of transaction** amount and applicable taxes.
- Online ticketing through IRCTC website is gaining popularity and its share vis-à-vis counter tickets is increasing. Further, online ticket booking is also being promoted as a cashless mode of transaction.
- ePaylater as a payment option is displayed at the payment page of IRCTC website to make people aware about the availability of this payment method.

Proxy voting for Overseas electors cleared by Government

The Government approved changes in electoral laws to permit Non-Resident Indians to cast their vote in assembly and LokSabha elections from overseas.

If the proposal passes political muster in Parliament, NRIs will be able to **exercise their voting rights through "proxy".** Currently, only service personnel are permitted to vote through proxy.

Govenrment Considerations
The Government is considering to allow the alternative options of voting to overseas electors in the form of

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a) e-Postal Ballot System which envisages making available bank postal ballot electronically to the NRI voters and thereafter return of the same by normal post and

b) Proxy voting which would allow such voters to appoint a proxy after following certain formalities and exercise his franchise through the medium of the proxy so appointed.

Key Highlights

- Overseas electors will have to appoint a nominee afresh for each election — one person can act as proxy for only one overseas voter.
- Oversea electors are free to cast their votes in constituencies where they are registered, as per the proposal, they would also be allowed to use the option of proxy, which is only available to service personnel.
- The proposal of amendment of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and 1951 require consideration and approval of both the Houses of the Parliament in order to include proxy voting as other means to cast their votes

Welfare Schemes for Handloom Weavers

The Government of India through the Office of Development Commissioner (Handlooms) has been implementing the following schemes for the welfare of handloom weavers and development of handloom sector in the country:

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1. National Handloom Development Programme (with following components)

   (i) Block Level Cluster

   (ii) Handloom Marketing Assistance

   (iii) Concessional credit/weavers Mudra Scheme

   (iv) Handloom Census

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Mai Bhagolstri
> Shakti Scheme

2. **Handloom Weavers' Comprehensive Welfare Scheme**

3. Yarn Supply Scheme

4. Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme

The Handloom Marketing Assistance component of the National Handloom Development Programme has been facilitating the handloom weavers to sell their products directly to the customers by eliminating the middlemen.

World Breastfeeding Week

About

Breastfeeding Week is observed in the first week of August to focus attention on the important aspect of promotion and support of breastfeeding.

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Global Breastfeeding Scorecard

- The Global Breastfeeding Scorecard, a new **report by the UN Children's Fund** (UNICEF) and WHO in collaboration with the Global Breastfeeding Collective.
- It points out that breastfeeding not only helps prevent diarrhoea and pneumonia, two major causes of death in infants, it also helps reduce **mothers' risk of ovarian and breast cancer, two** leading causes of death among women.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> IGMSY,Sabla,Priyadarshin, STEP, ICPS

- The scorecard was released with new analysis, demonstrating that an annual investment of only USD 4.70 per newborn is required to increase the global rate

of exclusive breastfeeding among children less than six months to 50 per cent by 2025.

- Lower levels of performance are graded into three levels, colour coded as yellow, orange, and red, with red indicating the lowest level of support.

Initiatives taken by Indian govt to promoteBreasfeeding Week

1. The theme of this year's breastfeeding week is '**Sustaining Breastfeeding'.**
2. To intensify the efforts further for promotion of breastfeeding, the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has initiated a nationwide programme called "MAA- **Mother's Absolute Affection**'' to bring undiluted focus on promotion of breastfeeding and provision of services towards supporting breastfeeding.
3. The key components of the MAA programme are awareness generation, promotion of breastfeeding & inter personal counselling at community level, skilled support for breastfeeding at delivery points and monitoring and Award/ recognition of health facility.
4. Under this programme, ASHA has been incentivized for reaching out to pregnant and lactating mothers and provide information on benefits and techniques of successful breastfeeding.

Improved rates of breastfeeding lead to…

Improved health and development for children

Improved health for women

And improved…

Cognitive development

Learning and educational attainment

Productivity

Wages

Economy (GDP)

Coconut palm declared State tree of Goa

The State government has decided to include coconut palm as tree in the Goa, Daman and Diu (Preservation of) Trees Act, 1984 to regulate felling of coconut trees under this Act
Cabinet passed an amendment restoring the coconut palm in the list of trees and also according it the status of State tree.

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One Stop Centres

- The Ministry of Women & Child Development has set up 151 Centres till date under the new scheme of One Stop Centres (OSCs) for women affected by violence.

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- The objective of these One Stop Centres is to help those women who have no access to either police or medical facilities or are not able to visit a police station in times of distress.
- Each centre has a psychologist, a doctor, a nurse, a lawyer, police and facility for 8 beds which can be expanded
- It is a centrally Sponsored Scheme which is a sub-scheme of Umbrella Scheme for National Mission for Empowerment of women including Indira Gandhi MattritavSahyaogYojana
- In case girls under 18 year of age are referred to the Centre, they will also be served in coordination with authorities/institutions established under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 and Protection of Children from Sexual Offence Act, 2012

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Gender Budgeting, Working Women Hostel, Kishori Shakti Yojna

> **Universalization of Women's Helpline**
> - The Scheme of Universalisation of Women Helpline is intended to provide 24 hours immediate and emergency response to women affected by violence
> - To facilitate crisis and non-crisis intervention through referral to the appropriate agencies such as police/Hospitals/Ambulance services/District Legal Service Authority (DLSA)/Protection Officer (PO)/OSC

AGRI UDAAN- Food and Agribusiness Accelerator 2.0

This programme is a 6 month program in which shortlisted agri startups with promising innovative business models will be mentored & guided to scale up their operations for effective improvement in agriculture.

Key Highlights
1. Accelerators are 4-8 month program aiming at scaling up innovative startups and ideas to attract the youth from rural India into viable businesses.
2. Four distinct factors that make accelerators unique are fixed term, cohort based, mentorship driven and they culminate into demo day.
3. ICAR-NAARM Technology Business Incubator (TBI), a-IDEA and Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad's (IIM-A) incubator Center for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIIE) are collectively overlooking this program
4. 40 startups will be shortlisted and allowed to pitch in front of panel of evaluators during cohort finalization programme at NAARM. Out of these about 8 to 12 startups will be selected for final cohort for capacity building workshop.

High Level Committee on Making India Hub of Arbitration Submits Report

The Government of India under Ministry of Law & Justice is committed for speedy resolution of commercial disputes and to make India an international hub of Arbitration and a Centre of robust ADR mechanism catering to international and domestic arbitration, at par with international standards available.

A ten Member,High Level Committee under the Chairmanship of Justice B.N.Srikrishna working under the aegis of Ministry of Law & Justice and is subjected to review the institutionalization of arbitration mechanism

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> International Court of Arbitration, Permanent Court of Arbitration, ICC

and suggest reforms.

Key recommendations by committee

1. Setting up an Autonomous Body, styled the Arbitration Promotion Council of India (APCI), having representatives from all stakeholders for grading arbitral institutions in India.
2. The APCI may *inter alia* recognize professional institutes providing for accreditation of arbitrators.
3. Creation of a specialist Arbitration Bench to deal with such Commercial disputes, in the domain of the Courts
4. The Committee has preferred for declaring the ICADR as anInstitution of national importance and takeover of the Institution by a statute. The Committee are of the view that a revamped ICADR has the potential be a globally competitive institution.
5. Recommended for creation of the post of an **'International Law Adviser' (ILA)** who shall advise the Government and coordinate dispute resolution strategy for the Government in disputes arising out of its international law obligations, particularly disputes arising out of BITs

Significance

The roadmap of suggested reforms after an in depth examination of the issues, by the High Level Committee can result in a paradigm shift from the current perception of delay in resolution of commercial disputes in India to it being viewed as an investor friendly destination. The suggested reforms will not only lessen the burden of the judiciary, but give a fillip to the development agenda of the Government and aid the financial strength of the country and serve the goal of welfare of the citizens.

The Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill,2017

In News

Bill is tabled in RajyaSabha recently aspiring to bring radical changes in the transport sector by amending the nearly 30-year-old Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, would be sent to a Select Committee of the RajyaSabha.

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Highlights of the Bill

1. The Bill amends the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 to address issues such as third party insurance, regulation of taxi aggregators, and road safety.
2. Under the Act, the liability of the third party insurer for motor vehicle accidents is unlimited. The Bill caps the maximum liability for third party insurance in case of a motor accident at Rs 10 lakh in case of death and at five lakh rupees in case of grievous injury.

PEPPER IT WITH
Solatium Fund, Good Samaritan Guidelines,National Transportation Policy, Tokyo Convention 1963

3. The Bill provides for a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund which would provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India for certain types of accidents.
4. The Bill also provides for:
   I. amending the existing categories of driver licensing,
   II. recall of vehicles in case of defects,
   III. protection of good samaritans from any civil or criminal action, and
   IV. increase of penalties for several offences under the 1988 Act.

Key Issues and Analysis

➢ The Bill does not address several issues around road safety that have been highlighted by other committees such as: (i) creating road safety agencies, and (ii) improving road design and engineering
➢ Under the Act, compensation for hit and run victims comes from a Solatium Fund. The Bill creates a new Motor Vehicle Accident Fund in addition. The purpose of the new Accident Fund is unclear.
➢ The Bill caps the maximum liability for third party insurance, but does not cap the compensation amount that courts can award. In cases where courts award compensation higher than the maximum liability amount, it is unclear who will pay the remaining amount

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SATH initiative of NITI Aayog

Favouring the agenda for cooperative federalism, NITI Aayog has launched SATH, a program providing **'Sustainable Action for Transforming Human capital'** with the State Governments. The vision of the program is to initiate transformation in the education and health sectors. The program addresses the need expressed by many states for technical support from NITI.

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Key Points

1. To design a robust roadmap of intervention, develop a program governance structure, set up monitoring and tracking mechanisms, hand-hold state institutions through the execution stage and provide support on a range of institutional measures to achieve the end objectives.
2. SATH is a challenging and ambitious initiative as the baseline of various indicators and parameters of education and health in the States are in public domain.
3. It defines a new dimension for cooperative federalism, where NITI Aayog and its knowledge partner in close collaboration with their state machinery will actively aid implementation of their recommendations, in addition to just policy inputs.
4. The program will be implemented by NITI along with McKinsey & Company and IPE Global consortium.

Under SATH Initiative

NITI Aayog has selected Uttar Pradesh, Assam, and Karnataka to improve healthcare delivery and key outcomes in these States. In Education, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Jharkhand have been selected for support to better learning outcomes. The six States have been chosen after a rigorous competitive process based on comprehensive metrics to determine potential for impact and likelihood of success.

SwachhSurvekshanGramin 2017

Under Swachh Bharat Mission, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation with the help ofQuality Council of India (QCI) launched a third party verification survey report to take stock of the progress already made by the Mission in rural India called SwachhSurvekshanGramin 2017.

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Key Highlights

- Under the SwachhSurvekshanGramin 2017, QCI surveyed 1.4 lakh rural households across 4626 villages, and found the overall toilet coverage to be 62.45%.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Swachh Bharat Mission, ODF scheme, Swachh Bharat Kosh

- It was also announced to encourage States and districts to improve their Sanitation coverage and Solid Liquid Waste Management (SLWM)

- MDWS will also begin ranking all districts in India based on the data available on the SBM-G IMIS quarterly. The ranking will be based on parameters vizPerformance, Sustainability and Transparency.

> *Total score (100) = Performance (50) + Sustainability (25) + Transparency (25)*

- In response to the Prime Minister's call to the nation to Quit Filth, it was announced by MDWS that the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) will celebrate the week leading up to the 70th Independence Day as **"Khule Mein Shauch Se Azaadi"saptaah**.

RURAL INDIA'S JOURNEY TOWARDS ODF*

(AS ON AUGUST 7, 2017)

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Sanitation coverage in rural India: 66.27% up from 42.05% in 2014
- More than 2.2 lakh villages, 160 districts and 5 states declared ODF
- 4.56 crore toilets constructed since the launch of Clean India Mission in 2014
- 60,50, 751 toilets built in 2017-2018
- Under Namami Gange, all 4,480 villages along the banks of Ganga have been declared ODF
- 27.57% increase in Individual Household Latrines since October 2014
- 50% of 14-15 lakh Anganwadis covered with toilets for men and women

ODF* Open Defecation Free

Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin seeks to eliminate open defecation in rural areas by 2019 through improving access to sanitation.

Global Retirement Index(GRI)

About

The Global Retirement Index (GRI) is a multi-dimensional index developed byNatixis Global Asset Management and CoreData Research to examine the factors that drive retirement security and to provide a comparison tool for best practices in retirement policy.

The index incorporates 18 performance indicators, grouped into four thematic sub-indices, namely :

I.   the material means to live comfortably in retirement
II.   access to quality financial services to help preserve savings value and maximize income
III. access to quality health services
IV.   a clean and safe environment.

The index ranks 43 countries which include International Monetary Fund (IMF) advanced economies, members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China).

Norway, Switzerland and Iceland topped the ranking chart of GRI.

Why in news

India ranks 43rd in GRI 2017 and has the same score compared to last year. Its sub-indices all rank in the bottom **five. Compared to last year's report, India declines in the** Material Wellbeing (41st) and Health (43rd) sub-indices but gains ground in Finances (39th) and Quality of Life (43rd).

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Atal Pension Yojana (APY), EPFO

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TOP 10 COUNTRIES IN 2017 GRI

Norway		Switzerland		Iceland		Sweden		New Zealand	
2017	86%	2017	84%	2017	82%	2017	80%	2017	80%
2016	86%	2016	84%	2016	80%	2016	79%	2016	80%

Australia		Germany		Denmark		Netherlands		Luxembourg	
2017	78%	2017	77%	2017	77%	2017	77%	2017	76%
2016	78%	2016	78%	2016	77%	2016	78%	2016	76%

Sankalp Se Sidhi

"Sankalp Se Sidhi" commemorate the on everyone to pledge

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1. Filth   –   Quit India
2. Poverty   –   Quit India
3. Corruption –   Quit India
4. Terrorism   –   Quit India
5. Casteism   –   Quit India
6. Communalism –   Quit India

On this occasion, the Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Ministry has planned to organize the Sankalp Se Sidhi program at 578 KrishiVigyanKendras (KVKs), 29 ICAR institutes/SAUs and 53 ATMAs in 18 states at 32 locations.

The programs comprise of Kisan Film **having message of Hon'ble PM to double farmers' income by year 2022, followed by pledge for Sankalp Se Sidhi.**

program is being organized across the country to 75th Anniversary of Quit India Movement. It calls together towards

SANKALP SE SIDDHI
(New India Movement 2017-2022)

NEW INDIA PLEDGE
Let us together pledge for a New India.

In 1942 our freedom fighters had taken a pledge of 'Quit India' and in 1947 that pledge came true and India achieved it's Independence.

COME, LET US TOGETHER PLEDGE FOR BUILDING A **NEW INDIA** BY 2022

Let us together pledge that by 2022 we build a New India

Let us together pledge towards a **Corruption Free India**

Let us together pledge towards a **Clean India**

Let us together pledge towards a **Poverty Free India**

Let us together pledge towards a **Terrorism Free India**

Let us together pledge towards a **Casteism Free India**

Let us together pledge towards a **Communalism Free India**

LET US ALL STRIVE IN SPIRIT AND SOUL TO ACCOMPLISH THIS PLEDGE FOR BUILDING A NEW INDIA.

First hybrid clone species 205 was developed for sub-tropical climate and it was launched in 1918 for commercial farming. Sugarcane farmers can make the best of intercropping technique and increase their income by growing oilseeds, pulses, potatoes, and cucumber with cane: Ministry of Agriculture addressed a gathering at **"100 years of Excellence In Sugarcane Research and "New India Manthan –** Sankal Se **Siddhi"**.

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Madhyamik and Uchchtar Shiksha Kosh" (MUSK)

Cabinet approves creation of a single non-lapsable corpus fund for Secondary and Higher education called MUSK from the proceeds ofCess for Secondary and Higher Education levied under Section 136 of Finance Act, 2007.

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Key Highlights

A) Administration and maintenance of the above pool by Ministry of Human Resource Development.

B) Accruals from the Cess would be utilized in the ongoing schemes of Secondary and Higher Education. However, the Ministry of Human Resources Development can allocate funds for any future programme/scheme of secondary and higher education, based on the requirement, as per prescribed procedure,

C) The MUSK would be maintained as a Reserve Fund in the non-interest bearing section of the Public Accounts of India.

D) The purpose of levying cess for secondary and higher education is to provide adequate resources for secondary and higher education.

E) The fund would be operationalised as per the present arrangements underPrarambhikShikshaKosh (PSK) wherein the proceeds of cess are used for SarvShikshaAbhiyan (SSA) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Schemes of the Department of School Education & Literacy.

NHRC serves notice to UP government for Gorakhpur tragedy

In News

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to the Uttar Pradesh government, seeking a detailed report on the death of children at BRD Medical College in Gorakhpur in four weeks.

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The rights panel has taken *suomotu* cognizance of media reports hinting at negligence in the supply of liquid oxygen at the hospital which resulted in the death of a large number of children.

The commission has observed that reported deaths, in such a large number in a government run hospital, amount to serious violation of right to life and health of innocent victims.

NHRC

The National Human Rights Commission is an expression of India's concern for the protection and promotion of human rights. It is an autonomous statutory body which came into being in October,1993 under The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 (TPHRA).

> PEPPER IT WITH
> CEDAW, Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA),Devdasi (Prohibition of Dedication) Act

Composition

The commission is multi-member body consisting of a chairman and 4 members.

- A Chairperson-retired CJI
- One Member who is, or has been, a Judge of the Supreme Court of India
- One Member who is, or has been, the Chief Justice of a High Court

> Human rights defined in TPHRA 1993
> In terms of Section 2 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 (hereafter referred to as 'the Act'), "human rights" means the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed under the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in India. "International Covenants" means the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on the 16th December, 1966 .

- ▪ Two Members to be appointed from among persons having knowledge of, or practical experience in, matters relating to human rights

In addition to these full time members , the commission has four ex-officio members – the Chairman of the National Commission for Minorities, the National Commission for SCs, the National Commission for STs and the National Commission for Women.

Appointment

The Chairman and members are appointed by president on the recommendation of 6- member committee consisting of PM as head , Speaker of LokSabha, Deputy Chairman of RajyaSabha, Leader of Opposition in both Houses of Parliament and Central Home Minister.

Term

The chairman and members hold office for term of 5 years or until attain age of 70 years.

NITI Aayoglaunches "Mentor India" Campaign

NITI Aayog launches the Mentor India Campaign, a strategic nation building initiative to engage leaders who can guide and mentor students at more than 900 Atal Tinkering Labs, established across the country as a part of the Atal Innovation Mission(AIM).

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Key Highlights

- ✓ Mentor India is aimed at maximizing the impact of Atal Tinkering Labs, possibly the biggest disruption in formal education globally. The idea is to engage leaders who will nurture and guide students in the Atal Tinkering Labs.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Cyber Gram Yojna, Venture Capital Fund for SC scheme, SPQEM, SarvaShikshaAbhiyan

These labs are non-prescriptive by nature, and mentors are expected to be enablers rather than instructors.

- ✓ Young children will get a chance to work with tools and equipment to understand what, how and why aspects of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math).
- ✓ The objective of this scheme is to foster curiosity, creativity, and imagination in young minds and inculcate skills such as design mindset, computational thinking, adaptive learning, physical computing etc

> Atal Tinkering Labs(ATL)
> ATL are dedicated works spaces where students from Class 6th to Class 12th learn innovation skills and develop ideas that will go on to transform India. The labs are powered to acquaint students with state-of-the-art equipment such as 3D printers, robotics & electronics development tools, Internet of things & sensors etc.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana(PMKSY)

In News

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister has approved the renaming of the new Central Sector Scheme - SAMPADA (Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters)as "Pradhan MantriKisanSampadaYojana (PMKSY) " for the period of 2016-20 coterminous with the 14th Finance Commission cycle.

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Objective

The objective of PMKSY is to supplement agriculture, modernize processing and decrease Agri-Waste.

Significance

- The implementation of PMKSY will result in creation of modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management from farm gate to retail outlet

> PEPPER IT WITH
> PMFBY,NABARD, Blue Revolution, Training Infrastructure in Dairying for Rural Dairy Farmers

- It will provide a big boost to the growth of food processing sector in the country.

