



CURRENT CONNECT FEBRUARY - 2018

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GS-I	Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.	Indian history significant events, personalities, issues and the Freedom Struggle	Post independence issues, National boundary and disputes	Indian society, features, issues, globalization and diversity	Women - issues and developments	Urbanization - problems and remedies	Distribution of industries and resources - India and world	Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc	Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.		
GS-II	Indian constitution- Amendments, acts and bills.	Legislature, executive and judicial processes.	Constitutional, non-constitutional, judicial, quasi-judicial, administrative and other types of bodies.	Federal structure and local bodies. Their powers and functions.	Government policies and various governance issues like transparency, accountability and - governance	Committees and schemes.	Non-government issues, self-help groups and role of civil society	Vulnerable sections of our society and social sector issues and initiatives.	International Relation-India and other countries, various Indian and international agreements, effects of other countries on India and international institutions.		
GS-III	Various measures to boost Indian economy- planning, policies, management.	Government budgeting and issues related to budget.	Agriculture, animal husbandry and transport	Food security- measures to boost food security and food processing. Issues related to land, land reforms	Industries and infrastructure their growth and investment model	Space and technology, IT space, robotics and computer	Disease, biotechnology and human welfare	Innovations, intellectual property, Awards, POI and other import and aspects of S&T	Environment and disaster- government initiatives. various judgment, pollution, degradation and conservation efforts	International agreements and works of various international bodies, awards, effort by individuals and misc.	Challenges to internal security. Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate. Cyber security, money laundering and its prevention.
GS-IV	Ethical issues related to family, society, education, Corruption etc.	Ethics in public and private administration.	Issues	Related laws and rules	Governance/le-Governance	Ethics in international issues	Personalities and their teachings	Other import and topics			
Misc.											

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Democracy Index 2017: Free Speech Under Attack

In News

India has slipped 10 places in the democracy index to 42, in the rankings released by The Economist Intelligence Unit. Norway, Iceland and Sweden are the top three on the list while Chad, Syria and North Korea bring up the bottom.

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Democracy Index 2017

The Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) Democracy Index (DI) provides a snapshot of the state of democracy worldwide for 165 independent states and two territories. This covers almost the entire population of the world and the vast majority of the world's states (microstates are excluded). The Democracy Index is based on five categories: *electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture*. Based on its scores on a range of indicators within these categories, each country is then itself classified as one of four types of regime: **“full democracy”**; **“flawed democracy”**; **“hybrid regime”**; and **“authoritarian regime”**.

The 6th Edition of World Government Summit will be held in Dubai, UAE.

The Summit is a gateway to the future as it functions as a stage for analysis of the future trends, issues, and opportunities facing humanity. It is also an arena to showcase innovations, best practice, and smart solutions to inspire creativity to tackle these future challenges.

Report on India by EIU's DI 2017

- ❖ The report has classified India as a “flawed democracy” and attributed the dip in India’s rankings to lack of freedom of speech and free media.
- ❖ The report mentioned that India has also become a more dangerous place for journalists, especially Chhattisgarh and Jammu and Kashmir. The authorities there have restricted freedom of the press, closed down several newspapers and heavily controlled mobile internet services. Several journalists were murdered in India in 2017.
- ❖ **The rise of conservative religious ideologies is another factor that has affected the country’s ranking.** The report mentioned that the strengthening of right-wing Hindu forces in an otherwise secular country led to a rise of vigilantism and violence against minority communities, particularly Muslims, as well as other dissenting voices.
- ❖ India still continues to perform better than its neighbours and comparable BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) nations, with the sole exception of South Africa, which ranks one notch better, 41st. While Pakistan ranks 110th, Bangladesh 92nd and Sri Lanka 62nd, Brazil 49th, Russia 135th and China 139th.
- ❖ **In the ‘media freedom ranking’**, India ranked 49 out of 167 countries.

