CURRENT CONNECT
JULY - 17

North Delhi	Central Delhi	Jaipur	Bhopal	Patna	Indore
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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 the 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 with a title "pepper it with" where we expect the students to build further around the theme.

Team KSG

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AFRICAN UNION

Currently in news

Al Shabaab fighters ambushed African Union peace keeping troops in Somalia. The incident took place in Bulamareer district in Lower Shabelle region about 140 km south west of Mogadishu.

African Union

It was established on 26 May 2001 in **Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,** and launched on 9 July 2002 in South Africa, with the aim of replacing the **Organisation of African Unity (OAU).** The vision of the African Union is that of: "**An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena**."

The Objectives of the AU

1. To achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and the peoples of Africa;
2. To defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States;
3. To accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent;
4. To promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its peoples;
5. To encourage international cooperation, taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
6. To promote peace, security, and stability on the continent;
7. To promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance;
8. To promote and protect human and peoples' rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant human rights instruments;
9. To promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies

29th AU Summit at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Theme: Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through investment in Youth.

Morocco rejoins the AU after 33 years at this summit.

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What is Agenda 2063?

It is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the African continent over the next 50 years. It seeks to accelerate the implementation of past and existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development.

The guiding vision for Agenda 2063 is the AU Vision of "**An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in international arena**"

Working mode:: Ten year implementation plan.

Important FACTS

Membership: 55 member state

Motto: "**A United and Strong Africa**"

Type: Continental Union

AU Chairperson: Alpha Conde, Guinea

AUCommission Chairperson: H.E. MoussaFakiMahamat

Legislature: Pan-Africa Parliament

PEPPER IT WITH

OAU charter1963, Ajuba Treaty 1991, Sirte Declaration 1999.

ENCUMBRANCE CERTIFICATE

What is Encumbrance Certificate?

An Encumbrance Certificate or EC is a certificate of **assurance that the property in question is free from any legal or monetary liability** such as a mortgage or an uncleared loan. It is a mandatory document used in property transactions as **an evidence of free title/ownership**

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A CC is issued by the local authority to a builder or developer upon the completion of construction of a building in compliance with the building plan and other regulations. Once a CC is obtained, the local municipal authorities issue an OC or a Possession Certificate (PC) as a declaration of no objection in allowing the occupancy of the building.

Key Highlights:

- The EC for a property is provided at the sub-registrar's office in which the property has been registered.

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- An Encumbrance Certificate with the details of the transactions in the specified period, or if no transactions have taken place then a Nil Encumbrance Certificate (NEC) is issued.

- In a leading case, the High Court of Karnataka has rightly observed that "an Encumbrance Certificate relating to an immovable property issued by the Registration Office is not only of encumbrances but of all acts and encumbrances affecting such property."

- An EC is different from a Completion Certificate (CC) or Occupancy Certificate (OC)

An encumbrance refers to any charge created on any asset, more often used in the context of real estate.

DAEL ON RUSSIAN Mi-17 CHOPPERS

Russia and India are holding negotiations for the supply of **48 Russian Mi-17 (V5)** military transport helicopters, with Moscow hoping to seal the deal by the end of this year.

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Arms supplying Company:
Rosoboronexport (CEO Alexander Mikheev)
Utilization:
- It can be deployed in troop and arms transport, fire support, convoy escort, patrol, and search-and-rescue (SAR) missions.
- It is equipped with night vision technology, on-board weather radar, a new PKV-8 autopilot system, and a KNEI-8 avionics suite, which, according to a Russian Helicopters press release, results "in a very clear and intuitive cockpit with four large multi-functional displays that are easy to read and help reduce pilot fatigue".
- The system purportedly also helps reduce pre-flight inspection time.
- This can be critical in special forces operations when soldiers have to move
- at short notice in response to real time intelligence.

Future Aspirations:
Mikheev said Russia was already considering the capabilities of the Indian industry within the framework of the "Make in India" programme and noted that under it, a well-known project was the joint venture for **Kamov 226T helicopters.**
Triumf aircraft missile systems
Russia and India are holding "technical consultations" for the supply S-400 Triumf anti-aircraft missile systems which will be game changer for India's anti-aircraft defence capability.

HEERA- a vexed question

Currently in news
The Central Government (CG) plans to dissolve AICTE and UGC and replace them with a single body, tentatively titled **Higher Education Empowerment Regulation Agency** (HEERA).
HEERA is a **single statutory body** (unified regulator to govern) for higher education will simplify and consolidate the mass of regulations and compliances that currently operate in the sector.

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Role of HEERA
- The **NITI ayog and the Ministry of HRD** are in the process of drafting both a formal proposal to introduce HEERA, and the legislation which would govern HEERA (HEERA Law).
- Although the detailed particulars of the HEERA functioning body is still a work in progress but it is expected to remove the overlap in the jurisdiction and regulatory power of AICTE and UGC
- To bring the regulation of both technical and non-technical higher education institutions under one roof.
- Contemplating vision under the **Yashpal Committee, constituted in 2009** with the mandate of advising on "renovation and rejuvenation of the education sector", identified a need for a "drastic overhaul" of the higher education system and advising scrapping of UGC

Power of AICTE
1. Promoting quality in technical education, planning the co-ordination and development of the technical education system.
2. Regulation of technical education and maintenance of norms and standards for technical education in India.
3. promote innovations, research and development in established and new technologies
4. formulate schemes for promoting technical education for women, handicapped and weaker sections of the society
5. allocate and disburse funds out of the Fund of the Council such grants to technical institutions or Universities imparting technical education

Advantages
- Advent of unified regulator to govern which would

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- help in remedying the administrative deficiencies in higher education system
- Smoothens existing procedures and ensure their efficient enforcement.
- To remove jurisdictional ambiguity between AICTE and UGC
- The HEERA Law is likely to empower HEERA to take strict penal action against defaulting institutions providing sharper teeth for educational administration.
- It is likely to promote ease of development of institutions of higher learning providing better access to student intrests.

Power of UGC
1. Two primary responsibilities: (a) providing funds to educational institutions; and (b) coordinating, determining and maintaining standards in institutions of higher education.
2. Indicative list of the functions of UGC mandate is set out as follows: promoting and coordinating education in universities, determining and maintaining standards for teaching, examination and research in universities, framing regulations on minimum standards for education etc.
3. Advise the Central Government or any State Government on the allocation of any grants to Universities for any general or specified purpose out of the Consolidated Fund of State or Fund Of India
4. Advising the CG and State governments on possible policy measures to improve higher education in India.

Conclusion

The idea of replacing multiple regulatory authorities with one has been circulating since the era and it will **mark the end of UGC's "inspector raj and harassment"**. The new regulations under HEERA will be "short and clean" and will focus on outcomes by defining the minimum standards eliminating delays.

PEPPER IT WITH
Wood's Dispatch

BIO-GLUE

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- A **super strong, flexible adhesive materia**l inspired by the glue secreted by slugs.
- that sticks to biological tissues — even when wet — without causing toxicity for **healing wounds**.
- **A double- layered hydrogel consisting of an alginate-polyacrylamide matrix supporting an adhesive layer**.
- The "tough adhesive" is **biocompatible and binds to tissues** with a strength comparable to the body's own resilient cartilage
- The key feature of the material is the combination of a very strong adhesive force and the **ability to transfer and dissipate stress**, which have historically not been integrated into a single adhesive
- The polymers bond to biological tissues via three mechanisms **– electrostatic attraction** to negatively charged cell surfaces, **covalent bonds between neighbouring atoms**, and **physical interpenetration** – making the adhesive extremely strong

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GORKHALAND ISSUE

Currently in news

The demand for creation of Gorkhaland agitation is hurting Darjeeling's toy train tourism.

How the crisis was born?

The current crisis was born when the West Bengal government announced **Bengali as a compulsory language in schools across the State**upto class 9th.

the protests and claims of **'linguistic imperialism'** in the **Darjeeling and Kalimpong** districts **(where the lingua franca is Nepali)** has fanned the violence leading to threat to the identity crsis.

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PEPPER IT WITH

Article 244A, 1949

244A. Formation of an autonomous State comprising certain tribal areas in Assam and creation of local Legislature or Council of Ministers or both therefor

- Parliament may, by law, form within the State of Assam an autonomous State comprising (whether wholly or in part) all or any of the tribal areas specified in Part I of the table appended
- Any such law as is referred to in this article shall not be deemed to be an amendment of this Constitution for the purposes of Article 368 notwithstanding that it contains any provision which amends or has the effect of amending this Constitution PART XI RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNION AND THE STATES CHAPTER LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS Distribution of Legislative Powers.

The crux of the movement:

Gorkha National Liberation Front founder SubashGhisingh first Gorkhaland agitation in the 1980s

secondGorkhaland movement emerged in 2007 under the leadership of BimalGurung of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha(GJM)

The Gorkhaland movement is a long-standing quest for a separate State of Gorkhaland within India for Nepali-speaking Indian citizens (often known as 'Gorkhas')

Gorkhaland is a desire for the recognition, respect, and integration of Gorkha peoples in the Indian nation-state.

The demand for Gorkhaland is due to following reasons:
1. Differences in language and culture.
2. Gorkha identity crisis

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3. Deprived local economy illustrates their pangs
4. Racial discrimination affects aspiring Gorkhas (Called 'foreigners', 'outsiders' and 'chinkys')

History of Gorkha Agitation

Agitation under GNLF and demand for DGHC

In the **1980s, SubhashGhisingh** raised the demand for the creation of a state calledGorkhaland within India to be carved out of the hills of **Darjeeling and areas of Dooars and Siliguriterai**contiguous to Darjeeling.

This movement culminated with the formation of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in 1988. The DGHC administered the Darjeeling hills for 23 years with some degree of autonomy.

DGHC primary objective was treading on the path of social, economic, educational, and cultural advancement of the people residing in the Hill areas of Darjeeling District.

Agitation under GJM and GTA creation

BimalGurung, a former GNLF councillor of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, founder of GJM stated to oppose the Sixth Schedule bill then.

The aims and the objectives of the new party was to "fight for the democratic right of the Indian Gorkhas living in India and (to) work unitedly for the creation of separate state for the people residing in the three Hill Sub-Division of Darjeeling, SiliguriTerai and Dooars areas".

The memorandum of agreement for the formation of a Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA), **a semi-autonomous administrative** body for the Darjeeling hills, was signed on 18 July 2011 hrough a tripartite agreement signed by GoI, Govt. of West Bengal and GorkhaJanmuktiMorcha (GJM), replacing DGHC.

Conclusion

The sudden resurgence of Gorkhaland has caught many by surprise. But today's turmoilmustn't obscure deeper histories. For Gorkhas, the troubling realities of colonial and present-day Darjeeling are eerily similar**: linguistic chauvinism, ethnic and racial discrimination, resource extraction, unilateral territorial claims, the denial of self-governance, political suppression;** and ultimately, an unwillingness to respect the 'native point of view'. This double bind of colonial nostalgia and neocolonial regional domination produces a sense of constant threat, leading to the desperate feeling that genuine progress is out of reach.

The possible solutions to curb the agitation:

- Economic development of the affected regions, creation of better basic public infrastuctures like hospital, schools, public services etc.
- Providing proportionate legislative representation power to the people so that they can address their aspiration democratically.
- Present government should pay heed to the aspirations of Gorkha and **should not impose linguistic compulsion of Bengali language fanning linguistic chauvinism and racial discriminatons**.
- Through a constitutional amendment, an Article similar to **Article 244 A**, can be inserted as a new chapter in Part VI of the Constitution which wll enable the establishment of an Autonomous State of Gorkhaland, with a legislature and council of ministers within the existing state of West Bengal without bifurcating it
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WORLD'S FIRST LASER WEAPON SYSTEM

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- The U.S. Navy recently test fired the world's first operational and deployed laser weaponsfrom a warship in the Persian Gulf. The new weapon releases photons—elementary particles which transmit laser—at the speed of light **silently hitting** their target and burning it to a temperature of thousands of degrees. **It's about 50,000 times the speed of an incoming intercontinental ballistic missile**
- **It is entirely invisible because it operates in an invisible part of the electromagnetic spectrum.**
- **The downside of laser weapons systems is that they consume a lot of energy on the one hand, and that they have difficulties penetrating dust, haze, and smoke on the other hand, which makes it difficult to effectively operate them under adverse weather conditions**.
- Possible counter-measure against a laser weapon includes fitting aircraft, boats and drones, with anti-laser coating or laser-deflecting mirrors.
- It should also be noted that Geneva Convention prohibits the targeting of human beings with laser weapons of any type. Also, the convention have been ratified by all states are universally applicable.

PEPPER IT WITH
Geneva Convention
There are **four Geneva Conventions**, which were drawn up in 1949. They cover armed forces on land and at sea, prisoners of war, and civilians. And all of them have now been accepted by virtually every State in the world.
In addition, **two Protocols** (a Protocol is an addition or amendment to a Convention) were drawn up in 1977 and one new protocol was drawn in 2005 at diplomatic conference.

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NEW BUTTERFLY SPECIES SPOTTED

- Rajapalayam Butterfly Club, a wing of Wildlife Association of Rajapalayam, has spotted a **Common Imperial (Cheritrafreja)** butterfly for the first time in the **Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary**, most of which comes under Virudhunagar district, **Tamil Nadu**.

- **Common Imperial butterfly** is generally found in high altitudes

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CUTTING OF POLICY RATE BY RBI

Currently in news

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is expected to reduce the key policy rate or the repo rate by **25 basis points (bps) to 6%** at its monetary policy review meeting.

The expectation of a rate cut is mainly due to decreasing retail inflation, which eased to 1.54% in June — a record low, after reading 2.18% in May. **India may have already become a 4% inflation economy**.

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- Repo rate is the rate at which the central bank lends money to commercial banks, usually in exchange for government securities.

- So, a rate cut means a reduction in the rate of interest at which banks such as the ICICI and SBI get money from the RBI.

- **The monetary policy committee(MPC) of RBI decides this repo rate every two months**. The committee also looks at the state of the economy and inflation levels while deciding on whether to change interest rates.

- A rate cut **can increase liquidity in the economy** and hence drive up the cost of goods and services, so the RBI often uses this **monetary policy tool to control inflation**.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> **Structure of the MPC**
> - Six members committee. Three of the members are from the RBI while the other three members are appointed by the government.
> - The **RBIGovernor who is the chairman** of the MPC, a Deputy Governor and one officer of the RBI
> - Under MPC, the governor has a **casting vote and doesn't enjoy veto power**. Decisions will be taken on the basis of majority vote
> - Responsibility of the MPC is to administer the inflation targeting.

The decision on repo rates has wide-ranging implications for businesses and individual consumers. The banks need to be more sensitive to their consumers' concerns and pass the benefits of the cut in the repo rate adequately to them.

The reasons are multi-pronged why the policy rate(repo rate) cut is not sufficiently passed on :

- The extra capital built by not passing interest rate cuts, helps banks **against risky debt financing** in future.

- The extra capital is used by banks to **repair their balance sheets** burdened with black marks of **bad loans and NPAs**.

- Regulations by RBI to **maintain CRR**(cash reserve ratio) in order to put check on liquidity **compels banks to shore up their balance sheets** by building extra capital by not passing the cut benefits to its consumers.

- The small borrowers have limited access to alternative form of finances which **create monopoly like situation** for banks providing them to change lending rate as per their advantage. But larger firms have other options like debentures.

Regardless of the fallacies, RBI rate cut still benefits economy and its consumers:

1. **Home loans and corporate loans** get cheaper
2. **cheaper car loans and student loans** will also push demand in these segments
3. **Start-ups** can also **avail loans at a lesser rate** as banks and other lending institutions compete with each other to offer loans at the most favourable rates
4. It is not necessary that **prices of commodities** have to **come down when interest rates** go down. But if it does, it is beneficial to invest in say gold or appreciating assets such as real estate and book profits when they rebound, rather than spending on consumables.
5. When capital becomes cheaper, companies tend to expand their operations, thus, **generating more employment** as they would need more manpower.

In conclusion, it is unwise to park your money with the bank when interest rates come down. This is because earnings on your fixed deposits will be negligible at a time when economic activity is high because banks do not want to take the risk of raising high-cost funds at a time when borrowing rates are falling.

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Rather, it is advisable to liquidate short term fixed deposits and invest in less risky mutual funds or government infrastructure bonds, keeping your long term fixed deposits safe.

JIYO PARSI SCHEME

Currently in news

Ministry of Minority Affairs recently launched **"JiyoParsi Publicity Phase-2"** at Mumbai, with commitment to "inclusive growth" and "Antyodaya" to ensure prosperity, security and dignity of the last person of the society.

The Minister launched another very essential scheme "JiyoParsi" for containing population decline of Parsis in India. It is a **100% central sector scheme** referring to the alarming total fertility rate of Parsis that has gone down.

"JiyoParsi Publicity Phase-1" was initiated in 2013 for containing the declining trend of population of the Parsi community and reverse it to bring their population above the threshold level.

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PEPPER IT WITH

Nai Roshni
Nai Manzil
Learn and Earn (Seekho aur Kamao)

Highlights of JiyoParsi

- The main objective of the "JiyoParsi" scheme is to reverse the declining trend of Parsi population.
- It plans to achieve so by adopting a scientific protocol and structured interventions, stabilize their population and increase the population of Parsis in India.
- Ministry of Minority Affairs' scheme has two components: **Medical Assistance and Advocacy/Counselling.**
- The scheme has been successful. 101 babies have been born in Parsi community through "JiyoParsi" scheme.
- **Target groups** :: Parsi married couples of Child bearing age who seek assistance; and Adults/ Young men/women/Adolescent boys/girls for detection of diseases resulting in infertility with consent of their Parents/ legal Guardians

JAPAN'S OKINOSHMA ISLAND (MEN-ONLY ISLAND) GAINS UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE STATUS

Located 60 km off the **western coast of Kyushu island**, the island of Okinoshima is an exceptional example of the tradition of worship of a sacred island. Integrated within the **Grand Shrine of Munakata**, the island of Okinoshima is considered sacred to this day.

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- Okinoshima island is in the **Sea of Japan (East Sea)** is permanently manned by a Shinto priest who prays to the island's goddess as century old rule.
- **A men-only island in Japan where women are banned** and male visitors must bathe naked in the sea(purifying dip) before visiting its shrine
- **The island has sometimes been said to ban women, but in principle anyone but the priests who pray there for 365 days a year is barred from entering**.

Also given World Heritage status recently

- **Taputapuatea**, a portion of the "Polynesian Triangle" in the South Pacific thought to be the last part of the globe settled by humans, to the list.
- It also added **Britain's Lake District** — muse for artists from William Wordsworth to Beatrix Potter — and the **Valongo wharf** in Rio deJaneiro where slaves from Africa first arrived in Brazil.
- the underground mines in**Tarnowskie Gory in Poland**, the historic **city of Yazd**, in Iran

PEPPER IT WITH
UNESCO world heritage sites in India.

21st EDITION OF MALABAR NAVAL EXERCISE-2017

In News

The exercise by US, Japanese and Indian navies takes place amid the military standoff between armies of the India and China in the Sikkim sector and Beijing ramping up its naval presence in South China sea.

Location : Bay of Bengal

Participation : Indian Naval Ship Jalashwa and INS Vikramaditya

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Exercises : professional exchanges on carrier strike group operations, maritime patrol and reconnaissance operations, Medical operations, damage control, explosive ordinance disposal, helicopter operations, surface and anti-submarine warfare.

- **The Malabar exercise started in 1992 with the navies of US and India in the** _Indian Ocean._ **Japan** **only became a permanent partner of the Malabar exercise earlier in this decade, but it has participated in several drills since 2007**.

- The Oz factor: India turned down Australia's request to join the trilateral Malabar exercises. In its previous iteration in 2007, Australia was the first to pull out of the "quadrilateral" between US, India, Japan and Australia after China sent a demarche to all four participants. Indian officials involved in the decision said India would work with Australia bilaterally.

INDIA AND GLOBAL CYBERSECURITY INDEX

India is ranked a high 23rd out of 165 nations in the 2nd **Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI)**,

released by the **UN telecommunications agency International Telecommunication Union (ITU).**

The **Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI)** is a multi-stakeholder initiative to measure the commitment of countries to cybersecurity. Cybersecurity has a wide field of application that cuts across many industries and sectors. Each country's level of development will therefore be analyzed within five **GCA pillars/parameters,**
namely

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1. **Legal Measures:** Measured based on the existence of legal institutions and frameworks dealing with cybersecurity and cybercrime.
2. **Technical Measures:** Measured based on the existence of technical institutions and frameworks dealing with cybersecurity
3. **Organizational Measures:** Measured based on the existence of policy coordination institutions and strategies for cybersecurity development at the national level
4. **Capacity Building :** Measured based on the existence of research and development, education and training programmes; certified professionals etc
5. **Cooperation:** Measured based on the existence of partnerships, cooperative frameworks and information sharing networks.

Member States were classified into three categories by their GCI score
- *Initiating stage*refers to countries that have started to make commitments in cybersecurity.
- *Maturing stage*refers to countries that have developed complex commitments, and engage in cybersecurityprogrammes and initiatives.
- *Leading stage*refers to country that demonstrate high commitment in all five pillars of the index.
  The top 10 most committed countries to cybersecurity are Singapore, United States, Malaysia, Oman, Estonia, Mauritius, Australia, Georgia, France and Canada. Russia is ranked 11th.

The GCI includes 25 indicators and 157 questions. The indicators used to calculate the GCI were selected on the basis of the following criteria:
- Relevance to the five GCA pillars and in contributing towards the main GCI objectives and conceptual framework;
- Data availability and quality;
- Possibility of cross verification through secondary data.