- It will help in providing better prices to farmers and is a big step towards doubling of **farmers' income.**
- It will create huge employment opportunities especially in the rural areas.
- It will also help in reducing wastage of agricultural produce, increasing the processing level, availability of safe and convenient processed foods at affordable price to consumers and enhancing the export of the processed foods.

Conclusion

With the implementation of the Pradhan MantriKisanSamadaYojana, the supply management of products can be improved and a modern infrastructure can be developed. This will not only be a better effort for the food processing sector in the country, but it will also help the farmers to get better value. Also, it can prove to be an important step towards doubling the income of farmers.

NHAI launches mobile App MyFASTag and FASTag Partner

National Highways Authority of India under Ministry of Road Transport & Highways launched two mobile Apps – MyFASTag and FASTag Partner recently, to facilitate the availability of FASTags for Electronic Toll Collection.

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MyFASTag is a consumer App that can be downloaded from the App Store for both Android and iOS systems. A consumer can purchase or recharge FASTags on this App. The App also helps to keep track of transactions and provides for online grievance redressal

FASTag Partner is a merchant App. Agencies like Common Services Centre, banking partners and vehicle dealers can sell and enroll FASTag through this App. In addition to this, the App can also be used to activate the RFID tags that came built in with around 74 lakh cars in the country following the 2013 Gazette Notification in this regard

The dedicated FASTag lanes will become operational on all 371 NHAI toll plazas from 1st September 2017.

What is FASTag ?

FASTag is a simple to use, reloadable tag which enables automatic deduction of toll charges and lets you pass through the toll plaza without stopping for the cash transaction. FASTag is linked to a prepaid account from which the applicable toll amount is deducted. The tag employs Radio-frequency Identification (RFID) technology and is affixed on the vehicle's windscreen after the tag account is active.

Benefits

- Saves Fuel and Time
- Simple to use, reloadable tag
- No need to carry cash
- Online recharge
- SMS alerts for transactions

SC scrapsTripleTalaq

A perusal of the consideration recorded by us reveals, that the practice of **'talaq-e-biddat' has been done away with, by way of legislation in a large** number of egalitarian States, with sizeable Muslim population and even by theocratic Islamic States.

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In News

In a majority 3:2 judgment, a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court recently set aside talaq-e-biddat or instant and irrevocable talaq as a "manifestly arbitrary" practice, which is not protected by Article 25 (freedom of religion) of the Constitution.*The practice was against Article 14 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to equality, the Supreme Court has ruled.*

The practice of 'talaq-e-biddat' cannot be protected under the rights granted to religious denominations under Articles 25(1), 26(b) and 29 of the Constitution.

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Background

ShayaraBanofrom Uttarakhand then approached the Supreme Court in 2016 against her **husband's triple talaq, challenging the validity of arbitrary practices** against women followed by Muslims.Her petition seeks the Supreme Court to declare talaq-e-bidat, polygamy and nikahhalala illegal and unconstitutional on the grounds that they violate the rights guaranteed by the Constitution under Articles 14, 15, 21 and 25.

Shayara's husband opposed her plea on the ground they were governed by the Muslim Personal Law and all three discriminatory practices are sanctified provisions under the very same law.

However, under the Constitution, religious freedom is subject to all other Fundamental Rights. Article 25 — which guarantees Freedom of Practice and Propagation of Religion — does not protect religious practices since they can negatively affect the welfare of citizens.

Article 14, which guarantees the Right to Equality, overrides Article 25 because triple talaq denies a Muslim woman's equality before the law.

Types of Instant triple talaq

1. Talaq-e-Ahsan
2. TalaqHasan
3. Talaq-e-Biddat

Talaq- e- Ahsan : Under this form, once the husband pronounces talaq, there has to be a three-month iddat period to factor in three menstrual cycles of the woman. This time is meant for reconciliation and arbitration.

Talaq –e-Hasan (Proper): In this form too, there is a provision for revocation. The words of Talaq are to be pronounced three times in the successive periods after menstrual cycles. Lastly the husband is to make the third pronouncement in the third period the Talaq becomes irrevocable and the marriage dissolves.

Talaq-e-Biddat: Allows men to pronounce talaq thrice in one sitting, sometimes scrawled in a written talaqnama, or even by phone or text message.It has been banned in more than 20 Muslim countries.

Triple talaq and Supreme Court

The main ground on which the practice has been struck down is a simple formulation: that **"this** form of talaq is manifestly arbitrary in the sense that the marital tie can be broken capriciously and whimsically by a Muslim man without any attempt at reconciliation so as to save it.

Section 2 of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1937 has already recognised triple talaq as a statutory right.

It is significant to note that the words, "rule for decision shall be Muslim law" in Section 2 of the Act, are mandatory, meaning thereby that the courts are not only empowered but also bound to administer only Muslim personal law in the situations mentioned therein.

It was no longer a personal law to remain free of the fetters of the fundamental rights rigour but a statutory law which comes under the ambit of Article 13(1) of the Constitution.

Summary

The court favoured keeping on hold the practise of triple talaq for six months and requested the centre to come up with alternative legislation for instant talaq.

Justice Kurian suggested a Muslim bride, at the time of the wedding, should be allowed to lay down a condition in the *nikahnama* that instant *talaq*ought to beexcluded.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Shah Bano maintenance case,Art 142, SuoMotu Writ, Art 32

Law Commission should actively lay emphasis on the contentious issue of instant talaq and drive force toward the Uniform Civil Code.

NITI Aayog's 3-Year Action Agenda

NITI Aayog has come out with a detailed plan for reforms in the economy, judiciary, education, regulatory structure, transportation, energy and social sectors, in the three-year document to be implemented from 2017-18 to 2019-20.The Action Agenda has been prepared as an integral part of the exercise leading to the Vision and Strategy with fast tracked

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implementations harmoniously. The Vision, Strategy and Action Agenda exercise represents a departure from the Five Year Plan process.

The Agenda is a part of a longer-term Fifteen-year Vision and Seven-year Strategy outlined. The Action Agenda proposes a path to achieve all-round development of India and its people. A brief outline of the reforms suggested by NITI Ayog covered in the document is provided below.

1. Medium-Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework
    a. The Action Agenda proposes linking Central government expenditures to future priorities. It suggests shifting the composition of expenditures by allocating a larger proportion of additional revenues that become available over timeto high-priority sectors
    b. The proposals imply substantial expansion in expenditures by 2019-20 on education, health, agriculture, rural development, defence, railways, roads and other categories of capital expenditure.
2. Economic Transformations in Major Sectors

Agriculture: Doubling Farmers' Incomes :
    a. Enhancing agricultural productivity requires of efficiently using inputs, introducing new technologies and shifting from low to high value commodities
    b. . The reform of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMC) Act.
    c. Measures that can help reduce distortions in the MSP system.
    d. Measures to alleviate distress in case of natural calamities, via policies like FasalBimaYojana etc.

Trade, Industry and Services: Creating Well-Paid Jobs :
    a. focus on the domestic market through an import-substitution strategy via initiatives like Make in India.
    b. Agenda focuses on the measures necessary for the increased emergence of larger, organized-sector firms generating high-productivity, high-wage jobs
    c. The Action Agenda offers specific proposals for jumpstarting some of the key manufacturing and services sectors, including apparel, electronics, gems and jewellery, financial services, tourism and cultural industries and real estate.
3. Regional Development
    a. The Action Agenda facilitate urbanisation in the country and deals with key challenges like affordable housing, infrastructure development, public transport and promotion of Swachh Bharat, reform of urban land markets and waste management.
    b. Developing infrastructure in these areas to bridge the divide created by geographical uniqueness is an important element of government actions. (North Eastern region, coastal areas, islands, North Himalayan states and desert and drought prone areas)
4. Growth Enablers
    a. To enhance the contribution of a number of growth enablers. These include infrastructure, digital connectivity, Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), energy, science and technology and creation of an effective innovation ecosystem.
    b. development strategy to promote science and technology including creating an enabling environment for innovation and entrepreneurship via STEM, ATL etc
5. Government
    a. It suggests actions to eliminate corruption and black money, reforms in the civil service, and electoral process which have emerged as important policy priorities.
    b. Includes reforms to taxation policy and its administration with the view of reducing the scope for tax evasion and generation of black money, expansion of the tax base, and creation of a predictable and stable tax policy.
    c. The suggestions for reforming the judicial system revolve around streamlining human resource availability and performance, increasing and strengthening avenues for dispute resolution and extensive use of ICT to improve efficiency.
6. Social Sectors
    a. The Action Agenda turns attention towards education, skill development, health and issues facing specific groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women,

children, differently abled and senior citizens. Addressing the needs of all members of society is critical for inclusive growth of the country via policies like "SabkaSaath, SabkaVikas".

7. Sustainability
   a. The Action Agenda lay emphasis on environmental sustainability drawing attention to address the high levelsof air pollution in the cities, black carbon pollution indoors from the use of biomass fuels in cooking, massive volumesof solid waste in urban areas and deforestation. It suggests to strengthen and streamline regulatory structures governing sustainability of the environment to check pollutions.

Conclusion

The Three Year Action Agenda offers ambitious proposals for policy changes within a relatively short period.For holistic development, all ministries and departments must progress simultaneously and harmoniously. Therefore, as a roadmap for future progress, the Action Agenda attempts to cover nearly all aspects of the economy. Despite this wide coverage, an effort has been made to present all action points with the utmost clarity.It is in recognition of these joint aspirations that the Prime Minister has called for the transformation of India with the "Participation of All and Development of All" or "SabkaSaath, SabkaVikas."

YUVA – a skill development programme

With the help of Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) YUVA – a skill development programme and an initiative by Delhi Police under Pradhan MantriKaushalVikasYojana was launched recently.

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Key Highlights

1. **The 'YUVA' initiativeunder the MSDE by Delhi Police aims to connect with youth by** upgrading their skill as per their competencies which will help them to get a gainful employment under Pradhan MantriKaushalVikasYojna.
2. Delhi Police has tied up with National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for providing mass job linked skill training for the selected youth

> PEPPER IT WITH
> PMKVY scheme, NSDC

3. The target youth are in the age of 17-25 years for this training belonging to categories such as School dropouts, Juvenile offenders, Victims of crimes and families in dire state due to incarceration of the bread earner of the family, mostly from the underprivileged colonies.

Judicial Performance Index

The government think tank NITI Aayog has suggested establishment of a judicial performance index to check delay in finalisation of cases in lower judiciary. The recommendation comes against the backdrop of pendency of nearly 2.7 crore cases in subordinate courts, which also face a shortfall of nearly 5,000 judicial officers.

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Key Suggestions by NITI AYOG

1. Such an index could be established to help High Courts and High Court Chief Justices keep track of performance and process improvement at the District Courts and subordinate levels for reducing delay.
2. This suggested process by NITI Ayog requires fixing non-mandatory time frames for different types of cases as broad guidelines to benchmark when a case has been delayed. Using existing infrastructure and data, indicators could be created to see how long cases have been pending, what percentage of cases have been delayed and how many cases were disposed for comparative years.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Global Measures of Court Performance designed byInternational Framework for Court Excellence (IFCE)

3. NITI Ayog suggested that high priority should be given to court process automation and information and communication technology enablement for electronic court and case management, including electronic management of court schedules and migration of all courts to the unified national court application software.

4. The NitiAayog report has suggested shifting some workload out of the regular court system and introduction of a separate administrative cadre in the judicial system. The cadre should report in to the chief justice in each high court to maintain judicial independence.

5. Steps should be taken for ensuring availability of online real time judicial statistics for determining the adequacy of judicial manpower and infrastructure to deal with work load of cases, and will help in prioritizing appointment of judges at different judiciary levels to tackle the pendency problem.

Right to Privacy

A nine- judge Constitutional bench of Supreme Court— headed by outgoing chief justice JS Khehar had delivered the historic judgment on right to privacy. They said, in six separate judgments, that privacy is a fundamental right and **"right to privacy is an** intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty under Article 21 and entire Part III of the Constitution.**"**

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Background

The first case of – *M P Sharma v Satish Chandra, District Magistrate, Delhi1* **("M P Sharma")** was rendered by a Bench of eight judges and the second case , in *Kharak Singh v State of Uttar Pradesh2* **("Kharak Singh")** was rendered by a Bench of six judges. Each of these decisions, in the submission of the Attorney General, contained observations that the Indian Constitution does not specifically protect the right to privacy which is not a fundamental or'guaranteed' right.

In*Gobindv **State of Madhya Pradesh6 ("Gobind")***the Bench clarified that the R*ight to Privacy* was not an absolute right and must be subject to restriction on the basis of compelling public interest.

In R Rajagopalvs State of Tamil Nadu (1994), Supreme Court held that the Right to Privacy is implicit in the right to life and liberty guarantee by Article 21. A citizen has a right to safeguard the privacy of his own, his family, marriage, procreation, motherhood, child-bearing and education among other matters.

India's commitments under International law

- Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, recognises the right to privacy
    "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks."

- Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
    "The obligations imposed by this article require the State to adopt legislative and other measures to give effect to the prohibition against such interferences and attacks as well as to the protection of the right."

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Thomson's Reductionism, Posner's Economic critique, Bork's critique, Origins of privacy- Aristotle, RTI, US Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights, EURegulation of January 2012, OECD Privacy Principles, APEC Privacy Framework

- European Convention on Human Rights
    An international agreement to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe. Under Article 8 it recognizes the "right to respect for private and family life"

India is signatory of all major international conventions which advocates Right to Privacy.

Significance of Privacy

1. Privacy is the constitutional core of human dignity. Privacy ensures the fulfilment of dignity and dignity is part of the Preamble, part of the basic structure of the Constitution.
2. Privacy is a concomitant of the right of the individual to exercise control over his or her personality i.e. ability to make free choices and decisions autonomously.
3. The right to personal liberty of human is unsubstantial without adequate protection for right to privacy. It is inseparable and inalienable in nature.
4. The Right to Privacy is a right which protects the inner sphere of individual from interference of both state and non-state actors allowing to make free choices.

Salient features of Report of the Group of Experts on Privacy under Justice AP Shah

1. *Technological Neutrality and Interoperability with International Standards*:
   The Privacy Act should not make any reference to specific technologies and must be generic enough such that the principles and enforcement mechanisms remain adaptable to changes in society, the marketplace, technology, and the government
2. *Multi-Dimensional Privacy:*
   It should protect all types of privacy, such as bodily privacy (DNA and physical privacy); privacy against unauthorised interception, audio and video surveillance; and data protection on internet.
3. *Horizontal Applicability:*
   Any proposed privacy legislation must apply both to the government as well as to the private sector
4. *Co-Regulatory Enforcement Regime:*
   It recommends the establishment of the office of the "Privacy Commissioner", both at the central and regional levels.The Privacy Commissioners shall be the primary authority for enforcement of theprovisions of the Act.
   It also recommends a system of co-regulation, with equal emphasison Self-Regulating Organisations (SROs) being vested with the responsibility ofautonomously ensuring compliance with the Act, subject to regular oversight by thePrivacy Commissioners.

Way Forward and Scope

1. Clarify its ambit and definitions;
2. Specify the constitutional basis of the right to privacy;
3. State National Privacy Principles which can be used to harmonise legislation, policy, and practices including but not limited to interception, the use of personal identifiers, the use of audio and video recordings, the use of bodily and genetic material, and the use of personal information by the government and the private sector;
4. List additional exemptions necessary in the context of privacy and explain the necessary measures to weigh exemptions and limitations to the right of privacy against;
5. Articulate an enforcement regime including establishing the office of the **PrivacyCommissioner at the regional and central levels, defining the role of SRO's and co**-regulation, and creating a system of complaints and redressal for aggrieved individuals;
6. Prescribe safeguards for physical privacy including search and seizure;
7. Enumerate offences, associated remedies, and penalties;

Discordant notes to be addressed in future under Right to Privacy

Section 377: Sexual orientation is an essential attribute of privacy. Discrimination against an individual on the basis of sexual orientation is deeply offensive to the dignity and self-worth of the individual. The right to privacy and the protection of sexual orientation lie at the core of the fundamental rights guaranteed by Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution.

Data Protection: The dangers to privacy in an age of information can originate not only from the state but from non-state actors as well. Union Government need to examine and put into place a robust regime for data protection. It requires a careful and sensitive balance between individual interests and legitimate concerns of the state.

State Interfering with Diet: No one would like to be told by the State as to what they should eat or how they should dress or whom they should be associated with either in their personal, social or political life.

Violation of rights under Aadhaar& UIDAI:Both the government and service providers collect personal data like mobile phone numbers, bank details, addresses, date of birth, sexual identities,
biometric data, ownership of property and taxes without providing safeguards from third parties with a danger of data leakage.

Depiction Of Privacy

Conclusion
With the initiation of national programmes like Unique Identification number,NATGRID, CCTNS, RSYB, DNA profiling, Reproductive Rights of Women, Privilegedcommunications and brain mapping, most of which will be implemented through ICTplatforms, and increased collection of citizen information by the government, concernshave emerged on their impact on the privacy of persons.At the moment there is nooverarching policy speaking to the collection of information by the government. The Government has to devise a robust mechanism to address these above mentioned hurdles by fixing accountability, data collection limitation, purpose limitation and robust security measure so that a citizen can enjoy his/her privacy without lurking danger of data leakage and theft.

India can go ahead with Kishanganga, Ratle projects under Indus Water Treaty(IWT): World Bank

Under the Indus Waters Treaty, India is permitted to construct hydroelectric power facilities on tributaries of the Jhelum and Chenab rivers with certain restrictions.

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The conflict between the two countries is over the construction of the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric plants on Kishenganga and Chenab rivers respectively. Pakistan opposes the construction of the Kishanganga (330 megawatts) and Ratle (850 megawatts) hydroelectric power plants being built by India.
About Indus Water Treaty
• The IWT was signed on September 19, 1960 by the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistan's President Ayub Khan.
• It was brokered by the World Bank.
• The treaty administers how river Indus and its tributaries that flow in both the countries will be utilised.
• According to the treaty, Beas, Ravi and Sutlej are to be

Pepper it with

Kishanganga hydroelectric project, Ratle hydroelectric project, Teesta water sharing agreement

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governed by India, while, Indus, Chenab and Jhelum are to be taken care by Pakistan.

- However, since Indus flows from India, the country is allowed to use 20 per cent of its water for irrigation, power generation and transport purposes.

- A Permanent Indus Commission was set up as a bilateral commission to implement and manage the Treaty. The Commission solves disputes arising over water sharing.

- The Treaty also provides arbitration mechanism to solve disputes amicably.

- Though Indus originates from Tibet, China has been kept out of the Treaty. If China decides to stop or change the flow of the river, it will affect both India and Pakistan.

- Climate change is causing melting of ice in Tibetan plateau, which scientists believe will affect the river in future.

SKETCH

India reviewed the Indus Water Treaty

The review meeting on the IWT came as India weighed its options to hit back at Pakistan in the aftermath of the Uri attack that left 18 soldiers dead, triggering demands that the government scrap the water distribution pact to mount pressure on that country.

Way forward

IWT has been an example of most successful water treaty of the world. It was brokered so that water could be shared without any conflict.

If India disobeys or walks away from the treaty, then it will loose confidence with other countries like Bangladesh and Nepal with which it has river sharing agreements and China can also reciprocate it on Brahmaputra river.

Hence India should not walk away from the treaty but can use the rights over western rivers at full.

BRICS Agriculture Research Platform

The Union Cabinet has given its ex-post facto approval for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed among India and various BRICS countries for establishment of the BRICS Agriculture Research Platform (BRICS-ARP).

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Background:

During the 7th BRICS Summit held in 2015 at Ufa in Russia, Prime Minister proposed to establish BRICS Agriculture Research Centre which will be a gift to the entire world. The Centre will promote sustainable agricultural development and poverty alleviation through strategic cooperation in agriculture to provide food security in the BRICS member countries.

Pepper it with BRICS contingent reserve, BRICS plus initiative

In order to further intensify cooperation among BRICS countries in agricultural research policy, science and technology, innovation and capacity building, including technologies for small holder farming in the BRICS countries, an MoU on establishment of the Agricultural Research Platform was signed by the foreign Ministers of BRICS countries in the 8th BRICS Summit held in October, 2016 at Goa.