The main manifestations of global democracy recession include:

- declining popular participation in elections and politics
- weaknesses in the functioning of government
- declining trust in institutions
- dwindling appeal of mainstream representative parties
- growing influence of unelected, unaccountable institutions and expert bodies
- widening gap between political elites and electorates
- decline in media freedoms
- erosion of civil liberties, including curbs on free speech

PEPPER IT WITH
Human Rights Watch report,
Global Investment Index

Way Ahead

A Human Rights Watch report published recently had also alleged that Indian failed to protect its minorities in 2017. Women, Dalits and religious minority communities lived under threat in 2017 as violence perpetrated by vigilante groups continued unabated. Pressing measures should chalked out to protect democratic values of the country, without which our fundamental rights are seriously undermined. Indian democracy has over time shown a resilience that has been marveled at the world over.

Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme (TEQIP)

In News

The Ministry of Human Resource Development has recruited more than 1200 highly qualified and motivated graduates from including IITs and NITs to teach in Engineering Colleges in States/UTs like Andaman & Nicobar, Assam, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Tripura, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand etc. This is the first time that such a measure has been taken to improve the quality of education.

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TEQIP

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development launched in December, 2002 the TEQIP which aims to upscale and support ongoing efforts in improving quality of technical education and enhancing existing capacities of the institutions to become dynamic, demand-driven, quality conscious, efficient and forward looking, responsive to rapid economic and technological developments occurring both at national and international levels.
- The programme was conceived and designed as a long term project to be implemented in 10-12 years in 3 phases to support excellence and transformation in Technical Education in the country.
- TEQIP is an initiative of the National Project Implementation Unit (NPIU) which implements World Bank Assisted Projects in Technical Education.
- Under the initiative there will be focus on seven districts which have been called aspirational. They include Gaya and Muzaffarpur in Bihar, Kalahandi in Orissa and Dumka in Jharkhand.

TEQIP PHASE - I

TEQIP Phase I was implemented with the assistance of World Bank as a Centrally co-ordinated Central and State Sector Project with a total cost of Rs. 1389 crore. Out of this Rs. 306 crore was Central Component and the remaining Rs. 1033 crore was State Component.

PEPPER IT WITH
HEERA, HEEFA, AICTE

TEQIP PHASE- II

TEQIP Phase-II is to be implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) with the assistance of the World Bank at a total cost of Rs. 2430 crore. The funding pattern will be 75:25 between the Centre and the participating States and for North Eastern States it will be 90:10.

Technician Education Project-III

MHRD started TEQIP-III for improving the quality of engineering graduates at a cost of Rs. 2,300 Cr to be implemented in 3-year period till 2020. The focus is on the most-backward states like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, North-East, Rajasthan, MP etc.

Way Forward

The reason for backwardness in quality education was essentially because of lack of quality teachers in these areas. There are a lot of vacancies for teachers in engineering colleges in backward states and quality teachers are not willing to go there to teach. Therefore, this initiative

aims to address the problem of dearth of well qualified faculty in the country. The measures to implement this initiative include.

- Institution based: accreditation of the courses through NBA, governance reforms, improving the processes, digital initiatives, securing autonomy for the colleges.
- Student based: improving the quality of teaching, teacher training, equipping the class rooms, revision of syllabus, industry interaction, compulsory internships for students, training the students in industry-relevant skills, preparing them for the GATE exam etc.

Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002 Amendment Bill 2018

Background

Following amendments have been made in the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) through Finance Act 2018. The Amendments aim at further enhancing the effectiveness of the Act, widen its scope and take care of certain procedural difficulties faced by the Enforcement Directorate in prosecution of PMLA cases. The major amendments proposed are as follows:

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Measures to enhance effectiveness of PMLA

1. Amendment in definition of "proceeds of crime": The definition of "proceeds of crime" in PMLA was amended in 2015 to include "property equivalent held within the country" in case proceeds of crime is taken out or held "outside the country". The present amendment shall allow to proceed against property equivalent to proceeds to crime held outside the country also.
2. Amendment in bail provisions: Amendment proposed in Section 45(1) would make the applicability of bail conditions uniform to all the offences under PMLA, instead of only those offences under the schedule which are liable to imprisonment of more than 3 years. This will be a significant step forward in delinking the proceedings against scheduled offences and Money laundering offences under PMLA.