India with a score of 0.683 comes under Maturity Stage countries whereas Singapore with a 0.925 score under Leading Stage countries.

Conclusion
Cybersecurity is an increasingly important part of our life today, and the degree of interconnectivity of networks implies that anything and everything can be exposed, and everything from national critical infrastructure to our basic human rights can be compromised. Governments are therefore urged to consider policies that support continued growth in technology sophistication, access and security, and as a crucial first step, to adopt a national cybersecurity strategy.

IOC PLANNING REFUGEE TEAM AT 2020 TOKYO GAMES

International Olympic Committee

GS CONNECT

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- first appearance at last year's Rio de Janeiro Games.

- 10-member team from Syria, Congo, Ethiopia and South Sudan in Rio de Janeiro Olympics ,2016.

- **An effort to raise awareness of the issue of million refugees streamed into Europe.**

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G20 HAMBURG ACTION PLAN

Theme: **"Shaping An Interconnected World"**

G20's strategy sets the **Hamburg Action Plan** for achieving strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth. It was a two day event in Hamburg, Germany.

The Hamburg Action Plan also includes new measures to strengthen the international financial architecture, improve financial sector regulation and development, and promote collaboration on international taxation issues.

PEPPER IT WITH
G(irls) 20 summit

Hamburg Action Plan addresses compelling global challenges namely**:**

- **Trade and Investment**
- **Digitalization**
- **Financing Growth and Infrastructure**
- **Energy, Climate and Resource Efficiency**
- **Global Health**
- **Boosting Employment**
- **Women's Empowerment**
- **Anti-corruption**
- **Migration**

Topics of the G20 summit

BUILDING RESILIENCE	IMPROVING SUSTAINABILITY	ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY
WORLD ECONOMY	CLIMATE AND ENERGY	TACKLING THE CAUSES OF DISPLACEMENT
GLOBAL TRADE	THE 2030 AGENDA	PARTNERSHIP WITH AFRICA
EMPLOYMENT	DIGITALISATION	FIGHTING TERRORISM
FINANCIAL MARKETS / INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL ARCHITECTURE	HEALTH	ANTI-CORRUPTION
TAX COOPERATION	EMPOWERING WOMEN	AGRICULTURE / FOOD SECURITY

Key Highlights

BUILDING RESILIENCE

- **Strengthening economic resilience and international financial architecture** by improving the resilience of each individual G20 economy by **applying robust fiscal and monetary policies** to deal with future crisis. Central banks' interest rates have already reached an historic low in many G20 countries.
- Promoting **Cross-border capital flows** such flows are an intrinsic element of market economies and the basis of global free trade.
- **Developing financial markets** with **better monitoring and regulation** of the international financial markets and on **setting international standards.**
- **Making taxation fair and reliable internationally** by increasing the transparency, fairness and reliability of national tax systems worldwide. (BEPS)
- **Deepening cooperation on trade and investment** by developing Sustainable global supply
- **Enhancing and improving employment** by promoting ease of doing business, start-up funding and labour reforms.

IMPROVING SUSTAINABILITY

- **Protecting the climate and advancing sustainable energy supply :** Hamburg Action Plan also laid emphasis that the **Paris Agreement** is irreversible and reiterated the importance of fulfilling the UNFCCC commitment by developed countries in providing means of implementation including financial resources to assist developing countries with respect to both mitigation and adaptation actions in line with Paris outcomes.
- **Making progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda**: The G20 will be resolute in its endeavours to ensure, both through individual and collective action, the rapid and comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with its global goals for sustainable development, and of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.
- **Digitalization:** The G20 is in agreement that the spread of digital technology is a key driving force of economic growth and social development. Use of the potential for **innovation, growth and employment digital education**etc resulting from the spread of this technology.
- **Empowering women:** Gender equality and women's economic empowerment are crucial factors for socially just and sustainable development of societies. The G20 has pledged to reduce the current gap between male and **female employment by 25 percent by 2025**.
- **Health:** In the 2030 Agenda, the international community committed itself to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all people at all ages and combatting Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR).

ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY

- **Fighting corruption**
- **Improving food security:** Factors such as global population growth, climate change, fluctuation in precipitation, extreme weather events like droughts and flooding, and increased water consumption in industry and other sectors pose fundamental challenges to agriculture.
- **Combating terrorist financing and money laundering:** In order to enhance the fight against

terrorist financing, we aim to ensure global and comprehensive implementation of the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

G-20 and Indian aspect

- G20 has praised the initiatives in the country for promoting ease of doing business, start-up funding and labour reforms.
- G20 Summit, also noted that "in the financial sector, India is popularising a number of derivative instruments in exchanges or electronic trading platforms" as part of the measures to enhance resilience of its economy.
- It further said India is facilitating external commercial borrowings (ECBs) by start-ups to encourage innovation and promote ease of doing business, as part of the efforts being taken by the G20 members

RAIL CLOUD

In News

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The Indian Railways launches RailCloud, a virtual server with an inbuilt security system that will enable faster connectivity at a reduced cost.

Developed by rail PSU RailTel at an estimated cost of about ₹53 crore, Railcloud is aimed at optimising server the resources and its management.

Salient Features of the Initiatives Launched

- Faster and on-demand deployment of application- RailCloud will pave the way for swifter deployment of application
- Optimum use of Servers and storage-
- Utilization of existing infrastructure as part of Cloud
- Rapid scalability and elasticity
- IT Security enhancement and Standardization
- Cost reduction
- Better User Experience

Other Featutres:

- **NIVARAN-Grievance Portal'First IT application on RailCloud**
- **Cashless treatment Scheme in Emergency (CTSE)**

PEPPER IT WITH

Shahnawaz Committee, Wahchoo Committee, Seekari Committee, Sam Pitroda Committee, Rakesh Mohan Committee, Kanjaru Committee, A Panagariya Committee and Anil Kakodkar Committee

INDIA TO BE PART OF NEW GLOBAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

In News

India will soon have representation in the **Global Foreign Exchange Committee (GFXC)** of various central bankers and experts that has been recently formed to work towards the development of a **transparent global foreign exchange market.**

The Global Foreign Exchange Committee (**GFXC) was established in May 2017** as a forum bringing together central banks and private sector participants with the aim to promote a robust, liquid, open, and appropriately transparent forex market.

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- Emphasis on reducing misconduct risks in the financial sector presented by the **Financial Stability Board (FSB)** at the G20 Summit of leaders
- Actions to enhance conduct standards and adherence in markets include a **Global Code of Conduct for the Foreign Exchange Markets**
- **Members :** Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Euro Area, Hong Kong, **India**, Japan, Mexico, Scandinavia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland , United Kingdom, United States.
- The committee has been set up under the guidance of the **Bank for International Settlements (BIS)**, which is an organisation owned by 60 member central banks representing countries from around the world.

The objectives of the GFXC are:

1. to promote collaboration and communication among the local foreign exchange committees (FXCs) and non-GFXC jurisdictions with significant FX markets;
2. to exchange views on trends and developments in global FX markets, including on the structure and functioning of those markets, drawing on information gathered at the various FXCs; and
3. to promote, maintain and update on a regular basis the FX Global Code (the Code) and to consider good practices regarding effective mechanisms to support adherence.

What Is the FX Global Code?

- This set **of global principles of good practice in the foreign exchange market** (Global Code) has been developed to provide a common set of guidelines to promote the integrity and effective functioning of the wholesale foreign exchange market (FX Market).
- The Global Code does **not impose legal or regulatory obligations** on Market Participants nor does it substitute for regulation, but rather it is intended to serve as a supplement to any and all local laws,

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rules, and regulation by identifying global good practices and processes.

- The Global Code was developed by a partnership between **Foreign Exchange Working Group (FXWG) on central bank side** and **Market Participants Group (MPG) on private sector side.**

Also in News

In the **Hamburg Action Plan** adopted at the end of the two-day summit, the G20 countries, including India **agreed to keep the markets open and fight protectionism**, including all unfair trade practices and hinted at advancing the implementation of international standards on transparency to fight corruption, tax evasion, money laundering and terrorist financing.

PM NarendraModi said "India stands ready to carry forward the fight against corruption and black money.".

HYPERLOOP TRANSPORT TECHNOLOGY

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In News

HyperloopOne(private company) recently announced the successful completion of the world's first full systems Hyperloop(**futuristic mode of tube-based transportation**) test in a vacuum environment.

- It was the first phase of a multi-phase programme which was privately conducted on May 12 at the company's test track, **"DevLoop," in the Nevada Desert.**
- The vehicle coasted above the first portion of the track for 5.3 seconds using magnetic levitation while achieving the target speed of **70 mph set for phase 1**. The next phase of testing will target speeds of **250 mph.**
- The company tested the operation of all the system's components including **motor, vehicle—suspension, magnetic levitation, electromagnetic braking, vacuum pumping system and more as a single integrated unit in a vacuum.**

Elon Musk Pioneer in Hyperloop Technology
The catalyst in Hyperloop Technology was SpaceX CEO Elon Musk releasing his white paper in the summer of 2013. Musk presented a brilliant system architecture with his team at Space Exploration Technologies Corp. demonstrating the system's viability.

What is a Hyperloop?

Hyperloop is a new mode of transportation that moves freight and people quickly, safely, on-demand and direct from origin to destination. Passengers or cargo are loaded into the Hyperloop vehicle and accelerate gradually via electric propulsion through a low-pressure tube. The vehicle quickly lifts above the track using magnetic levitation and glides at airline speeds for long distances due to ultra-low aerodynamic drag. Hyperloop systems will be built on columns or tunneled below ground to avoid dangerous grade crossings and wildlife.

Significance

- With Hyperloop, the world will be cleaner, safer and faster.
- It's going to make the world a lot more efficient and will impact the ways our cities work, where we live and where we work. We'll be able to move between cities as if cities themselves are metro stops.
- It's fully autonomous and enclosed, eliminating pilot error and weather hazards
- It's safe and clean, with no direct carbon emissions.
- It unlocks vast economic opportunities with revolutionary step in transportation technology.

NGT DECLARES AREA NEAR GANGA AS 'NO DEVELOPMENT ZONE'

In News

GS CONNECT

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An area of **100 metres from the edge of the Ganga between Haridwar and Unnao** has been declared a "No Development Zone" by **NGT**, **prohibiting dumping of waste within 500 metres** of the river.

Key Highlights:

- NGT's principal bench headed by **Justice Swatanter Kumar**, the green tribunal directed that "100 meters from the edge of the river would be treated as no development/construction zone" along the stretch.
- An environment **compensation of ₹50,000** will be imposed on anyone dumping waste in the river.

National Green Tribunal (NGT)

The National Green Tribunal has been under the **National Green Tribunal Act 2010** for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.

Members
- **Chairman::** serving or retired Chief Justice of a High Court or a judge of the Supreme Court ofIndia.
- 10 expert members and 10 judicial members presently.

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- NGT had imposed a **plastic ban on the Gomukh-Haridwar** stretch and a fine of Rs 5,000 on hotels and dharamsalas for dumping waste along the river.
- NGT also directed the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments to formulate **guidelines for religious activities** on the ghats of the Ganga and its tributaries.
- The Uttar Pradesh government is **duty-bound to shift tanneries, within six weeks**, from **Jajmau in Kanpur to leather parks in Unnao** or any other place it considers appropriate
- The court has also appointed **a supervisory committee**, **headed by the Secretary of the Water Resources Ministry** and comprising IIT professors and officials of the Uttar Pradesh government to oversee implementation of the directions passed in its 543-page verdict

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Whanganui river, Yamuna river and ganga river.

- **No in-stream mechanical mining** is permitted and even the mining on the floodplain should be semi-mechanical and preferably more manual.

SC STAYS HIGH COURT VERDICT ON GANGA STATUS

In News

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The Supreme Court froze the status of "legal persons" accorded to rivers Ganga and Yamuna by the Uttarakhand High Court in March 2017.
The stay came on a petition filed over mining and stone crushing along the banks of the Ganga.

BACKGROUND
The High Court had invoked its jurisdiction as the *parens patriae* of the rivers while declaring the glaciers including Gangotri and Yamunotri, rivers, streams, rivulets, lakes, air, meadows, dales, jungles, forests wetlands, grasslands, springs and waterfalls, legal entity/ legal person/juristic person/juridical person/ moral person/artificial person having the status of a legal person, with all corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person, in order to preserve and conserve them.

VEBLEN GOODS

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A good for which demand increases as the price increases, because of its exclusive nature and appeal as a status symbol. Luxury goods like diamonds, whose appeal depends on their exorbitant price.
It is named after American economist Thorstein Veblen. Veblen goods are considered exceptions to the law of demand, which states that the demand for a good must decrease as its price increases, and vice versa.
Diagram for Veblen Good

In Contrast
A Giffen good is an extreme type of inferior good. The negative income effect of changes in price of a Giffen good is actual stronger than the substitution effect. This leads to its bizarre quality: when the price of a Giffen good rises, consumers actually buy more. **Veblen goods behave the same way for very different reasons.**
A giffen good occurs when a rise in price causes higher demand because the income effect outweighs the substitution effect.
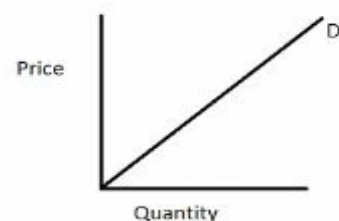
KOODIYATTAM - THE 'RITUALISTIC' SANSKRIT THEATRE OF KERALA

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- **Koodiyattam** is recognized by the UNESCO as one of the masterpieces of the **oral and intangible heritage of humanity.**
- **Koodiyattom** is a peculiar combination of the Sanskrit concept of theatre, operating within strict religious and ritualistic boundaries and an independent interpretation of the text.
- Koodiyattam is the oldest surviving form of Sanskrit theatre more than 1000 years old ancient form of classical dramatic dance theatre in India.
- The Koodiyattam tradition of enacting classical Sanskrit dramas, is closely tied to **Kerala**'s Hindu temples.
- **KulasekharaVarmaCheramanPerumal**, an ancient king of Kerala was known as the creator of Koodiyattam(9th – 10th century A.D)
- **Chakyars** enact the male-characters and the **Nangiars**(the women of the Nambiars) enact the female-characters

Performance elements:
Acting in Koodiyattam is based on a highly evolved mime language. Stylized facial and eye expressions, a language of mudras (hand gestures), a unique style of chanting together with elaborate headdresses and the symbolic use of colour through the makeup constitute the drama. Contained movements and intense

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emotions mark this temple theater style.
Unlike in Kathakali, women traditionally perform the female characters.
Music elements:
The accompaniment is chiefly by the use of **mizhavu drums** played by the **Nambiars** who sit at the rear of the stage. These huge drums have great symbolic significance; they set the mood for the play and heighten its drama. They also keep **the talam, the rhythmic pattern**.
To the left of the stage a **Nangyar may sing the main verses** of the drama and accompany the **Chakyar with small cymbals.**
itakka (an hour-glass shaped drum),
kuzhal (an oboe-like wind instrument)
shankha (conch shell).

STREET VENDING ACT

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Currently in news
Three years after the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, came into force, stipulating local bodies to issue licences to street vendors and set up designated vending zones, the city Corporation is yet to move beyond the preparation of the draft list of vendors.
Background

- **A survey of the street vendors in the city as part of rehabilitating them under the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) programme began in 2015.**
- The amendment made in 2014 in the Act has given teeth to the nearly defunct **"Town Vending Committees TVC)"**, which will now be responsible for not just enforcement of the policy, but also act as decision-making body.
- A draft list (prepared with help of survey) of street vendors in the city, based on their locations and the nature of items sold, was prepared and classified them according to the type of vending, whether it was on land, a temporarily raised platform or cart.
- The draft list also allocated **street vendor ID numbers** to those surveyed but various street vendors' organisations objected to the list, saying that many street vendors were not covered in the survey.
- At the end of the process, street vendors will be issued **identification cards** so that they can avail themselves of various **welfare benefits under NULM**
- Street vending will not be allowed in the other areas once this comes into force. But the local body is yet to identify such zones.

Highlights of Street vendor Act
- ✓ The Bill provides for **constitution of a Town Vending Authority** in each Local Authority, which is the fulcrum of the Bill, for implementing the provisions of the Bill.
- ✓ To avoid arbitrariness of authorities, the Bill **provides for a survey** of all existing street vendors, and subsequent survey at-least once in every five years, and issue of certificate of vending to all the street vendors identified in the survey
- ✓ It has been provided that **no street vendor will be evicted until the survey has been completed and certificate of vending issued to the street vendors**.
- ✓ the mechanism is to **provide universal coverage**, by protecting the street vendors from harassment and promoting their livelihoods
- ✓ **Relocation of street vendors should be exercised as a last resort**. Accordingly, a set of principles to be followed for 'relocation' is proposed to be provided for in the second Schedule of the Bill.

PEPPER IT WITH
Which Indian State has maximum number of street vendors.
Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation.

MATERNITY BENEFITS ACT

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Speaking out loud against **harassment of women at workplace**, the Madras High Court Bench has held that it is unreasonable to deny maternity leave with full pay to women in government service for their second delivery just because they had given birth to twins during their first.
Justice S. Vimala said: "Unless there is a law either prohibiting or restricting the

Ruling in Sharmila case
Terming such incidents as nothing but "maternity harassment," the judge wondered how could the officials continue to deny maternity leave for the second delivery on the basis of number of babies borne by a woman employee during the first delivery despite a categorical ruling passed on the issue by Justice K. Chandru (since retired) in J. Sharmila's case on October 19, 2010.
In that judgement, Mr. Justice Chandru had traced the history of the law related to maternity benefits before holding that it was not right on the part of the State government to introduce a two-child norm for grant of maternity leave with full pay when the thrust across the country was to expand the scope of maternity benefits.

number of deliveries in order to have indirect control over the population, the Government cannot decline

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maternity leave by fixing the number of children delivered in each delivery as the basis."

Provisions of the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill

- Women working in the organised sector will now be entitled to paid maternity leave of 26 weeks, up from 12 weeks
- Maternity leave for more than two children after first birth will continue to be 12 weeks.
- maternity leave of 12 weeks to mothers adopting a child below the age of three months as well as to commissioning mothers (defined as a biological mother) who uses her egg to have a surrogate child
- establishment with more than 50 employees to provide crèche facilities within a prescribed distance
- The new law will apply to all establishments employing 10 or more people and the entitlement will be for only up to first two children. For third child, the entitlement will be for only 12 weeks.
- The employer can permit a woman to work from home as an option if work is of such nature.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> The Maternal mortality rate (MMR) is the annual number of female deaths per 100,000 live births from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes).

Benefits of maternity leave

- ✓ maternity leave reduces the risk of infant mortality
- ✓ improves breastfeeding rates
- ✓ helps prevent post and pre natal depression and stress in new mothers
- ✓ better bearing on child's physical and mental health

Pan-India implementation of Maternity Benefit Program

Objective of the Scheme

- To provide partial compensation for the wage loss in terms of cash incentives so that the woman can take adequate rest before and after delivery of the first living child.
- The cash incentives provided would lead to improved health seeking behaviour amongst the Pregnant Women and Lactating Mother (PW&LM) to reduce the effects of under-nutrition namely stunting, wasting and other related problems
- Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers who are eligible will receive a cash benefit of Rs.5,000/- in three installment

SEBI MAY REGULATE BITCOIN TRADE

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Currently in news

The government is considering the introduction of a regulatory regime for virtual or crypto currencies, such as Bitcoin, that would enable the levy of the Goods and Services Tax on their sale.

Bitcoin is a digital currency. Instead of printing banknotes, or minting coins, a list of the registration numbers of each of the "coins" is kept and a record of who owns them Bitcoin is a type of **cryptocurrency**: Balances are kept using **public and private "keys,"** which are long strings of numbers and letters linked through the **mathematical encryption algorithm** that was used to create them.Examples of cryptocurrenciesbitcoin, ethereum, ripple etc.**They are neither illegal nor legal in India.**

> **Blockchain Technology**
> Blockchain is basically a digital public ledger that records every transaction.
> The blockchain has complete information about the addresses and their balances right from the genesis block to the mostrecently completed block.

Benefts of Cryptocurrencies

- ✓ *Quick and Cheap Transactions*
- ✓ Bitcoin is the only payment method that is 100% irreversible and cannot be charged back
- ✓ *Appreciating Value*
- ✓ IF regulated can serve as digital asset, similar to gold," which means that crypto currency owners will be able to trade them on registered exchanges
- ✓ regulation of these currencies will "promote" a formal tax base.
- ✓ regulation of these currencies can help keeping a tab on their use for illegal activities such as money laundering, terror funding and drug trafficking

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Decentralised currencies and Satoshi Nakamoto

Banning cryptocurrencies will give a clear message that all related activities are **illegal and will disincetivise** those interested in taking speculative risks, but it was pointed out it will impede tax collection on gains made in such activities and that regulating the currency instead would signal a **boost to blockchain technology**, encourage the development of a supervision ecosystem (that tracks legal activities and may also assist in tracking illegal activities) and promote a formal tax base.

INDIA TO HOST 8TH EDITION OF THEATRE OLYMPICS

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India to host 8th Edition of Theatre Olympics '**The Biggest Theatre Celebration of the World**' from February 17 –April 08, 2018

- The Theatre Olympics, being held in **India for the first time**, is being organised**by National School of Drama, under the aegis of Ministry of Culture.**
- The first country to host the **Theatre Olympics was Greece in 1995**.The 7th Theatre Olympics were held in Wroclaw, Poland.
- Inaugural ceremony of the Theatre Olympics will take place in New Delhi
- The Theatre Olympics was established in **1993 in Delphi, Greece**, as the first international theatre festival. With the tagline **'Crossing Millennia'**, this is an initiative to connect the cultural past with the present and future, bringing the richness and diversity of theatre heritage to the experiments and research of contemporary theatre.