Significance

BRICS-ARP will be the natural global platform for science-led agriculture-based sustainable

development for addressing the issues of world hunger, under-nutrition, poverty and inequality, particularly between farmers' and non-farmers' income, and enhancing agricultural trade, bio-security and climate resilient agriculture.

Memorandum of Association (MOA) to establish the ISARC

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In order to establish the ISARC (IRRI South Asia Regional Centre), a Memorandum of Association (MOA) has been signed between the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare India and International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Philippines.
About ISARC

> Pepper it with South China Sea dispute

1. The Center will be the first international Center in the eastern India and it will play a major role in harnessing and sustaining rice production in the region.
2. It is expected to be a boon for food production and skill development in the eastern India and similar ecologies in other South Asian and African countries.
3. It would be a Centre of Excellence in Rice Value Addition (CERVA) and will include a modern and sophisticated laboratory with the capacity to determine quality and status of heavy metals in grain and straw.
4. The Centre will also undertake capacity-building exercises for stakeholders across the rice value chain.
5. ISARC will operate under the governance of the IRRI Board of Trustees who will appoint an appropriate IRRI staff member as Director.

SIGNIFICANCE
This will help India to achieve higher per hectare yields and improved nutritional contents. **India's food and nutritional security issues will also be addressed.** The Centre will support in adopting value chain based production system in the country. This will reduce wastage, add value and generate higher income for the farmers. The farmers in Eastern India will benefit in particular, besides those in South Asian and African countries.
About IRRI
The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is **the world's premier research** organization dedicated to reducing poverty and hunger through rice science; improving the health and welfare of rice farmers and consumers; and protecting the rice-growing environment for future generations. IRRI is an independent, nonprofit, research and educational institute, founded in 1960 by the Ford and Rockefeller foundations with support from the Philippine government. The institute, headquartered in Los Baños, Philippines, has offices in 17 rice-growing countries in Asia and Africa, and more than 1,000 staff.

India signs loan agreement with AIIB

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The Loan and Project Agreements for Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) lending of US$ 329 million for Gujarat Rural Roads Project have been signed between the Government of India/ Government of Gujarat and the AIIB today recently at New Delhi.

The objective of the project is to improve the rural road connectivity and accessibility (by providing all weather road connectivity) to 1,060 villages in all the 33 districts in Gujarat state benefiting about 8 million people. The project will also benefit the service providers such as public transport operators, educational institutions, hospitals, local markets and traders.

> Peeper it with Asian Development Bank, AIIB and its support to Belt and Road initiative

About road project
The project consists of following two main components:
- Constructions and Up-gradation of Non-Plan Roads (NPRs): A total of 5000 km of NPRs will be constructed under this component. Besides, it is also envisaged to

construct – missing links (last mile connecting to the road network); missing structures (culverts and small bridges); approach roads to educational institutions; and upgrade/ construct roads passing through tribal areas.

- Up-gradation of Planned Roads: It is envisaged to upgrade existing earthen and metal roads to black top roads, resurfacing of village roads and other district roads, up-gradation of bridges to prevent flooding and subsequent isolation of flooded villages during monsoon season and widening of village roads and other district roads to ease traffic congestion.

About AIIB

✓ The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a new multilateral financial institution founded to bring countries together to address the daunting infrastructure needs across Asia.

✓ By furthering interconnectivity and economic development in the region through advancements in infrastructure and other productive sectors, it help stimulate growth and improve access to basic services.

✓ It was launched by the Chinese President Xi Jinping in January, 2016.

✓ The AIIB has a total of 57 members including 37 regional and 20 non-regional prospective founding members. China and India are among the largest shareholders.

China Cautions over Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)

The Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) sponsored by India and Japan is welcome — as long as it does not try to trip China's Belt and Road initiative, a Chinese newspaper said.

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What is Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)? How will Japan and India contribute to the project?

➢ The AAGC is an attempt to create a **"free and open Indo**-Pacific region" by rediscovering ancient sea-routes and creating new sea corridors that will link the African continent with India and countries in South-Asia and South-East Asia.

➢ The project stakeholders hope the sea corridors will be "low-cost" and have **"less carbon footprint"** when compared to a land corridor.

➢ Under the AAGC, there is a plan to connect ports in Jamnagar (Gujarat) with Djibouti in the Gulf of Eden. Similarly, ports of Mombasa and Zanzibar will be connected to ports near Madurai; Kolkata will be linked to Sittwe port in Myanmar. India is developing ports under the Sagarmala programme specifically for this purpose.

> Pepper it with Japan India Civil Nuclear Deal

➢ Apart from developing sea corridors, the AAGC also proposes to build robust institutional, industrial and transport infrastructure in growth poles among countries in Asia and Africa. The idea is to enable economies in Asia and Africa to further integrate and collectively emerge as a globally competitive economic bloc.

➢ Japan's contribution to the project will be its state-of-the-art technology and ability to build quality infrastructure, while India will bring in its expertise of working in Africa. The private sector of both countries are expected to play big role by coming together to form joint-ventures and consortiums, to take up infrastructure, power or agribusiness projects in Africa.

Where did the idea of AAGC originate?

The proposal for an AAGC was first mentioned in the joint declaration issued by prime ministers Modi and Shinzo Abe in November 2016. The declaration included their intention to work jointly and cooperatively with other countries to promote development of industrial corridors and networks in Asia and Africa.

What is the AAGC vision document? Which institutions were behind its creation?

A 30-page booklet, the AAGC vision document was unveiled by the Indian and Japanese government officials at the African Development Bank (AfDB) annual general meeting held at Gandhinagar on May 24. It is just a broad framework for the creation of the project. In the first phase, the corridor attempts to link Africa with India and countries in South-Asia including Bangladesh, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos.

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Is AAGC a counter to OBOR?

Unlike OBOR which entails development of a land corridor, AAGC will essentially be a sea corridor linking Africa with India and other countries of South-East Asia and Oceania. It is **being presented as a "distinct initiative" borne out of a consu**ltative process which would be **profitable and bankable, unlike the "government-funded model" of OBOR (One Belt One Road)** project.

Why is Africa lucrative? What kind of presence do the Chinese have across the continent?

The Chinese influence on the African economy can be gauged from the 2017 African Economic Outlook, released at the AfDB summit, which showed that country was still the **major consumer of African goods, accounting for 27 per cent of Africa's total global exports.** China is also a leader in greenfield investment in Africa. In comparison, India invested just USD 2.2 billion (1.3 percent of total greenfield investments) across 64 greenfield projects. Japan investments at present are minuscule.

India calls for early operationalisation of Chabahar Port

India and Iran have expressed commitment for early completion and operationalisation of Chabahar Port besides strengthening bilateral ties.

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Road Transport, Highways and Shipping Minister was on a two-day visit to Tehran to represent India at the inauguration and oath taking ceremony of Hassan Rouhani as the President of Iran for a second term where he also held discussions with Iranian officials on wide ranging issues including Chabahar Port and proposed rail link between Chabahar and Zahedan.

> Pepper it with Gwadar port, China Pakistan economic corridor

About Chabahar Port

1. The port of Chabahar is located in southeastern Iran in the Gulf of Oman. It is the only Iranian port with direct access to the ocean.

2. India will develop and operate the Chabahar port. India Ports Global, a recently formed port project investment arm of the shipping ministry and a joint venture between the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust and the Kandla port, will invest $85 million in developing two container berths with a length of 640 metres and three multi-cargo berths.

3. State run railway body IRCON International will set up a railway line at Chabahar to move goods right up to Afghanistan. The 500-km rail link between Chabahar and Zahedan will link Delhi to the rest of Iran's railway network.

Importance for India

✓ The port will make way for India to bypass Pakistan in transporting goods to Afghanistan using a sea-land route. At present, Pakistan does not allow India to transport through its territory to Afghanistan.

✓ This will also give momentum to the International North-South Transport Corridor of which both are initial signatories along with Russia. Iran is the key gateway in this project. It entails the ship, rail, and road routes for moving freight between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and Central Asia. The route primarily involves moving freight from India, Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia. The objective of the corridor is to increase trade connectivity between major cities such as Mumbai, Moscow, Tehran, Bak.

✓ It would counter Chinese presence in the Arabian sea through the support to Pakistan in developing Gwadar port.

✓ It can be used to station security

vessels for merchant ships off the African coast apart from giving the country a foothold in the western Arabian Sea, which is important as many of its energy imports pass through the route.

ASEAN, China adopt framework for crafting code on South China Sea

Foreign ministers of Southeast Asia and China adopted a negotiating framework for a code of conduct in the South China Sea.

The framework seeks to advance a 2002 Declaration of Conduct (DOC) of Parties in the South China Sea, which has mostly been ignored by

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claimant states, particularly China, which has built seven manmade islands in disputed waters, three of which are equipped with runways, surface-to-air missiles and radars.

All parties said that the framework is only an outline for how the code will be established.

About South China Sea Dispute

Approximately 3.5 million square km area of the South China Sea has been under dispute as China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei have all claimed sovereignty over this territory. This area of the sea is rich in oil and gas fields.

Disputed claims in the South China Sea

Source: D.Rosenberg/MiddleburyCollege/HarvardAsiaQuarterly/Phil gov't   AFP

It is a dispute over territory and sovereignty over ocean areas, and the Paracels and the Spratlys - two island chains claimed in whole or in part by a number of countries.

Alongside the fully fledged islands, there are dozens of rocky outcrops, atolls, sandbanks and reefs, such as the Scarborough Shoal.

China has backed its territorial claim by building on these islands and running naval patrols near them.

> Pepper it with
> Chagos archipelago sovereignty dispute

15th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting

The Fifteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting was convened in Kathmandu, Nepal on 10-11 August 2017.

Prime Minister of Nepal, inaugurated the Meeting. In his inaugural address, the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister underlined the need for concerted

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efforts in order to advance deeper regional cooperation in the BIMSTEC region.

The Meeting considered and approved the Reports of the 7th and 8th Sessions of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meetings held in Kathmandu, Nepal

> **BIST-EC**
> Initially, the economic bloc was formed with four Member States **with the acronym 'BIST-EC'** (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation). Following the inclusion of Myanmar in 1997 during a special Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok, the Gro**up was renamed 'BIMST-EC'** (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation). With the admission of Nepal and Bhutan at the 6th Ministerial Meeting (February 2004, Thailand), the name of the **grouping was changed to 'Bay of Bengal Ini**tiative for Multi-**Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation' (BIMSTEC).**

on February,7 and August, 10, 2017 respectively.

At the conclusion of the Meeting, the Leaders of Delegation issued a Joint Statement which recalled the 1997 Bangkok Declaration establishing BIMSTEC and agree to intensify collaborative efforts to realise the aims and purposes of BIMSTEC embodied therein and pledge to make BIMSTEC stronger, more effective and result oriented.

Greater cooperation were pleadged in areas of trade, agriculture, climate change, energy and other sectors.

About BIMSTEC

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organization comprising seven Member States lying in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal constituting a contiguous regional unity.

- This sub-regional organization came into being on 6 June 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration.It constitutes7 Member States: five deriving from South Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand.

> Pepper it with SAARC satellite, BBIN corridor, RCEP service pact

- The regional group constitutes a bridge between South and South East Asia and represents a reinforcement of relations among these countries. BIMSTEC has also established a platform for intra-regional cooperation between SAARC and ASEAN members.

India and Rohingya issue

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres **is concerned about India's plans** to deport Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, underlining that refugees should not be returned to countries where they fear persecution once they are registered.

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Central government had directed state authorities to identify and deport illegal immigrants, including Rohingyas, who face persecution in the Buddhist-majority Myanmar.

According to available data, more than 14,000 Rohingyas, registered with the UNHCR, are presently staying in India.

Issue

UN principles of non-refoulement applies in this case. According the these principles, no nation shall expel or return a refugee in any manner to territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

> Pepper it with UNHCR refugee **convention,** India's policy for refugees

ROHINGYA MIGRATION

Maritime Routes   Land Routes
Sources: NYT, BBC, CNN, IOM   Credits: Eleanor Albert, Julia Ro

COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS

India'sstand

Infiltration of (Rohingyas) from the Rakhine state of Myanmar into Indian territory, especially in recent years, besides being a burden on the limited resources of the country, also aggravates security challenges posed to India.The Rohingya are an ethnic Muslim minority group living primarily in M**yanmar's western Rakhine state.**

About Rohingyas

- ✓ They practice a Sufi-inflected variation of Sunni Islam. The estimated one million **Rohingya in Myanmar account for nearly a third of Rakhine's population.**
- ✓ **The Rohingya differ from Myanmar's dominant Buddhist groups ethnically,** linguistically, and religiously.
- ✓ The Rohingya trace their origins in the region to the fifteenth century when thousands of Muslims came to the former Arakan Kingdom.
- ✓ The Rohingya are largely identified as illegal Bengali immigrants, despite the fact that many Rohingya have resided in Myanmar for centuries. The Myanmar government refuses to grant the Rohingya citizenship status, and as a result the vast majority of **the group's members have no legal documentation, eff**ectively making them stateless.
- ✓ **Though Myanmar's 1948 citizenship law w**as already exclusionary, the military junta introduced a citizenship law in 1982 whose strict provisions stripped the Rohingya of access to full citizenship.

India to revive TAPI gasline

India will host the next steering committee meeting of the proposed 1,814 kilometre-long Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline.

The decision was made during the sixth joint Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) meeting on trade, economic, scientific and technological cooperation.

After a long time, efforts are being put for this gas pipeline.

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Pepper it with
Urja Ganga

About TAPI

The Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline (TAPI), also known as Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline, is a natural gas pipeline being developed by the Asian Development Bank. The pipeline will transport Caspian Sea natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan into Pakistan and then to India. The pipeline is expected to be operational by 2019. The abbreviation TAPI comes from the first letters of those countries. It start from the Galkynysh gas field.

In November 2014, the Pipeline Consortium, TAPI Pipeline Company Limited (TPCL) was incorporated in Isle of Man, a British Crown dependency. The Share Holders Agreement of TPCL was also signed in December 2015. The shareholding percentage in the TPCL would be Turkmenistan 85%, India 5%, Pakistan 5% and Afghanistan 5%.

Significance of this project

Turkmenistan holds 4 percent of the gas reserves of the world. It only exports gas to Russia, but with the TAPI pipeline, it will be able to come in contact with other countries too and expand its economy.

Afghanistan will earn transit fee through this pipeline and will be able to develop.

It will also bring India and its neighbours much needed energy at competitive pricing, and could easily supply Pakistan, India and Afghanistan gas needs till it is completed. It will further diversify the fuel basket to the benefit of Indian economy and the gas would be used mainly in power, fertiliser and city gas sectors.

Obstacles to TAPI pipeline

- Regional instability, especially in the Afghanistan and Pakistan is threat to the pipeline.
- The planned route of the 1800 km pipeline will pass through southern and western Afghanistan, regions which are hotbeds of terrorism.
- Moreover with the withdrawal of NATO American forces from Afghanistan, the question is whether Afghanistan will be able to protect it.
- **The pipeline will also pass through Pakistan's Balochistan Province, a region which is** unstable.
- It can become a target for terrorist groups.
- Also ADB is not funding it completely, and hence it will be difficult to have investors for this project.

Way Ahead

This project is a good opportunity to connect Central Asia and India. India would be able to deepen its bilateral economic partnerships with the Central Asian countries and become a major player in the emerging Eurasian region.

U.K. to seek 'temporary customs union'

The British government wants to remain a part of the European Union customs union for a number of years, as part of transition arrangements, while still being able to negotiate trade deals with countries such as India. A government paper published recently set out its ambitions around future relations with the customs union **— the EU's tariff**-free trading area **— one of the trickiest issues in negotiations over Britain's exit from the EU**.

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As Britain leaves EU and therefore the customs union, the government seeks a new customs arrangement that facilitates the freest and most frictionless trade possible in goods between the U.K. and the EU, and allowsBritain to forge new trade relationships with partners in Europe and around the world. Britain would push for a **"highly streamlined" customs arrangement** that would remove the need for a U.K.-EU customs border.

One potential approach would involve the U.K. **mirroring the EU's requirements for import**s from the rest of the world where their final destination is the EU.

It outlines Britain's ambitions for an interim arrangement: a time-limited customs based on

> BREXIT
> -Brexit is the popular term for the United Kingdom's prospective withdrawal from the EU..
> - In a referendum on 23 June 2016, 51.9% of the participating UK electorate voted to leave the EU. On 29 March 2017, the British government invoked Article 50 of the Treaty on the European Union;although revoking this might be legally possible, the UK is thus on course to leave the EU in March 2019.

shared external tariffs and without customs processes and duties between Britain and the EU. It will also push for Britain to be able to begin negotiations with new trade partners, something that members of the customs union are not able to do.

The U.K. has been clear that, once it has left the EU, it intends to pursue new trade negotiations with others. However, the U.K. would not bring into effect any new arrangements with third countries

> Pepper it with Plebiscite, Initiative, Recall

which were not consistent with the terms of the interim agreement while the interim agreement was in place.

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Significance

The proposals are ambitious, and rightly so. They set out arrangements that would allow U.K. businesses to continue to trade with their European partners in the future, while expanding their markets beyond the EU.

Trump's new Afghanistan policy

President Trump put a long-awaited strategy for resolving the nearly 16-year-old conflict in Afghanistan.

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Mr. Trump said there would be no **"blank check"** for the American engagement in Afghanistan announcing his plan, he deepened American involvement in a military mission. He put the argument that a hasty withdrawal would create a vacuum for terrorists, including ISIS and Al Qaeda.

He portrayed the strategy as to be a comprehensive, conditions-based regional approach that would aim for a political solution there.

Part of the plan is to deploy more American troops to Afghanistan to continue to train Afghan forces there, with the goal of convincing the Taliban — which has recently gained substantial ground in the war — that they could not win on the battlefield.

Pepper it with H1B visa issue, India a major defence partner of US

Evaluation

Mr. Trump's strategy was not all that different from Mr. Obama's, relying on a mix of conventional military force and diplomatic pressure on Pakistan. One administration official conceded that there was to be no major change in the mix of American forces operating in Afghanistan, and that the priorities would remain training Afghan forces and conducting counterterrorism operations.

India's Response

Hitting out at cross-border terrorism from Pakistan, India welcomed U.S. President Donald **Trump's new policy on Afghanistan and said his move would help target "safe havens" of** terrorism in South Asia**. American leader's call for an end to Pakistan's involvement in** terrorism in Afghanistan and his support for Afghan-led peace process had addressed a core Indian concern.

India **welcomed President Trump's determination to enhance efforts to overcome the** challenges facing Afghanistan and confronting issues of safe havens and other forms of cross-border support enjoyed by terrorists.

Mr. Trump urged India to do more to help Afghanistan with its developmental needs and urged Pakistan to stop terror attacks that originate from its territory.

5 chemicals banned in firecrackers

Ahead of the festive seasons of Dussehra and Deepavali, the Supreme Court on Monday prohibited the use of five chemicals, labelled as toxic by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), in the manufacture of firecrackers.

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The five chemicals are antimony, lithium, mercury, arsenic and lead.

BACKGROUND

The order came after the court heard the submissions from officials of the CPCB and **Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organisation's (PESO) Firework Research and Development** Centre at Sivakasi in Tamil Nadu.

WHAT THE COURT SAID

It is the responsibility of the Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organisation (PESO) to ensure compliance particularly in Sivakasi.

The court asked the CPCB to clarify on the use of strontium, another chemical branded toxic by the pollution body, in firecrackers.

ABOUT PESO

Petroleum And Explosives Safety Organization (PESO) is the department formed by Government of India and is under DIPP.

Its objectives are to administer the responsibilities delegated under the Explosives Act 1884 and Petroleum Act 1934 and the rules made there under related to manufacture, import, export, transport, possession, sale and use of Explosives, Petroleum products and

Compressed gases.
Colour to the firecrackers

Red	Strontium salts (Nitrates, carbonates and sulphates of strontium)
Orange	Calcium salts (Carbonates, chlorides and sulphates of calcium)
Yellow	Sodium salts (Nitrates and oxalates of sodium)
Green	Barium salts (Nitrates, carbonates, chlorides and chlorates of barium)
Blue	Copper salts (Carbonates and oxides of copper)
Purple	A combination of copper and strontium compounds
White	he burning of metals like magnesium, aluminium and titanium)

Methanol a clean and cheaper fuel

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Road Transport and Highways Ministry is deliberating upon a strategy to use methanol as an alternative fuel in automobiles. The Minister has asked government think-tank Niti Aayog to study the automobile standards developed in China to use methanol as an alternative fuel.