PEPPER IT WITH Finance Act 2018, PMLA 2002

Further limit of Rs.one crore shall allow court to apply bail provisions more leniently to less serious PMLA cases.

3. Corporate frauds included as Scheduled offence:Section 447 of Companies Act is being included as scheduled offence under PMLA so that Registrar of Companies in suitable cases would be able to report such cases for action by Enforcement Directorate under the PMLA provisions. This provision shall strengthen the PMLA with respect to corporate frauds.
4. Measures to enhance effectiveness of investigations

The process of creating the appearance that large amounts of money obtained from serious crimes has originated from a legitimate source is called Money-Laundering.

Methods of money laundering
Structuring, Bulk Cash Smuggling, Cash Intensive Businesses, Trade-based laundering, Shell companies and trusts, Round-tripping, Bank Capture, Gambling, Real Estate, Black Salaries, Fictional Loans, Hawala, False invoicing etc.

Section 5(1) of the Act provides that every order of provisional attachment passed by an officer of Enforcement Directorate shall cease to have effect after 180 days from the date of the provisional attachment order, unless confirmed by the Adjudicating Authority under PMLA within that period. The section is proposed to be amended to include the

period of stay in this time limit of 180 days and also further period of not more than 30 days to take care of delays if any in communication of judicial orders.

- 5. Under the existing provision of Section 8(3), presently, the Directorate is required to file prosecution immediately after confirmation by Adjudicating Authority. Proposed amendment gives 90 days more for investigation to ED, before prosecution is filed.
- 6. New sub-section (2) of section 66 is being introduced to provide for clear guidelines to share the information relating to contraventions of other laws noticed during investigation by ED, with concerned authorities under the said Acts. This shall enable exchange of information among agencies and enhance effectiveness of efforts against black money.
- 7. Measures for restoration of property of persons adversely affected by PMLA investigation

Present provisions under Section 8(8) allow distribution of confiscated property to the rightful claimants, only after the trial is complete. Present amendment allows Special Court, if it thinks fit, to consider the claims of the claimants for the purposes of restoration of such properties even during trial also, in such manner as may be prescribed.

Way Ahead

Most disturbing of all, money-laundering fuels corruption and organized crime. Corrupt public officials need to be able to launder bribes, kick-backs, public funds and, on occasion, even development loans from financial institutions. Organized criminal groups need to be able to launder the proceeds of drug trafficking and commodity smuggling. Terrorist groups use money-laundering channels to get cash to buy arms. The social consequences of allowing these groups to launder money can be disastrous. Taking the proceeds of crimes from corrupt public officials, traffickers and organized crime groups is one of the best ways to stop criminals in their tracks.

5thSouth Asia Region Public Procurement Conference

In News

The Fifth South Asia Region Public Procurement Conference being held in New Delhi, will continue with the SARPPN overarching goal of providing a learning and networking platform to SAR heads of public procurement and procurement professionals and to exchange their knowledge and experiences on topics that would help them improve their public procurement systems.

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Key Highlights

- 1. The objective of the Conference is to enable the Heads of Public Procurement and other key stakeholders in the eight South Asian countries to meet and learn from one another and from experts in the field of public procurement.
- 2. The Government of India (GOI), through the Public Procurement Division (PPD) of the Ministry of Finance and All India Management Association (AIMA) are hosting the Conference.
- 3. The Conference is held under the auspices of the South Asia Region Public Procurement Network (SARPPN), which is sponsored and facilitated by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank.
- 4. The theme of the Fifth Conference **“Public Procurement and Service Delivery”** is appropriate and timely as the governments of all the countries in the region strive to improve their public procurement to ensure timely and quality delivery of public services.
- 5. The First Conference was held in Kathmandu in 2010, the second in Islamabad in 2014, the third in Dhaka 2015 and the fourth in Sri Lanka 2017.

Startup India Ranking Tools

In News

Three new tools for States and Union Territories for ranking of startups in India was launched by Union Minister of Commerce and Industry recently.