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INTERPRETATIVE NOTES BETWEEN INDIA AND BANGLADESH

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Currently in news

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for the Joint Interpretative Notes (JIN) on the Agreement between India and Bangladesh for the Promotion and Protection of Investments.

Key highlights

- The JIN includes interpretative notes to be jointly adopted for many clauses, including, the definition of investor, definition of investment, exclusion of taxation measures, Fair and Equitable Treatment (FET), National Treatment (NT) and Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment, expropriation, essential security interests and Settlement of Disputes between an Investor-and a Contracting Party.

PEPPER IT WITH

The volume of bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh is about $6.6 billion; there are estimates that the trade potential is at least four times the present level**.**

- Joint Interpretative Statements in general play an important supplementary role in strengthening the investment treaty regime.
- With increasing bilateral investment treaty disputes, issuance of such statements is "likely to have strong persuasive value before tribunals.
- Such pro-active approach by States can foster a more predictable and coherent reading of treaty terms by arbitration tribunals.
- The JIN would impart clarity to the interpretation of the existing agreement between India and Bangladesh for the Promotion and Protection of Investments (BIPA)

SARASWATI-SUPERCLUSTER OF GALAXIES DISCOVERED BY INDIAN ASTRONOMERS

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- **The supercluster is about 4 billion light years away and spreads over a "great wall" about 600 million light years across**.
- The first supercluster of galaxies, the Shapley Supercluster, was discovered in 1989, and the second, the Sloan Great Wall in 2003. The Milky Way galaxy is part of the **Laniakea Supercluster**, which was discovered in 2014

PEPPER IT WITH

Superclusters are clusters of clusters. They can have as few as two clusters, and superclusters with two to four clusters are common. Saraswati has 42. Superclusters are the largest coherent structures seen in the universe.

- The astronomers belong to Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) and Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISER) in Pune, besides NIT, Jamshedpur and Newman College, Thodupuzha.

U.S. INDIA BUSINESS COUNCIL (USIBC)

GS CONNECT

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In News

USIBC, a forum of companies that seek to promote business cooperation between the two countries, **has decided to delink from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and function as an autonomous entity**.

About

The U.S.-India Business Council is the premier business advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening the economic and commercial relationship between the United States and India. The Council's primary mission is to serve as the direct link between business and government leaders

Mission

The Council's mission is to promote **bilateral trade relations** between India and the United States through **pro-growth policies** that will advance commercial partnerships from **$100 billion to $500 billion** by the end of the decade.

Issues
- Aerospace and Defense
- Digital Economy
- Energy and Environment
- Financial Services
- Food & Agriculture
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Legal Services
- Life Sciences
- Logistics
- Manufacturing
- Media and Entertainment
- Real Estate

Important Meets (In August**)**
- *Roundtable and Reception with the Embassy of India's New Deputy Chief of Mission and Minister Commerce in Washington, DC to discuss industry ambitions.*
- U.S.-India Startup Dialogue Series.

Conclusion
The growth of bilateral trade between the two countries, the U.S.-India Business Council provides its member companies access to unparalleled leadership in both the public and private sectors and simultaneously opening many economic avenues for India to tread on.

INDIAN RAILWAYS LAUNCHES FIRST SOLAR-POWERED DEMU TRAIN

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- *India's first 1600 HP solar-powered DEMU (Diesel Electric Multiple Unit) train from Safdarjung railway station on Friday. The train will run from Sarai Rohilla in Delhi to Farukh Nagar in Haryana.*
- The train has six trailer coaches, with 16 solar panels fitted in each of them
- The Railways are hoping to reduce 239 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually by saving approximately 90,800 litres of diesel per rake.
- The Indian Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai has manufactured the new train which will run on a 1,600 hydraulic horsepower (HHP) DEMU unit.

WHAT IS PEG RATIO IN FINANCE?

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- The **price/earnings to growth ratio** (PEG ratio) is a stock's price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio divided by the growth rate of its earnings for a specified time period.
- A metric used to evaluate the attractiveness of a stock by comparing its price-to-earnings ratio with its earnings growth
- It is calculated by dividing the price-to-earnings ratio by the annual earnings growth rate.
- The PEG ratio is considered superior to the PE ratio since it evaluates a stock in relation to its earnings growth
- For example, the PEG ratio would suggest that a stock with a low PE is not necessarily a better buy than a stock with high PE if the latter has a sufficiently higher rate of earnings growth.
- The metric was popularised by American investor Peter Lynch through his 1989 book *One Up on Wall Street.*

WATER WARS: PLACHIMADA VS COCA-COLA

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Background
The Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt. Ltd, the Indian subsidiary of the Atlanta-based manufacturer of aerated drinks, erected its factory in a 38-acre plot in Plachimada, Palakkad distric in 1999. The plant is situated in the midst of agricultural land, which has historically belonged to the Adivasis.

Issues
- As per the agreement struck by the company with the KSPCB, up to 1.5 million litres of water was drawn commercially from 6 bore-wells situated inside the factory compound. The permit granted Coca-Cola the right to extract ground water to meet its production demands of 3.8 litres of water for a litre of cola.
- As a result, the water table receded, as did the quality of groundwater. Detailed sampling of the water

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collected from the region revealed high concentration of calcium, and magnesium ions.

- The colloidal slurry that was generated as a by-product was initially sold to villagers as fertilizer.The samples of slurry that was being deployed as fertilizer were found to contain dangerous levels of toxic metals and the known carcinogen, cadmium.
- The area's farming industry has been devastated and jobs, as well as the health of the local people, have been put at risk
- Plachimada has been mentioned for failing to meet the quality norms on salinity, alkalinity, and high traces of magnesium, and chloride, among other minerals.

Protest

Group of villagers formed the 'Coca-Cola VirudhaJanakeeya Samara Samithy,' a body fighting for the closure of the polluting soda factory, in April, 2002 resulting in several villagers picketing the factory. The cola giant slapped charges against the leaders of the rebellion

Federalism and the law

The Perumattypanchayat took matters into its own hands by refusing to renew Coca-Cola's license on account of the exploitation of natural resources that had deleterious effects on public health, as well as agricultural yield. The company challenged this order in the Kerala High Court, which directed the litigants to approach the government's Local Self-Government Department (LSD). The LSD overruled the panchayat's order banning the license.

The panchayat again approached the High Court, which observed that "groundwater was a public property held in trust by a government and that it had no right to allow a private party to overexploit the resource to the detriment of the people." However, the LSD refused to relent from its earlier position on legal grounds. The company was allowed to continue operation as long as it found alternative sources of water supply.

Coca-Cola relinquished its license, stating in the SC that it did not intend to resume production from Plachimada.

NIIF

GS CONNECT

In News

Department of Economic Affairs had signed an agreement with the NIIF (National Investment & Infrastructure Fund) for a Rs. 22,000 crore contribution with strong investment opportunities into the roads, ports, aviation and power sectors.

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NIIF

- Its creation was announced in the Union Budget 2015-16
- NIIF is registered with Securities and Exchange Board of India ("SEBI") as a **Category II Alternate Investment Fund ("AIF") under the SEBI** (Alternative Investments Funds) Regulations, 2012
- NIIF is formed as a trust (set up under the provisions of Indian Trusts Act 1882) created by the Government of India
- NIIF is Considering investments in third party managed funds focused on clean energy (Green Growth Fund already committed), affordable housing and medium sized infrastructure companies.
- NIIF is a major initiative by the Government of India to give fillip to Infrastructure sector and spur economic growth.

PEPPER IT WITH
Differneces between NIIF and National Investment Fund

NIIF Structure

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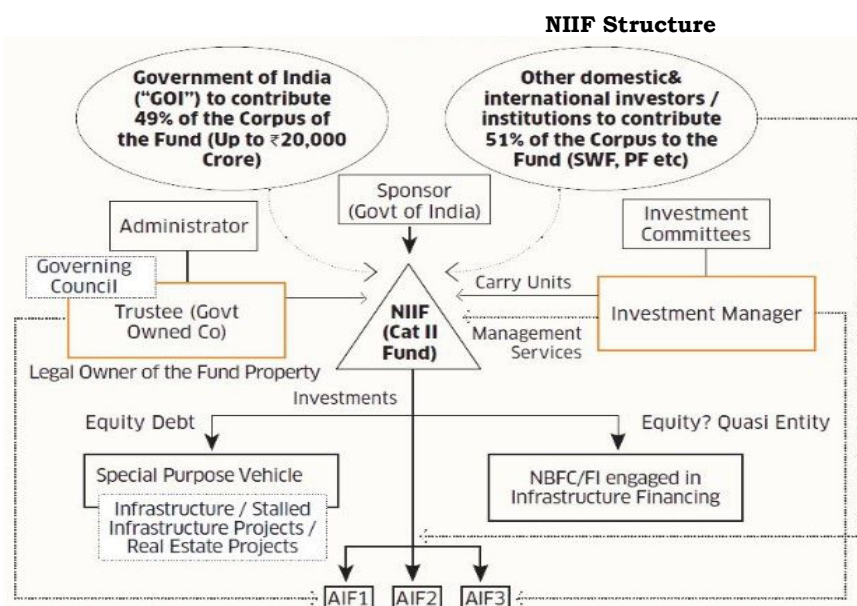
SC ORDERS CBI PROBE INTO MANIPUR EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLINGS

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Currently in news

The Supreme Court on Friday directed a probe by the CBI into the alleged extra-judicial killings by the Army, the Assam Rifles and the Manipur Police in the insurgency—hit State

Background

The court was hearing a PIL seeking probe and compensation in the **alleged 1,528 extra-judicial killings** in Manipur from 2000 to 2012 by security forces and police.

The Army had told the apex court that it cannot be subjected to FIRs for carrying out anti-militancy operations in insurgency-prone areas like Jammu and Kashmir and Manipur, while alleging local bias in judicial inquiries conducted against it in these regions, which have tarnished its image.

In every military operation, the Army cannot be disbelieved. Every judicial inquiry cannot be against the Army. The alleged extra-judicial killing cases in Manipur are not cases of massacre, rather these are cases of military operations.

PEPPER IT WITH

How are Extrajudicial killings defined.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

AFSPA (Armed Force Special Powers Act)

➤ The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) was preceded by the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Ordinance 1958. The Ordinance gave the armed forces certain special powers in the 'disturbed areas' of Manipur and Assam.

➤ AFSPA empowers the governor of the state, or the central government to declare any part of the state as a 'disturbed area', if in its opinion there exists a dangerous situation in the said area which makes it necessary to deploy armed forces in the region.

➤ The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, or AFSPA, as it is commonly known, has been a subject of intense discussion and debate. AFSPA has been in force in the North-East and Jammu and Kashmir, and the 'draconian' law has been the reason of wide protests.

States are under AFSPA

Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Manipur (**except Imphal**), Arunachal Pradesh(only **Tirap, Changlang and Longding** districts). Meghalaya Afspa is confined to a 20-km area bordering Assam.

Special powers given to army officialsunder AFSPA

- Under Section 4 of the AFSPA, an authorised officer in a disturbed area enjoys certain powers. The authorised officer has the power to open fire at any individual even if it results in death if the individual violates laws which prohibit (a) the assembly of five or more persons; or (b) carrying of weapons

- It also protects them from legal processes for actions taken under the act.

- arrest without a warrant

- seize and search without any warrant any premise in order to make an arrest or recovery of hostages, arms and ammunitions

- Individuals who have been taken into custody have to be handed over to the nearest police station as soon as possible

How Disturbed Areas are declared?

Power to declare areas to be disturbed areas comes under Section 3 in The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.

If, in relation to any State or Union territory to which this Act extends, the Governor of that State or the Administrator of that Union territory or the Central Government, in either case, if of the opinion that the whole or any part of such State or Union territory, as the case may be, is in such a disturbed or dangerous condition that the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary, the Governor of that State or the Administrator of that Union territory or the Central Government, as the case may be, may, by notification in the Official Gazette, declare the whole or such part of such State or Union territory to be a disturbed area.

Role of the judiciary to monitor AFSPA

There were questions about the constitutionality of AFSPA, given that law and order is a state subject. The Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of AFSPA in a 1998 judgement (Naga People's Movement of Human Rights v. Union of India).

In this judgement, the Supreme Court arrived at certain conclusions including

- a suo-motto declaration can be made by the Central government, however, it is desirable that the state government should be consulted by the central government before making the declaration;

- AFSPA does not confer arbitrary powers to declare an area as a 'disturbed area';

- theauthorised officer should strictly follow the 'Dos and Don'ts' issued by the army.

Review of the Act

On November 19, 2004, the Central government appointed a five member committee headed by Justice B P Jeevan Reddy to review the provisions of the act in the north eastern states.

The committee submitted its report in 2005, which included the following recommendations: (a) AFSPA should be repealed and appropriate provisions should be inserted in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967; (b) The Unlawful Activities Act should be modified to clearly specify the powers of the armed forces and paramilitary forces and (c) grievance cells should be set up in each district where the armed forces are deployed.

The 5th report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission on public order has also recommended the repeal of the AFSPA.

Points against AFSPA

- Critics flagged it as a failed undemocratic tool which is unable to contain terrorism in 'disturbed areas' and restore normalcy. Instead it is used as tool for iron-hand governance which spirals violent factions.

- It is seen as 'License to Kill' by common citizens which violates the Human Rights.
- Many Human rights violations go unnoticed as the Government decisions cannot be challenged in court of law. AFSPA's immediate withdrawal is a *sine qua non* for the protection and promotion of human rights.
- Due to it many innocent citizens have to face hardships due inhumane curfew conditions.

Conclusion

The existence of laws such as AFSPA is deplorable. It shows the inability of our system to address the problems of the masses in a democratic way. It is time AFSPA to be repealed. We won our independence through a non-violent struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi and the issues can be discussed democratically.

HAMARI DHAROHAR

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Scheme/Policy name	Detail of Scheme/ Objective	Target Beneficiary	Target Achieved
HamariDharohar (Launched in 2014-15)	The scheme aims at curating iconic exhibitions, supporting calligraphy, preservation of old documents, research and development, etc.	The scheme aims on preservation of cultural heritage of minorities,	- "The Everlasting Flame" to showcase the civilization and culture of the Parsis (Zoroastrians) - Ministry has also sanctioned a project to DairatulMaarifil Osmania (an institution established in 1888 AD), Osmania University, Telangana for translation from Arabic language into English, digitization and re-printing of 240 invaluable documents belonging to Moghul period on the subjects of Medicines, Mathematics, Literature, etc

PEPPER IT WITH

National Commission for Minorities (NCM)
National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.
Which communities in India are considered as minorities according to the ministry.

HRIDAY

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Scheme/Policy name	Detail of Scheme/ Objective	Target Beneficiary	Benefits Accrued to citizens
Heritage Infrastructure Development and Augmentation Yojana**(HRIDAY)**	To improve infrastructure for better access, sanitation ,signages and amenities in the vicinity of heritage sites for enhanced experience and better presentation.	12 mission cities have been included in the Mission. These are: Ajmer, Amaravati(AP),Amritsar, Badami(Karnataka), Dwarka (Gujarat), Gaya, Mathura, Kanhipuram,Mathura, Varanasi and Vellankini(TN) and Warangal (Telangana)	Benefits to tourists and visitors will follow on completion of ongoing projects

PEPPER IT WITH

It was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India.

KAMBALA BILL CLEARED BY THE PRESIDENT

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In news

All the hurdles for resuming Kambala — the traditional slush-track buffalo race of the coastal districts — are cleared with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Karnataka Amendment) Bill.

About

The uproar to allow the Kambala as traditional sports was spurred after Tamil Nadu government allowed Jallikattu forcing the government to make same similar provisions in Central act of PCA in Karnataka. The new Bill seeks to take out Kambala and Bullock-cart race from the premise of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960(PCA).

KeyHighlights

- The Union Home Ministry suggested modifications to the Bill and returned it to the State. It wanted the government to modify or omit the phrase "**subject to such other conditions as may be prescribed**", in the sub-section 2 of section 3 of the Bill which **would open the window for inclusion of more such sports.**

- The bill highlights the importance of Kambala and Bullock-cart race from traditional point of view which helps in promoting and preserving the traditions and culture in locale of the concerned state.

PEPPER IT WITH
Cock fight, bail gari shariat, camel race, Dog fight, Bulbul fight, Horse race.

What is Kambala?

Kambala is an annual buffalo race which is a tradition in the Karnataka's Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts' farming community. This area is called Tulunadu (Land of Tulu Language).

A pair of buffaloes is tied to the plough and one person anchors it, beating the buffaloes with a stick to run faster. There are two parallel muddy tracks, on which two competing pairs of buffaloes run. Fastest team wins

Where: Coastal region of Karnataka (Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts and bordering area of Kerala).

Season: This annual event starts in November and lasts till March every year. This age-old festival is organized on a large scale and a huge crowd gathers to participate in the celebrations.

Belief: According to one belief, Kambala is a festival that originated in the farming community of Karnataka around 800 years back. The festival is dedicated to Kadri's Lord Manjunatha, an incarnation of Lord Shiva. It is believed to be celebrated to please the Gods for a good harvest. It is a form of recreational sport for the farming community and also another belief is that it is considered as the Sport of the royal (landlord) Family.

DO WE NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THE RISE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Artificial Intelligence systems could soon surpass humans, which may potentially lead to our deliberate (or inadvertent) extinction.

Since late 1950's scholars are considering how to build computers that could improve themselves and take on problems that only humans could handle. That's still a workable definition of artificial intelligence.

Artificial intelligence is a branch of computer science that aims to create intelligent machines. It has become an essential part of the technology industry. Research associated with artificial intelligence is highly technical and specialized. The core problems of artificial intelligence include programming computers for certain traits such as: **Knowledge, Reasoning Problem solving, Perception, Learning, Planning, Ability to manipulate and move objects etc**.

PEPPER IT WITH
Artificial Intelligence Innovation Conferences.

1987 INDIA SRILANKA ACCORD

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The agreement is popularly referred to as the **Rajiv-Jayewardene Accord**, after its architects—rime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President J.R. Jayewardene. Unfortunately, the event is today remembered only for its unpleasant fallout after India unwittingly got entangled in a counter-insurgency war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) from 1987 to 1990. After sacrificing the lives of over 1,200 of its soldiers, India felt cheated when President Ranasinghe Premadasa joined hands with the LTTE to send the Indian troops out of Sri Lanka before they had completed their job.

The accord sought to collectively address all the three contentious issues between India and Sri Lanka: strategic interests, people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka and Tamil minority rights in Sri Lanka. Its success depended on sustained political support from both the countries. So the Accord got sidelined when political leaders who were unhappy with the Accord came to power in both countries almost at the same time.

PEPPER IT WITH
Tamil Eelam and Sinhalese.

KORAGA TRIBE

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- The Koraga are classified by the Government of India as a Scheduled Tribe. They are mainly found in **Karnataka** and **kerala**.
- Koraga people have been subjected to a practice **known as *AJALU***, which the Government of Karnataka defined as "differentiating Koraga people and persons belonging to other communities, treating them as inferior human beings, mixing hair, nails and other inedible abnoxious substances in the food and asking them to eat that food and to make them to run like buffaloes before the beginning of **Kambala**.
- **Kambala is an annual buffalo race** which is a tradition in the Karnataka's Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts' farming community and is different from Jallikattu. This area is called Tulunadu (Land of Tulu Language).
- *Ajalu* has been considered to be inhuman and was prohibited in 2000 by the Karnataka **Koragas (Prohibition of Ajalu Practice) Act,2000. Ajalu** has been occasionally witnessed during *Nemotsava* or temple fairs at places in Karnataka.
- Although an untouchable community, the Koraga regard themselves as Hindus and have their own language classified as an independent Dravidian language.

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Religious Blindness:
The will to believe induces in religious people a variety of blindness for which there seems to be no cure. Apparently educated people, whom one would expect to be acquainted with at least the elements of logic, will, with the utmost seriousness make the most ridiculous statements which will send the non-believer into convulsions of laughter.

IN NEWS- POCSO

- The Supreme Court has shown due restraint in declining to apply the provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act to mentally retarded adults whose mental age may be that of a child.
- POCSO is meant to protect children from sexual offences. To extend it to adult victims based on mental age would require determination of their mental competence. This would need statutory provisions and rules; the legislature alone is competent to enact them.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Cerebral Parsy Symptoms

RCEP-TECHNICAL LEVEL TALKS IN HYDERABAD

Why in news?
Technical level talks of the RCEP is being held from July 18 to 28 in Hyderabad.

- RCEP is a proposed comprehensive regional economic integration agreement amongst the **10-ASEAN countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam)**
- **and its six Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) partners, viz. Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, Korea and India.**
- India's push for easier norms on movement of professionals across borders
  for short-term work under a proposed mega Free Trade Agreement (FTA) —
  is learnt to have found favour with some ASEAN-bloc members.
- Australia and New Zealand are against the move as mentioned by the official sources.

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PEPPER IT WITH
East Asia Free Trade Agreement (EAFTA) and the Comprehensive Economic Partnership in East Asia (CEPEA) initiatives

MEKEDATU PROJECT ON CAUVERY RIVER

- The project was first proposed along with **Shivanasamudra hydro power project** for hydro power generation and supplying drinking water.
- Tamil Nadu is against the project saying that Karnataka had not sought prior permission for the project. Its argument was that the project would affect the flow of **Cauvery** water to Tamil Nadu.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Projects of National Importance.