Benefits

> Pepper it with
> Combustible ice
> Asian Clean Energy
> Summit 2017

- Methanol economy will help India use its vast reserves of coal while driving import substitution. Research in converting carbon dioxide to methanol is promising and can be a game-changer for methanol economy.
- Niti Aayog has said that methanol is a promising fuel for waterways as it is clean, cheaper than fossil fuels and a good substitute for heavy fuels. It suggested that ethanol could be made out of coal and informed that a pilot project was already underway in Talcher in Odisha.
- NITI AAYOG is working on a roadmap for conversion from coal to methanol
- The government think-tank also said that methanol can be produced from municipal waste as well.
- Presently India imports methanol from Saudi Arabia and Iran.

WAY AHEAD

Methanol is a promising fuel used in many parts of the world. While in most countries it is being made from natural gas, for India it makes much more economic sense to use locally available coal.

ABOUT METHANOL AS FUEL

Methanol is an alternative fuel for internal combustion and other engines, either in combination with gasoline or directly. It is used in racing cars in many countries.

In general, ethanol is less toxic and has higher energy density, although methanol is less expensive to produce sustainably and is a less expensive way to reduce the carbon footprint.

Methanol may be made from hydrocarbon or renewable resources, in particular natural gas and biomass respectively. It can also be synthesized from CO2 (carbon dioxide) and hydrogen.

Projects worth Rs 425 crore approved by NMCG

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The Executive Committee of National Mission for Clean Ganga in its 4th meeting approved seven projects worth Rs 425 crore in the sector of sewage infrastructure, Ghat development and research.

All the six projects will be provided with Operation and Maintenance cost for 15 years by Central government and 100 per cent central assistance.

> Pepper it with
> Ganga and Yamuna
> declared living
> entities

A research study to understand the non-putrefying properties of river Ganga in both water and sediment was also approved at an estimated cost of Rs 4.96 crore.

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About NMCG

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is a society registered in 2011 under the Societies Registration Act 1860.

The aims and objectives of NMCG is to accomplish the mandate of National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) of

• To ensure effective abatement of pollution and rejuvenation of the river Ganga by adopting a river basin approach to promote inter-sectoral co-ordination for comprehensive planning and management and

• To maintain minimum ecological flows in the river Ganga with the aim of ensuring water quality and environmentally sustainable development.

• World bank aid for cleaning ganga river is to be added in NMCG.

NGRBA has since been dissolved with effect from the 7th October 2016, consequent to constitution of National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga (referred as National Ganga Council). Subsequently NMCG has been converted into an authority.

India ratifies 2nd commitment period of Kyoto Protocol

India has ratified the 2nd commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol that commits countries to contain the emission of greenhouse gases, reaffirming **its stand on climate action. In a brief statement, India's Permanent Mission** to the UN said that India deposited its Instrument of Acceptance of the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol under the UN Convention on Climate Change.

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With this, India became the 80th country to accept the amendment relating to the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, the international emissions reduction treaty.

> Pepper it with
> Marrakech Climate Change Conference
> Paris agreement
> Green Climate Fund

About Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto protocol was the first agreement between nations to mandate country-by-country reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions. Kyoto emerged from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was signed by nearly all nations at the 1992 mega-meeting popularly known as the Earth Summit. The framework pledges to stabilize greenhouse-gas concentrations "at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system". To put teeth into that pledge, a new treaty was needed, one with binding targets for greenhouse-gas reductions. That treaty was finalized in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997, after years of negotiations, and it went into force in 2005.

During the 1st commitment period, 37 industrialized countries and the European Community committed to reduce GHG emissions to an average of five percent against 1990 levels. During the second commitment period, Parties committed to reduce GHG emissions by at least 18 percent below 1990 levels in the eight-year period from 2013 to 2020; however, the composition of Parties in the second commitment period is different from the first.

Under the Protocol, countries must meet their targets primarily through national measures and also offers them an additional means to meet their targets by way of 3 market-based mechanisms.

The Kyoto mechanisms are:

• International Emissions Trading

• Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)

• Joint implementation (JI)

Monitoring emission targets

Under the Protocol, countries' actual emissions have to be monitored and precise records have to be kept of the trades carried out.

Registry systems track and record transactions by Parties under the mechanisms. The UN Climate Change Secretariat, based in Bonn, Germany, keeps an international transaction log to verify that transactions are consistent with the rules of the Protocol.

Reporting is done by Parties by submitting annual emission inventories and national reports under the Protocol at regular intervals.

A compliance system ensures that Parties are meeting their commitments and helps them to meet their commitments if they have problems doing so.

Adaptation

The Kyoto Protocol, like the Convention, is also designed to assist countries in adapting to the adverse effects of climate change. It facilitates the development and deployment of technologies that can help increase resilience to the impacts of climate change.

The Adaptation Fund was established to finance adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries that are Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. In the first commitment period, the Fund was financed mainly with a share of proceeds from CDM project activities.

The road ahead

The Kyoto Protocol is seen as an important first step towards a truly global emission reduction regime that will stabilize GHG emissions, and can provide the architecture for the future international agreement on climate change.

GAJ YATRA

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister, launched **'Gaj Yatra'**, a nationwide campaign to protect elephants on the occasion of World Elephant Day dated on August 12. The campaign is planned to cover 12 elephant range states with artist and craftmen creating shows with theme of elephants using local art and craft.

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GS CONNECT

The **'Gaju' mascot**, which was released by the Ministry in 2012, will behelm the campaign. The campaign will be led by the Wildlife Trust of India.

Important Facts

- **African elephants are listed as "vulnerable" and Asian** elephants **as "endangered" in the IUCN Red List of** threatened species.

> Pepper it with Project Elephant

- World Elephant Day was conceived in 2011.
- The Indian elephant (Elephas maximus) occurs in the central and southern Western Ghats, North-east India, eastern India and northern India and in some parts of southern peninsular India. It found in 16 states.
- It is included in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES).
- Reserves in the Western Ghats, Nilgiris and Eastern Ghats, spread across **Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu are collectively known as "Asia's elephant** empir**e", with about 10,000 elephants**.

World Bio-Fuel Day 2017

Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas celebrated the World Biofuel Day on 10th august 2017.

The World BioFuel Day was celebrated across 100 districts of the country in various states to create awareness about the bio fuel programme.

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Aim

The objective of "World Biofuel Day" is to sensitize youths, farmers and other stakeholders about the benefits of biofuel and seek their involvement in Biofuel programme run by the Government.

> Pepper it with Ethanol as biofuel Methane gas

About World Biofuel Day

On this day in 1893, Sir Rudolph Diesel (inventor of the diesel engine) for the first time successfully ran mechanical engine with Peanut Oil. His research experiment had predicted that vegetable oil is going to replace the fossil fuels in the next century to fuel different mechanical engines. Thus to mark this extraordinary achievement, World Biofuel Day is observed every year on 10th August.

Ministry of Petroleum & Natural gas has started observing the World Bio fuel Day since 2015.

Significance

1. The energy needs for Transportation and Domestic use in the country requires for 80

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percent import of crude. Hon'ble Prime Minister has given a task to cut down the crude import by 10% by 2022.

2. Petroleum Ministry will be coming out with the BioFuel Policy soon. The policy will taken into consideration various facets like Role of Government, Return on investment, Minimum Assurance etc. Recently Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has been made responsible for BioFuel Policy. The Minister said that both the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas will be working towards more utilisation of biofuels.

3. Approx $2 Billion is being invested by the Government Companies by way of R&D on Second Generation (2G) Biofuel Refineries across the country. Ways are being explored on conversion of urban, rural waste to fuel; use of waste/barren lands for cultivation of feedstock for 2G biofuels. The potential for the bio fuel industry in India would be around Rs 1 Lakh Crore in the next 1 to 2 years.

Largest volcanic region on Earth discovered under Antarctica

Scientists have uncovered the largest volcanic region on Earth – consisting of almost 100 volcanoes – 2 kilometres below the surface of the vast Antarctic ice sheet.

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The newly discovered volcanoes range in height from 100 to 3,850 metres. All of them are covered in thick layers of ice. These active peaks are concentrated in a region known as the west Antarctic rift system, which stretches 3,500 km from **Antarctica's Ros**s ice shelf to the Antarctic peninsula.

Researchers also pointed to an alarming trend that most volcanism in the world at present is in regions that have only recently lost their glacier covering – after the end of the last ice age.

This could happen in west Antarctica, where significant warming in the region caused by climate change has begun to affect its ice sheets.

Pepper it with
Ring of fire
Barren Island

Harit Diwali, Swasth Diwali

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, launched **"Harit Diwali, Swasth Diwali" campaign.**

GS CONNECT

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Children from schools of Delhi and NCR, were addressed on the importance of their contribution towards reducing pollution by not bursting harmful fire crackers during Diwali instead buying a gift, food items, or sweets for the poor and underprivileged children living in their locality . Children were encouraged to learn about the chemicals present in the fire crackers and the impact of these chemicals on various parts of the human body.

A pledge for a Green and Healthy Diwali was taken by the gathering of students. The Pledge will be widely circulated to the schools/colleges and other educational institutions and the school administration will be requested to administer the said Pledge during their school assembly up to Diwali.

Significance

Diwali is an integral part of our rich tradition and a festival that embodies joy and happiness. In recent times, the pattern of celebration has changed somewhat and has got associated with excessive bursting of crackers, which contributes significantly to air and noise pollution. As a result, there has been a significant impact on the environment and health of the people.

As has been the experience in the past few years, airborne pollution has been rising above safe limits during winter in many cities. The excessive burning of crackers during Diwali aggravates the problem. The pollution levels in Delhi last year, especially post Diwali, reached such levels that the government had to declare an emergency situation, which had socio-economic consequences like closing down of schools, construction sites and power stations.

India signs Global Environment Facility (GEF) Grant Agreement with the World Bank

A Grant Agreement from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) of the World Bank of USD 24.64 million for "Ecosystem Service Improvement Project" has been signed.

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The size of Project is USD 24.64 million which entirely will be financed **by the World Bank out of its GEF Trust Fund. The project's duration is 5 years**.

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) will implement the Project in the States of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh through Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education under the National Mission for Green India. The objective of the Project is to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Departments of Forestry and Community Organisations to enhance forest ecosystem services and improve the livelihoods of forest dependent communities in Central Indian Highlands.

> **Pepper it with**
> Minamata Convention, Stockholm Convention, United Nation Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nation Convention to Combat Desertification , UNFCCC.

About GEF

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth **Summit to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems**. GEF funds are available to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to meet the objectives of the international environmental conventions and agreements. GEF support is provided to government agencies, civil society organizations, private sector companies, research institutions, among the broad diversity of potential partners, to implement projects and programs in recipient countries.

The GEF is...

A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP of 18 agencies — including United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks, national entities and international NGOs — working with 183 countries to address the **world's most challenging environmental issues**

A FINANCIAL MECHANISM for 5 major international environmental conventions: the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

AN INNOVATOR AND CATALYST that supports multi-stakeholder alliances to preserve threatened ecosystems on land and in the oceans, build greener cities, boost food security and promote clean energy for a more prosperous, climate-resilient world; leveraging $5.2 in additional financing for every $1 invested.

Aeroplanes may be affecting ozone layer

Aeroplanes may be ejecting significant amounts of black carbon (BC) — a pollutant known to aggravate breathing disorders, upset the monsoon and quicken glacier melt — and may be depleting the ozone layer, according to a study by climate researchers from multiple institutions in the country.

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Photochemical Smog

Though airborne, BC is known to dissipate and settle down in a few months under the influence of rain and wind and is unlikely to travel upward of 4 km. However, a group of scientists — including **from the Indian Institute of Science and ISRO's Space Centre** — say they now have evidence of such particles existing up to 18 km

> **Pepper it with**
> Brown Carbon
> Soot
> Photochemical Smog

into the stratosphere and there are about 10,000 of them in every cubic centimetre.

Given the shape and location of these particles, they argue, it could only derive from emissions from aviation fuel and they pose a problem because these black carbon particles can linger

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long enough to provide a fertile ground for other chemical reactions that can deplete the ozone layer.

SAMAR
- It is a system of Aerosol monitoring and research launched by Indian Meteorological Department (IMD).
- Aerosols are minute particles suspended in the atmosphere. When these particles are sufficiently large, we notice their presence as they scatter and absorb sunlight. Their scattering of sunlight can reduce visibility (haze) and redden sunrises and sunsets.
- Aerosols interact both directly and indirectly with the Earth's radiation budget and climate. As a direct effect, the aerosols scatter sunlight directly back into space. As an indirect effect, aerosols in the lower atmosphere can modify the size of cloud particles, changing how the clouds reflect and absorb sunlight, thereby affecting the Earth's energy budget.

CONCERN

1. Because BC particles strongly absorb solar and terrestrial radiation and heats up the atmosphere it can upset the monsoon system.

2. If deposited on snow, it could accelerate the heating of snow and quicken the melting of glaciers.

3. Moreover, when BC particles are located above highly reflective surfaces (snow or clouds), their absorption efficiency is amplified. It's known to be one-fourth as potent as carbon dioxide in whetting global warming and ways and means to curb its emissions are increasingly part of international climate discussions.

Significance

This is the first time that any group in the world has shown that black carbon from aircraft can go to the stratosphere and affect the ozone layer.

TRIFED celebrates World Honey Bee Day

To create awareness about Beekeeping and uses of its products including Honey, Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) is celebrating World Honey Bee Day (WHBD) on 19th august this year in the Country and on 18th at all its Regional Offices and 43 Retails Outlets spread in the country.

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Significance

Honey, being an important Minor Forest Produce, TRIFED is playing and lead role in protecting, promoting and multiplication of Honey Bees by Scientific, Non-destructive collection practices, thereby increasing the livelihood of tribal people living in various forest areas of the country.

The forests provide 60% of the food & medicinal needs of tribals and 40% of their income comes from Minor Forest Produce (MFP) mostly from Honey.

Beekeeping has been useful in pollination of crops, thereby, increasing income of the farmers/beekeepers by way of increasing crop yield and providing honey and other beehive products, viz. royal jelly, bee pollen, propolis, bees wax, etc. that serves a source of livelihood for rural poor. Therefore, honeybees/ beekeeping has been recognised as one of the important inputs for sustainable development of agriculture/ horticulture.

About TRIFED

TRIFED is an apex organisation at National Level and functioning under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs. TRIFED is serving the interests of Tribals, who are engaged in collection of NTFP and making of Tribal Art & Handicraft Products for their livelihood so as to ensure better remunerative price for their products as well as for the socio-economic betterment through Self Help Groups, Empanelled NGOs, State level Tribal Development Corporations, Forest Development Corporations for undertaking marketing development of the tribal products.

Western Ghats gifts two new earthworm species

Scientists have discovered two new species of earthworms of the primitive Drawida genus from the southern Western Ghats.

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One of the new species, Drawida polydiverticulata, has more than two lobes in its reproductive organs, distinguishing it clearly from other species of earthworms.

This species is widespread in the shola-grasslands of Idukki district, including Eravikulam National Park, Pampadum Shola National Park, and Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary.

The second new species, Drawida thomasi, collected at the Kozhippara Waterfalls in Malappuram district, is approximately 5 cm long and bluish in colour.

About Drawida earthworms

Drawida earthworms are distributed across Indo-China, southeast Asia and northern Japan. Of the 73 species of Drawida earthworms found in India, 43 are found in the Western Ghats. India is home to 505 earthworm species, of which 200 are found in the Western Ghats.

Ocean forecasting system

The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) of the Ministry of Earth Sciences inaugurated the Ocean Forecasting System for Comoros, Madagascar, and Mozambique at the 3rdinisterial Meeting of Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Asia and Africa (RIMES), held at Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

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The ocean forecast and early warming information on high wave, currents, winds, tides, sub-surface ocean conditions cater to users like fishermen, coastal population, tourism sector, coastal defence officials, marine police, port authorities, research institutions and offshore industries of these countries.

> Pepper it with
> Earthquake early warning system
> Indian – Ocean Rim Association

Significance

1. The system would offer oil spill advisory services, high wave alerts, port warnings, forecast along the ship routes in addition to tsunami and storm surge warnings and help in search and rescue operations.
2. The Ocean Forecast System developed for the Indian Ocean countries and the real-time data from their territories also help to improve the ocean forecast and early warning system for the Indian coast too.
3. Wave surge (Kallkadal) and coastal flooding that occurred earlier in 2016 along Kerala and West Bengal were well predicted and real-time data from Seychelles were highly beneficial for predicting these incidents.
4. The ocean forecast and early warning services were most essential for safe navigation and operations at sea and the blue economic growth of many of these Indian Ocean rim countries and island nations.

Moss serves as a cheap pollution monitor

Delicate mosses found on rocks and trees in cities around the world can be used to measure the impact of atmospheric change and could prove a low-cost way to monitor urban pollution, according to Japanese scientists.

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The "bioindicator" responds to pollution or drought-stress by changing shape, density or disappearing, allowing scientists to calculate atmospheric alterations.

Significance

- This method is very cost effective and important for getting information about atmospheric conditions.
- Mosses are a common plant in all cities so we can use this method in many countries. They have a big potential to be bioindicators.

- Bioindicators such as mosses - which generally absorb water and nutrients from their immediate environments - were often cheaper to use than other methods of environmental evaluation, and can also reflect changes to ecosystems.

> Pepper it with Lichens, Hornwrts and Liverworts

- Humid cities where moss thrives could benefit most from using bryophytes – a collective term for mosses, hornworts and liverworts – as bioindicators, adding moss could be monitored in its natural environment or cultivated for analysis.

Effect of nitrogen pollution
- In a research paper published in the Landscape and Urban Planning journal, the effect of nitrogen pollution, air quality and drought-stress on moss found over a 3km square (1.9 mile) area in Hachioji City in northwestern Tokyo was studied.
- The study showed severe drought-stress tended to occur in areas with high levels of nitrogen pollution, which it said raised concerns over the impact on health and biodiversity.
- However, the scientists could not effectively measure air purity which affects the number of moss types as pollution levels in the sample area were not high enough.
- If the air pollution is severe, the purity is also evaluated by moss. The change of the moss is very diverse according to the environmental problem.

About Mosses
- ✓ Mosses are small flowerless plants that typically grow in dense green clumps or mats, often in damp or shady locations. The individual plants are usually composed of simple leaves that are generally only one cell thick, attached to a stem that may be branched or unbranched and has only a limited role in conducting water and nutrients.
- ✓ Mosses do not have seeds and after fertilisation develop sporophytes with unbranched stalks topped with single capsules containing spores. They are typically 0.2–10 cm (0.1–3.9 in) tall, though some species are much larger. Dawsonia is the tallest moss in the world.
- ✓ Mosses are now classified on their own as the division Bryophyta.
- ✓ The main commercial significance of mosses is as the main constituent of peat, although they are also used for decorative purposes, such as in gardens and in the florist trade. Traditional uses of mosses included as insulation and for the ability to absorb liquids up to 20 times their weight.

NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR)

ISRO and NASA are working towards realization of NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) mission by 2021.

ISRO and NASA have a framework agreement for cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes signed in 2008. Under this framework agreement, ISRO and NASA have executed an implementing arrangement for cooperation in NISAR mission, which is valid until 2034 and provides scope for joint activities on science & applications of NISAR data after the launch.

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About NISAR

Using advanced radar imaging that will provide an unprecedented, detailed view of Earth, the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar, or NISAR, satellite is designed to observe and take measurements of some of the planet's most complex processes, including ecosystem disturbances, ice-sheet collapse, and natural hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes and landslides.

> Pepper it with GSLV mark III Antrix Corporation Mangalyaan Mission

Data collected from NISAR will reveal information about the evolution and state of Earth's crust, help scientists better understand our planet's processes and changing climate, and aid future resource and hazard management.

In NISAR mission, NASA is responsible for development of L-band SAR and ISRO is responsible for development of S-band SAR. The L & S band SAR will be integrated with **ISRO's spacecraft and launched on-board India's GSLV.**

Way Forward

NISAR will add a tremendous new data set to create new and greatly improve upon existing applications. By virtue of the planned frequent and regular sampling of some of the world's most hazard-prone areas, these data will be more than a rich source of information to guide

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development of applications and their associated scientific studies. They will be a reliable source over the life of the mission for proactive planning for disasters, and will have a store of pre-disaster images available to rapidly and unambiguously understand what transpired in the disaster, leading to the development of actionable applications that could inform the government for consideration of future operational missions. Water resource monitoring, infrastructure monitoring, and other value-added applications will also be revolutionized by access to these data.