The tools listed are:

1. State and Union Territory Startup Ranking Framework
2. Compendium of Good Practices for Promoting Startups in India
3. Startup India Kit

These will act as catalysts to help the Startup India **initiative to drive India's economic growth.**

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Startup Ranking Framework

- The key objective of the Startup States and UTs Ranking Framework is to encourage States and UTs to take proactive steps towards strengthening the Startup ecosystems at the local level. The Ranking Framework will measure the impact of each step initiated at the local level for building a strong Startup ecosystem. The Ranking Framework will also enable continuous learning through the dissemination of good practices.
- The State and UT Ranking Framework is based on the feedback collected from Startup ecosystem stakeholders, which include startups, mentors, investors, accelerators, incubators and the government bodies. Areas which should be given greater thrust like seed funding support, women entrepreneurship are given more score.

Compendium of Good Practices for Promoting Startups in India

The official release of the Startup India Compendium of Good Practises for promoting Startups in India focuses on enriching the Startup ecosystem through ethical behaviours and is currently followed by 18 States and UTs. It covers 95 good practises across 7 areas of intervention. These are distilled into 38 action points including Incubation Support, Seed Funding, Angel & Venture Funding, Startup Policy & Implementation, Simplified Regulations, Easing Public Procurement, Awareness & Outreach.

Startup India Kit

It is primarily a one-stop guide on all Startup India offerings. It offers vital information, advice and assistance through website links, statistics, tools, templates, events, competitions and a glossary on startup terms. All the benefits available to startups from the Startup India initiative can be found in the kit.

Significance

India is home to about 20,000 startups, with about 1,400 beginning operations every year. They are not only driving economic growth but also leading to technological innovations and employment generation in every state. Entrepreneurs are introducing new solutions everyday and also improving existing processes. To encourage and help statrups the Govt of India has taken the lead in creating policies and a framework. Lots of States and UTs have a startup focused environment with ease of doing business for startups.

Rationalization of Autonomous Bodies under DoHFW

In News

The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for closure of Autonomous Bodies, namely, Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN) and JansankhyaSthirataKosh(JSK) and the functions are proposed to be vested in Department of Health & Family Welfare (DoHFW).

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Background

Based on the recommendations of Expenditure Management Commission, NITI Aayog had undertaken a review of the 19 Autonomous Bodies, under the DoHFW, that have been formed under Societies Registration Act, 1860 (SRA) and submitted the Interim Report of the Committee for the Review of ABs with recommendations to rationalize the same. The main concern of the Government is that ABs are required to be reviewed and rationalised with a view to improve their outcomes, effectiveness and efficiency, utilisation of financial and human resources, synergy, governance and relevance in current policy and programme context, with improved monitoring and oversight. The Committee had recommended closure of RAN and JSK and their functions to be vested in the Ministry.

Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN)

It was set up as a registered society to provide financial medical assistance to poor patients receiving treatment in designated central government hospitals. An advance is placed with the Medical Superintendents of such hospitals who then provide assistance on a case to case basis. Since the DoHFW provides funds to the hospitals, the grants can be given from the Department to the hospital directly. RAN functions can, therefore, be vested in DoHFW. Managing Committee of RAN Society will meet to dissolve the Autonomous Body (AB) as per provisions of Societies Registration Act, 1860 (SRA). In addition to this, Health Minister's Cancer Patient Fund (HMCPEF) shall also be transferred to the Department. The timeline required for this is one year.

JansankhyaSthirataKosh (JSK)

It was set up with a corpus grant of Rs.100 crores in the year 2003 to raise awareness for population stabilization strategies. JSK organizes various activities with target populations as a part of its mandate. There has been no continuous funding to JSK from the Ministry. Population stabilization strategies require private and corporate funding, which can be accessed through JSK. Although, JSK will continue to play a significant role in population stabilization strategies, its existence as an Autonomous Body is not necessary. Hence, JSK as an Autonomous Body can be closed as it can be administered by the Department as a fund.

PEPPER IT WITH
Asiatic Society, CIHTS,
CCRT, IGNSA

Village Resource Centres

In News

To demonstrate the potential of satellite technology for development of rural areas, ISRO established Village Resource Centres (VRCs) on a pilot scale, in association with selected NGOs, Trusts and State Government Departments. About Rs 18 crores was spent for establishing 473 VRCs.