ANTI-PROFITEERING AUTHORITY

- The anti-profiteering authority proposed under the new goods and services tax (GST) regime will investigate only those **cases that have mass impact and not small cases of alleged undue profits.**
- The national anti-profiteering authority will be responsible for applying anti-profiteering measures in **cases where a reduction in tax incidence or the benefit of input tax credit** has not been passed on to customers by way of a commensurate reduction in prices.
- The authority, to be headed by a **secretary-level officer** and assisted by
  four technical members, will lapse after two years.
- The constitution of the National Anti-profiteering Authority is expected
  to bolster consumer confidence and ensure all stakeholders reap the intended benefits of GST.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Which type of cases have been fixed for scrutiny under Anti-Profiteering Authority.

ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION

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Why in news
It was in news because India strongly rejected the resolutions of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) that had expressed concern about the recent attacks on people by cow-vigilante groups.
About

- It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.
- **The Organization was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco on 12th Rajab 1389 Hijra (25 September 1969) following the criminal arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem.**
- **India is not a member of this organization. The administrative centre of the organization is in Jeddah. The OIC has permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union.**

PEPPER IT WITH
The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the **second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states spread over four continents**.

PEPPER IT WITH
Countries under conflict and are also the members of OIC.

STATES CAN'T ENACT LAWS ON PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY-SC

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Why in News?
The Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled that state assemblies hold no power to enact a law that enables them to appoint parliamentary secretaries.
Hightlights
The question posed before the court was whether Article 194(3) and Entry 39 of List II of the 7th Schedule authorised the state legislature to make the impugned Act.
Entry 39 indicates the field of legislation regarding the powers, privileges, and immunities of the house of legislatures.
Article 194(3) in The Constitution Of India 1949- In other respects, the powers, privileges and immunities of a House of the Legislature of a State, and of the members and the committees of a House of such Legislature, shall be such as may from time to time be defined by the Legislature by law, and, until so defined, shall be those of that House and of its members and committees immediately before the coming into force of Section 26 of the Constitution forty fourth Amendment Act, 1978.

RAPID MASS TRANSPORTATION TECHNIQUES

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Why in news
NITI Aayog has formed a six-member committee under a former senior Railways official to scrutinise the safety parameters associated with rapid mass technologies such as **hyperloop, pod taxis, metrinos and hybrid buses before they are adopted for commercial purposes.**

Metrinos: These are small, automated pods and run on an independent overhead cable network. Metrinos can carry a small group at a time and can be available on demand.

Pod taxis: Automated cable cars (like metrinos) or pod cars. Pod taxis are also capable for carrying a small group.

Hyperloop: Touted as the fifth mode of transportation, hyperloop is a pod like vehicle propelled through a tube network using near-vacuum conditions. These pods are capable of intercity travel at speeds exceeding those of aircrafts. Their energy consumption is quite low owing to partial magnetic levitation, regenerative braking, using solar power, and more.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Superconducting vacuum trains, string theory, reversing roles, sharing the street, High speed alternative energy, space elevator, orbital maglev etc.

Hybrid buses: This green and environment-friendly form of a conventional public transport system uses hybrid propulsion systems, consisting diesel and electric ones.

These new technologies are path breaking and can alter the way of intercity travel in the country.

CABINET CLEARS MINIUM WAGE CODE BILL

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- Union cabinet cleared the **first of the four labour codes on wages**, paving way for consolidation of more than a dozen different central labour laws dealing with wages of labourers.
  If passed in the parliament it will result in improving ease of doing business as well as ensuring universal minimum wage to all.
- The Code on Wages Bill also seeks to empower the Centre to set a minimum wage across sectors, and states will have to maintain that. However, states will be able to provide higher minimum wage in their jurisdiction than fixed by the central government since labour is in the **concurrent list**.
  Once approved by Parliament, even workers getting monthly pay of higher than Rs 18,000 would be legally entitled to a minimum wage.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Different definition of wages in various acts across the centre and states.

- Under the code on wages, the labour ministry plans to streamline the definition of wages by amalgamating four wage-related statutes. These include the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the **Payment of Wages Act, 1936**, the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.

SAGAR VANI

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In news

Minister of Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Environment, Forests & Climate Change, Dr. Harshvardhan launched an app "SagarVani" on the occasion of Foundation Day of Ministry of Earth Sciences in New Delhi.

Purpose

The 'SagarVani' will serve the coastal community, especially the fishermen community with the advisories and alerts towards their livelihood as well as their safety at Sea.

What it is and how it will work ?

The 'SagarVani' is a software platform where various dissemination modes will be integrated on a single central server. The 'SagarVani' **includes Multi Lingual SMS, Voice Call / Audio Advisory, Mobile Apps (User / Admin modules), Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), Email, GTS, Fax, Digital Display Boards, Radio / Television broadcast units, IVRS, Cloud Channels**, etc. The system also has facility to provide access to various stakeholders (NGOs, State Fishery Departments, Disaster Management Authorities, etc.) so that they too will be able to further disseminate these ocean information and alerts to the user community.

Crux

This 'SagarVani' system compares with the most advanced countries' services in terms of speed of delivery, omni channel capabilities and diverseness of services. With this system, the services will be disseminated in local languages using advanced artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities. For the first time in India, we are also using the power of television and cable network mediums for topical and alert dissemination services.

SC FOR PANELS TO EXAMINE DOWRY CASE

GS CONNECT

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In News

Expressing concern over disgruntled wives **misusing the anti-dowry** law against their husbands and in-laws, the Supreme Court on Thursday directed that no arrest or coercive action should be taken on such complaints without ascertaining the veracity of allegations.

BACKGROUND

A Bench of Justices A.K. Goel and U.U. Lalit said Section 498A (dowry harassment) of the IPC had come under much abuse. Dowry complaints were being filed in the heat of the moment over trivial issues.

Hence the two judge bench issued some directions to avoid the misuse of Section 498A.

The three-member family welfare committees will be set up by the district legal services authorities. Members can be appointed from para legal volunteers, social workers, retired persons, "wives of working officers" and other citizens.

Every complaint received by the police and the Magistrate will be passed on to the local committee, which will enquire into the genuineness of the complaint and file a report with the police official or Magistrate concerned within a month. The committee can directly get in touch with the parties involved, but the members will not be called as witnesses in case there is a trial.

Till the report of the committee is received, no arrest should normally be effected, the court said.

Trial judges should close Section 498A cases based on matrimonial disputes once parties reached a settlement. In fact, bail should be given the same day, the court directed.

SIGNIFICANCE

This is a shift from the dominant judicial conception of women as victims who would silently suffer injustice rather than bring disrepute to their family by taking domestic conflict outside the four walls of the home. Going by the popular portrait, it is only the worst victim of abuse among women who approach the court for redress.

Recently, the court broke away from the reigning perception to rule that in dowry cases, the account of the alleged victim need not be taken at face value.

MUNTRA, COUNTRY'S FIRST UNMANNED TANK

In News

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed an unmanned, remotely operated tank which has **three variants - surveillance, mine detection and reconnaissance** in areas with nuclear and bio threats. It is called Muntra. Though developed and tested for the Army by Combat Vehicles Research and Development Establishment (CVRDE) in Avadi, paramilitary has expressed interest to use them at Naxal-hit areas.

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ABOUT MUNTRA

Muntra-S is the country's first tracked unmanned ground vehicle developed for unmanned surveillance missions while **Muntra-M** is for detecting mines and **Muntra-N** is for operation in areas where there is a nuclear radiation or bio weapon risk.

DIGITAL EVOLUTION INDEX

In news

India has emerged strong, exhibiting a high potential in terms of digital payments and has been categorised under the "break out" segment among 60 countries, according to the Digital Evolution Index 2017.

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ABOUT DIGITAL EVOLUTION INDEX

The Fletcher School at Tufts University in partnership with Mastercard, unveiled the Digital Evolution Index 2017.

The Index is a comprehensive research that tracks the progress countries have made in developing their digital economies and integrating connectivity into the lives of billions.

With nearly half of the world's population online, the research maps the development of 60 countries, demonstrating their competitiveness and market potential for further digital economic growth.

The Index measures four key drivers - supply, consumer demand, institutional environment, and innovation.

VAN MAHOTSAV

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Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan is leading a month-long drive to plant saplings to mark Van Mahotsav here starting on July 5.

About Van Mahotsav

It is also in line with India's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDCs) to create additional **Carbon Sink of 2.5 to 3 Billion Tonnes of CO_2 equivalent** through additional forest and tree cover by 2030, as has been submitted to UNFCCC.

Van Mahotsav began in 1950, with a tree plantation drive, in which national leaders participated. The festival of tree plantation was started by Dr. K.M. Munshi, the then Union Minister for Agriculture and Food to create enthusiasm among masses for forest conservation and planting trees. The festival was simultaneously celebrated in other states in India.

Van Mahotsav is usually observed in the **first week of July every year** and is celebrated on different days in different parts of India. The objective behind celebrating Van Mahotsav is to keep local people involved in plantation drives and spread environmental awareness. Dr. Harsh Vardhan urged the people to become '**Green ambassadors**' and participate actively in plantation drives during the period of monsoon, in keeping with the spirit of Van Mahotsav.

Programmes like screening of short films and documentaries, seminars and exhibition, painting and poster competitions are also organised to mark the occasion.

Significance

It is in line with Prime Ministers emphasis on '**Van Dhan' to enhance the country's forest-based economy,** while improving the biodiversity and living in harmony with nature has been a part of our culture for thousands of years, the Environment Minister requested all States and the people at large, to hold plantation drives during the monsoon season.

EARTH FACING SIXTH MASS EXTINCTION

Background

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- The sixth mass extinction of life on Earth is unfolding more quickly than feared, scientists have warned. More than 30% of animals with a backbone — fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals — are declining in both range and population, according to the first comprehensive analysis of these trends.
- This is the case of a biological annihilation occurring globally.
- Globally, the mass die-off — deemed to be the sixth in the last half-billion years — is the worst since three-quarters of life on the Earth, including the non-avian dinosaurs, were wiped out 66 million years ago by a giant meteor impact.
- On an average, two vertebrate species disappear every year.
- Tropical regions have seen the highest number of declining species. In South and Southeast Asia, large-bodied species of mammals have lost more than four-fifths of their historical ranges.
- While fewer species are disappearing in temperate zones, the percentage is just as high or higher.

Reason For Loss

- The main drivers of wildlife decline are habitat loss, overconsumption, pollution, invasive species, disease, as well as poaching in the case of tigers, elephants, rhinos and other large animals prized for their body parts.
- Climate change is poised to become a major threat in the coming decades.
- **"The massive loss of populations and species reflects our lack of empathy to all the wild species that have been our companions since our origins."**

TERI RANKED AMONG WORLD'S TOP THINK TANKS

In News

The Energy Resources Institute (TERI) has been ranked as the second best climate think tank in the world. The rankings were released by the the International Center for Climate Governance, which focuses on the design of climate policy and related governance issues.

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About TERI

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) is a leading think tank dedicated to conducting research for sustainable development of India and the Global South.

TERI was established in 1974 as an information centre on energy issues. However, over the following decades, it made a mark as a research institute, whose policy and technology solutions transformed people's lives and the environment.

TERI's key focus lies in promoting:

- Clean energy
- Water management
- Pollution management
- Sustainable agriculture
- Climate resilience

NINE MORE BIRD, BIODIVERSITY AREAS IN KERALA

GS CONNECT

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Background

The bird and biodiversity-rich areas in Kerala are drawing global attention with nine more locations being identified as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs).

The newly identified IBAs of Kerala are **Achencoil Forest Division; Anamudi Shola National Park; Camel's Hump Mountain, Wayanad; Kurinjimala Wildlife Sanctuary; Malayattoor Reserve Forest; Mankulam Forest Division; Mathikettan Shola National Park; Muthikulam-Siruvani; and Pampadum Shola National Park.**

With the latest addition, Kerala now has 33 IBAs.

The new list was released by the Bombay Natural History Society, a partner of BirdLife International.

Kerala IBAs are home to three critically endangered species — **Whiterumped Vulture, Indian Vulture, and Red-headed Vulture.**

IBAs

The IBAs are places of international significance for the conservation of birds and other biodiversity and are distinct areas amenable to practical conservation action.

About Birdlife International

BirdLife International (formerly the International Council for Bird Preservation) is a global partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. It is the world's largest partnership of conservation organisations, with over 120 partner organisations. **It is headquartered in Cambridge (USA).**

ECO-BRIDGES FOR THE MOVEMENT OF TIGERS

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About

In a first of its kind, Telangana State will have eco-friendly bridges over a canal cutting across the tiger corridor linking the **Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in the Chandrapur district of Maharashtra with the forests in Telangana's Kumram Bheem Asifabad district.** The intervention requires the laying of fertile soil to grow grass and plants over the structure, so that fragmentation of the reserve forest is camouflaged.

The 'eco-bridges' will be constructed at key spots along the 72 km-long, and at some places over a kilometre wide, right flank canal of the Pranahita barrage in the Bejjur and Dahegaonmandals.

NEED FOR THIS

It is due to the large-scale destruction of pristine forest along the corridor, which would result in cutting off tiger movement between TATR and Bejjur.

In recent years, big cats from the TATR have ambled into the mixed and bamboo forests of the Bejjur range via the Sirpur forests. The TATR and its buffer area, which are contiguous with the Sirpur forests, boast of a speedily multiplying tiger population, the cause of the frequent migration of tigers into Sirpur and Bejjur.

PEPPER IT WITH
The Save the Tiger Fund-Panthera Partnership and Big Cat Rescue.

NGT DIRECTS UTTARAKHAND, HIMACHAL PRADESH TO SUBMIT GUIDELINES ON FOREST FIRE

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In News

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh governments to submit the national forest fire prevention and control guidelines. The bench also asked both the state governments to inform it about the total number of forest fires till date starting from 2016.

BACKGROUND

In Himachal Pradesh during 2016-17, there were 1,545 forest fires which affected 13,069-hectare causing loss of Rs 1.53 crore, whereas, in 2015-16, there were 672 fire incidents which caused harm in 5,749.95 hectare area causing loss of Rs 1.34 crore.

Massive forest fires had engulfed a large part of areas in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh in May last year.

Increasing the area under broadleaf forests throughout is a good way forward.

PEPPER IT WITH
What is Ecopyrology?
What types of plant should be grown to control forest fire?

MEET ON ISLAND DEVELOPMENT

In News

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday chaired the first meeting of the Island Development Agency (IDA) that was set up on June this year.

Ten islands — Smith, Ross, Aves, Long and Little Andaman in Andaman & Nicobar and Minicoy, Bangaram, Suheli, Cherium and Tinnakara in Lakshadweep — have been identified for development in the first phase.

ABOUT IDA

The IDA was set up on June 01, 2017 following the Prime Minister's review meeting for the development of islands.

The meetings of the agency is chaired by Union Home Minister. Other Members of the IDA include Cabinet Secretary, Home Secretary, Secretary (Environment, Forests and Climate Change), Secretary (Tourism) and Secretary (Tribal Welfare).

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PEPPER IT WITH

Concept Development Plans and Detailed Master Plans are being prepared for identified islands with principles of sustainability, people's participation, eco-system preservation and determination of carrying capacity as the guiding principles.

NABARD ACCREDITED BY UN'S GREEN CLIMATE FUND

In News

➢ NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) has been accredited by the Green Climate Fund as an implementing entity for undertaking climate change related projects in India.

➢ NABARD has been accredited by GCF as national implementing entity (NIE) for undertaking climate change adaptation and mitigation projects from India.

➢ NABARD is the only NIE in the country, at present, for undertaking climate change projects. The fund assistance will be in the form of concessional loan, grant and through other modalities, instrument or facilities as may be approved by the GCF Board.

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PEPPER IT WITH

Ground Water Recharge and Solar Micro Irrigation to Ensure Food Security and Enhance Resilience in Vulnerable Tribal Areas of Odisha.

ABOUT GCF

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a new global fund created to support the efforts of developing countries to respond to the challenge of climate change. GCF helps developing countries limit or reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapt to climate change. It seeks to promote a paradigm shift to low-emission and climate-resilient development, taking into accounts the needs of nations that are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts.

It was set up by the 194 countries who are parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2010, as part of the Convention's financial mechanism. It aims to deliver equal amounts of funding to mitigation and adaptation, while being guided by the Convention's principles and provisions.

When the Paris Agreement was reached in 2015, the Green Climate Fund was given an important role in serving the agreement and supporting the goal of keeping climate change well below 2 degrees Celsius.

ABOUT NABARD

• **NABARD came into existence on 12 July 1982 by transferring the agricultural credit functions of RBI and refinance functions of the then Agricultural Refinance and Development Corporation (ARDC). It was dedicated to the service of the nation by the late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi on 05 November 1982.**

• Set up with an initial capital of Rs.100 crore, its' paid up capital stood at Rs. 5,000 crore as on 31 March 2016. Consequent to the revision in the composition of share capital between Government of India and RBI, the Government of India today holds Rs. 4,980 crore (99.60%) while Reserve Bank of India holds Rs. 20.00 crore (0.40%).

• It is aimed at building an empowered and financially inclusive rural India through specific goal oriented departments which can be categorized broadly into three heads: Financial, Developmental and Supervision.

EASY WAY TO SCOOP OUT OIL SPILLS

About

More efficient and quick absorption of crude oil from the sea following marine spill has now become possible by scientists from the Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research (IISER) in Thiruvananthapuram, who have developed a hydrophobic sorbent that can suck up oil and congeal it. A hydrophobic material automatically becomes oil-loving and takes up oil when it comes in contact with it.

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They have developed the hydrophobic sorbent by using a **cheap raw material (mannitol) and cellulose pulp as a matrix**. Mannitol was converted into a hydrophobic gelator. Cellulose balls of the size of marbles were then dipped in the solution and dried.

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The gelator gets adsorbed on the cellulose fibre through hydrogen bonding. This process of adsorption of gelator on the cellulose fibre matrix changes the cellulose matrix from being very hydrophilic (water-loving) to hydrophobic (water repelling). A hydrophobic material naturally becomes oleilophilic (oil-loving).

ADVANTAGES OVER OTHER
✓ Unlike other alternatives, the sorbent can be easily applied over oil-water mixture, and no solvent is needed for spraying the gelator thus making it environmental benign.Thegelator adsorbed on the surface of cellulose fibre is able to absorb oil when it comes in contact with it.
✓ It takes only about 30 minutes to two hours from the time of application to scooping out the rigid fibre balls containing congealed oil, leaving behind clean water. Since crude oil spreads quickly in the sea after a spill, it is necessary to quickly remove the oil from water.

INNOVATE IN INDIA (I3)

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About the scheme
With an aim of creating a globally competitive biopharmaceutical industry that can addresses the country's **major concerns around barriers to affordable healthcare**; innovate in India (i3) programme was launched by Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Science & Technology , Earth Sciences, Environment, Forest & Climate Change in New Delhi.

The $250 million programme of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science & Technology, is a first- of-its-kind mission that brings together industry and academia to promote entrepreneurship and indigenous manufacturing in the biopharmaceutical sector. This flagship programme of the GOI in collaboration with **World Bank, will be implemented by Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)**, a Public Sector Enterprise, set up by DBT.

What it will do?
This Mission is anticipated to be a game changer for the Indian Bio-pharmaceutical industry. It aspires to create an enabling ecosystem to promote entrepreneurship and indigenous manufacturing in the sector.

This endeavor will help nurture next- generation technical skills; promote entrepreneurship; and support institutions in adoption of global innovations, technologies, and licensing models. It will provide young entrepreneurs the confidence as well as the systemic support to pursue their aspirations in biotechnological innovation, and transform India into a global hub for cutting-edge biotechnology research and development.

DOUBLE ASTEROID REDIRECTION TEST (DART) MISSION BY NASA

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Aim of mission
Intended to protect the planet from potential cosmic body impacts in the future.
It is NASA's first-ever mission that will deflect a near-Earth asteroid, and help test the systems that will allow mankind to protect the planet from potential cosmic body impacts in the future.

What it is?
DART would be NASA's first mission to demonstrate what's known as the kinetic impactor technique — striking the asteroid to shift its orbit — to defend against a potential future asteroid impact.

How it will protect our planet?
✓ With DART, we can protect Earth from an asteroid strike with a kinetic impactor by knocking the hazardous object into a different flight path that would not threaten the planet.
✓ It will be first tested on asteroids known as Didymos — Greek for "twin" — because it is an asteroid binary system that consists of two bodies: Didymos A, about 780 metres in size, and a smaller asteroid orbiting it called Didymos B, about 160 metres in size.
✓ DART would impact only the smaller of the two bodies, Didymos B.
✓ After launch, DART would fly to Didymos and use an APL- developed onboard autonomous targeting system to aim itself at Didymos B.
✓ Then the refrigerator-sized spacecraft would strike the smaller body at a speed about nine times faster than a bullet, about six kilometres per second.

Kinetic Impact technique
The kinetic impact technique works by changing the speed of a threatening asteroid by a small fraction of its total velocity, but by doing it well before the predicted impact so that this small nudge will add up over time to a big shift of the asteroid's path away from Earth.

INDIA FREE FROM BIRD FLU

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India has declared itself free from Bird Flu (highly pathogenic **Avian Influenza - H5N1 and H5N8**) and notified it to the World Organisation for Animal Health.
Impact
Some countries like United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Hong Kong have banned Indian poultry products. The move will help it resume export of poultry products to these countries.
About Avian Influenza
Avian influenza refers to the disease caused by infection with avian (bird) influenza (flu) Type A viruses. These viruses occur naturally among wild aquatic birds worldwide and can infect domestic poultry and other bird and animal species. Avian flu viruses do not normally infect humans. However, sporadic human infections with avian flu viruses have occurred.
About World Organisation for Animal Health
The World Organisation for Animal Health is recognised as a reference body by the WTO. It has 181 countries as its members. This global body keeps tab on animal health issues and advises countries on best practices to be followed during such outbreaks.
This organisation also supports countries to help them control animal diseases that cause livestock losses and pose a risk to public health. Under its norms, ban can be lifted after 90 days of surveillance.