Measles-Rubella (MR) Campaign widens its reach

India, along with ten other WHO South East Asia Region member countries, have resolved to eliminate measles and control rubella/congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) by 2020. In this direction, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has initiated measles-rubella (MR) vaccination campaign in the age group of 9 months to less than 15 years in a phased manner across the nation. Following the campaign, MR vaccine will become a part of routine immunization and will replace measles vaccine, currently given at 9-12 months and 16-24 months of age of child.

Background

The first phase of measles-rubella vaccination campaign has been successfully completed in five states, namely, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Lakshadweep and Puducherry. More than 3.3 crore children were vaccinated, reaching out to 97% of the intended age group. The campaign was carried out in schools, community centers and health facilities. The next round is starting in 8 states/UTs (Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Telangana and Uttarakhand) from August 2017, aiming to cover 3.4 crore children.

Pepper it with
National Health Mission
Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana

Aim of campaign

The campaign aims to rapidly build up immunity for both measles and rubella diseases in the community so as to knock out the disease, therefore, all the children should receive MR vaccine during the campaign. For those children who have already received such vaccination, the campaign dose would provide additional boosting to them.

The Measles-Rubella campaign is a part of global efforts to reduce illness and deaths due to measles and rubella/CRS in the country. Measles immunization directly contributes to the reduction of under-five child mortality, and in combination with rubella vaccine, it will control rubella and prevent CRS.

About Measles-Rubella

German measles, also known as rubella, is a viral infection that causes a red rash on the body. Aside from the rash, people with German measles usually have a fever and swollen lymph nodes. The infection can spread from person to person through contact with droplets from an infected person's sneeze or cough.

It mainly affects children, more commonly those between 5 and 9 years old, but it can also occur in adults.

It can be a serious condition in pregnant women, as it may cause congenital rubella syndrome in the fetus. Congenital rubella syndrome can disrupt the development of the baby and cause serious birth defects, such as heart abnormalities, deafness, and brain damage. It's important to get treatment right away if you're pregnant and suspect you have German measles.

National Deworming Day

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is celebrating 2nd round of National Deworming Day (NDD) 2017 on 10th August in 33 States/UTs followed by mop-up activities on 17th August targeting 31 crore children.

This is one of the largest public health programs reaching large number of children during a short period. The first NDD round of 2017 implemented in February covered 26 crore children with a coverage of 89%.

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About NDD program

The NDD program has been launched in 2015 as WHO estimates that 220 million children below 14 years of age are at risk of STH infections in India. National Deworming Day is organised twice in a year covering all the children from 1-19 years of age except the States of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh where deworming is carried out once in a year. The Soil Transmitted Helminths (STH) prevalence in these two States is less than 20%. All the children are provided deworming tablet in schools and anganwadis. The deworming has the potential to improve nutritional status of children. The deworming tablet called **'Albendazole' is a safe and effic**acious drug for controlling worm infestation.

Aim

National Deworming Day aims to reach every child, regardless of their socio-economic circumstance. Schools and anganwadis are ideal platforms for such a program, reaching children in their natural environment in a coordinated, cost-effective, and systematic way. In addition, through extensive awareness generation and community mobilization efforts at state, district, and community levels, children who are out of school, live in hard-to-reach areas, and are from vulnerable populations are also mobilized to be dewormed at anganwadis on National Deworming Day.

ISRO to develop full-fledged hyperspectral imaging satellite

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) says it plans to launch a full-fledged niche Earth observation (EO) satellite — called the Hyperspectral Imaging Satellite or HySIS — using a critical chip it has developed.

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There is no specific time-frame yet for its launch, meanwhile, the new chip, technically called **an "optical imaging detector array,"** that they have created for it would be tested and perfected.

ISRO is endeavouring to enter the domain of operational hyperspectral imaging from earth orbit with a satellite that can see in 55 spectral or colour bands from 630 km above ground.

Pepper it with

IRNSS

Cartosat

Hyspex

Hyperspectral or hyspex imaging is said to be an EO trend that is being experimented globally. Adding a new dimension to plain-vanilla optical imagers, it can be used for a range of activities from monitoring the environment, crops, looking for oil and minerals all the way up to military surveillance — all of which need images that show a high level of differentiation of the object or scene.

'Hyspex' imaging is said to enable distinct identification of objects, materials or processes on Earth by reading the spectrum for each pixel of a scene from space.

GIS-enabled portal maps land-related information

The Centre has brought out an online database of more than half a million hectares of land assisting industry. The Geographic Information System-enabled database also has details of close to 3,000 industrial parks/clusters, as well as area-wise availability of agricultural/horticultural crops, and mineral production.

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The portal will soon incorporate information on warehouses, power-grid and financial institutions as well as the demand for industrial infrastructure captured on the basis of applications from entrepreneurs for projects.

The exercise is to eliminate the information asymmetry that is currently adversely affecting **the country's industrial policy**-making and investments in the manufacturing sector.

Data is available on agricultural crops such as fibre crops, food grains, oilseeds, plantation crops, pulses and spices, and horticultural crops, including most fruits and vegetables. Also

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available are the details of mineral production.

The database is being developed by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) and the National e-Governance Division in the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology as well as the BISAG – an institute for space applications and geo-informatics under the Gujarat Government.

Significance

The development comes in the backdrop of the Centre firming up a new industrial and manufacturing policy to push **up the contribution of the manufacturing sector in India's GDP** to 25% by 2020 from the current level of about 16%. The aim is to make India a global manufacturing hub and in the process generate employment locally. The details on the database about government-approved technical institutions will indicate the availability of skilled and semi-skilled talent.

China uses quantum satellite to send secure data

In a major step towards building a hack-proof global quantum communication network, China has sent an unbreakable code from its quantum satellite to the Earth, marking realization of quantum key distribution technology for the first time.

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The achievement based on experiments conducted with the world's first quantum satellite, Quantum Experiments at Space Scale (QUESS), was published in the journal Nature on Thursday, Xinhua news agency reported.

China launched the world's first quantum satellite, nicknamed "Micius" after a 5th Century Chinese philosopher and scientist in August, 2016.

When the satellite flies over China, it provides an experiment window of about 10 minutes. During that time, the 300 kbit secure key can be generated and sent by the satellite, according to Pan.

"That, for instance, can meet the demand of making an absolute safe phone call or transmitting a large amount of bank data," Pan said.

> Pepper it with
> Tiangong 1
> SAARC satellite

About QUESS

China's Quantum Experiments at Space Scale (QUESS) mission, also known as Micius after an ancient Chinese philosopher.

Launched last August, the craft is designed to demonstrate principles underlying quantum communication.

Quantum communication is secure because any interference is detectable. Two parties can exchange secret messages by sharing an encryption key encoded in the properties of entangled particles; any eavesdropper would affect the entanglement and so be detected.

The Micius team has already done experiments exploring whether it is possible to create such encryption keys using entangled photons, and even 'teleport' information securely between Earth and space.

Cabinet approves MoU between India and Sweden on IPRs

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Sweden on cooperation in the field of Intellectual Property (IPRs).

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The MoU establishes a wide ranging and flexible mechanism through which both countries can exchange best practices and work together on training programs and technical exchanges to raise awareness on IPRs and better protect intellectual property rights.

A Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) with members from both sides will be formed to decide cooperation activities to be taken under the MoU.

> Pepper it with
> **India's rooftop solar** mission and dispute with USA on local buying clause

Significance

The MoU will enable India to exchange experiences in the innovation and IP ecosystems that will substantially benefit entrepreneurs, investors and businesses on both sides. The exchange of best practices between the two countri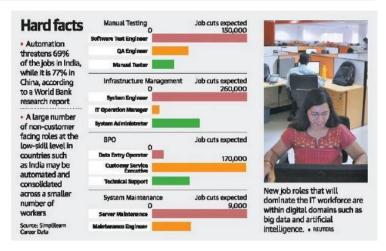es will lead to improved protection and awareness about India's range of Intellectual creations which are as diverse as its-people. It will be a landmark step forward in India's journey towards becoming a major player in global Innovation and will further the objectives of National IPR Policy, 2016.

Hard facts

• Automation threatens 69% of the jobs in India, while it is 77% in China, according to a World Bank research report

• A large number of non-customer facing roles at the low-skill level in countries such as India may be automated and consolidated across a smaller number of workers

Source: Simplilearn Career Data

Manual Testing	Job cuts expected 150,000
Software Test Engineer	
QA Engineer	
Manual Tester	
Infrastructure Management	Job cuts expected 260,000
System Engineer	
IT Operation Manager	
System Administrator	
BPO	Job cuts expected 170,000
Data Entry Operator	
Customer Service Executive	
Technical Support	
System Maintenance	Job cuts expected 9,000
Server Maintenance	
Maintenance Engineer	

New job roles that will dominate the IT workforce are within digital domains such as big data and artificial intelligence. ▪ REUTERS

NASA's Tracking and Data Relay Satellite-M (TDRS-M)

NASA's Tracking and Data Relay Satellite-M (TDRS-M), which is the third and final in a series of next generation communications satellites, has successfully been placed into orbit following separation from an United Launch Alliance (ULA) Atlas V rocket.

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NASA will conduct additional tests before putting TDRS-M into service early next year. When ready, TDRS-**M will become part of NASA's Space Network providing** navigation and high-data-**rate communications to the International Space Station, NASA's Hubble** Space Telescope, rockets and a host of other spacecraft.

About TDRS

Started in the early 1970's, the Tracking and Data Relay Satellite (TDRS) comprises the space segment of the Space Network. NASA Goddard Space Flight Center manages the development and operations of the TDRS satellites.

The current Tracking and Data Relay Satellite configuration consists of nine in-orbit satellites distributed to provide near continuous information relay service to missions like:

➤ The Hubble Space Telescope (HST)
➤ The International Space Station (ISS)

Artificial intelligence imperils India Inc jobs

Technology leaders are drumming up the thought that the emergence of new technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and automation are **going to be the new drivers of employment, especially** for India's $150 billion information technology (IT) industry that now employs about four million people.

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Automation threatens 69% of **the jobs in India, while it's 77% in China, according to a** World Bank research. If automation is not planned well and addressed holistically, it is a disaster in the making. It is going to affect 60%-70% of the current jobs. They will either get marginalised or totally eliminated in a decade and not in 50 or 100 years.

Brighter Side

The era of digitisation and automation will create newer career choices for IT professionals. The new job roles that will dominate the IT workforce are within digital domains such as big data, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing and cybersecurity.

The impact of automation is not just limited to the country's information technology industry but other areas as well such as agriculture. Tata Group is exploring use of automation to improve the lives of the workforce and bring in efficiency.

In the area of soft-robotics, where, instead of using traditional robots, wearables and other techniques can be leveraged not to replace the workers on the factory floor but to assist them. In April, Infosys released next generation AI platform, Nia which, it said, tackles business

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problems such as forecasting revenues and understanding customer behaviour. The other applications include deeply understanding the content of contracts and legal documents, understanding compliance and fraud.

Way Forward

It is clearly a time of career pivot for IT professionals to make sure they are where the growth is.

With the advances in automation technology, **more 'commoditised' jobs** are going away and one needs to move towards next-generation jobs and new areas of opportunities.

Pepper it with
Big Data
Internet of Things

About AI

From SIRI to self-driving cars, artificial intelligence (AI) is progressing rapidly. While science fiction often portrays AI as robots with human-like characteristics, AI can encompass anything fro**m Google's search algorithms to IBM's Watson to autonomous weapons.**

Artificial intelligence today is properly known as narrow AI (or weak AI), in that it is designed to perform a narrow task (e.g. only facial recognition or only internet searches or only driving a car). However, the long-term goal of many researchers is to create general AI (AGI or strong AI). While narrow AI may outperform humans at whatever its specific task is, like playing chess or solving equations, AGI would outperform humans at nearly every cognitive task.

Advantages

Artificial intelligence is complex in nature. It uses very complicated mixture of computer science, mathematics, and other complex sciences. Complex programming helps these machines replicate the cognitive abilities of human beings.

- Error Reduction: Artificial intelligence helps us in reducing the error and the chance of reaching accuracy with a greater degree of precision is a possibility.
- Difficult Exploration: Artificial intelligence and the science of robotics can be put to use in mining and other fuel exploration processes. Not only that, these complex machines can be used for exploring the ocean floor and hence overcoming the human limitations.
- Daily Application: Computed methods for automated reasoning, learning and perception have become a common phenomenon in our everyday lives. When we take a picture, **the artificial intelligence algorithm identifies and detects the person's face and** tags the individuals when we are posting our photographs on the social media sites. Artificial Intelligence is widely employed by financial institutions and banking institutions to organize and manage data. Detection of fraud uses artificial intelligence in a smart card based system.
- Digital Assistants: **Highly advanced organizations use 'avatars' which are replicas or** digital assistants who can actually interact with the users, thus saving the need of human resources.
- Repetitive Jobs: Repetitive jobs which are monotonous in nature can be carried out with the help of machine intelligence.
- Medical Applications: In the medical field also, we will find the wide application of AI. Doctors assess the patients and their health risks with the help of artificial machine intelligence. It educates them about the side effects of various medicines. Medical professionals are often trained with the artificial surgery simulators.
- No-Breaks: Machines, unlike humans, do not require frequent breaks and refreshments. They are programmed for long hours and can continuously perform without getting bored or distracted or even tired.

Disadvantages

- High Cost: Creation of artificial intelligence requires huge costs as they are very complex machines. Their repair and maintenance require huge costs. They have software programs which need frequent up gradation to cater to the needs of the changing environment and the need for the machines to be smarter by the day.
- No Replicating Humans: Intelligence is believed to be a gift of nature. An ethical argument continues, whether human intelligence is to be replicated or not. Machines do not have any emotions and moral values. They perform what is programmed and cannot make the judgment of right or wrong. They cannot take decisions if they encounter a situation unfamiliar to them. They either perform incorrectly or

breakdown in such situations.

- No-Improvement with Experience: Unlike humans, artificial intelligence cannot be improved with experience. With time, it can lead to wear and tear.
- No Original Creativity: AI can help you design and create, they are no match for the power of thinking that the human brain has or even the originality of a creative mind.
- Unemployment: Replacement of humans with machines can lead to large scale unemployment.

World's smallest surgical robot

Scientists in the UK **have developed the world's smallest surgical robot** with low-cost technology used in mobile phones and space industries. The robot, called Versius, mimics the human arm and can be used to carry out a wide range of procedures in which a series of small incisions are made to circumvent the need for traditional open surgery. These include hernia repairs, colorectal operations, as well as prostate, ear, nose and throat surgery.

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The robot is controlled by a surgeon at a console guided by a 3D screen in the operating theatre. The robot is much easier to use than existing systems, and take up about a third of the space of current machines.

Significance

It reduces complications and pain after surgery and speed up recovery time for patients.

For robots to revolutionise surgery, they need to be versatile, easy to use and small so that surgical staff can move them around the operating room or between operating theatres, or pack them away when they are not being used. This robot does all of this and is the first robotic arm to be designed specifically for laparoscopic surgery.

One of the key benefits of the robot is that it works like a human arm and contains technology that detects resistance to make sure the right amount of force is used when the instruments are inside the patient.

Researchers used electronics from mobile phones to help the robot "think" and process information, and gear box technology originally designed for the space industry to help it move.

The robot is set to be launched next year.

India's Exclusive Rights to Explore Polymetallic Nodules

News

India's exclusive rights to explore polymetallic nodules from seabed in Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) have been extended by five years. These rights are for over 75000 sq. km of area in international waters allocated by International Seabed Authority(ISA) for developmental activities for polymetallic nodules.

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> Pepper it with Exclusive Economic Zone

The estimated polymetallic nodule resource potential is 380 million tonnes, containing 4.7 million tonnes of nickel, 4.29 million tonnes of copper and 0.55 million tonnes of cobalt and 92.59 million tonnes of manganese. This has been approved unanimously in the 23rd session of ISA.

India is the first country to have received the status of a pioneer investor in 1987 and was allocated an exclusive area in Central Indian Ocean Basin by United Nations (UN) for exploration and utilization of nodules. India is one among the top 8-

> ISA
> International Seabed Authority (ISA) is a UN body set up to regulate the exploration and exploitation of marine non-living resources of oceans in international waters. India actively contributes to the work of International Seabed Authority. Last year, India was re-elected as a member of Council of ISA. **India's nominees on Legal and Technical Commission and** Finance Committee of the ISA were also elected last year.

countries/ contractors and is implementing a long–term programme on exploration and utilization of Polymetallic Nodules through Ministry of Earth Sciences. This includes survey and exploration, environmental studies, technology development in mining and extractive metallurgy, in which significant contributions have been made.

While, the extraction of metals from the polymetallic nodules lying at the deep ocean floor is not yet found to be economically viable at this stage. Environmental studies for mining of deep-sea polymetallic nodules were also carried out to evaluate the possible impacts of mining on deep-sea environment.

About polymetallic nodule

Polymetallic nodules were discovered in the Kara Sea, in the Arctic Ocean off Siberia (1868).

Polymetallic nodules, also called manganese nodules, are rock concretions formed of concentric layers of iron and manganese hydroxides around a core. The core may be microscopically small and is sometimes completely transformed into manganese minerals by crystallization.

Visible to the naked eye, it can be a small test (shell) of microfossil (radiolarian or foraminifer). On some nodules they are discontinuous, with noticeable differences between the two sides. Nodules vary in size from tiny particles visible only under a microscope to large pellets more than 20 centimetres across. Their surface is generally smooth, sometimes rough, mammilated (knobby) or otherwise irregular.

The nodules on the Indian Ocean bed are found at a depth of about 6,000 metres and the closest point of the nodule fields is at a distance of about 2,500 km off the Kanyakumari coast

World map showing the occurrence of polymetallic nodules.

Cloud-seeding project of Karnataka

Following initial hiccups, the much-touted cloud seeding project of the Karnataka took off at Jakkur Airfield.

The project - named Varshadhare - will be taken up for a period of 60 days.

About Cloud Seeding

Cloud seeding is a form of weather modification, a way of changing the amount or type of precipitation that falls from clouds, by dispersing substances into the air

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that serve as cloud condensation or ice nuclei, which alter the microphysical processes within the cloud. The usual intent is to increase precipitation (rain or snow), but hail and fog suppression are also widely practiced in airports.

Cloud seeding essentially helps by providing additional "nuclei" around which water condenses. These nuclei can be salts, calcium chloride, dry ice or silver iodide. Silver iodide is effective because its form is similar to ice crystals. Calcium chloride is often used in warm or tropical areas.

> Pepper it with El Nino and La Nina and its effect on monsoon

Problems with Cloud Seeding

- Among the problems for successful precipitation in rain-bearing clouds are that water droplets formed in the clouds are much smaller.
- Droplets formed in the clouds are blown away in the wind even before they have the time to reach earth. Moreover, small droplets do not have the energy to collide and form large droplets that can come down as rain.
- By introducing impurities such as Silver Iodide, Potassium Chloride and others, the objective is to ensure that the size of the droplets is large enough to fall down as rain.
- It also yields other harmful consequences. Some of these consequences include rain suppression, flooding, tornadoes, and silver iodide toxicity.

Bt Cotton Issue

In news

The report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology claimed that the government cited only overall cotton output **and not the average yield in area. India's cotton yields increased by** 69% in the five years (2000-2005) when Bt Cotton was less than 6% of total cotton area, but by only 10% in the 10 years from 2005-2015 when Bt Cotton grew to 94% of the total cotton area.

The duality of the claims about the increase in yield of cotton needs further examination, the committee said. **It slammed the government for its "casual" approach** to the need for a scientific study of GM crop impact on health.

> Pepper it with Bt Brinjal Genetic Engineering Approval Commitee

About Bt Cotton

Bt cotton is a genetically modified organism (GMO) cotton variety, which produces an insecticide to bollworm. Strains of the bacterium Bacillus thuringiensis produce over 200 different Bt toxins, each harmful to different insects. Most notably, Bt toxins are insecticidal to the larvae of moths and butterflies, beetles, cotton bollworms and ghtu flies but are harmless to other forms of life.