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Village Resource Centres

The VRCs programme launched by ISRO/ DOS disseminates a portfolio of services emanating from space systems directly to the rural communities. The programme is executed in association with NGOs/ Trusts and State/ Central agencies.

Services include Tele-education, Tele-healthcare, Land & Water Resources Management, Interactive advisory services, Tele-Fishery, e-Governance Services, Weather Services and other services based on local needs.

Major Benefits

- ✓ Rural empowerment
- ✓ SMART governance
- ✓ Computerised Gram Panchayat
- ✓ Distance education
- ✓ Remote healthcare services
- ✓ Employment opportunities
- ✓ Access to products and services available to city dwellers

PEPPER IT WITH
Antrix, ISRO,

Significance

Over 6500 programmes have been conducted by the VRCs so far addressing the areas like, Agriculture/horticulture development; Fisheries development; Livestock development; Water resources; Tele health care; Awareness programmes; Woman’s empowerment; Supplementary education; Computer literacy; Micro credit; Micro finance; Skill development / vocational training for livelihood support etc. So far, over five Lakh people have used VRC services. The feasibility of incorporating advancements emerged in the area of communication technology into future VRCs is being studied. Based on the outcome of the study, utilization plan and interest of NGOs and State Governments, further expansion of VRC network would be considered.

Maldives’ political crisis

Why In News?

The Maldives almost looks set for a collision course with India, as a parliamentary committee voted to extend the state of emergency by 30 days, **defying India’s** expectation conveyed hours earlier.

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What is the issue?

- In an unexpected move recently, the Maldives Supreme Court ordered the release of several imprisoned opposition lawmakers, ruling that their trials were politically motivated. The Supreme Court had ordered the release of nine jailed Opposition leaders, including exiled former President Mohamed Nasheed, and the reinstatement of 12 expelled legislators.
- President Abdulla Yameen refused to comply with the decision and instead imposed a state of emergency for a period of 15 days. This afforded him sweeping powers to send security forces into the Supreme Court building in the capital city of Male.
- Alongside India, the U.S. and the U.K. have both urged Yameen to honor the rule of law and free the detainees.

Milan 2018
 MILAN is a congregation of littoral navies conducted biennially by Indian Navy at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, under the aegis of the Andaman and Nicobar Command.
Theme: ‘Friendship Across the Seas’.
Maldives has declined India’s invitation to participate in the biennial naval exercise Milan.

Background

Gayoom (former leader of the Maldives), who has sided with the opposition party since leaving office a decade ago, has been a vocal critic of the current president Abdulla Yameen. He was

succeeded by Mohamed Nasheed in 2009, who served during a brief period of multiparty democracy before being controversially ousted five years after taking office.

Nasheed(former leader of the Maldives) was internationally recognized for his efforts in addressing the impact of climate change on the Maldives. However, he was imprisoned in 2015 on terrorism charges — which his supporters say were contrived.

After being allowed to leave prison a year later on medical grounds, Nasheed was granted asylum in Britain. He was reportedly expected to challenge Yameen in presidential elections later this year, before the current political dispute triggered the ensuing crisis.

PEPPER IT WITH
Indira point, 9 degree channel, 10 degree channel, 8 degree channel

Way Ahead

Mr. Yameen, who this month declared a state of emergency and rounded up Supreme Court judges and opposition leaders, has cozied up to China. He has invited heavy investment into the Maldives as part of Beijing’s ambitious “One Belt, One Road” initiative, the infrastructure program reviving land and sea trading routes that China is using to spread its influence around the globe.

As the Maldives’ autocratic president, Abdulla Yameen, cracks down on opposition to consolidate power ahead of another election, analysts and diplomats warn that the small nation’s troubles could provoke a larger crisis that draws in China and India, which have long competed for influence in the Indian Ocean region.

SwadharGreh

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is administering SwadharGrehScheme for relief and rehabilitation of women in difficult circumstances including the victims of sexual harassment. There are 559 SwadharGreh presently functional in the country with 17231 beneficiaries.