PEPPER IT WITH
First case of swine flu in India.

PETRWRAP/PETYARANSOMWARE CYBER ATTACK

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It is the latest global ransomware attack and has been spreading fast after initially affecting computers in Ukraine.
What is Petrwrap?
Petrwrap is the latest in a series of powerful ransomware attacks which deny access to a computer system and then demands money from users to regain access.
PetrWrap is said to be using the same EternalBlue exploit employed by WannaCry earlier this May.
How does it work?
Computers attacked by Petrwrapransomeware were blocked and it was asked to pay $300 in the bitcoin to regain access.
"Perhaps you are busy looking for a way to recover your files, but don't waste your time. Nobody can recover your files without our decryption service," the message says.
What is the impact?
Russia and Ukraine were most affected, with other victims spread across countries including Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and the United States.
But security experts said they expected the impact to be smaller than WannaCry since many computers had been patched with Windows updates in the wake of WannaCry last month to protect them against attacks.
Can it be stopped?
WannaCry attack was crippled after a 22-year-old British security researcher Marcus Hutchins created a so-called "kill-switch" that experts hailed as the decisive step in slowing the attack.
However, security experts said they did not believe that Petrwrap had a kill switch, meaning that it might be harder to stop.
Has it affected any company in India yet?
As of now, operations at India's biggest container port in Mumbai was hit by a ransomware attack. It is not clear whether if it was by Petrwrap.

PEPPER IT WITH
National Cyber Security Policy (2013)
National Technical Research Organisation (the nodal agency for cybersecurity)

DRUG-RESISTANT TB HIGHER AMONG CHILDREN THAN EXPECTED: REPORT

GS CONNECT

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While detection of tuberculosis (TB) in children remains a challenge, it has now emerged that Multi-Drug Resistant (MDR) TB is higher among children than expected. This has been described as a "worrying trend" by the Union Health Ministry.
As many as 5,500 of over 76,000 children tested in nine cities have been diagnosed with TB. Nine per cent of these paediatric TB cases have been diagnosed to have MDR TB, according to the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND) that conducted the tests in collaboration with the Central TB Division under the Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP).
MDR-TB
MDR-TB is an abbreviation of Multi Drug Resistant TB and it is a specific type of drug resistant TB infection. It means that the TB bacteria that a person is infected with, are resistant to at least two of the most important TB drugs, **isoniazid (INH) and rifampicin (RMP).** If

PEPPER IT WITH
Revised National TB Control Program (RNTCP)

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bacteria are resistant to certain TB drugs this means that the drugs won't work. Other drugs then need to be taken by the person if they are to be cured.

MDR-TB accounts for about 3.3% of new TB cases. Also, about 3.9% of new, and about 21% of previously treated TB cases were estimated to have either rifampicin or multi drug resistant TB in 2015.

What need to be done

A proactive approach to testing helps in early and correct diagnosis of all contacts and in cutting the transmission chain.

Using the **Xpert molecular diagnostic test** to screen children with TB is a positive step taken by government, but all the diagnosed children should be guaranteed paediatric FDCs (Fixed-Dose Combination). It would be unethical to deny them this lifeline.

"JIGYASA" - STUDENT-SCIENTIST CONNECT PROGRAMME LAUNCHED

Jigyasa, a student- scientist connect programme was officially launched in the national capital.

GS CONNECT

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Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), has joined hands with Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) to implement this programme.

The focus is on connecting school students and scientists so as to extend student's classroom learning with that of a very well planned research laboratory based learning.

The program will also enable the students and teachers to practically live the theoretical concepts taught in science by visiting CSIR laboratories and by participating in mini-science projects.

"JIGYASA" is one of the major initiative taken up by CSIR at national level, during its Platinum Jubilee Celebration Year. CSIR is widening and deepening its Scientific Social Responsibility further with the programme.

Significance

Jigyasa programme was inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a new India and "Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR)" of scientific community and institutions. The day also coincides with the birthday of Shri Shyama Prasad Mukherjee who is an inspirational figure and a role model for all Indians.

It will help inculcate scientific temper among the students and make them aware about the impact of science on the society. Science has played a very important role in changing our lives.

The "JIGYASA" would inculcate the culture of inquisitiveness on one hand and scientific temper on the other, amongst the school students and their teachers. The Programme is expected to connect 1151 KendriyaVidyalayas with 38 National Laboratories of CSIR targeting 100,000 students and nearly 1000 teachers annually.

ANTIBIOTIC-RESISTANT GONORRHOEA ON THE RISE, NEW DRUGS NEEDED

Data from 77 countries show that antibiotic resistance is making gonorrhoea – a common sexually-transmitted infection – much harder, and sometimes impossible, to treat.

GS CONNECT

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PEPPER IT WITH
It is a bacterial disease.

Each year, an estimated 78 million people are infected with gonorrhoea. Gonorrhoea can infect the genitals, rectum, and throat. Complications of gonorrhoea disproportionally affect women, including pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancy and infertility, as well as an increased risk of HIV.

Reason for increase in cases of gonorrhoea

Decreasing condom use, increased urbanization and travel, poor infection detection rates, and inadequate or failed treatment all contribute to this increase.

INDIA QUAKE

National Centre for Seismology launched 'India Quake' – An App for Earthquake Parameter Dissemination on the occasion of Foundation Day of Ministry of Earth Sciences in New Delhi.

GS CONNECT

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PEPPER IT WITH
Center for Earthquake Research and Information.

How it will work

The Mobile App developed by the NCS is for automatic dissemination of earthquake parameter (location, time and magnitude) after the occurrence of earthquakes. The App will make information dissemination faster with no restrictions on the number of recipients.

Benefits from the app

Any citizen can download this App and get the real time earthquake location information on his/her mobile. Other than scientific and administrative benefits of the App, it will help in reducing panic amongst people during an earthquake. For example, if an earthquake occurs in Hindukush region, Afghanistan and is strongly felt in Delhi, then people in Delhi will know in less than 2 minutes that the earthquake has actually occurred in Afghanistan and not in Delhi.

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INDIA TO HOST GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON CYBER SPACE 2017

India will be hosting the 5th Global Conference on Cyber Space (GCCS) in 2017, one of the world's largest conference on Cyber Space and related issues.

Theme : **Cyber4All: An Inclusive, Sustainable, Developmental, Safe and Secure Cyberspace**.

GS CONNECT

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To be held in India for the first time, the two-day conference will see participation of around 2000 delegates from senior Government officials, industry leaders, academia and civil society from over 100 countries. GCCS will congregate and deliberate on issues relating to promotion of cooperation in cyberspace, norms for responsible behaviour in cyberspace and to enhance cyber capacity building. Many of these delegations will be headed at Ministerial level delegates thereby making it an important forum of global consultation of various issues of cyber space.

PEPPER IT WITH
GCCS was launched with a view to establish internationally agreed 'rules of the road' for behavior in cyberspace

Significance

GCCS is a prestigious international conference that aims at encouraging dialogue among stakeholders of cyberspace, which has been taking place since 2011. Incepted in 2011 in London, GCCS witnessed a participation of 700 global delegates. It helped in setting up rules and guidelines for the editions to follow.

Goal of GCCS 2017 is to promote an inclusive Cyber Space with focus on policies and frameworks for inclusivity, sustainability, development, security, safety & freedom, technology and partnerships for upholding digital democracy, maximizing collaboration for strengthening security and safety and advocating dialogue for digital diplomacy.

It will be an opportunity to showcase the "Digital India" program as a positive, sustainable and scalable model for use of ICTs for addressing developmental challenges and growth opportunities. It can help provide vision of inclusive digital society for inclusive growth, education, healthcare especially for developing world.

NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN FOR MALARIA ELIMINATION (2017-22)

Union Minister of **Health and Family Welfare** launched the National Strategic Plan for Malaria

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Elimination (2017-22). The Strategic Plan gives year wise elimination targets in various parts of the country depending upon the endemicity of malaria in **the next 5 years**. Government has aimed to **eliminate malaria by 2027** and urged the states for active cooperation.

Salient features of NSP

- Strategies involve strengthening malaria surveillance
- Establishing a mechanism for early detection and prevention of outbreaks of malaria
- Promoting the prevention of malaria by the use of Long Lasting Impregnated Nets (LLINs)
- Effective indoor residual spray and augmenting the manpower and capacities for effective implementation for the next five years.

PEPPER IT WITH
Nearly half of the world's population is at risk of malaria. Children under 5 are at high risk of Malaria. Malaria mortality rates are falling. Early diagnosis and prompt treatment of Malaria prevents death. Emerging artemisinin resistance is a major concern. Indoor residual spraying is the most is the most effective way to rapidly reduce malaria transmission. Pregnant women are particularly at risk of malaria. Malaria causes significant economic losses in high-burden countries.

Significance of NSP

NSP is an important step in the direction of global efforts for elimination of malaria in various countries. One child dies of malaria every two minutes and the burden is the heaviest in the African region. India has the third highest malaria burden in the world. There is need of harnessing innovation and research along with monitoring and surveillance, and community participation.

About Malaria

Malaria is a life-threatening mosquito-borne blood disease caused by a **Plasmodium parasite**.

It is transmitted to humans by parasites through the bite of the Anopheles mosquito. Once an infected mosquito bites a human, the parasites multiply in the host's liver before infecting and destroying red blood cells.

POLICY BOOSTS CARE FOR BLOOD DISORDERS

Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry released a policy on the Prevention and Control of **haemoglobinopathies** in India.

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Supported by the National Health Mission, Blood Cell and the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram, the guidelines provide for screening of pregnant women during antenatal check-up, pre-marital counselling at college level and one-time screening for variant anaemia in children.

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Using public health awareness programmes and education, it highlights various haemoglobinopathies. The guidelines include the creation of a national registry to plan future patient services. The registry will also collect useful data, such as the location of patients to identify areas of high concentration, ethnicity or other characteristics, age distribution, records of deaths and their cause.

Why this policy needed

Thalassaemia and sickle cell anaemia are the most frequently encountered 'rare blood disorders' in the country and impose a significant economic burden on families. The policy aims at creating treatment protocol benchmarks, to improve the quality of life of patients.

It is also a guide on prevention and control, which includes antenatal and prenatal testing to reduce the incidence of live haemoglobin disorder births (currently pegged at 10,000-15,000 live births a year).

People living with Thalassaemia, sickle cell anaemia and other variant haemoglobins can now look forward to better screening and treatment.

PEPPER IT WITH
A blood cell disorder is a condition in which there's a problem with your red bloodcells, white blood cells, or the smaller, circulating cells called platelets, which are critical for clot formation

INDIA CONTRIBUTES TO UN TAX FUND

India has contributed USD 100,000 to a UN fund to help developing countries actively participate in the discussion of tax issues, **becoming the first country to make the contribution**.

About UN Tax Fund

- The UN Tax Trust Fund aims to support the work of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters (**the UN Tax Committee**).
- Voluntary contributions for the fund have been called for by the UN and the committee since its establishment in 2006.
- The call for contributions was also emphasized in the **Addis Ababa Action Agenda** adopted at the third International Conference on Financing for Development in 2015.
- India became the first country to respond to the call with an initial contribution of USD 100,000 that will be dedicated towards ensuring greater support for developing countries participation in the sub-committee meetings of the UN Tax Committee, which are currently unfunded.

Aim of the Fund

- ✓ Through the fund, the UN expects that more developing countries will draw upon the best practice of other bodies, ensuring that global tax cooperation norms and rules will work more effectively and efficiently for all countries and all stakeholders.
- ✓ The UN Tax Committee, a subsidiary body of the UN Economic and Social Council **(ECOSOC)**, has provided guidance on current issues such as double taxation treaties, transfer pricing (profit shifting) taxation of the extractive industries and taxation of services.
- ✓ The committee also provides a framework for dialogues with a view to enhancing and promoting international tax cooperation among national tax authorities, while making recommendations on capacity-building and the provision of technical assistance to developing counties and countries with economies in transition.

About Addis Ababa Action Agenda

The Addis Agenda provides a global framework to ensure the effective mobilization of resources at the national and international level for sustainable development. Implementation of the Addis Agenda supports the implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the historic and transformational agenda that countries unanimously adopted in 2015.

In Addis Ababa, UN Member States committed to work together to enhance the UN Tax Committee's resources to strengthen its effectiveness and operational capacity. The Addis Agenda also specifically called on the Member States to support the UN Tax Committee and its subsidiary bodies through the voluntary Trust Fund, supporting the increased participation of developing country experts at subcommittee meetings.

PEPPER IT WITH
In the 2016 edition of its World Development Indicators, the World Bank has made a big choice: It's no longer distinguishing between "developed" countries and "developing" ones in the presentation of its data.

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ADB, INDIA SIGN $220 MILLION LOAN FOR IMPROVING ROAD CONNECTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY IN RAJASTHAN

The Asian Development Bank and the Government of India signed a $220 million loan for improving connectivity as well as transport efficiency and safety on **state highways of Rajasthan**.

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The loan is the first tranche of the $500 million Rajasthan State Highway Investment Program, approved by ADB Board in May this year, that will upgrade about 2,000 kilometers of state highways and major district roads to two-lane or intermediate-lane standards to meet road safety requirements.

About ADB

ADB, based in Manila, is dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.

Established in 1966, ADB is celebrating 50 years of development partnership in the region. It is owned by 67 members—48 from the region.

In 2016, ADB assistance totaled $31.7 billion, including $14 billion in co-financing.

PEPPER IT WITH
• India and ADB: A Broad Partnership Sets Priorities for the New Millennium.
• Connecting Rajasthan's Solar Power to India's National Grid.
• India-ADB: Partnering for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth.

BEIJING DECLARATION ON EDUCATION

BEIJING DECLARATION ON EDUCATION has been adopted in the 5th Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Education in Beijing, China, on July 5th, 2017.
The declaration is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)-Education 2030, which aims to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all".

For ensuring coordinated and deeper cooperation among the Member States, the document declares to;

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1. Reiterate support for the BRICS Network University (NU) to collaborate in the fields of education, research and innovation. Encourage universities to participate in the BRICS University League.

2. Increase cultural cooperation through language education and multilingualism to promote mutual understanding of the history and culture of BRICS Member States.

PEPPER IT WITH
Brasilia declaration, Moscow declaration and New Delhi declaration.

3. Undertake initiatives to promote professionalization of academics in higher education through the BRICS Network University as a focus of future education development.

4. Encourage more teachers and educational administrators to learn from experience of other countries in improving teacher quality and performance, and promoting the development of education through international exchanges.

5. Strengthen cooperation in the field of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), share ideas and experiences in the development of vocational educators, and develop projects that are of common interests to BRICS Member States.

6. Recognize the importance of BRICS Think Tanks Council (BTTC), BRICS Network University as well as other BRICS initiatives, and encourage the streamlining of mechanisms for their closer cooperation to ensure the alignment of their work.

7. Emphasize the importance of streamlining the cooperation among educational think tanks and education researchers, and welcome China's invitation to host a conference to explore possible cooperation among the various entities in BRICS Member States.

8. Encourage the organization of "youth winter/summer camps" to reinforce communication and cultural exchanges among the young generation from BRICS Member States.

9. Encourage Member States to expand the number of scholarship opportunities to students across BRICS Member States.

10. Share the experience and practices in achieving the SDG4-Education 2030 targets in order to foster a more favorable policy environment, adopt effective practices, and advocate for global educational policies that take into account the common concern and priorities of the BRICS Member States.

11. Encourage the participation in the 3rd BRICS NU Annual Conference to be held in 2018, in Cape Town, South Africa and in the BRICS Global Business and Innovation Conference to be held in September 2017, in St. Petersburg, Russia.

About BRICS

BRICS brings together five major emerging economies, comprising 43% of the world population, having 30% of the world GDP and 17% share in the world trade.

Starting essentially with economic issues of mutual interest, the agenda of BRICS meetings has considerably widened over the years to encompass topical global issues. BRICS cooperation has two pillars – consultation on issues of mutual interest through meetings of Leaders as well as of Ministers of Finance, Trade, Health, S&T, Education, Agriculture, Communication, Labour, etc. and practical cooperation in a number of areas through meetings of Working Groups/Senior Officials. Regular annual Summits as well as meetings of Leaders on the margins of G20 Summits are held.

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G-20 SUMMIT

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12th G20 Summit was held at **Hamburg** (Germany).

The theme chosen for this year's G20 Summit is **"Shaping an Inter-connected World".**

Hamburg action plan was adopted at the summit.

On steps being taken by G20 countries for promoting inclusive growth this year, the Action Plan said India is introducing labour market reforms to provide security to workers, increase female participation in the workforce and make doing business easier in the country.

Ten Achievements of G20 summit

1. **Affirmation of support for free trade and the WTO**
2. **Paris Agreement is irreversible**
3. **Partnership with Africa:**

   The new G20 Africa Partnership aims to deepen cooperation between the G20 and Africa with a view to achieving sustainable economic development. The partnership will be based on the African Union's Agenda 2063.
4. **Fighting terrorism together**
5. **Forging ahead with digitalisation – G20 adopts roadmap**

   The G20 states intend to cooperate more closely on digitalisation, with a view to introducing all people to the digital world by 2025, if at all possible.
6. **No compromise on international financial market regulation**
7. **United in support for the multilateral 2030 Agenda**
8. **Fighting pandemics and antimicrobial resistance**
9. **Support for women entrepreneurs in developing countries**
10. **Addressing the root causes of displacement**

India on terrorism at G20

Equating Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad with the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda, Prime Minister NarendraModi Friday made a radical suggestion — that government functionaries from countries that support terrorists be barred from entering G20 countries.

He proposed 11 point plan for counter terrorism.

- Deterrent action against countries supporting terrorism and banning entry of leaders of such countries to the G-20 nations
- Exchange of suspected terrorist list among the G-20 nations and joint action against them and to simplify and expedite extradition and other legal processes.
- Adoption of comprehensive convention on international terrorism
- Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions and other international process
- Joint efforts for best practices in de-radicalisationprogrammes by G-20 nations and closure of terrorist financing sources through FATF (Financial Action Task Force).
- Called for the creation of an Explosive Action Task Force in the lines of FATF that could crackdown on the sources of supply of arms and ammunitions to terror outfits.

Other points included in the list were G-20 cooperation in cyber-security and to establish a mechanism for National Security Advisors on counter-terrorism in G-20 nations.

G20 on India

The group noted that "in the financial sector, India is popularising a number of derivative instruments in exchanges or electronic trading platforms" as part of measures to enhance resilience of its economy.

It further said India is facilitating external commercial borrowings (ECBs) by startups in order to encourage innovation and promote ease of doing business, as part of the efforts being taken by the G20 members this year for maintaining momentum on structural reforms and sustainable growth.

About G20

The Group of Twenty is comprised of **19 countries plus the European Union**. The countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, R ussia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Founded in 1999, the G20 aims to discuss policy issues pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability. It seeks to address issues that go beyond the responsibilities of any one organization. The G20 heads of government or heads of state have periodically conferred at summits since their initial meeting in 2008, and the group also hosts separate meetings of finance ministers and foreign ministers due to the expansion of its agenda in recent years.

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PETROLEUM MINISTER REPRESENTS INDIA AT 22ND WORLD PETROLEUM CONGRESS AT ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan visited Istanbul in Turkey from July 10-12 to represent India at the 22nd World Petroleum Congress (WPC) International Conference.

The Minister also launched an event on Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) as a part of the process of promoting the upcoming oil and gas bidding rounds in India.

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About WPC

The tri-annual WPC Conference is widely recognized as the 'Olympics' of the oil and gas industry. It attracts ministers, chief executive officers of oil and gas multinational corporations, experts and academics from the hydrocarbon sectors.

Importance for India

The WPC provides an ideal forum to showcase the potential of India's hydrocarbon sector, highlight policy reforms to international investors and interact with policy makers, technologists, scientists, planners and management experts, entrepreneurs, service providers and vendors in order to attract foreign investments into India's oil and gas sector.

NSG ORGANISES FIRST INTERNATIONAL AVIATION SECURITY SEMINAR

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The Minister of State for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy attended the second day of the first International Aviation Security Seminar in Manesar (Haryana). National Security Guard (NSG) has organised the seminar.

Prominent personalities/speakers from various organizations/aviation sector delivered lectures and shared valuable views on the matter of aviation security. Weapons and equipment were also displayed showcasing the current weapons and systems used by the forces and cutting edge systems considered for future planning.

The aim was to bring all major stakeholders under one roof and facilitate them sharing views/opinion, discussions, brain storming with the matters concerning Aviation Security.

PEPPER IT WITH
Operation Blue Star.

The NSG was modelled on the pattern of the **SAS of the UK and GSG-9 of Germany**. **It is a task-oriented Force and has two complementary elements in the form of the Special Action Group (SAG) comprising Army personnel and the Special Ranger Groups (SRG), comprising personnel drawn from the Central Para Military Forces / State Police Force. All the personnel are on deputation. It came into existence in 1984 as a federal contingency deployment force to tackle all facets of terrorism in India**.

122 NATIONS ADOPT FIRST TREATY BANNING NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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More than 120 nations adopted the **first international treaty banning nuclear weapons on Friday at the United Nations headquarters in New York City**. **The initiative—led by Austria, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, and New Zealand**—was approved by 122 votes, with only the Netherlands opposed, and Singapore abstaining. The nine countries generally recognized as possessing nuclear weapons—the U.S., Russia, Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel—were noticeably absent from the negotiations, as were most members of NATO.