Dispute

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) breed controversy like no other. Little wonder then **that Monsanto's much**-maligned Bt cotton has spawned the mother of all intellectual property (IP) disputes in India, involving at least 15 different proceedings in various courts, government agencies and tribunals.

Monsanto patented a number of components related to Bt cotton, a biotech invention involving the infusion of the Bt gene into the cotton genome. Bt stands for Bacillus thuringiensis, a bacteria whose genome codes for a protein that kills the bollworm, a pest that has perennially plagued the cotton plant.

Advantage

- The main selling points of Bt cotton are the reductions in pesticides to be sprayed on a crop and the ecological benefits which stem from that.
- In India and the US, Bt cotton initially alleviated the issues with pests whilst increasing yields and delivering higher profits for farmers.

Disadvantage

- High cost of Bt cotton seeds as compared to non Bt cotton seeds.
- Effectiveness up to 120 days, after that the toxin producing efficiency of the Bt gene drastically reduces.

- Ineffective against sucking pests like jassids, aphids, whitefly etc.

India's scenario

India is now overwhelmingly a Bt Cotton country.

The agriculture ministry said that almost 90% of the cotton cultivation area is under Bt Cotton. The data shows Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh are the top producers of cotton with 105, 88 and 53 lakh bales cotton respectively, and 81%, 92% and 98% of their total cotton cultivation area under Bt cotton.

Since 2002, Bt cotton has steadily prevailed over India's cotton fields. Before being legally approved, farmers in Gujarat and Maharashtra were already against this new kind of cotton seed, which, for a higher price, promised pest resistance against a particularly belligerent pest called the white bollworm, and reduced spraying of cotton pesticides.

MoU between India and Brazil for cooperation in the fields of ZebuCattle Genomics

The Union Cabinet has approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between India and Brazil for cooperation in the fields of Zebu Cattle Genomics and Assisted Reproductive Technologies. The MoU was signed in October, 2016.

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The MoU will strengthen the existing friendly relations between India and Brazil and promote development of Genomics and Assistant Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) in Cattle through joint activities to be implemented through mutually agreed procedures.

Zebu Cattles
Zebus are a species or subspecies of domestic cattle which originated in South Asia. They have been domesticated since 3,000 B.C. Today, there are about 75 breeds, evenly divided between those living in Asia and those living in Africa. Zebu are used as draft animals, and are farmed as both dairy and beef cattle.

An implementation committee will be created with an equal number of representatives of each party for the purpose of regularly determining the activities and developing work plans and subsequently their evaluation.

It will be done through joint projects in the fields of Productivity Improvement of cattle and buffaloes, for the purpose of broadening the existing knowledge base on sustainable dairy development and institutional strengthening.

Significance

The MoU would promote and facilitate scientific cooperation and setting up of genomic selection programme in Zebu Cattle through application of genomic in Zebu Cattle and their crosses and buffaloes and assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) in cattle and buffaloes

Facts on Zebu cattle

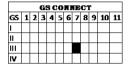|	
Scientific Name	Bos primigenius indicus
Size	34-42 in (86-106 cm) tall at the shoulder
Weight	331-440 lb (150-200 kg)
Special Physical Traits	Large hump on the shoulders, fold of flesh hanging below the throat
Life Span	12-16 years
Habitat	Tropical jungles, open grasslands
Social Lifestyle	Herd
Diet	Grass, seeds, flowers
Favorite Food Source	Grass
Predators	Humans, bears, large cats
Location	Africa, Asia, South America, United States
Conservation Status	Domesticated; of Least Concern

USISPF set up to deepen Indo-US ties

A new representative body -- US- India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) -- is being set up to further enhance business relations between the two countries.

The non-profit corporation aims to promote bilateral trade and work on creating meaningful opportunities that have the power to change the lives of citizens.

The body will work closely together with businesses and government leaders to achieve its goals of driving economic growth.

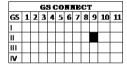| GS CONNECT											
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ICMR inks deal to promote vaccine development

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has signed an MoU with the International Vaccine Institute (IVI) for collaborating on vaccine research and development.

India will commit $5,00,000 (₹3.20 crore) annually for a stake in IVI— an amount approved during a Cabinet meeting in January.

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India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund

The Union Cabinet approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Israel on "India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F)".

India and Israel will make a contribution of four million USD each for the Fund, annually for five years. The Innovation Fund will be governed by a joint Board which will consist of four members from each country.

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The MoU envisages promotion of bilateral Industrial R&D and Innovation cooperation in the fields of science and technology by extending support to joint projects for innovative or technology-driven new or improved products, services or processes. Such projects will lead to affordable technological innovations in focus areas of mutual interest such as water, agriculture, energy and digital technologies. Institutional support in building up consortia including private industry, enterprises and R&D institutions from India and Israel will be enabled through these collaborative projects.

The activities supported by the Joint Fund would increase the techno-economic collaboration between the two countries by investing in jointly developed technology projects and collaborations based on technological innovation. It would leverage the complementary strengths of Israel and India to encourage Israel-Indian joint projects that capitalize on both the national and global marketplace. It would provide a comprehensive set of support tools to encourage joint projects that convert "know-how" into "show-how". It is expected that this will foster and strengthen the eco-system of innovation and techno-entrepreneurship in India and will contribute directly to the Start-up India programme.

A new Bridge over Mechi River at Indo-Nepal border

The Union cabinet approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be signed between India and Nepal for laying down implementation arrangement on Cost sharing, Schedules and Safeguard issues for starting construction of a new Bridge over Mechi River at Indo-Nepal border.

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The estimated cost of construction of the bridge is Rs. 158.65 crore, which would be funded by Government of India through ADB loan. The new bridge is part of up-gradation of the Kakarvitta (Nepal) to Panitanki Bypass (India) on NH 327B covering a length of 1500 meters including a 6 lane approach road of 825 meters. Mechi Bridge is the ending point of Asian Highway 02 in India leading to Nepal and provides critical connectivity to Nepal.

The construction of the bridge will improve regional connectivity and has potential to strengthen cross border trade between both the countries and cementing ties by strengthening industrial, social and cultural exchanges.
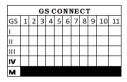
National Highway and Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDCL) under Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has been designated as the implementing agency for this project. DPR for this project has been prepared and alignment of bridge has been finalized in consultation with Government of Nepal.

Project Brainware

Software giant Microsoft has announced its Project Brainwave deep learning acceleration platform for real-time artificial intelligence (AI).

With the help of ultra-low latency, the system processes requests as fast as it receives them.

The 'Project Brainwave' uses the massive field-programmable gate array (FPGA) infrastructure that Microsoft has been deploying over the past few years.

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TOTAL RETURN INDEX
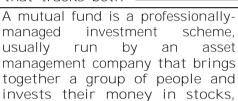
Why in News

Recently DSP Blackrock Asset Management announced it will benchmark its actively-managed equity schemes to the Total Return Index (TRI).

What is the Total Return Index?

The total return index is a type of equity index that tracks both the capital gains of a group of stocks over time, and assumes that any cash distributions, such as dividends, are reinvested back into the index. Looking at an index's total return displays a more accurate representation of the index's performance. By assuming dividends are reinvested, it effectively account for stocks in an index that do not issue dividends and instead, reinvest their earnings within the underlying company.

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A mutual fund is a professionally-managed investment scheme, usually run by an asset management company that brings together a group of people and invests their money in stocks, bonds and other securities.

Currently, Indian fund managers benchmark their schemes to simple price index, which considers the price movements of stocks that make up the index. In comparison, a TRI includes dividends and other gains in addition to the stock price movements, boosting the value

PEPPER IT WITH
Chit fund

of the index. When mutual funds talk about the performance of their schemes, they are required to compare it with a stock benchmark, which could be the Sensex or the Nifty or the BSE 200, among others. So, if these benchmarks are considered on a TRI basis, it could reduce the extent of outperformance of the schemes.

The move could make it tough for fund managers to show a wide outperformance if mutual funds decide to benchmark their schemes against TRI. Benchmark returns with TRI will go up by 1 per cent to 3 per cent annually. For instance, the Nifty has gained 20.42 per cent so far this year, but in terms of TRI it has given a return of 21.71 per cent. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is yet to make TRI mandatory for calculating benchmarks.

PROMPT CORRECTIVE ACTION (PCA)

PCA framework has been in operation since December 2002. It is not intended to constrain normal operations of the banks for the general public. Reserve Bank, under its supervisory framework, uses various measures/tools to maintain sound financial health of banks. PCA framework is one of such supervisory tools, which involves monitoring of certain performance indicators of the banks as an early warning exercise and is initiated once such thresholds as relating to capital, asset quality etc. are breached. Its objective is to facilitate the banks to take corrective measures including those prescribed by the Reserve Bank, in a timely manner, in order to restore their financial health. The framework

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also provides an opportunity to the Reserve Bank to pay focussed attention on such banks by engaging with the management more closely in those areas.

> Return on assets (ROA) is a financial ratio that shows the percentage of profit a company earns in relation to its overall resources. It is commonly defined as net income divided by total assets.

Breach of any risk threshold (as detailed under) would result in invocation of PCA.

PCA matrix - Areas, indicators and risk thresholds				
Area	Indicator	Risk Threshold 1	Risk Threshold 2	Risk Threshold 3
Capital (Breach of either CRAR or CET 1 ratio to trigger PCA)	CRAR- Minimum regulatory prescription for capital to risk assets ratio + applicable capital conservation buffer(CCB) current minimum RBI prescription of 10.25% (9% minimum total capital plus 1.25%* of CCB as on March 31, 2017) And/ Or Regulatory pre-specified trigger of Common Equity Tier 1 (CET 1min) + applicable capital conservation buffer(CCB) current minimum RBI prescription of 6.75% (5.5% plus 1.25%* of CCB as on March 31, 2017) Breach of either CRAR or CET 1 ratio to trigger PCA	upto 250 bps below Indicator <10.25% but >=7.75% upto 162.50 bps below Indicator <6.75% but >= 5.125%	more than 250 bps but not exceeding 400 bps below Indicator <7.75% but >=6.25% more than 162.50 bps below but not exceeding 312.50 bps below Indicator <5.125% but >=3.625%	- - In excess of 312.50 bps below Indicator <3.625%
Asset Quality	Net Non-performing advances (NNPA) ratio	>=6.0% but <9.0%	>=9.0% but < 12.0%	>=12.0%
Profitability	Return on assets (ROA)	Negative ROA for two consecutive years	Negative ROA for three consecutive years	Negative ROA for four consecutive years
Leverage	Tier 1 Leverage ratio[4]	<=4.0% but > = 3.5% (leverage is over 25 times the Tier 1 capital)	< 3.5% (leverage is over 28.6 times the Tier 1 capital)	

The capital conservation buffer is designed to ensure that banks build up capital buffers outside periods of stress which can be drawn down as losses are incurred. The requirement is based on simple capital conservation rules designed to avoid breaches of minimum capital requirements.

Capital adequacy ratio (CAR) or capital to risk weighted asset ratio (CRAR) is the capital needed for a bank measured in terms of the assets (mostly loans) disbursed by the banks. Higher the assets, higher should be the capital by the bank. A notable feature of CRAR is that it measures capital adequacy in terms of the riskiness of the assets or loans given. For example, if the bank has given loans to the government by investing in government securities like government bonds, it need not keep any capital. This is because, the riskiness of loans to government securities is zero and hence, the risk weight for government securities is zero.

If banks are not to be allowed to fail, it is essential that corrective action is taken well in time when the bank still has adequate cushion of capital to minimise the losses.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> List of banks which came under the Reserve Bank of India's Prompt Corrective Action (PCA)

Its Implications

Banks are not allowed to re new or access costly deposits or take steps to increase their fee-based income. Banks will also have to launch a special drive to reduce the stock of NPAs and contain generation of fresh NPAs. They will also not be allowed to enter into new lines of business. RBI will also impose restrictions on the bank on borrowings from interbank market. PCA norms allow the regulator to place certain restrictions such as halting branch expansion and stopping dividend payment. It can even cap **a bank's lending limit to one entity or sector.** Other corrective action that can be imposed on banks include special audit, restructuring **operations and activation of recovery plan. Banks' promoters can be asked to bring in new** management, too. The RBI can **also supersede the bank's board, under PCA.**

NUAKHAI JUHAR

It is an agricultural festival mainly celebrated by the people of western Odisha. It is one of the major festivals celebrated in the state. It is the harvest festival of Odisha wherein farmers are in possession of new rice of the season. They offer the first produce of their respective lands to Goddess Samaleswari and then consume it personally.

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FIRST EDITION OF RURAL GAMES TO BE HELD IN DELHI

Youth affairs ministry announced that the first edition of Rural Games or Grameen Khel Mahotsav will kick-start from Delhi and will take place between 28th August to 3rd September, 2017. The Rural Games will aim at popularising the indigenous games like wrestling, athletics etc. and will also have fun games like Matka Race, Tug of War for senior citizens

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to add the fun element in the games. These games are intended to act as a catalyst to promote sports in rural areas across the country. The main objective is to deepen the sports culture among the rural youth.
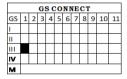
> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Target Olympic podium scheme.

Sports play an important role in improving physical and mental health, and fostering active citizenship and social inclusion. It also inculcates leadership skills, team spirit and enables a person to develop a sense of equanimity during a win or a loss. There is evidence that sport and play enhance child development, learning and encourage better academic performance, he added.

ALGORITHM TRADING

An algorithm is a specific set of clearly defined instructions aimed to carry out a task or process.
Algorithmic trading (automated trading, black-box trading, or simply algo-trading) is the process of using computers programmed to follow a defined set of instructions for placing a trade in order to generate

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profits at a speed and frequency that is impossible for a human trader. The defined sets of rules are based on timing, price, quantity or any mathematical model. Apart from profit opportunities for the trader, algo-trading makes markets more liquid and makes trading more systematic by ruling out emotional human impacts on trading activities.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Buy today sell tomorrow trading and sell today buy tomorrow trading.

Benefits of Algorithmic Trading
- Trades executed at the best possible prices
- Instant and accurate trade order placement (thereby high chances of execution at desired levels)
- Trades timed correctly and instantly, to avoid significant price changes
- Reduced transaction costs (see the implementation shortfall example below)
- Simultaneous automated checks on multiple market conditions
- Reduced risk of manual errors in placing the trades
- Backtest the algorithm, based on available historical and real time data
- Reduced possibility of mistakes by human traders based on emotional and psychological factors.
-

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS: AN ENTERPRISE SURVEY OF INDIAN STATES

Why in News
It was in news because of government clearly stating that the report is meant to be a research document and its contents do not represent the views of the Government of India, the NITI Aayog or the IDFC Institute.

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- The NITI Aayog-IDFC Institute Enterprise Survey is a unique effort to document and analyse the experience and perceptions of manufacturing firms on doing business in India.

How is it different from

> **World Bank's Ease of Doing Business**
> The rankings are determined by sorting the aggregate distance to frontier scores on 10 topics, each consisting of several indicators, giving equal weight to each topic.
> India wants to reach the 90th **rank in World Bank's Doing** Business rankings for 2017-18 and 30th by 2020, in its endeavour to improve ease of doing business. India's present rank is 130 and the list is topped by New Zealand.

World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Survey and DIPP's Ease of Doing Business rankings?

- It differs from **the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Survey and the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion's (DIPP) Ease of Doing Business Rankings in that** it focuses on how organised manufacturing firms, rather than experts or implementing agencies, view the business environment in their respective states.
- The present survey also covers all states and Union Territories (UTs), except Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Andaman and Nicobar, and Lakshadweep. Therefore, its scope is much wider than the World Bank Doing Business Surveys which currently focus only on Delhi and Mumbai.
- This survey focuses only on the organised manufacturing sector whereas the World Bank survey extends to services as well.

About the Survey

The survey comprises 3,276 manufacturing enterprises, including 141 early stage firms. The enterprises surveyed cover 23 manufacturing sector categories. The report assesses the implications of regulations and compliance requirements for enterprises by focusing on time taken for getting various approvals, whether costs incurred in fulfilling regulatory **compliances are higher than the prescribed fees and enterprises' perceptions of how different** regulatory processes impede their businesses.

- An important and surprising finding of the report is that the awareness among enterprises about single window systems, instituted by states, is low.
- Newer and younger firms report a more favourable business environment in that they take less time in obtaining approvals. In addition, young firms report that most regulatory **processes don't constitute a major obstacle to doing business.** These findings strongly point to an improvement in the business environment in recent years.
- Firms with more than 100 employees took significantly longer to get necessary approvals than smaller firms with less than 10 employees.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> **DIPP's reforms towards** ease of doing business.

- Large firms were also more likely to complain that regulatory obstacles were a major impediment to doing business. They are also more likely to report incurring higher costs for getting necessary approvals.
- The experiences and grievances of large firms indicate that it remains very hard for firms to scale up or grow in size. This could explain why firms in India are overwhelmingly small and remain small. For example, according to the latest Economic Census conducted during 2013 and 2014, a gigantic 98.6% of non-agricultural establishments had less than ten workers.
- An enterprise-friendly regulatory environment will allow easy entry and exit of enterprises, enable them to reach an optimal size and scale, and boost job creation.
- There is a strong correlation between a higher level of economic activity and doing better on a range of doing business indicators. While available data do not allow us to establish causation running from ease of doing business to growth, they strongly indicate the existence of feedback loops between the doing business climate and economic activity.

Firms in industries that have intensive power-use experience longer wait times, on average, for getting electricity connections. They also face more power shortages, all of which impede their efficiency. Labour-intensive sectors have a special importance in policy as they can create proportionately more jobs per unit of capital investment.

- The report states that labour intensive sectors feel more constrained by labour related regulations.
- More of them report that finding skilled workers, hiring contract labour, and terminating employees are major or very severe obstacles.
- They also lose more days due to strikes and lockouts.
- These findings point to the centrality of labour law reforms to the expansion of labour-intensive sectors and job creation.
- Further, labour-intensive sectors also report significantly higher average time taken for environmental approvals, and more hours of power shortage in a month. Addressing
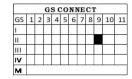
these is likely to favourably impact the growth of labour-intensive sectors and hence job availability.

Conclusion

An enterprise-friendly regulatory environment will allow easy entry and exit of enterprises, enable them to reach an optimal size and scale, and boost job creation. There is a strong correlation between a higher level of economic activity and doing better on a range of doing business indicators. While available data do not allow us to establish causation running from ease of doing business to growth, they strongly indicate the existence of feedback loops between the doing business climate and economic activity. If India is to enter the "double digit" economic growth club, clearly it will need to continually streamline and improve the business environment.

SOMALIA SIGNS PACT ON CONVICTS

Opening a new front for collaboration in anti-piracy operation in Eastern Africa, India and Somalia signed an agreement for transfer of sentenced convicts. The collaboration between two sides will be significant due to the incidents of piracy that have affected Indian interests in the Indian Ocean region near the Horn of Africa. India has

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in recent years extended development assistance to Somalia which has included mini buses to the war-battered country.

PEPPER IT WITH
Banjul Formula, SADR (Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic), Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme.

India Africa forum summit is being held since 2008. The third summit was held in 2015 were a record 41 of the 54 leaders of the African Union (AU) came together in Delhi, compared with the previous participation of just 15 leaders or less in 2008 and 2011.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO PHILIPPINES FOR FIGHT AGAINST TERROR GROUPS

In a significant development, India has decided to provide a financial assistance of $5,00,000 (₹ 3.2 crore) to the Philippines to aid its fight against the Islamic State (IS)-affiliated terror groups in the troubled Mindanao province.

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- This is the first time India is sending aid to another nation to help it fight terrorism, thereby becoming an important marker in New Delhi's attempts to burnish its credentials as an emerging security provider to the wider Asian region.

- **India's support to Manila shows a new**-found sense of urgency in standing shoulder to shoulder with other victims of terror, even when the source of the problem is different.

  Manila went to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague **challenging Beijing's claim to** almost all of the South China Sea. Though Manila won the case last year, it has not been able to push Beijing to moderate its stance on the maritime dispute.

- India has expressed its concerns at the situation and used this crisis to enhance its anti-terror and deradicalisation partnership with the Philippines.

- India is also conducting cybersecurity training for the Philippine security forces, focusing on deradicalisation.