Despite being a victim of atomic attacks in 1945, Japan also boycotted the meeting.

The treaty is extensive in its demands, prohibiting signatories from developing, testing, manufacturing, possessing, or threatening to use nuclear weapons. Nations are also prohibited from transferring nuclear weapons to one another. Having now been approved by the UN, the treaty will be open for signatures on September 20, at which point it will need to be ratified by 50 states before entering into international law.

PEPPER IT WITH
Nuclear supplier group, Australia group, Global Zero, Wassenar Agreement, Missile Technology Control Regime, Nuclear Security Summit.

OBSTACLES TO THE TREATY

- The major obstacle, of course, is that many prominent members of the international community—and their allies—remain vocally opposed. US, Britain, and France said they had no intention of joining the treaty, arguing that it "clearly disregards the realities of the international security.
- Of particular concern, they said, was the fact that the treaty failed to address of the growing threat

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of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. North Korea claimed to have tested its first intercontinental ballistic missile, which experts say may be capable of striking Hawaii and Alaska. The nation has also conducted five nuclear tests since 2006—and could be preparing for its sixth.

- Rather than ban nuclear weapons and risk vulnerability to a North Korean attack, the U.S., Britain, and France hope to strengthen the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), which provides nations other than the five original nuclear powers—the U.S., Russia, Britain, France, and China—from pursuing nuclear programs.

WAY AHEAD
- NPT is failing to elicit a speedy disarmament. At the very least, Friday's treaty introduces the concept of a nuclear-free world, and could even put pressure on nuclear powers to adopt a new set of standards.
- The key thing is that it changes the legal landscape. The newly-approved treaty stops states with nuclear weapons from being able to hide behind the idea that they are not illegal.

CABINET APPROVES SASEC ROAD CONNECTIVITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

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The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for upgradation and widening of 65 kms of **Imphal-Moreh Section of NH-39 in Manipur** at a cost of Rs. 1630.29 crores.

Manipur being a landlocked state with almost 90% of the area under difficult terrain presently has only road transport as a means of mass transport system within the state. Hence development of the road infrastructure is of paramount importance to improve connectivity and progress of the State and to ensure that the administrative set up reaches the isolated and remote habitats. The project will improve connectivity between Imphal with the eastern part of the state. Based on the existing and projected traffic requirements the NH-39 will be widened to 4 lane between Lilong village and Wanginj village, while the stretch between Wanginjvillage to Khongkhang will be upgraded to 2 lane with paved shoulder.

PEPPER IT WITH
South Asian Growth quadrangle.
Cross Boarder Trade, Regulations and processures.

The project is being developed with ADB's loan assistance under the South Asian Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Road Connectivity Investment Program which aims at upgradation of road infrastructure in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and India (BBIN) in order to improve the regional connectivity among BBIN nations. The project corridor is also a part of the Asian Highway No. 01 (AH01) and acts as India's Gateway to the East. Thus trade, commerce and tourism in the region will get a boost.

Background

For fulfilling India's "Look East" Policy and to promote and enhance trade link with South East Asia, the Government of India has notified an Integrated Custom Post (ICP) at Moreh. The development of this project is essential in order to support the increased traffic volume due to coming up of ICP.

Besides socio-economic development the project will also lead to reduction in average travel time along the project road by nearly 40%. Improved highway and lesser travel time will lead to savings in terms of fuel cost.

SASEC member countries are India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Maldives, Srilanka and Nepal.

INDIA JAPAN CIVIL NUCLEAR DEAL COMES INTO FORCE

The India-Japan Agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy entered into force on July 20, 2017 with the exchange of diplomatic notes between Dr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary and H.E. Mr. Kenji Hiramatsu, Ambassador of Japan to India.

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ABOUT THE CIVIL NUCLEAR DEAL
- The civil nuclear cooperation agreement was signed last November during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Tokyo after over six years of negotiations.
- **It is first such pact Japan has concluded with a country outside of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime and is designed to promote exports of the nation's nuclear power plant technology**.
- The Japanese government maintains that a document accompanying the pact empowers Japan to terminate the pact if India carries out a nuclear test. The document says Japan can scrap the pact if a change occurs to India's 2008 statement declaring a moratorium on nuclear bomb tests and confirmation of its policy of no first use of nuclear weapons.
- However, a clause inserted in the pact also says that Japan will consider whether the conditions that may lead to ending the pact have emerged as a result of India's response to an action taken by a country whose behavior may affect India's security and is of the same kind as an action India may take in response.

PEPPER IT WITH
India has signed civil nuclear deals with more than a dozen countries.

IMPORTANCE

- This agreement is a reflection of the strategic partnership between India and Japan and will pave the way for enhanced cooperation in energy security and clean energy.

SRI LANKA BANS BOTTOM TRAWLING

Sri Lankan assembly has amended the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act.

As per the new rule, a fine of 50,000 Lankan rupees (LKR) will be imposed along with imprisonment of up to two years on those found guilty of bottom trawling.

The Tamil Nadu government on Friday raised concerns over a Sri Lankan ban on bottom trawling, saying the move would prevent the state's fishermen from exercising traditional fishing rights in the **Palk Bay**.

BOTTOM TRAWLING

Bottom trawling is a destructive fishing practice which affects the marine ecosystem. While some fishermen from Tamil Nadu use this method of fishing, a section of fishermen from the northern Sri Lanka also engage in bottom trawling.

Trawl fishing, or dragging, has undergone many changes in the last quarter century. Negative impacts to the **environment** may include damage to bottom dwelling (benthic) animals and plants.

HISTORY OF DISPUTE

The dispute between the two countries is complicated by domestic political factors in India. A majority of Indian fishermen caught fishing illegally in Sri Lankan waters are ethnic Tamils from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu and argue that the waters claimed by Sri Lanka have historically been exploited by Tamil fishermen.

Moreover, the issue of **Katchatheevu Island** also complicates the fishermen issue between the two countries. Katchatheevu is an uninhabited island that India ceded to Sri Lanka in 1974 that has since been declared sacred land by Sri Lanka in a 2009 proclamation.

Neither government officially disputes the status of the island, but Tamil politicians condemned the move.

What India Has Done

- The Indian side has agreed to encourage Indian fishermen to avoid the practice of "bottom trawling" — an unsustainable mode of fishing that indiscriminately captures aquatic life, leading to overfishing.
- The Indian External Affairs Ministry said that bottom trawling would be phased out in a graded time-bound manner within a practicable timeframe.

PEPPER IT WITH

China Merchants Port Holdings Co., a state-owned Chinese port operator, issued a press release. According to the release, China Merchants Port Holdings Co. agreed to pay $1.12 billion for an 85 percent share of Hambantota port in Sri Lanka for 99 years

EU, INDIA SET UP FUND FOR INVESTMENTS

European Union (EU) and India on Friday announced the establishment of an **Investment Facilitation Mechanism (IFM)** for EU investments in India.

OBJECTIVE OF THE FUND

- The mechanism will allow for a close coordination between the European Union and the Government of India with an aim to promote and facilitate EU investment in India.
- The IFM has been established with the key objectives of paving the way for identifying and solving problems faced by EU companies and investors with regard to their operations in India.
- IFM will cover new investors as well as those already established in India. The IFM is also going to serve as a platform for discussing general suggestions from the point of view of EU companies and investors with regard to ease of doing business in India.
- Ease of doing business is a fundamental priority of the Indian Government's Make in India Campaign and the establishment of IFM for facilitating EU investments in India is another step to achieve this goal.

PEPPER IT WITH

Article 50 of Lisbon Treaty and Brexit.

Why Needed

Trade and Investment are key elements of the EU-India Strategic Partnership launched in 2004. Along with being the first trade partner in goods and services, EU is one of the biggest provider of foreign investment in India, with a stock exceeding $81.52 billion (more than Rs 4.4 lakh crores) as of March 2017. There are currently more than 6,000 EU companies present in India, providing direct and indirect employment to over 6 million people.

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US HOUSE PASSES BILL FOR STRENGTHENING DEFENCE TIES WITH INDIA

The US House of Representatives has passed a $621.5-billion defence expenditure Bill that proposes to advance defence cooperation with India.

An amendment in this regard, was adopted by a voice vote by the House as part of the National DefenceAuthorisation Act (NDAA) 2018, beginning October 1 this year.

The India-related amendment passed by the House requires the Secretary of Defence, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to develop a strategy for advancing defence cooperation between the United States and India.

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National Defence Authorisation Act

- Following the passage of the National Defence Authorisation Act, the Secretary of Defence and Secretary of State have 180 days to develop a strategy for advancing defence cooperation between the United States and India.

PEPPER IT WITH
LEMOA, GSOMIA, CISMOA and BECA

- NDAA needs to be passed by the Senate before it can be sent to the White House for the US President Donald Trump to sign into law.
- **As passed by the House, NDAA-2018 asks the State Department and thePentagon to develop a strategy that addresses common security challenges, the role of American partners and allies in India-US defence relationship, and role of the defence technology and trade initiative.**
- It also asks them to address how to advance the communications interoperability and security memorandum of agreement and the basic exchange and cooperation agreement for geospatial cooperation.
- The previous NDAA-2017 had designated India as a major defence partner which brings India at par with closest American partners in terms of defence trade and technology transfer.

Importance of the bill

- The United States is the world's oldest democracy and India is the world's largest democracy. It is vitally important to develop a strategy that advances defence cooperation between our two nations.
- Cooperation between the US and India enhances defence and and together the ability to meet the evolving security challenges of the 21st century.
- When we look at the security scenario of Asia, India's role is evolving and both countries look the region in the same way and both countries interest are aligned too.
- Both countries have same interests in upholding this international system that upholds the rule of law that favours freedom of navigation, open sea lanes of communication, and freedom of over flight.

INDIA CHINA DOKLAM DISPUTE

The 2017 China India border standoff refers to the military borader standoff between the Indian

armed forces and the **People's Liberation Army of China** over construction of a road in Doklam (known as Donglang in China).

The standoff started on June 18, 2017, when around 270 India troops, with weapons and two bulldozers, crossed the border between India and China, and entered Doklam region.

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It started when India (Indian Army) objected a road construction by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China in the Doklam plateau which China claims to be a part of its Donglang region. However, India and Bhutan recognise it as Doklam, a Bhutan territory.

Both countries accused each other and China blocked the pilgrims of KailashMansarovar who passed through Nathu-LA (Sikkim).

About Doklam Plateau

Doklam plateau which lies at a tri-junction between the **India, China, and Bhutan**. It is an area with a plateau and a valley, lying between **China's Chumbi Valley** to the north, **Bhutan's Ha Valley** to the east and **India's Sikkim state to the west**. It has been depicted as part of Bhutan in the Bhutanese maps since 1961, but it is also claimed by China.

Why India is Supporting Bhutan

> **Under the 2007 India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty,** the two sides have agreed to "cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests. Neither Government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other."

Under the previous treaty, India was to "guide" Bhutan on foreign and defence policies. **The language of the 2007 treaty, is meant to respect the sensitivities of Bhutan regarding its sovereignty**. But the reality is that the Indian military is virtually responsible for protecting Bhutan from the kind of external threat that the Chinese military poses.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
>
> MacMohan line and MacDonald line

The Eastern Army Command and the Eastern Air Command both have integrated protection of Bhutan into their role. The Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT), headed by a Major General, plays a critical role in training Bhutanese security personnel.

While the rest of India can be seen as one big landmass, the North East is trickier. The presence of Bangladesh means that the North East is connected with the mainland by a particularly thin piece of land called the **Siliguri corridor**. This narrow strip — which slims down to **17 kilometres at its narrowest** — is **also known by a more appropriate name: Chicken's Neck**.

The corridor is extremely important for India because it runs its rail and road networks towards the North East through it. This allows it to sustain the armed forces posted in the North East which will form an important piece of the puzzle should a conflict arise between India and China in the region. If, however, China is able to block off the corridor, this will isolate the North East and will cut off the supplies and reinforcements reaching that area. There is no sea route as the North East is completely land-locked. Limited provisions can reach the region if India uses only aeroplanes.

It is in this context that the stand-off at Doka La becomes important. **Doka La is a pass in the middle of the Doklam plateau**, which is very close to the tri-junction border of India, Bhutan and China. India accused China of constructing a road in the disputed territory on the Doklam plateau. This road would link the Chinese territory of Yadong to Doklam and would allow China to transport troops and munitions practically at India's doorstep with great ease.

What India Should DO

India's diplomacy with China must now be both robust and rational. **India must focus on building its economic strength and conventional military capability. It has already established a nuclear triad - air, sea, and land**. The Chinese may not understand English, but they certainly understand military and economic strength.

MARIAN DIAMOND PIONEERING RESEARCHER ON THE BRAIN'S 'PLASTICITY' PASSED AWAY

Marian Diamond, a neuroscientist who **studied Albert Einstein's brain** and

was the first to show that the brain's anatomy can change with experience, has died at age of 90.

Diamond became famous in 1984 when she examined preserved slices of Einstein's brain and found it had more **support cells than the average person's brain.**

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RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

Why in news

Institutions under the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission will continue to remain outside the purview of the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO).

Significance

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- **In September 2015, union government decided to bring workers in all charitable and**
- **Religious trusts, employing more than 20 workers, under the social security fold with effect from April 2015**. So, all religious trusts and places — maths , temples, gurudwara, and

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
>
> **RAMAKRISHNA MATH** is a monastic organization for men brought into existence by Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886), the great 19th century saint of Bengal.
>
> **RAMAKRISHNA MISSION** is a registered society in which monks of Ramakrishna Math and lay devotees cooperate in conducting various types of social service mainly in India. It was founded by Sri Ramakrishna's chief apostle, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) in 1897.

churches — employing at least 20 workers were required to extend provident fund benefits to their staff.

- **R**amakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission are twin organizations which form the core of a worldwide spiritual movement (**known as Ramakrishna Movement or Vedanta Movement),** which aims at the harmony of religions, harmony of the East and the West, harmony of the ancient and the modern, spiritual fulfillment, all-round development of human faculties, social equality, and peace for all humanity, without any distinctions of creed, caste, race or nationality.

MAHADAYI RIVER DISPUTE

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- Mahadayi River or Mondovi, as it is called in Goa, actually originates from a cluster of 30 springs near Bhimgad in Karnataka and forms into a river at Degaon village in KhanapurTaluk of Belagavi district.
- **The river flows 35 km through Karnataka and then 52 km through Goa, before flowing into the Arabian Sea.**
- **The Mahadayi catchment area covers around 2,032 km and includes some parts of Maharashtra near the Maharashtra-Karnataka border region.**
- In April 2002, after getting an approval from the Water Resources Ministry in New Delhi and the National Environment Engineering Institute, the state government of Karnataka announced plans to build two barrages on Kalasa and Banduri, the two tributaries of Mahadayiriver, to supply water to people living the Hubballi-Dharwad, Badami, Nargund, Ron, Navalgund and Gadag region.
- Since the Mahadayi river is largely rain-fed between months of June through October, any diversion of waters by Karnataka would adversely affect the water needs of people of Goa. Therefore, the state government of Goa approached the Supreme Court in September 2002 objecting to the plan, claiming any water diversion would deny people of Goa critical water it needs, besides having a negative impact on the highly sensitive ecology of Western Ghats. **In 2006, Goa had moved the apex court for establishing a tribunal. Justice JM Panchal headed the MWDT set up in 2010.**

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Similar river water sharing disputes between states.
> **River Krishna**
> Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana and Maharashtra
> **River Godavari**
> Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha
> **River Narmada**
> Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat
> **River Cauvery**
> Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Puducherry
> **River Vansadhara**
> Andhra Pradesh and Odisha
> **River Ravi & Beas** – Sutlej-Yamuna Link Canal
> Punjab and Haryana.

General observation

- There are several ongoing river water disputes between states and this does raise a valid point for all stakeholders. River water is a natural resource and all states must have a just share of it.
- But the bigger question that must be asked of these state governments is what have they done towards investing and building 'rainwater' water holding capacities in their respective states?
- **Barring a few regions, there is adequate rainfall in Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra, yet all the three states suffer from severe water crisis during the hot pre-monsoon period. So why is it that these states, and it's true for other states in India as well, have not invested judiciously in setting up rainwater harvesting check dams, mini-dams and micro-ponds, which collectively can meet a large part of people's need, if not all of it, during crisis periods?**

FOOD WASTAGE

Why in News

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Prime Minister NarendraModi brought up the issue of food wastage on his 'Mann Ki Baat' programme recently.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), **"One third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally, which amounts to about 1.3 billion tons per year."** It also states: **"Food is lost or wasted throughout the supply chain, from initial agricultural production to final household consumption."** The losses, it says, represent "a waste of resources used in production such as land, water, energy and inputs, increasing the green gas emissions in vain".

> **About GHI**
> The GHI is calculated by taking into account **four key parameters: shares of undernourished population, wasted children aged under 5, stunted children aged under 5, and infant mortality rate of the same age group**.
> Each year, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) calculates GHI.

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About FAO

Achieving food security for all is at the heart of FAO's efforts – to make sure people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives.

The main goals of FAO are: the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; the elimination of poverty and the driving forward of economic and social progress for all; and, the sustainable management and utilization of natural resources, including land, water, air, climate and genetic resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

Impacts of Food Wastage

PEPPER IT WITH
Food mile
The 20/20 initiative
Article 47

- Food wastage has multiple socio-economic and environmental impacts. In a country like India, not only is food scarce for many poor families, it is a luxury for many others. India ranked 97th among 118 countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) for 2016. Wastage of food is not less than a social delinquency. According to one estimate, 21 million tonnes of wheat are wasted in India every year. A recent study by the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, revealed that only 10% of food is covered by cold storage facilities in India. This, coupled with poor supply-chain management, results in significant wastage, both at pre- and post-harvest stages, of cereals, pulses, fruits and vegetables.

- The wastage of food entails loss of considerable amount of resources in the
  form of inputs used during production. For example, 25% of fresh water and nearly 300 million barrels of oil used to produce food are ultimately wasted.

- The increasing wastage also results in land degradation by about 45%, mainly due to deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices, and excessive groundwater extraction. Wastage results in national economic loss. To put a monetary value to the loss in terms of wastage, India loses Rs. 58,000 crore every year, to quote The CSR Journal.

- **The energy spent over wasted food results in 3.3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide production every year. Decay also leads to harmful emission of other gases in the atmosphere; for instance, decaying of rice produces methane. Food waste emissions have a major impact on climate change and result in greater carbon footprint.**

- As per extant Policy, FDI up to 100%, under the automatic route, is allowed in food processing industries. Further, 100% FDI under Government route for retail trading, including through e-commerce, is permitted in respect of food products manufactured and/or produced in India.

TRADE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR EXPORT SCHEME

- The Scheme is focused on addressing the needs of the exporters.
- **Unlike Assistance to States for Development of Export Infrastructure and Allied Activities (ASIDE) Scheme, which was funded by the Centre, the cost of projects under TIES would be equally shared between the Centre and the states.However, for north—eastern and the Himalayan region states, the Centre may bear 80 per cent of the cost.**

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PEPPER IT WITH
Border Haats, Land customs stations, quality testing and certification labs, cold chains, trade promotion centres, dry ports, export warehousing and packaging, SEZs and ports/airports cargo terminuses.

- Under the scheme, priority would be given to the projects involving significant contribution by the implementing agency and bank financing for achieving financial closure.
- The other salient features of the scheme includes promotion of leveraging of funds from other sources including bank financing; no recurring costs of the land to be included; and operating & maintenance costs to be met through pay and use charges.
- The central and state agencies, including Export Promotion Councils, Commodities Boards, SEZ authorities and apex trade bodies recognised under the EXIM policy of government; are eligible for financial support under this scheme. The TIES, which is being implemented from FY18 till FY20, has a budgetary allocation of Rs. 600 crore.

GOVERNMENT PANEL TO STUDY COW DERIVATIVES

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- The government has set up a 19-member panel to carry out what it says will be scientifically validated research on cow derivatives including its urine, and their benefits, according to an inter-departmental circular and members of the panel.
- Headed by Science and Technology Minister Harsh Vardhan, the committee will select projects that can help scientifically validate the benefits of **panchgavya — the concoction of cow dung, cow urine, milk, curd and ghee — in various spheres such as nutrition, health and agriculture. The panel has been named as National steering committee.**
- The government has given the project the acronym **SVAROP, which stands for Scientific**

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Validation and Research on Panchagavya, and says it is a "national programme" that's being conducted by the Department of Science and Technology, Department of Biotechnology, and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) of the Ministry of Science and Technology in collaboration with IIT-Delhi.

TADOBA ANDHARI TIGER RESERVE

Why in News

- In a first of its kind, Telangana State will have eco-friendly bridges over a canal cutting across the tiger corridor linking the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in the Chandrapur district of Maharashtra with the forests in Telangana'sKumramBheemAsifabad district. The intervention requires the laying of fertile soil to grow grass and plants over the structure, so that fragmentation of the reserve forest is camouflaged.
- **TadobaAndhari Tiger Reserve is a Tiger reserve in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra state in central India.**
- It represents Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Teak Forests in the Tiger habitat. Beside Tiger, it is abode to number of prominent wild denizens like Leopard, Wild dog, Sloth bear, Gaur, Sambar, Barking deer, Cheetal, Chausinga, Nilgai, Wild boar alongwith rare ones like Ratel, Flying squirrel, Pangolin and Rusty spotted cat.

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PEPPER IT WITH

Project tiger
National Tiger Conservation Authority

SOHAM

- The **ministry of science and technology** launched a low-cost indigenous screening device to detect congenital hearing loss in newborns.
- One of the most common birth disorders – **congenital hearing loss –** is a result of both genetic and non-genetic factors. These factors are mostly associated with resource-poor economies such as India where, unlike in advanced healthcare systems, hearing impairment goes undiagnosed.
- When it is discovered at 4-plus years, it's too late to reverse the damage and this leads to a host of problems such as impaired communication skills and even possible mental illness, all of which have a deep impact on the child, emotionally and economically, life-long. Early screening can facilitate timely treatment and rehabilitation.
- Globally, 800,000 hearing impaired babies are born annually, of which nearly 100,000 are in India.
- The portable Sohum hearing screening device measures auditory brain waves via three electrodes placed on the baby's head. When stimulated, they detect electrical responses generated by the brain's auditory system. If there is no response, the child cannot hear.
- **"The battery-operated device is non-invasive, which means babies do not need to be sedated, which is the current, and risky, testing in process at present. Another key advantage over other testing systems is the patented, in-built algorithm that filters out ambient noise from the test signal. This is important because health clinics can be incredibly crowded and noisy.**

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PEPPER IT WITH

Pradhan Mantri Swastya Suraksha Yojna
Mission Indradhanush

TELANGANA GOVERNMENT PUTS CAP ON SCHOOL BAG WEIGHT

Acting on proposals submitted by the Commissioner and Director of School Education, the Telangana School Education Department on Tuesday issued strict guidelines to reduce the weight of school bags for children in the State. Schools including aided and un-aided private schools have to follow guidelines, according to the government officials.

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Back-breaking regimen

- School bags should not weigh more than: Class I &II-1.5 kg, Class III to V-3 kg, Class VI to VII-4 kg, Class VII to IX- 4.5 kg, and Class X- 5 kg.
- Number of textbooks should not exceed the number prescribed by SCERT.
- Schools should not prescribe additional textbooks.
- Bags must be checked to ensure students are not carrying unnecessary material.
- Recreation and physical activity is the right of the children.
- No homework for students in Class I to V.

INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCTAION

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Innovation and upgradation of infrastructure in higher education institutions is an on-going endeavour and the Central Government is making a constant effort in this direction.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) under the Scheme "General Development Assistance" provides financial assistance to eligible Central Universities, Deemed Universities, State Universities and colleges. The main objective of the grant, inter-alia, is to set up new infrastructure and strengthen/upgrade existing infrastructural facilities in the institutions.

PEPPER IT WITH
Subramanian committee on education.

Further, in order to encourage innovation and infrastructure development, the UGC has launched various schemes and initiatives such as Universities with Potential for Excellence (UPE), Centre with Potential for Excellence in Particular Area (CPEPA), Special Assistance Programme (SAP), Research Projects, Basic Science Research and Inter-University Centres.

The Central Government has launched several new initiatives viz. National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), Impacting Research Innovation & Technology (IMPRINT), UchchatarAvishkarYojna (UAY), Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) & Global Research Interactive Network (GRIN) in the field of education to encourage innovation and research in the country.

The initiative of SWAYAM has been launched which intends to provide massive open online courses (MOOCs) for the students across the country with the objective of expanding the reach of quality education to the students using the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools.

Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of RashtriyaUchchatarShikshaAbhiyan (RUSA), financial support is provided to improve infrastructure availability in the State Higher Educational Institutions and also to promote research and innovation.

Some of the initiatives taken by UGC for improving quality of Higher Education are as under:
(i)   Choice-based Credit System (CBCS);
(ii)   Universities with Potential for Excellence;
(iii)   Centre with potential for excellence in particular area;
(iv)   Special Assistance Programme (SAP);
(v)   Community College;
(vi)   Scholarship Scheme (ISHAN UDAY) for North Eastern Region;
(vii)   UGC (Credit Framework for Online Learning Courses through SWAYAM) Regulation, 2016.

PAIKA REBELLION

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- **The Paika Rebellion, also known as the Paika Bidroha and Paik Rebellion, was an armed rebellion by Paiks against the British East Company in Odisha in the year 1817. The Paiks were the traditional landed militia inhabiting Odisha.**

- As the East India Company conquered Odisha in 1803 and dethroned the king of Khurda, the period of fall I n the power and prestige of Paiks began. In 1817, led by BakshiJagabandhu, the commander of forces of king of Khurda, the Paiks rose in rebellion which quickly spread across a large part of the state.

- The primary reasons behind the rebellion were discontent among Paiks over policies of the company, rise in price of salt because of the tax imposed by the new British government, extortionist land revenue policy, abolition of the established cowrie currency system of the state, and oppression of masses at the hands of company government.

Some other warriors of PaikaBidroha

Dinabandhu Samantray Mohapatra, Dama Subudhi Manjaraj, Samanta Madhaba Chandra Routray (Dalbehera of Tapanga), Pindiki Bahubalendra, Krutibas Patsani and many more

- Despite all the efforts by Paikas and BakshiJagabandhu, their leader, the rebellion was put down ruthlessly by the East India Company. In 1817 itself, British posted judges to Khurda who announced sentences of death, transportation and long-term imprisonment to the captured rebels. Those who managed to escape were captured and put to death later.

PEPPER IT WITH

Indigo Revolt

- **In Odisha, and surrounding areas of the country, Paika Rebellion was a popular and powerful war against the British for independence.**

- Along with BuxiJagabandu there were some other great warriors of PaikaBidroha who fought side by side such as DinabandhuSamantrayMohapatra, DamaSubudhiManjaraj, SamantaMadhaba Chandra Routray (Dalbehera of Tapanga), PindikiBahubalendra, KrutibasPatsani and many more.

INSTALLATION OF GAGAN SYSTEM IN AIRCRAFT

Government has proposed to make it compulsory to install GAGAN navigation system in all aircrafts in the country. In accordance with the provisions of the National Civil Aviation Policy, 2016, it is mandatory for all aircrafts registered in India from 1st January, 2019 to be GPS Augmented Geo Navigation System (GAGAN) enabled.

GAGAN System has been certified for en-route and Approach with Vertical Guidance (APV1) operations by Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) in December, 2013 and April, 2015 respectively in accordance with essential international standards. GAGAN System is continuously monitored on 24X7 basis to meet all the international standards of accuracy, availability, integrity and continuity requirements.

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PEPPER IT WITH
ICAO
DGCA

About GAGAN
- The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and Airports Authority of India (AAI) have implemented the GPS Aided Geo Augmented Navigation-GAGAN project as a Satellite Based Augmentation System (SBAS) for the Indian Airspace. The objective of GAGAN to establish, deploy and certify satellite based augmentation system for safety-of-life civil aviation applications in India has been successfully completed.
- The system is inter-operable with other international SBAS systems like **US-WAAS, European EGNOS, and Japanese MSAS etc**. GAGAN GEO footprint extends from Africa to Australia and has expansion capability for seamless navigation services across the region. GAGAN provides the additional accuracy, availability, and integrity necessary for all phases of flight, from enroute through approach for all qualified airports within the GAGAN service volume.
- GAGAN though primarily meant for aviation, will provide benefits beyond aviation to many other user segments such as intelligent transportation, maritime, highways, railways, surveying, geodesy, security agencies, telecom industry, personal users of position location applications etc.
- IRNSS, the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System, is an ISRO initiative to design and develop an independent satellite-based navigation system to provide positioning, navigation and timing services for users over Indian region. The system is designed with a constellation of 7 spacecraft and a vast network of ground systems operating

- While GAGAN will redefine navigation over Indian Airspace, IRNSS will provide independent and self reliant satellite based navigation services over Indian region.

PRADHAN MANTRI VAYA VANDANA YOJNA (PMVVY)

PMVVY is a Pension Scheme announced by the Government of India exclusively for the **Senior Citizens aged 60 years and above** which is available from 4th May, 2017 to 3rd May, 2018. The Scheme can be purchased offline as well as online through Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India which has been given the sole privilege to operate this Scheme.

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Benefits of PMVVY
- Scheme provides an assured return of 8% p.a. payable monthly (equivalent to 8.30% p.a. effective) for 10 years.
- Pension is payable at the end of each period, during the policy term of 10 years, as per the frequency of monthly/ quarterly/ half-yearly/ yearly as chosen by the pensioner at the time of purchase.

PEPPER IT WITH
National Pension System
Atal Pension Yojna

- **The scheme is exempted from Service Tax/ GST.**
- On survival of the pensioner to the end of the policy term of 10 years, Purchase price along with final pension installment shall be payable.
- Loan upto 75% of Purchase Price shall be allowed after 3 policy years (to meet the liquidity needs). Loan interest shall be recovered from the pension installments and loan to be recovered from claim proceeds.
- The scheme also allows for premature exit for the treatment of any critical/ terminal illness of self or spouse. On such premature exit, 98% of the Purchase Price shall be refunded.
- On death of the pensioner during the policy term of 10 years, the Purchase Price shall be paid to the beneficiary.

Minimum / Maximum Purchase Price and Pension Amount:
- The ceiling of maximum pension is for a family as a whole, the family will comprise of pensioner, his/her spouse and dependants.
- The shortfall owing to the difference between the interest guaranteed and the actual interest earned and the expenses relating to administration shall be subsidized by the Government of India and reimbursed to the Corporation.

IN PRINCIPLE APPROVAL TO CONVERT 51,300 KM OF STATE ROADS TO NHs

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has approved "In-Principle" declaration of about 51,300 km length of state roads as new National Highways subject to the outcome of their Detailed Project Reports (DPRs). The declaration of state roads as new National Highways is done from time to time depending upon the requirement of connectivity, inter-se-priority and availability of funds.

The State roads are declared as new NHs on the basis of well established principles. The criteria for this include roads running through length, breadth of the country, connecting adjacent countries, national capital with state capitals, mutually the state capitals, major ports, non-major ports, large industrial centers or tourist centers, roads meeting very important strategic requirement in hilly and isolated area, arterial roads which enable sizeable reduction in travel distance and achieve substantial economic growth thereby, roads which help opening up large tracts of backward area and hilly regions (other than strategically important ones), achieving a National Highways grid of 100 km, etc.

> **SetuBharatam Project**
> ARs 50,000 croreprogramme which will do away with railway crossings on National Highways by 2019.

The total length of NHs in the country as on 31st March, 2014 was about 91,287 km. This has been enhanced to about 1,15,435 km at present.

- The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare runs a scheme under which financial assistance is provided to the state government for Trauma Care facilities in the government hospitals located on National Highways.

- During the 11th Five Year Plan, 116 Trauma Care Facilities were funded

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Bharatmala and Sagarmala

with 100% central funding along the Golden Quadrilateral Highways Corridor as well as the North -South and East - West Corridor.

Since April 2015, the financial assistance is shared between Central and State Government in the ratio of 60:40 onwards; the ratio of sharing for North Eastern states and hilly states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttrakhand and Jammu & Kashmir is 90:10; for UTs there is 100% central funding.

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highway has set an ambitious target of 15000 km for construction of national highways during the year 2017-18. Against this, 2269 km of highways have been completed as on 30th June in.

- Maharashtra has the longest network of National Highways in India (15,436).

BHARAT NET

Why in news

Deadline of the Bharat Net project pushed to march 2019.

The Bharat Net project, earlier National Optical Fibre Network or NOFN, seeks to bring high-speed broadband to all 2.5 lakh gram panchayats through optical fibre. It was approved by Cabinet in 2011 and deadline was fixed by end of 2013 then deferred to September 2015 by UPA Government. The NarendraModi-led government re-examined project status and set target to complete roll out by end of 2016. This was later delayed to December 2018.

Bharat Net project is a Centre-State collaborative project, with the States contributing free Rights of Way for establishing the Optical Fibre Network. The three-phase implementation of the BharatNet project is as follows.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> JAM YOJNA

- **The first phase envisages providing one lakh gram panchayats with broadband connectivity by laying underground optic fibre cable (OFC) lines by March 2017.**

- The second phase will provide connectivity to all 2,50,500 gram panchayats in the country using an optimal mix of underground fiber, fiber over power lines, radio and satellite media. It is to be completed by December 2018. For success in phase-2, which will also involve laying of OFC over electricity poles, the participation of states will be important. This is a new element of the BharatNet strategy as the mode of connectivity by aerial OFC has several advantages, including lower cost, speedier implementation, easy maintenance and utilization of existing power line infrastructure. The last mile connectivity to citizens was proposed to be provided creating Wi-Fi hotspots in gram panchayats.

- In the third phase from 2018 to 2023, state-of-the-art, future-proof network, including fiber between districts and blocks, with ring topology to provide redundancy would be created.

PRIVILEGE MOTION

Why in news
Privilege motion has regularly been in news as opposition demands this motion

A **privilege motion** is a motion moved by a member if he feels that a Minister has committed a breach of privilege of the House or of any one or more of its members by withholding the facts of a case or by giving a distorted version of facts etc.
Some important motions in Indian parliament are as under.

Adjournment Motion: At the end of the question-hour in the Parliament, motion moved by a member when it is desired to draw the attention of the Executive for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance. It needs the support of at least 50 members to be admitted.

Censure Motion: A motion which seeks to censure the government for its "lapse". If the motion is passed in the Popular House, the Cabinet resigns.

'No-Confidence' Motion: A motion moved by a member to express lack of confidence in the government for any reason. The motion, if allowed, be debated upon. At the conclusion of such debate, a vote of confidence is sought by the government and if it fails to get the required majority of votes, it has to resign. This motion needs the support of 50 members to be admitted.

Calling Attention Motion: A member may, with prior permission of the Speaker, call the attention of a Minister to any matter of urgent public importance and the Minister may make a brief Statement regarding the matter or ask for time to make a Statement.

Cut Motion: A motion that seeks reduction in the amount of a demand presented by the government is known as a cut motion. Such motions are admitted at the Speaker's discretion. It is a device through which members can draw the attention of the government to a specific grievance or problem. There are three types of Cut Motion:

GS CONNECT

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PEPPER IT WITH
Zero hour and Question hour

WORLD CUSTOM ORGANISATION

Why in News
India's National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP), which aims to reduce cargo release time for exports and imports as part of measures intended to boost trade, has been described by the World Customs Organisation (WCO) as a 'best practice' that other nations can adopt.

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- The WCO is an international intergovernmental organization, first established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC). The inaugural session of the Council took place on 26 January 1953, which is now celebrated annually as International Customs Day. With the 1990s seeing a huge surge in membership, in 1994 the CCC agreed to adopt the working name "World Customs Organization or WCO" in order to better reflect its new orientation as a truly global institution.

- **Being the only organization uniquely focused on Customs issues, the WCO is particularly noted for its work in areas covering the development of global standards covering topics, such as commodity classification, valuation and rules of origin, compliance, cross-border enforcement to combat illicit trade, trade facilitation, the simplification and harmonization of Customs procedures, the security of the trade supply chain, and the promotion of integrity.**

PEPPER IT WITH
Trade Related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS)

- The WCO is the voice of the global customs community, with its primary objective to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of member customs administrations, thereby assisting them to contribute successfully to national development goals, particularly revenue collection, national security, trade facilitation, community protection, and collection of trade statistics.

- The WCO — the international body supporting the uniform implementation of the TFA across the globe — has 182 member nations (including India) that manage more than 98% of world trade.

- The NTFAP, which is to be implemented between 2017 and 2020, is part of India's efforts to improve its ease of doing business ranking in the World Bank's annual report. While India's overall rank in the report is 130, it ranks 144 out of 190 nations in the report's 'Trading across Borders' category.

- The TFA — meant to ease Customs norms for faster flow of goods across borders — had come into effect in February 2017.

- India had ratified the TFA in April 2016. As per the WTO, "the full implementation of the TFA could ... boost global trade by up to $1 trillion per year."

- Of the 25 activities that are part of the TFA requirements, 17 will be implemented within 6-18 months, while eight have a timeline of up to six months.

MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE

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Why in news

Amid farmers' unrest in many parts of the country, the demand for an increase in minimum support price (MSP) has been voiced regularly.

A part of the agricultural price policy, MSP is the price at which the government offers to procure farmers' produce during the season. While farmers are free to sell their produce to government agencies or in the open market, it is when market prices fall below the MSP that government agencies step in to buy the crop to protect the growers. Also, the aim is to safeguard the interest of the consumer by ensuring supplies at a reasonable price.

The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs announces the MSP at the start of each sowing season, taking into account the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). The key considerations, while recommending the MSP for crops, are demand and supply, production cost, price trends in the domestic and international market and the likely implications of the price on consumers. The CACP's recommendations are in the form of price policy reports every year, separately for five groups of commodities: kharif crops, rabi crops, sugarcane, raw jute and copra. At present, agricultural commodities for which MSP is given include paddy, wheat, maize, sorghum, pearl millet, barley, ragi, gram, tur, moong, urad, lentil, groundnut, rapeseed-mustard, soyabean, sesamum, sunflower, safflower, nigerseed, copra, sugarcane, cotton and raw jute.

Why MSP is Important

- The key purpose of the government's price support policy is to provide a fair return to efficient farmers and to protect the interests of consumers by keeping the prices of food and other agriculture commodities at reasonable levels.
- Agricultural commodities are prone to price fluctuations: while a farmer may get a handsome return for his produce in a short supply scenario, the same commodity may fetch him a poor price during years of bumper production.
- MSP ensures that farmers get a minimum price for their produce in unfavorable market conditions. Also with MSP, farmers are incentivised to grow crops, which are short in supply.
- In the absence of support price, farmers may not find certain crops lucrative, which would lead to poor production, resulting in high prices.

About CACP

The government decided to set up a permanent body, called the Agricultural Prices Commission, in 1965. This was renamed as the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices in 1985.

To ensure remunerative price to farmers, the government procured 38.65 million tonnes of rice, 22.93 million tonnes of wheat and 1.3 million tonnes of pulses during 2016-17 in various States.

PEPPER IT WITH
Statutory Minium Price.
Essential Commodities Act.
Policy for Sugarcane pricing.

COMBAT ROLE FOR WOMEN IN INDIAN ARMY

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- The induction of Women Officers is based on the organizational requirement, fighting efficiency, combat effectiveness and functionality of the Army.
- **Presently, women are inducted in Indian Army as Officers through Short Service Commission (SSC). Women Officers are inducted in Army Service Corps, Army Ordnance Corps, Army Education Corps, Judge Advocate General Branch including Engineers, Signals, Intelligence and Electrical & Mechanical Engineering branches. They have also been granted option for Permanent Commission in Judge Advocate General (JAG) Department and in Army Education Corps (AEC) of Army. There has been a progressive enhancement in the induction of women in the Army. There is no proposal to raise all women battalion in the Army.**

PEPPER IT WITH
One Rank One Pension (OROP)

- In the Army, women officers are being employed in the above streams and are being tasked which is commensurate to the rank and service on equal footing as male officers. In Indian Navy and Indian Air Force, women officers are inducted on same terms as male officers. For Indian Navy, the Government has approved induction of Women SSC officers as Pilots and in Naval Armament Inspectorate cadre with effect from 2017. As such, it is the endeavour of the Government to bring gender parity in all three wings of defence forces.

INDEX OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION (IIP)

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Background

It is compiled and published monthly by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation six weeks after the reference month ends.

- The Central Statistics Office (CSO) revised the base year of the all-India Index of Industrial Production (IIP) from 2004-05 to 2011-12 on 12 May 2017. Revisions in the IIP are necessitated to maintain representativeness of the items and producing entities and

PEPPER IT WITH
Core Industries and their weightage.

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also address issues relating to continuous flow of production data

- **The base year revision captures structural changes in the economy and improves the quality and representativeness of the indices. The revised IIP (2011-12) not only reflect the changes in the industrial sector but also aligns it with the base year of other macroeconomic indicators like the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Wholesale Price Index (WPI).**
- IIP in the revised series will continue to represent the Mining, Manufacturing and Electricity sectors.
- As per IIP, the annual growth rate of industrial sector was 5.0 per cent in 2016-17 compared to 3.4 per cent in 2015-16.

FLOATING RATE BONDS

Floating Rate Bonds are securities which do not have a fixed coupon rate. The coupon is re-set at pre-announced intervals (say, every six months or one year) by adding a spread over a base rate. In the case of most floating rate bonds issued by the Government of India so far, the base rate is the weighted average cut-off yield of the last three 364- day Treasury Bill auctions preceding the coupon re-set date and the spread is decided through the auction. Floating Rate Bonds were first issued in September 1995 in India.

The present Floating Rate Bonds will be of eight years tenure commencing from November 07, 2016. The Bonds will be repaid at par on November 07, 2024.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Green Bonds
Masala bonds

SHe BOX

This portal is an initiative to provide a platform to women working or visiting any office of Central Government (Central Ministries, Departments, Public Sector Undertakings, Autonomous Bodies and Institutions etc.) to file complaints related to sexual harassment at workplace under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (the SH Act), 2013.

Once a complaint is submitted to the 'SHe-Box', it will be directly sent to the internal complaints committee (ICC) of the ministry/department/PSU/autonomous body etc concerned, having jurisdiction to inquire into the matter.

The sexual harassment Act mandates that all workplaces with more than 10 workers constitute an internal complaints committee for receiving complaints of sexual harassment.

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The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 seeks to protect women from sexual harassment at their place of work. This statute superseded the **Vishakha Guidelines** for prevention of sexual harassment introduced by the Supreme Court of India in 1997.

PEPPER IT WITH
Nirbhaya Act and Nirbhaya Fund

PRISON REFORMS SECURING RIGHTS OF INMATES

Currently in news due to death in Byculla jail of inmate Manjula Sette
The focus of public and judicial concern over the situation prevailing in India's prisons has in recent times been related to overcrowding and long spells of incarceration faced by indigent inmates too poor to obtain bail.