- India's engagement with the Philippines is also key to underscoring its growing role in Southeast Asia where China's rise has already created serious challenges for the wider region.

TRADING RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED BY SEBI ON 331 COMPANIES

Why in News

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) tagged 331 firms as shell companies and restrict trading in them.

It is apparent that SEBI passed the impugned order without any investigation. Interestingly, the regulatory body had acted on a list of suspect companies that the Ministry of Corporate Affairs had forwarded after consultation with the Serious Fraud Investigation Office and the Income Tax department.

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Before a proper investigation by SEBI or the exchanges, the companies were put under stage four of the Graded Surveillance Measure, whereby trading is limited to one day a month (first Monday of every month), the trading price is capped, and buyers are required to deposit money. It is suspected **that trading on the shares of these "shell"** companies was used as a way to launder black money.

A dormant company gets its title in two ways: **it has chosen to get a 'dormant'** status from the Registrar of Company (RoC) by way of an application.
Further, in case a company has not filed financial statements or annual returns for two financial years consecutively, the RoC shall issue notice and include it in the **register of 'dormant' companies.** But a shell company is one which is typically suspected of illegal activities.

Closing the exit option is not the right decision, as it not only hurts retail investors but also weakens broader sentiment in the market.

Some companies moved the Securities Appellate Tribunal(SAT) against the SEBI direction, the Tribunal stayed trading restrictions imposed on some companies. As a result, these companies can resume normal trading.

PEPPER IT WITH
Benami Transaction (Prohibition) Amendment Act 2016; The Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002 and The Companies Act, 2013.

It is interesting to note that the term 'shell company' is not defined under the Companies Act, 2013. The Act requires that a company may be set up for any lawful purpose only. Subsequent to incorporation, if a company is found to be formed for fraudulent or unlawful purpose, it is liable for penal action, including for winding up under Section 271 of the Act.

eBiz Iniative

Why in News

The ambitious eBiz portal project unveiled by the Centre in 2013 is still struggling to become fully operational.

The eBiz initiative, being piloted by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, seeks to provide comprehensive Government-to-Business (G2B) services to business entities with transparency, speed, and certainty.

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It aims at reducing the points of contact between business entities and Government agencies, standardizing "requirement information", establishing single-window services, and reducing the burden of

PEPPER IT WITH
e-courts and e-procurements.

compliance, thereby benefitting stakeholders such as entrepreneurs, industries and businesses, industry associations, regulatory agencies, industrial promotional agencies, banks and financial institutions, and taxation authorities.

- The portal has been developed by Infosys in a public-private-partnership model.
- **It is a part of Government's initiative to improve the business environment and the** ease of doing business in the country.
- It may be noted that the partner ministries and departments offering their services through eBiz portal have migrated their existing applications to new technology platforms.
- More than two years after discussions began with the States to devise a state-level composite application form (CAF) for investors that would integrate about 14 state government services and permits, this key component of the eBiz portal is also stuck with no takers, except Delhi, so far.

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GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUMMIT

Why in News

Eighth annual global entrepreneurship summit will be held in Hyderabad, India.

The Summit will be addressed by The Honorable Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi and Ms. Ivanka Trump.

The United States and India will co-host the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) November 28-30 in Hyderabad, India. Advisor to the President Ivanka Trump will lead the United States' delegation to the Summit, which will focus on supporting women entrepreneurs and fostering economic growth globally.
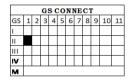
The theme of GES this year is Women First, Prosperity for All, which highlights that when women do better, countries do better. GES 2017 will create an environment that empowers innovators, particularly women, to take their ideas to the next level. Their voices are critical to global security, prosperity, and peace.

Organized annually since 2010, GES is the preeminent annual entrepreneurship gathering that convenes over one thousand emerging entrepreneurs, investors, and supporters from around the world. This year marks the first GES held in South Asia, and the event underscores our broad and enduring partnership with India.

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PROPOSAL TO AMMEND FACTORIES ACT, 1948

Why in News

The Central government will go ahead with its proposal to amend the Factories Act of 1948 by giving flexibility to State governments to enhance the threshold limit over which a unit will be considered a factory despite concerns flaked by a Parliamentary Standing Committee.

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In 2014, the Centre had proposed changes to the Factories Act following requests from state governments to enhance the threshold limits for coverage under the law. At present, the Factories Act applies to establishments with 10 or more workers, if the premise is using power and to establishments with 20 or more workers, without the aid of power.

A Parliamentary Standing Committee examining the proposed changes had, however, observed that "if the amendment is carried out more than 70 per cent of the factory establishments in the Country will be out of the coverage of the Factories Act and workers will be at the mercy of employers."

> **Factories Act, 1948**
> - It extends to the whole of India and came into existence from 1st April 1949.
> - The Act defines a child as a person who has not completed his 15 years of age.
> - Welfare of labour including conditions of work, provident funds, employers' liability, workmen's compensation, invalidity and old age pensions and maternity benefits comes under entry 24 of concurrent list of the constitution of India.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment has not agreed to the observations of the Committee and has said in a note circulated to stakeholders that it has only given flexibility to state governments to fix the threshold limit and "all the factories including the one which employes a single worker may also be brought under the purview of the Act thus, in fact, increasing the total number of workers covered under the Act."

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Definition of child according to various GOI acts.

The state governments will not be allowed to set the threshold limit for applicability of the factories law beyond 40 workers, as per the proposal of the Ministry of Labour and Employment. But it should be noted that due to increased automation, the size of Indian factories has drastically come down and as a result most factories in India have less than 40 workers.
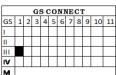
Moreover, the proposal to allow entrepreneurs to give self-certified declaration on the safety, health and welfare standards of the factory to get approvals for setting up a factory was also opposed by trade unions.

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INDIA SEEKS TO DIVERSIFY OIL IMPORTS

Why in News

The current state of the global oil market characterized by low oil prices is helping India to diversify its supply sources, as evidenced by Indian Oil **Corporation's first ever shale oil order.**

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- India used to buy oil on an FOB (Free On Board) basis. Under the **FOB model, the buyer takes delivery of the item as soon as it leaves the seller's shores,** which means that shipping costs are borne by the buyer.

- These small shale producers cannot give a complete supply, so India allowed them to aggregate and ship it to us. It is their ship that will deliver the oil. The deal with U.S. companies by IOC and BPCL, for 3.5 million barrels and 1.9 million barrels respectively, has PetroChina transporting the oil on behalf of the U.S. companies.

> - India is the world's third largest oil importer.
> - Brent is the benchmark crude that serves as a reference price for buyers in the Western world while Dubai serves as a benchmark for countries in the eastern world.
> - India's oil recovery is 30-40% of it's produces. How can it be done to over 50% is the real challenge.

- Currently, India imports about 82 % of crude oil for its domestic requirement. According to latest IEA reports, at present, India imports around 3.78 million of crude oil barrels per day and produces 897,300 barrels.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Asian Premium

- During the past several decades, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Kuwait were the major crude suppliers for India, whereas Qatar was the most preferred gas supplier, accounting for 61% of total LNG shipment to India, followed by Nigeria (14.7%). However, new destinations like Australia and the United States are fast emerging as viable alternative options.

- India is also negotiating with Japan to hire very large container carriers (VLCC) for the transport of large volumes of gas as it looks at diversifying its energy mix. India opened 2.8 square km of sedimentary basins for oil and gas exploration to overseas investors as part of the Open Acreage Licensing or OAL program, the first-round offering of oil and gas blocks under the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy, or HELP.HELP is a part of the government's strategy to double India's oil output to 150-155 million mt/year by 2022, from the current 80 million mt/year.

CHINA INDIA EXPERT LEVEL MECHANISM TO SHARE HYDROLOGICAL DATA

Why in News

India said that China has not shared any water-related data about the Himalayan rivers in the current year.

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- There is an existing mechanism named India-China Expert-Level mechanism which was started in 2006 to share hydrological data during the flood season for Brahmaputra and Satluj rivers.

- **Under the MoUs singed in 2013 and '15 the hydrological data** is to be shared between 15 May to 15 October every year but from 15 May till now, India have received no data from China. The last meeting of the mechanism was held in 2016.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Nathu La pass and
> Lipu pass

- The hydrological data is shared by upper riparian states to lower riparian states every monsoon, so that the flow of the water can be anticipated, and measures can be taken to deal with flooding. The data is also shared with Bangladesh.

- China in response said that it cannot share with India the hydrological data of the Brahmaputra river for the time being as the data collection station in Tibet is being upgraded.

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FAME INDIA SCHEME

- Government of India notified FAME India Scheme [Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India] for implementation with effect from 1st April 2015, with the objective to support hybrid/electric vehicles market development and Manufacturing eco-system.

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- The scheme has 4 focus areas i.e. Technology development, Demand Creation, Pilot Projects and Charging Infrastructure.
- The phase-I of the scheme is being implemented for a period of 2 years i.e. FY 2015-16 and FY 2016-17 commencing from 1st April 2015.
- The FAME India Scheme is aimed at incentivising all vehicle segments i.e. 2 Wheeler, 3 Wheeler Auto, Passenger 4 Wheeler Vehicle, Light Commercial Vehicles and Buses. The scheme covers Hybrid & Electric technologies like Mild Hybrid, Strong Hybrid, Plug in Hybrid & Battery Electric Vehicles.
- As part of mission NMEM, Department of Heavy Industry formulated Fame India Scheme. The overall scheme is proposed to be implemented over a period of 6 years, till 2020, wherein it is intended to support the hybrid/electric vehicles market development and its manufacturing eco-system to achieve self-sustenance at the end of the stipulated period.
- The scheme is one of the green initiatives of the Government of India.

> With a view to promote electric mobility in the country, the Government of India approved the National Mission on Electric Mobility (NMEM) in 2011 and subsequently National Electric Mobility Mission Plan 2020 was unveiled in 2013. This Mission Plan has been designed mainly considering the Fuel Security and Environmental Pollution in the country.

> PEPPER IT WITH National Policy on Biofules.

PMEGP

- **GOI approved Prime Minister's Employment Generation** Programme (PMEGP) by merging the two schemes that were in operation till 31.03.2008, namely Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY) and Rural Employment Generation Programme (REGP).

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- PMEGP is a credit-linked subsidy programme aimed at generating self-employment opportunities through establishment of micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector by helping traditional artisans and unemployed youth.
- Under the scheme any individual above 18 years of age is eligible.

> PEPPER IT WITH IRDP and Food for Work Programme.

- For setting up of projects costing above Rs.10 lakh in the manufacturing sector and above Rs. 5 lakh in the business /service sector, the beneficiaries should possess at least VIII standard pass educational qualification.
- At the national level, the Scheme is being implemented by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), a statutory organization under the administrative control of the Ministry of MSME as the single nodal agency.
- PMEGP is a central sector scheme administered by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME).

EXCHANGE TRADED FUND BHARAT 22

- Bharat 22 is an ETF that will track the performance of 22 stocks the government plans to pare its stake in. An ETF unit represents a slice of the fund; issued units are listed on exchanges for anyone to buy or sell at the quoted price.

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- The Bharat-22 ETF will span six sectors — basic materials, energy, finance, FMCG, industrials and utilities.
- Besides public sector banks, miners, construction companies, and energy majors, the ETF will also include

> PEPPER IT WITH First CPSE ETF

some of the government's holdings in SUUTI (Specified Undertaking of Unit Trust of India).

- The Bharat 22 ETF will be managed by ICICI Prudential AMC while Asia Index will be the index provider. The index will be rebalanced annually.

Why is it important?

The ETF mechanism has proven to be a smart and effective way for the government to help meet its disinvestment targets, a key factor to keep fiscal deficit under control. The ETF route provides a neat workaround by letting the government pare small stakes (2-3 per cent) in a **big basket. Everyone's happy** — the state gets its money, investors get a piece of PSUs and employees are glad to stay under the PSU umbrella.

> An ETF (exchange traded fund) pools money from investors and channels it into a basket of stocks, mirroring an index and its performance. ETFs are listed and traded on exchanges like stocks.

PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Why in News

Information technology systems of treasuries of seven north eastern states have been integrated with the Centre's Public Financial Management System (PFMS).

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- The Department of Expenditure is administering the Public Financial Management System (PFMS), which is an end-to-end solution for processing payments, tracking, monitoring, accounting, reconciliation and reporting.
- It provides the scheme managers a unified platform for tracking releases and monitoring their last mile utilization. Government has decided to universalise the use of PFMS to cover all transactions/payments under the Central Sector Schemes.
- It is an important tool for improving governance.

> Public Financial Management System (PFMS) initially started as a Plan scheme named CPSMS of the Planning Commission in 2008-09 as a pilot in four States for four Flagship schemes.

SATTRIYA DANCE

- Sattriya dance is a classical dance form which was introduced in the 15th century A.D by the great Vaishnava saint and reformer of Assam, Mahapurusha Sankaradeva as a powerful medium for propagation of the Vaishnava faith.

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- The dance form evolved and expanded as a distinctive style of dance later on. This neo-Vaishnava treasure of Assamese dance and drama has been, for centuries, nurtured and preserved with great commitment by the Sattras i.e. Vaishnava *maths* or monasteries. Because of its religious character and association with the Sattras, this dance style has been aptly named Sattriya.
- Sankaradeva introduced this dance form by incorporating different elements from various treatises, local folk dances with his own rare outlook.

> PEPPER IT WITH classical dances of India

BANKING REGULATION AMMENDMENT BILL

- It seeks to amend the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 to insert provisions for handling cases related to stressed assets. Stressed assets are loans where the borrower has defaulted in repayment or where the loan has been restructured (such as by changing the repayment schedule). It will replace the Banking

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> A NPA is a loan or advance for which the borrower has failed to repay the principle or interest for a period of 90 days.
> Stressed Assets include include NPAs and loans that have been restructured

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Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017.

- Initiating insolvency proceedings: The central government may authorise the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to issue directions to banks for initiating proceedings in case of a default in loan repayment. These proceedings would be under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.

- Issuing directions on stressed assets: The RBI may, from time to time, issue directions to banks for resolution of stressed assets.

- Committee to advise banks: The RBI may specify authorities or committees to advise banks on resolution of stressed assets. The members on such committees will be appointed or approved by the RBI.

- Applicability to State Bank of India: The Bill inserts a provision to state that it will also be applicable to the State Bank of India, its subsidiaries, and Regional Rural Banks.

> PEPPER IT WITH
>
> corporate debt restructuring **(CDR), Joint lenders' forum** (JLF), flexible structuring for long-term project loans to infrastructure (or 5/25 Scheme), Strategic debt restructuring (SDR) scheme, Sustainable structuring of stressed assets (S4A) and the concept of bad banks.

Reasons behind Introduction of Bill.

Over the years, NPAs, as a proportion of total loans extended by banks have increased from 2.3% in 2008 to 7.5% in 2016. The current level of the NPAs indicate a stressed banking system where the lending capacity of banks is limited, thereby affecting investment and economic growth. In 2016, a parliamentary standing committee had observed that a majority of the stressed assets were in the five sectors of infrastructure, iron and steel, textiles, aviation and mining (including coal). It is interesting to note that RBI data indicates that loans given by public sector banks account for 88% of the NPAs in the country.

NCRB MERGED WITH BUREU OF POLICE RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT (BPR&D)

Why in News

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) recently merged two police bodies with completely different functions into a single entity

The ministry of home affairs **issued an order placing NCRB's functions** under the Director General of BPR&D, who will now oversee all the data collection related to Crime in India, Accidental Deaths and Suicides, Prison Statistics and Fingerprints.

BPR&D has been given charge of NCRB so that there is more research based and methodological data collection in future as data collection by NCRB as of now was that of taken from states and sometimes inaccurate.

About NCRB

- National Crime Records Bureau, an attached office of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India was established in 1986 with a mandate to empower Indian Police with information technology solutions and criminal intelligence to enable them to enforce the law effectively.

- **NCRB's core function is to collect data on crimes related to IPC and other** sections, courts, convictions etc which are taken from states and union territories and then analysed. **On the other hand, BPRD's research is not related to crime**.

- It focusses more on research and data collection on how police, central paramilitary forces work, manpower problems, pattern of registration of crime, or influences of police on society etc.

BPR&D, which was constituted in 1966 to directly participate in police functions and suggest reforms, and NCRB will now jointly foster partnership with universities, researchers, NGOs and public to have robust data on crime, police, courts and prisons.

ANTI DUMPING DUTY

Why in News

The Finance Ministry has imposed a definitive anti-dumping duty on certain "textured toughened (tempered) glass" imports from China.

An anti-dumping duty is a protectionist tariff that a domestic government imposes on foreign imports that it believes are priced below fair market value. Dumping is a process where a company exports a product at a price lower than the price it normally charges on its own home market. To protect local businesses and markets, many countries impose stiff duties on products they believe are being dumped in their national market.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) operates a set of international trade rules. Part of the organization's mandate is the international regulation of anti-dumping measures. The WTO does not regulate the actions of companies engaged in dumping. Instead, it focuses on how governments can or cannot react to dumping. In general, the WTO agreement allows governments to "act against dumping where there is genuine (material) injury to the competing domestic industry." In other cases, the WTO intervenes to prevent anti-dumping measures.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Focus market scheme and Focus product scheme.

> Textured toughened (tempered) glass" is used as a component in solar photovoltaic panels and solar thermal applications.
> This product is also known as solar glass, low iron solar glass or high transmission photovoltaic glass.

This intervention is justified to uphold the WTO's free market principles. Anti-dumping duties distort the market. Governments cannot normally determine what constitutes a fair market price for any good or service; fair market value is whatever price the market will bear as determined by supply and demand.

SheMeans Business Programme

Why in News

Odisha government and Facebook launched 'SheMeansBusiness' programme to train women entrepreneurs in Odisha.

About the Programme:

- The SheMeansBusiness programme has been launched in 16 countries around the world, including India.
- The programme is designed to reach out to aspiring and enthusiastic women entrepreneurs to help them build and grow their businesses online

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Project Aquila and Project Loon.

- Under the scheme, 25,000 women entrepreneurs and self-help-groups (SHG) members will be given training on digital marketing skills within the next one year.
- Facebook will also make a database of entrepreneurs in the state and will monitor their growth, turnover and profit after one year
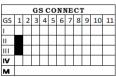
IN-PRINCIPLE APPROVAL FOR AMALGAMATION OF PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS

Why in News

Union Cabinet approved an alternative mechanism to oversee proposals of amalgamation of public sector banks.

> At present, there are 20 public sector banks, apart from State Bank of India, which recently merged with five of its subsidiaries and the Bharatiya Mahila Bank.

- The proposals received from banks for in-principle approval to formulate schemes of amalgamation shall be placed before the Alternative Mechanism (AM) and the decision will be based only on commercial consideration by the boards of the banks involved.

- After getting in-principle approval, the banks will take steps in accordance with the law and SEBI requirements. The final scheme will be notified by the Central government in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India.
- The alternative mechanism will include a panel of ministers, whose members will be decided by the Prime Minister.

Background

The proposal of fewer but stronger state-run lenders was originally mooted in 1991, but in recent years, the Finance Ministry has been hoping to bring down the number of public sector banks to about a dozen to create economies of scale and improve their functioning.

PEPPER IT WITH
Too-big-to-fail banks in India and systematically important banks.

The decision will help create strong and competitive banks that can absorb shocks and have the capacity to raise resources without depending on the state exchequer. Public sector banks will benefit from operational and functional synergies, resulting in better efficiencies. Merger amongst similar performing banks can also result in effective resolution of non-performing assets across lenders.

MOU BETWEEN INDIA AND MYANMAR FOR THE CONSERVATION OF EARTHQUAKE-DAMAGED PAGODAS

Why in News

The Union Cabinet has approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Myanmar for the conservation of earthquake-damaged pagodas at Bagan, Myanmar.

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Pagoda is a towerlike, multistory, solid or hollow structure made of stone, brick, or wood, usually associated with a Buddhist temple complex and therefore usually found in East and Southeast Asia, where Buddhism was long the prevailing religion.

The pagoda structure derives from that of the stupa, a hemispherical, domed, commemorative monument first constructed in ancient India. The origin of pagodas, like that of Buddhism, can be traced to India. The relation between Buddhism and pagodas is explained in Buddhist literature, which says that pagodas were originally built for the purpose

PEPPER IT WITH
Harmika, Anda, Chaitya-griha, Vihara.

of preserving the remains of Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism. According to Buddhist scripture, when Sakyamuni's body was cremated after his death, his disciples discovered that his remains crystallized into unbreakable shiny beads. They were called sarira, or Buddhist relics, as were his hair, teeth and bones. Later, the remains of other Buddhist monks of high reputation were also called sarira. Since more often than not, no such precious shiny beads could be found in the ashes of cremated Buddhist monks, other things, such as gold, silver and crystal objects or precious stones, were used instead.

Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS)

Why in News

India and China jointly submitted a proposal to the WTO calling for the elimination - by developed countries - of the most trade-distorting form of farm subsidies, known in WTO parlance as Aggregate Measurement of **Support (AMS) or 'Amber Box'** support as a prerequisite for consideration of other reforms in domestic support negotiations.

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Aggregate measurement of support (AMS) is the indicator on which the domestic support discipline for the Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture is based. It is determined by calculating a market price support estimate for each commodity receiving such support, plus non-exempt direct payments or any other subsidy not exempted from reduction commitments, less specific agricultural levies or fees paid by producers.

PEPPER IT WITH
Blue and Green boxes of WTO

The subsidies by the developed countries amount to about $160 billion. On the other hand,

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countries like India provide a subsistence amount of about $260 per farmer annually. Most of the developing countries, including India and China, do not have AMS entitlements.

ECONOMIC SURVEY VOLUME-II

In a break from tradition, the full economic survey was not presented at the beginning of the budget session. Only Part I was presented. This is the part which is policy oriented and future looking.Part-II of the survey comprises of hard data with a stamp of authenticity. This volume includes a backward-looking review and also features historic data tables.The second volume was published in august mainly due to change in the budget calendar from early march to early February.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Fiscal Developments

- The combination of strong growth in tax revenue, sustenance of the pace of capital spending and a consolidation of non-salary/pension revenue expenditure has allowed the Government to contain the fiscal deficit to 3.5 per cent of GDP in 2016-17.
- The Budget for 2017-18 introduced a number of procedural reforms, including: the integration of the Railway Budget with the Union Budget; advancing of the date of the Union Budget to February 1, almost by a month; elimination of the classification of expenditure into **'plan' and 'non-plan'; and, restructuring of** the Medium Term Expenditure Framework Statement with projected expenditures (revenue and capital) for each demand for the next two financial years.

Agriculture and Food Management

- The progress in agriculture needs to be evaluated in terms of outcomes such as catching up with global yields of various crops as a means to increase incomes of farmers.

- The fiscal deficit target of 3 per cent of GDP under the FRBM framework is projected to be achieved in 2018-19.
- FDI equity inflow of 43.4 Billion USD in Financial Year 2016-17, is the highest ever FDI Equity inflows.
- Railways registered passenger earning of 4.5% during 2016-17 while freight earning was negative.
- 26 states and 1 UT have joined UDAY scheme.
- Both rural and urban inflation have declined in 2016-17 and the gap between rural and urban inflation has narrowed.
- India is implementing the largest renewable energy expansion programme in the world. It envisages a 5-fold increase in the overall renewable energy capacity to 175 GW by 2022.
- Among the major economies running current account deficit, India is the second largest foreign exchange reserve holder after Brazil with reserves at US$ 386.4 billion.
- The health sector in India faces many challenges in the form of declining role of public delivery of health services, high Out of Pocket (OoP) expenses on health and issues of accessibility and affordability of health services for many.

- Credit is an important mediating input for agriculture to improve productivity. The predominance of informal sources of credit for farmers is a concern. There is regional disparity in the distribution of agricultural credit which also needs to be addressed.

Industry and Infrastructure

Industrial performance has shown a moderation from 8.8 percent during 2015-16 to 5.6 percent in 2016-17.

- The Government in 2016 introduced imposition of Minimum Import Price (MIP) to counter dumping of Steel into Indian markets. Steps taken by the government have borne fruit since imports of Steel by India have declined by 36.2 percent while exports have risen by 102 percent in 2016-17.

Services Sector

- **The services sector remains the key driver of India's economic growth, contributing** almost 62 per cent of its gross value added growth in 2016-17. However, the growth of this sector has moderated to 7.7 per cent in 2016-17 compared to 9.7 per cent achieved in the previous year.

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- Various initiatives taken by the Government to promote tourism sector of the country that include e-Visa for the citizens of 161 countries, promotion of India as a 365 days destination, launching of Multilingual Tourist Infoline, and Swachh Paryatan Mobile App have led to an increase in foreign tourists in India.

Monetary Management and Financial Intermediation

- The Reserve Bank of India shifted its monetary policy stance from accommodative to neutral in February 2017.
- Credit off-take from banks continued to decelerate further. During 2016-17, gross bank credit outstanding grew at around 7 per cent on an average

Prices and Inflation

- Significant moderation in CPI headline inflation during the last three years. CPI inflation fell to a series low of 1.5 percent in June 2017.
- Food inflation, which was the main driver of inflation in the past, declined significantly during the year because of improvements in supply of pulses and vegetables on the back of a normal monsoon.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Schemes related to energy efficiency. Sustainable Development Goals.

Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Energy

- India ratified the Paris Agreement on 2nd **October, 2016. India's actions for the post**-2020 period are based on its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).
- **India's NDC targets to lower the emissions intensity of GDP by 33** - 35 per cent by 2030 from2005 levels, to increase the share of non-fossil based power generation capacity to 40 per cent of installed electric power capacity(cumulative) by 2030, and to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 Gt CO_2e through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

External Sector

- The current account deficit (CAD) narrowed down progressively to 0.7 per cent of GDP in 2016-17 from 1.1 per cent of GDP in 2015-16 led by sharp contraction in trade deficit which more than outweighed a decline in net invisibles earnings.
- Net capital inflows were slightly lower at US$ 36.8 billion (1.6 per cent of GDP) in 2016-17 as compared to US$ 40.1 billion (1.9 per cent of GDP) in the previous year, mainly due to fall in NRI deposits.

Social Infrastructure, Employment and Human Development

- The deterioration in quality learning in primary education sector and achievement of targeted enrolment level in the middle education is a challenge
- Employment in India
- poses a great challenge in terms of its structure which is dominated by informal, unorganized and seasonal workers, and is characterized by high levels of under employment, skill shortages, with the labour markets impacted by rigid labour laws, and the emergence of contract labour.

GOVERNMENT eMARKETPLACE (GEM)

Why in News
MoU signed between GeM and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) aimed at establishing GeM *Samvaad*.

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- As part of this initiative GeM & the Indian industry shall work together to:
- Create GeM related awareness and onboard industry members from across the country.
- Create a GeM-Industry Forum for collaboration with the Indian Industry for, seeking inputs on the technical specifications of products and SLAs of services to be procured by the Government agencies, improving the quality of products/services procured especially from the MSMEs, organize annual Public Procurement Convention of all stakeholders and set up GeM Resource Centres at CII Regional Offices.

> GeM *Samvaad*- It is a participative and collaborative approach with the industry for promoting Indian industry and entrepreneurship.

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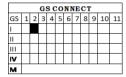
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About GeM
GeM is the Govt. Public Procurement Portal with maximum online reach and highest credibility, with many registered Govt. customers across the Country. It has direct access to all Govt. departments registered. It has the following features and benefits:

- One stop marketing place with minimal marketing efforts.
- Dynamic pricing – price can be changed based on market conditions – no fixed price for whole year – no fear of fluctuation of raw material prices or exchange rate variations.
- Dynamic product listing – no need to run for model up-gradation/changes. List your latest products and market them based on features and your competitive prices.
- Get complete information of all Govt. requirements through Annual Procurement Plans and there is no need to watch for tenders of different Govt. departments.

75th anniversary of QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

Why in News
This month was the 75th anniversary of Quit India Movement (QIT). PM urged citizens to rise above the differences they have with each other **and unite in a joint effort to establish an India that the country's freedom** fighters had dreamt of in the next five years to 2022, the 75th anniversary of independence.

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ABOUT QIM
The Quit India movement, a final push towards India's independence was launched on August 8, 1942.
75 years ago a meeting of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) was organised in Bombay (now Mumbai). The agenda of the meeting was to launch a movement urging the British government to leave India.

PEPPER IT WITH
Gandhiji speech for QIM, Wavell plan, August Offer, Cripps Mission, Simla Conference

As the world was engulfed in the World War II, India was fighting an internal battle. After repeated promises by the British government to grant independence, India was still under the colonial rule. Thus, on July 14, 1942, a resolution was passed by the Congress Working Committee declaring the "urgent" need for ending the British rule in India.
The declaration stated that free India "will assure the success by throwing his great resources in the struggle for freedom and against the aggression of Nazism, Fascism and imperialism".
To pacify the increasing anger among Indians, Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India in March 1942. The Cripps Mission aimed at arriving at a common ground with the Indian National Congress to obtain India's co-operation during the war. The talks were a failure.
In the AICC meet held on August 8, the historic decision to launch the 'Quit India Movement' was passed. Indians wanted independence, and they wanted it without delay.
Thousands of people from across the country rose in support of the Quit India Movement. Congress leaders were arrested and put in jail for the next three years, till the World War ended.
Meanwhile, the anger among the Indians had grown manifolds and uprisings from all parts of the country could be seen. Aruna Asaf Ali hoisted the Indian national flag at the Gowalia Tank Maidan in Mumbai where the resolution to launch the Quit India movement was passed by the Congress.

KSG

CONCEPT CLEARING ASSIGNMENT

1. Right to Education (RTE) Act ensures education in every government school should be such that everyone finds it good. The infrastructure and conditions in government school is horrendous that even very poor parents are removing their children from government schools and sending their children to private schools.

   Critically analyze this daunting problem and suggest steps that government schools and education offices look attractive, so that people develop faith in the government **education system as children's improvement.**

2. **"Knowledge about a person gives a power over that person. The personal data collected** is capable of effecting representations, influencing decision-making processes and **shaping behaviour," The right to** privacy is not just a right in the physical world, it also is a fundamental right in the virtual or cyber world. Comment in light of the committee created under Justice B N Sri Krishna for Data Protection Bill.

3. Present an account on National Mission for Clean Ganga and examine its economic, ecological and political implications in context of government initiatives for cleaning Ganga.

4. Examine the main provisions of the National Mission for Empowerment of women and throw light on the status of its implementation. Also elucidate recent initiatives/scheme to support your answer.

5. Professor Amartya Sen has advocated important reforms in the realms of primary education and primary health care. What are your suggestions to improve their status and performance.

6. In the Global Retirement Index (GRI), India stands 43rd very low. Discuss briefly the legal, political, social and cultural factors that have caused the decline of best practices in retirement policy in India ensuring geriatric care.

7. What was held in the Gorakhpur tragedy case? In this context, NHRC can only make recommendations, without the power to enforce decisions. This lack of authority to ensure compliance can lead to outright rejection of its decision too. If human rights commissions are to truly protect rights in India, it needs a revamp? Enumerate limitations and suggest steps to revamp NHRC powers.

8. Given the vulnerability of Indian agricultural sector, discuss the need for steps to be taken to stabilize and transform Indian agricultural sector in light of the NITI Ayog Three Year Action Agenda and bring out the salient features of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana.

9. India is a secular country. The government firmly stand by what is mentioned in Preamble that is Justice, Equality and non-discrimination. These values are enshrined in our Constitution, notably the Fundamental Rights. In context of above statement critically analyse and comment historic verdict of SC on Triple Talaq to invalidate this religious practice.

10. **"Justice Delayed Is Justice Denied". Pendency of cases in subordinate courts is a** complex judicial management issue which is a difficult task to address in an effective way. Elucidate the challenges and strategies for effective and fast finalisation of cases and throw light on the Judicial Performance Index suggested by NITI Ayog and bring out its salient features.

11. In case of involvement of other agencies/third parties (for collection, processing, etc.), how does the agency ensure protection of personal information by such agencies / third parties (e.g. de-identification, anonymization, contracts, etc.)? Especially, what are the safeguards to protect information from resources such as system administrators who have access to servers, databases, etc.

12. Recently the prices of petroleum has raised in International market. Taking in mind the commitments made by India to UNFCCC discuss the potentials India have to replace petroleum related products.

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13. With the launch of GSLV MARK III, ISRO has shown its potential in space technology to the world. Discuss.

14. Credit ratings are an important tool for borrowers to gain access to loans and debt. Most of the western rating agency are said to be biased. In light of above discuss the importance of setting BRICS rating agency.

15. Brexit a popular term for the prospective withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union in a referendum on 23 June 2016. 51.9% of the participating UK electorate voted to leave the EU.

    Can this be seen as a process in which different countries are moving away from globalization?

16. The financial crisis of 2008 revived interest in the bad bank solution, as advisors at some of the world's largest institutions contemplated segregating their nonperforming assets into bad banks. Government of India (GOI) and reserve bank of India (RBI) has taken various steps to resolve Non-performing Assets (NPAs) but NPA is still a big financial issue in India. Discuss various measures taken by RBI and GOI to resolve NPA in India.

P.T. ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. With which of the following the 90:90:90 programme associated:
   (a) AIDS
   (b) Ebola
   (c) Tuberclosis
   (d) Family Planning

2. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/s
   (1) Internatonal Vaccine Institute (IVI) is an arm of WHO working in field of vaccine development.
   (2) It is located in Hague (Neitherland)
   Code:
   (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
   (c) both 1 and 2 (d) None of above

3. Which of the following projects are supported by AIIB.
   (1) India Infrastructure fund
   (2) Andhra Pradesh 24*7
   (3) Rajasthan State Highway investment programme.
   Code:
   (a) 1 and 2   (b) 1 and 3
   (c) 2 and 3   (d) All the above

4. Consider the following statements about Urja Ganga project and choose the correct one/s
   (1) It is a pipeline project to provide LPG to eastern region of the country.
   (2) It is being implemented bi IOC (Indian Oil Corporation).
   Code:
   (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
   (c) 1 and 2   (d) None of above

5. Which of the following countries are party to South China sea dispute
   (1) Indonesia
   (2) Thailand
   (3) Philippines
   (4) Laos
   (5) Taiwan
   (6) Vietnam
   Code:
   (a 1,2,3,5   (b) 1,3,4,5
   (c) 1,3,5,6   (d) 1,2,3,4,5,6

6. Consider the following statements about National Ganga Council and choose the correct one/.
   1. The jurisdiction of the National Ganga Council shall extend to the States comprising River Ganga Basin.
   2. It is headed by Minister of water resources.
   (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
   (c) 1 and 2   (d) None

7. Which of the following authority approves the merger of Companies/banks
   (a) SEBI
   (b) Competition Commission of India
   (c) Finance Ministry
   (d) RBI

8. Which of the following are associated with Non Performing Assets
   (1) Credit Information Bureau
   (2) 5:25 rule
   (3) 5/20 norm
   Code:
   (a) 1 and 2   (b) 1 and 3
   (c) 2 and 3   (d) All the above

9. Which of the following index are correctly matched with the institution publishing them
   (1) Global Competitiveness Index- WEF
   (2) Logistic Performance Index-World Bank
   (3) World Economic Outlook-IMF
   (a) 1 and 2   (b) 1 and 3
   (c) 2 and 3   (d) All the above

10. Consider the following statements about JIGYASA programme
    (1) The program will be implemented by CSIR (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research) in collaboration with IIT Delhi.
    (2) This program is based on the idea of Scientific Social Responsibility.
    Code:
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) 1 and 2   (d) None

11. Which of the following dance forms are correctly matched to their state.
    (1) Sattriya   -   Assam
    (2) Mohiniattam   -   Kerala
    (3) Kalbelia   -   Rajasthan
    Code:
    (a) 1 and 2   (b) 1 and 3
    (c) 2 and 3   (d) All the above

12. India is member to which of the following international groups.
    (1) Sanghai Cooperation Organization
    (2) East Asia Summit
    (3) G20
    (4) G6
    Code:
    (a) 1, 2, 3   (b) 1, 2, 4
    (c) 2, 3, 4   (d) All the above

13. Consider the following statements about Quit India Movement (QIM) and choose the correct one/s
    (1) It was launched after the failure of Cripps mission
    (2) Muslim league supported QIM.
    Code:
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) 1 and 2   (d) None

14. Which of the following are tributaries of Teesta River.
    (1) Kameng river
    (2) Rangeet river
    (3) Rangpo river
    Code:
    (a) 1 and 2   (b) 1 and 3
    (c) 2 and 3   (d) All the above

15. Consider the following statements about USTTAD scheme and choose the correct one/s:
    1. It is a scheme of Ministry of Culture.
    2. It is a scheme to establish linkages of traditional arts/crafts with the national and international market.
    Code:
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) 1 and 2   (d) None

16. Consider the following statements on Permanent Court of Arbitration and choose the correct one/s:
    1. It is headquartered in Hague.
    2. It was established by Rome treaty.
    Code:
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) 1 and 2   (d) None

17. Consider the following statements about Green Climate Fund and choose the correct one/s:
    1. It has been created to support the efforts of developing countries to respond to the challenge of climate change.

2. It was set up by the 194 countries who are parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2010.
    Code:
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) 1 and 2   (d) None

18. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/s:
    (1) Project Elephant (PE) was launched by the Government of India in the year 1992 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme
    (2) Mysuru elephant reserve is the biggest elephant reserve of India.
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) 1 and 2   (d) None

19. Which of the following are correctly matched:
    (1) Minamata Convention - Mercury
    (2) Stockholm Convention- Biodiversity
    (3) Vienna convention- Ozone depletion
    Code:
    (a) 1 and 2   (b) 1 and 3
    (c) 2 and 3   (d) All the above

20. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/s
    (1) Photochemical Smog is caused due to primary pollutants interacting under the influence of sunlight
    (2) The irritant red haze in the traffic and congested places is due to oxides of nitrogen.
    Code:
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) 1 and 2   (d) None

21. Which of the following states have Earthquake Early Warning System
    (a) Himachal Pradesh
    (b) Sikkim
    (c) Uttarakhand
    (d) Arunachal Pradesh

22. CARTOSAT series satellites are for:
    (1) Earth observation
    (2) Remote sensing
    (3) Navigation
    Code:
    (a 1 and 2   (b) 1 and 3
    (c) 2 and 3   (d) All the above

23. Consider the following statements about SAARC satellite and choose the correct one/s:
    (1) It is a communication and meteorology satellite
    (2) It will be used by all SAARC members except Pakistan and Afghanistan.
    Code:
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) 1 and 2   (d) None

24. Consider the following statements given below.
    1. The agriculture agreemen t of WTO has no Red box.
    2. S&D box are exemptions for developing countries.
    3. For agriculture, all domestic support measures considered to distort production and trade (with some exceptions) fall into the Amber Box.
    Code:
    (a) 1 and 2 only
    (b) 2 and 3 only
    (c) 1 and 3 only
    (d) All of the above

25. Which among the following given below is/are correct about Anti-Dumping Duty.
    1) It distorts local industry from unfair competition.
    2) It increases the price in the importing countries.
    Code:
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

26. Consider the following statements about Total Return Index (TRI).
    1) SEBI made TRI mandatory for calculating benchmarks.
    2) TRI includes the dividends which boosts the value of the index.
    Which of the following is/are correct?
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

27. Consider the following statements about Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES).
    1) India along with US with co-host the GES-2017 in New Delhi.

    2) This will be the first GES held in South Asia
    3) It is being organized annually since 2010
    4) The theme of GES this year will be Women First, Prosperity for All.
    Which of the following are correct?
    (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
    (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
    (c) 1, 3 and 4 only
    (d) 1, 2 and 4 only

28. Which among the following given below is not correct.
    (a) There is no difference between a shell Company and a dormant company.
    (b) The term 'shell company' is not defined under the Companies Act, 2013
    (c) A shell company is generally suspected of illegal activities.
    (d) Both 1 and 2

29. Consider the following statements given below.
    1) Factories Act applies to establishments with 20 or more workers, if the premise is using power and to establishments with 10 or more workers, without the aid of power
    2) Welfare of labour is a subject of concurrent list.
    Which of the following is/are correct?
    Code:
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

30. Consider the following statements about Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) and choose the correct ones.
    1) It applies to both farming and non-farming sector.
    2) It is aimed at generating self-employment.
    3) Any individual above 18 years of age is eligible.
    Code:
    (a) 1 and 2 only
    (b) 2 and 3 only
    (c) 1 and 3 only
    (d) All of the above