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The plea complains about the inhuman condition inside the prison and says the inmates are deprived of their fundamental human rights.

The inmates may not have been accustomed to even rudimentary care from the jail authorities.

As per SC judgement an empowered committee was to be constituted to look into all aspects of the jails in the light of Supreme Court decisions, the Model Prison Manual of 2016 and relevant UN resolutions.

The panel was to suggest

Nelson Mandela Rules
RULES OF GENERAL APPLICATION is called Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners
It was adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 45/111 of 14 December 1990 as commssoned by UNHR.

In December 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the revised rules as the "United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners". As per the recommendation of the Expert Group, the revised rules are to be known as "the Nelson Mandela Rules" to honour the legacy of the late President of South Africa, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, who spent 27 years in prison in the course of his struggle for global human rights, equality, democracy and the promotion of a culture of peace.

measures to create modern jails and modernise amenities.

The issues range from prisoners' rights, health, hygiene and access to legal aid, to the condition of women inmates and their children.

The judiciary's approach has been anchored in the belief that fundamental rights "do not part company with the prisoner at the gates".Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh released a model jail manual consisting of 32 chapters which aims at bringing in basic uniformity in laws.

Model Prison Manual key features

- Access to free legal services **under Article 39A**
- Additional provisions for women prisoners. This is drawn from the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Female Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders adopted by the UN General Assembly (UN Bangkok Rules)
- Rights of prisoners sentenced to death
- Modernisation & Prison computerisation
- Focus on after-care services
- Provisions for children of women prisoners
- Organisational uniformity and increased focus on prison correctional staff
- Inspection of Prisons

NALSA TO LAUNCH WEB APPLICATION TO ENSURE NO PRISONER REMAINS UNREPRESENTED IN COURTS

The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) will soon launch a web application, in coordination with the National Informatics Centre, to ensure that no prisoner in the country remains unrepresented in courts in the course of his or her trial or appeal.

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- The digitised database, launched by Justice Misra, would also have details of cases pending against the inmates, lawyers representing them, if any, case stage, next date of hearing and other related information collated from the jail authorities.

NALSA
o The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
o to provide free Legal Services to the weaker sections of the society and to organize LokAdalats for amicable settlement of disputes.
o Articles 14 and 22(1) also make it obligatory for the State to ensure equality before law and a legal system which promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity to all.
o The prime objective of NALSA is speedy disposal of cases and reducing the burden of judiciary
o NALSA is headed by the Chief Justice of India.

- It would also help in extending legal aid to under-trials who are entitled to bail under Section 436A of the Criminal Procedure Code.
- Justice Misra said the web application would make the legal services system more transparent and efficient, owing to real-time monitoring.
- The information on legal aid seekers and beneficiaries will be available at one centralised point — SLSA office
  Recently, Gujarat State Legal Services Authority — wherein 'NyayaSampark' was inaugurated by Justice Misra.

Organizational Structure
http://nalsa.gov.in/sites/default/files/Orgnization.png

CAN OCI STUDENT BE TREATED AS INDIAN CITIZENS

Currently in news due to
The Ministry of External Affairs onSaturday informed the Karnataka High Court that it differs from the view taken by the State government on students belonging to Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) category while emphasising that the Union government treats OCI cardholders on a par with Non-Resident Indians (NRI).

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Issue
The petitions, filed by several OCI students, questioning State government's norm of not considering them for admission for medical and dental courses

Court's Counsel

- under all-India quota as the Centre is treating them as citizens of India, whereas the State has adopted the policy not to treat them as Indian citizens based on status of their citizenship.
- a Division Bench comprising Justice H.G. Ramesh and Justice K.S issued the statement of the State's counsel that OCI students will be considered for admission to medical courses **only under NRI quota**.

Point to ponder

PEPPER IT WITH
Article 5-11 of Indian constitution

Question on the legality of Rule 5 (1) of the Karnataka Selection of Candidates for Admission to Government Seats in Professional Educational Institutions Rules, 2006, though admission is restricted to only Indian citizens.

Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) Cardholder
The following categories of persons (except Pakistan and Bangladesh) are eligible to apply under OCI scheme
Who is a citizen of another country, but was a citizen of India
Who is a citizen of another country, but was eligible to become a citizen of India at the time of the commencement of the constitution
Who is a citizen of another country, but belonged to a territory that became part of India after the 15th day of August, 1947
Who is a child or a grand-child or a great grandchild of such a citizen.

AADHAAR PRIVACY ISSUE

The Aadhaar project is the world's largest national identity project, launched by government of India, which seeks **to collect biometric and demographic data of residents and store these in a centralised database**. Privacy concerns relating to the Aadhaar project have been the subject of much heated debate recently

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Currently in news due leak of aadhaar card details and SC decision on it
Reports mentioned that data of over 130 million Aadhaar cardholders have been leaked from four government websites but UIDAI claims that there is noleak from their organisation instead leak is from state.
On behalf of all Indian citizens, SC asks the current government to address the most basic questions in a democracy governed by the law: what are the privacy rights of its citizens; and are they protected equally.

**Privacy and security concerns** (Possible ways of breach of privacy)
- Identification of individuals without consent using the global Aadhaar number.
- Identification and authentication without consent using demographic and biometric data.
- Surveillance, tracking or profiling of people beyond legal sanctions
- biometric information is necessary for targeted surveillance, but not suitable for everyday transactions between the state and law abiding citizens which can misused easily

National Identification Authority of India Bill 2010
The Bill seeks to establish the National Identification Authority of India (NIAI) to issue unique identification numbers (called 'Aadhaar') to residents of India
Every person residing in India is entitled to obtain an Aadhaar number after furnishing relevant demographic and biometric information
The information collected shall be stored in the Central Identities Data Repository(CIDR)
Sharing of data is prohibited except by the consent of the resident; by a court order; or for national security(authorisedby the rank of Joint Secretary or above).
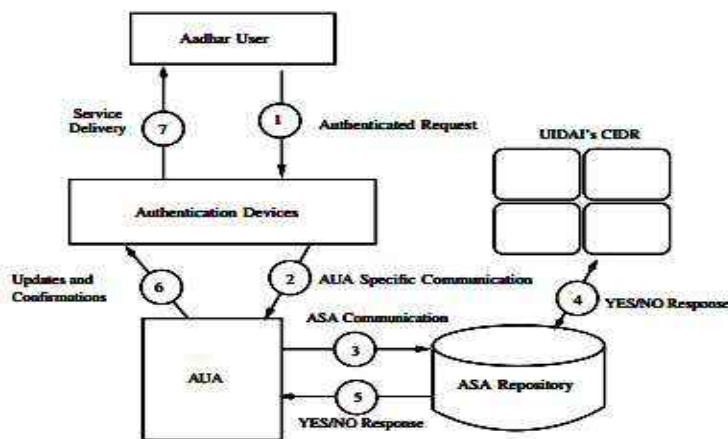
Possible solution to prevent breach of privacy
Manual inspection of user data, authentication records and audit trails should be made possible via pre-approved authorized investigation
1. Sufficiently strong cryptographic measures to protect the user data along with strong firewall and hardware security module
2. RecognisingUntrusted network, trusted application and authentication servers, trusted clients and indexing the verified application for the use.

The Privacy Bill, 2011
- every individual shall have a right to his privacy-confidentiality of communication made to, or, by him-including his personal correspondence, telephone conversations, telegraph messages, postal, electronic mail
- The bill gives protection from a citizen's identity theft, including criminal identity theft.
- The bill prohibits interception of communications except in certain cases with approval of Secretary-level officer
- The bill mandates the establishment of a Data Protection Authority of India, whose functionis to monitor development in data processing and computer technology.

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3. Protection measures to stop external as well as internal hack attack on UIDAI database
4. Tamper proof hardware and code access to CIDR data
5. Strengthen legal and policy framework to demarcate identity verification and authorization
6. Separate administrative control body for online audit
7. Shift from biometric to smart card

GOI stand on privacy issue

- **Right to privacy is not enumerated as a Fundamental Right** in the Constitution of India
- The scope of this right first came up for consideration in **Kharak Singh's Case**
- Right To Privacy-Permissible Restriction ::Intrusion into privacy may be by- (1) Legislative Provision (2) Administrative/Executive order (3) Judicial Orders
- The right of privacy on one hand and power of the State of search and seizure on the other hand has been the subject matter of judgments not only in India but also in other countries as well. The Supreme Court referred to American case laws under the **Fourth Amendment to the US Constitution**

Summary

Though there are serious privacy concerns at present, we believe that Aadhaar can be made safe from a technology perspective with due-diligence. The legal framework however needs to be more specific and requires significant strengthening. Perhaps the single most important specific question that begs answering is who should have the right to verify the identity of an individual, and under what circumstances. The effectiveness of biometric identification and to what extent are the biometric features required are remaining important questions.

SmartCardvsAadhaarCard
Biometrics allows for identification of citizens even when they don't want to be identified. **Smart cards which require pins on the other hand require the citizens' conscious cooperation** during the identification process. If smart card is destroyed once it cant be used by others Consent is baked into the design of the technology
Smart card helps decentralize authentication As a result UIDAI can destroy authenticaton transaction database.

Identity Verfication Vs Authentication
Identity provides an answer to the question "who are you?"
Authentication is achallenge-response process that provides a "proof of the claim of identity"
Identity may be considered public information
Authentication credential must necessarily be private-a secret that is known only to the user
Example of Identity cryptographic public keys, email ids,ATM or smart cardsetc
Example of authentication OTPs,PINsetc

ISSUE OF SEPARATE STATE FLAG

Currently in news due to demand of separate state flag by Karnataka.
The State has constituted a nine-member committee headed by Principal Secretary, Department of Kannada and Culture, to study and submit a report to the government on the possibility of "designing a separate flag for Karnataka and providing it a statutory standing."

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Constitutional and Legal position
- There is no prohibition in the Constitution for the State to have its own flag in the constitution and Flag Code of india
- Former Advocate-General of Karnataka Ravivarma Kumar cited **S.R. Bommai v/s Union of India (Supreme Court 1994) case**. "In Bommai's case, the Supreme Court has declared that federalism is a basic feature of the Constitution and States are supreme in their sphere to justify the legalties of the demand.
- The manner in which the State flag is hoisted should not dishonour the national flag. It has to be always below the national flag
- The national flag code specifically authorises use of other flags subject to the regulation by the court and requires President's accent
- Karnataka will become the second state after Jammu and Kashmir to have its own flag.
- J&K, which enjoys special powers under Article 370 of the Constitution, adopted its own flag in 2015. Under the Article 144 of the J&K Constitution, the state flag is "red in colour with three equidistant white vertical strips of equal width next to the staff and a white plough in the middle with handle facing the strips".

Where can this flag be used?
That flag is not to be used in national ceremonies like Republic Day or Independence.

Flag Code of India, 2002 has been divided into three parts.

Part I = general description of the National Flag

Part II =the display of the National Flag by members of public, private organizations and educational institutions.

Part III = display of the National Flag by Central and State governments and their organisations and agencies.

India did not permit it on private buildings by individuals except on special occasions.

PEPPER IT WITH
Article 51A
Prevention of insults to National Honour Act 1971.

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CONCEPT CLEARING ASSIGNMENT

1. "An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena", is the aim of African Union (AY). How AU is helping bring African economy at with global platform. Critically analyse.

2. After announcing the formation of bodies like the National Testing Agency (NTA), the Government of India is all set to take the next big step within the education sector. The government is planning to do away with the two major education regulatory bodies i.e. the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the University Grants Commission (UGC). These two regulatory bodies will be replaced by another agency planned by the government that will be called Higher Education Empowerment Regulation Agency (HEERA).
   How HEERA will help in ending of inspector raj and harassment of UGC?

3. The main reason for the separate Gorkhaland movement is due to the differences in ethnicity, culture and language. The people of Nepali-Indian Gorkha ethnic origin on the Northern part of West Bengal demands a state on basis of their cultural identity, which is very different from Bengali culture. How should the Government of India handle the persisting issue of demand for separate Gorkhaland? Critically Examine.

4. The Geneva conventions are essentially a series of do's' and don'ts' to apply during conflict. What is the underlying principle of the convention? Do you think that in warfare some basic concept of humanity is required?

5. According to a RBI report, in the financial year 2016-17, there has hardly been any transmission of a reduction in the policy rate to the actual lending rates charged to customers. Banks are not passing on the benefits of rate cuts to customers to protect their earnings.
   How the banks can make sure that benefits of the Policy rate cut by RBI trickles down to its consumers?

6. The shackles of traditions has always weighed down heavy on the society's liberal rights of women. Comment with examples.

7. Cybersecurity will be the main concern of state's national security and economic security issue in near future. Is India sufficiently gear- up ? Critically analyse as per present situation.

8. The government has decided to introduce Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) to revive PPP (Public Private Partnership) in highway construction.
   How the HAM outlines will help India in achieving a strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth in economy?

9. The Global Foreign Exchange Committee (GFXC) established in May 2017 as a forum bringing together central banks and private sector participants with the aim to promote a robust, liquid, open, and appropriately transparent FX market in which a diverse set of participants, supported by resilient infrastructure, are able to confidently and effectively transact at competitive prices that reflect available information and in a manner that conforms to acceptable standards of behaviour.
   How India's representation in GFXC will help vision of PM to fight against corruption and black money? Elucidate.

10. In a recent judgment, the Uttarakhand High Court declared the rivers Yamuna and Ganga as legal or juridical persons, enjoying all the rights, duties and liabilities of a living person. Can the river file a case against any person or persons performing actions she considers a violation of her rights? Comment.

11. The street vending act,2014 has promised the answer to the dangling question lurking on livelihood rights of street vendors and solution to free movement of pedestrian and traffic problems comprehensively. Comment.

12. Economic dependence of women is what gives rise to their subordination in society today. Hence to remove such subordination and to lay the foundation of equality women too must be made economically independent and must take an active role in all sectors of business today. To support such initiative the Government must provide some conditions which are suitable for the needs of women.
   On above context critically analyze the implications of amendments made in the Maternity Benefit Act.

13. There is no doubt about it, BitCoin is much more than a passing internet trend. Many people consider it to be the future of currency, however there are a few fatal flaws.
   Is India sufficiently prepared to embrace cyrptocurrencies ?

14. The role of JIN in promoting a healthy investment relationship across the borders. Comment.

15. "It is our fundamental obligation to prevent water scarcity and pollution and to preserve it for generations... Water is not a commodity. We should resist all criminal attempts to marketise, privatise and corporatise water." Comment in respect of Plachimadavs Coca-Cola.

16. As per the recent uproar and discontent in certain parts of India under AFSPA; has it been successful in its objectives or it is a ripe time to revisit or repeal AFSPA. Critically analyse.

17. Animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, use for entertainment, or abuse in any way. They are cut up alive in the name of "science". They are skinned alive so that people can parade

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around in their coats; and worse. Comment in light of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960.

18. The IT services industry alone is set to lose 6.4 lakh low-skilled positions to automation by 2021. Automation threatens 69% of the jobs in India, while it's 77% in China, according to a World Bank research. The present trajectory of AI advancement indicates that future economies and national security will be defined by it, making it among a handful of technologies that will shape global politics.
    Does India need to envision strategic outlook to artificial intelligence capabilities? Discuss.

19. India is leading the talks on easing restrictions on the temporary movement of professionals in RCEP region. How will it benefit India and what will be its impact on other countries? Also discuss the importance of RCEP with regard to India.

20. NITI Aayog has formed a six-member committee under a former senior Railways official to scrutinise the safety parameters associated with rapid mass technologies such as hyperloop, pod taxis, metrinos and hybrid buses before they are adopted for commercial purposes.
    Discuss the ways through which India's public transport can get futuristic.

21. Our cities and towns have subsequently grown without planning for water need vs water availability. In 1951, the per capita water availability was about 5177 m3. This has now reduced to about 1545 m3 in 2011 as per data provided by TERI. Various states in India suffer from severe water crisis problems. Draw attention on the reasons behind water scarcity in India and suggest measures to remove these problems.

22. India is committed to secure availability of food to 2/3 of its population by National Food Security Act, 2013. While securing food for all is important, addressing wastage of food in all forms is equally critical to complete the cycle of food sufficiency and food sustainability. Discuss.

23. In many countries, hospitals have made neo-natal screening test mandatory but it is a sad thing that in India there is no such legislation. WHO published guidelines on basic newborn resuscitation in 2012, which provides a clinical guideline for low resource settings neonatal resuscitation to decrease infant mortality rate. Should NGO and SHG come forward and take an initiative in the way of making Neo Natal screening mandatory and compel indian administration to device steps to curb gender biased feticide? In context of above mentioned statement suggest pragmatic and holistic steps to curb feticide and importance of neo-natal screening test for newborns? Discuss.

24. Initiatives of central government like National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), Impacting Research Innovation & Technology (IMPRINT), Uchchatar Avishkar Yojna (UAY), Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) & Global Research Interactive Network (GRIN) is how much important in the field of education to encourage innovation and research in the country.

25. Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 states that '*A senior citizen including parents who is unable to maintain himself from his own earning or out of property owned by him, shall be entitled to make an application under section 5*'. India needs to take a serious look at the needs of the elderly in a more pragmatic and holistic manner. Does scheme like Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojna (PMVVY) is sufficient for elderly people in India? Discuss.

26. Digital India is an initiative by the government of India to provide services to the citizens electronically, make the citizens digitally literate and to transform the country into a digitally empowered knowledge economy. Does the pushing the deadline of BharatNet project shows that India is still not ready for the aims of Digital India.

27. The NTFAP on line of Trade Facilitation Agreement contains provisions for expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit. With the release of NTFAP India is looking ahead for compliance with TFA with emphasis on trade facilitation and its time bound implementation. Is this action plan in consonance with the "Ease of doing business" and what are the NTFAP importance in making India a global trading hub? Also discuss how trade facilitation agreement will help India in increasing its export.

28. The MSP works as a tool to stabilise production and control consumer prices and sounds good, but farmers across the country have been facing problems of selling their produce at the minimum support price and even though there is regular demand for an increase in MSP by farmer groups. Discuss.

29. India's internal security is a determinant of its relations with neighbours .It is people not treaties which make relations between two nations meaningful. Critically analyze India-Sri Lanka strategic security aspects.

PT ORIENTATED QUESTIONS:

1. Consider the following statements given below:
   1) All the members of SAARC are the members of RCEP.
   2) All the members of ASEAN are members of East Asia Summit.
   Which of the statements is/are correct?
   A) 1 only
   B) 2 only
   C) Both 1 and 2
   D) Neither 1 nor 2

2. Recently which of the following country withdrew from Paris Climate Deal?
   A) China
   B) USA
   C) Venezuela
   D) None of above

3. Which of the following are programmes of TERI.
   1) GRIHA initiative
   2) Lighting a billion lives
   3) Electrical vehicle initiative
   Code:
   A) 1 and 2   B) 1 and 3
   B) 2 and 3   C) All the above

4. Which of the following missions are for asteroids.
   1) OSIRIS-REX
   2) Dawn mission
   3) Cassini
   Code:
   A) 1 and 2   B) 1 and 3
   C) 2 and 3   D) all the above

5. India has been declared free of which of the following diseases.
   1) Smallpox
   2) Polio
   3) Yaws
   4) Hookworm
   Code:
   A) 1 and 2   B) 1,2 and 3
   C) 1, 2 and 4   D) All the above

6. Which of the following are functions of United Nation Economic and Social Council.
   1) Promoting sustainable development
   2) Managing the transition from MDGs to SDGs
   3) Promoting womens education

   A) 1 and 2   B) 1 and 3

   B) 2 and 3   C) All the above

7. Which of the following country hold highest share in ADB
   A) USA
   B) Japan
   C) China
   D) both A and B

8. The ninth BRICS summit is to be held in:
   A) China
   B) Russia
   C) Brazil
   D) South-Africa

9. Which of the following groups established Financial Action Task Force (FATF)?
   A) G20
   B) G7
   C) OECD
   D) UN Security Council

10. Consider the following statements.
    1) Inchampalli project is a proposed hydro electricity project on river Godavri.
    2) Polavaram project has been accorded national project status.
    Which of the statement/statements given above is/are correct?
    A) 1 only
    B) 2 only
    C) Both 1 and 2
    D) Neither 1 nor 2

11. Which among the following given below is correct?
    A) Congenital hearing loss does not take place due to genetic factors.
    B) New born screening is a medical procedure where a newborn baby is screened within 10 days for any disorders or diseases.
    C) Sickle cell disease is a biochemical birth defect
    D) None of the above

12. Which among the following were not the reasons behind the Paika rebellions?
    1) Abolition of the established cowrie system of the state
    2) Rise in price of salt
    3) Extortionist land revenue policy
    Code:
    A) 1 and 2 only
    B) 2 and 3 only

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C)   All of the above
D)   None of the above

13.   Which among the following given below is INCORRECT?
A)   A censure motion should state the reason for its adoption.
B)   Censure motion cannot be moved against the whole council of ministers.
C)   Calling attention motion is an Indian innovation in the parliamentary procedure.
D)   None of the above

14.   Which among the following are correct about Index of industrial production.
1)   It is published by CSO

2)   The current base year of IIP is 2011-12
3)   It represents mining, manufacturing and electricity sectors only
Code:
A)   1 and 2 only
B)   2 and 3 only
C)   1 and 3 only
D)   All of the Above

15.   Which among the following is correct about operation Pawan?
A)   It resulted in the end of the rule of Nizam of Hyderabad.
B)   It led to the capture of Goa and Daman and Diu.
C)   It was aimed to flush out Bodo militants in Assam.
D)   None of the above.