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Objectives

Under the Scheme, SwadharGreh will be set up in every district with capacity of 30 women with the following objectives:

- a) To cater to the primary need of shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment and care of the women in distress and who are without any social and economic support.
- b) To enable them to regain their emotional strength that gets hampered due to their encounter with unfortunate circumstances.
- c) To provide them with legal aid and guidance to enable them to take steps for their readjustment in family/society.
- d) To rehabilitate them economically and emotionally.
- e) To act as a support system that understands and meets various requirements of women in distress.
- f) To enable them to start their life afresh with dignity and conviction

PEPPER IT WITH
Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, SHe-Box

Beneficiaries

- The benefit of the component could be availed by women above 18 years of age.
- The beneficiaries include widows deserted by their families and relatives, women prisoners released from jail and without family support, women survivors of natural disasters, women victims of terrorist/extremist violence etc.

National Women Entrepreneurship Council

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is considering to establish National Women Entrepreneurship Council (NVEC). NVEC will promote entrepreneurship as it would be the umbrella organization for socio-economic gender parity, financial inclusion and economic empowerment of women in India.

According to Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs 2017, India scored an overall 41.7 points, ranking 49 among 54 economies globally with comparatively low in Women Business Ownership percentages.

The Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs tracks female entrepreneurs’ ability to capitalize on opportunities granted through various supporting conditions within their local environments and is the weighted sum of three components:

- 1) **Women’s Advancement Outcomes (degree of bias against women as workforce participants, political and business leaders, as well as the financial strength and entrepreneurial inclination of women)**
- 2) Knowledge Assets and Financial Assets (degree of access women have to basic financial services, advanced knowledge assets, and support for small and medium enterprises)
- 3) Supporting Entrepreneurial Conditions (overall perceptions on the ease on conducting **business locally, quality of local governance, women’s perception of safety levels and cultural perception of women’s household financial influence**).

ASH TRACK Mobile App

In News

Ministry of Power and New & Renewable Energy launched a Web based monitoring System and a Fly Ash mobile application named ASH TRACK here recently.

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About ASH TRACK App

The ASH TRACK App would be managing 200 million tonnes of fly ash by tracking coal based power plants situated within 100 km and 300 km from given location and availability of fly ash, along with prospective users within the same radius. The App gives plant-wise, utility-wise and State-wise ash utilization status in the country.

PEPPER IT WITH
NGT, HCM

These platforms will enable better management of the ash produced by thermal power plants by providing an interface between fly ash producers (Thermal Power Plants) and potential ash users such as – road contractors, cement plants etc. This would allow effective monitoring and reviewing for increasing ash utilization.

Significance

Present, 63 per cent of the fly ash is being utilised and target is for 100 per cent utilisation of the fly ash. For this the Ministry emphasized the need for education and awareness generation. Road contractors and construction engineers need to know the benefits of using fly ash in construction.

Fly ash, the end product of combustion during the process of power generation in the coal based thermal power plants, is a proven resource material for many applications of construction industries and currently is being utilized in manufacturing of Portland Cement,

bricks/blocks/tiles manufacturing, road embankment construction and low lying area development, etc.

Health Index Report- NITI Aayog

In News

NITI Aayog released recently a **comprehensive Health Index report** titled, **“Healthy States, Progressive India” at a function in the capital** recently. The report ranks states and Union territories innovatively on their year-on-year incremental change in health outcomes, as well as, their overall performance with respect to each other.

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About Health Index

- The Index includes 23 indicators which are used to calculate the composite index score and generate overall performance ranks and incremental ranks.
- The Index covers three domains- Health Outcomes (sub-domains: Key outcomes & Intermediate outcomes; Governance and Information (sub-domains: Health monitoring and data integrity & Governance); Key inputs/Processes (sub-domain: Health systems/ Service delivery).
- Based on the availability of data and the fact that similar States should be compared, it was decided to rank the States in three categories, namely Larger States, Smaller States and UTs

Category	Number of States and UTs	States and UTs
Larger States	21	Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal
Smaller States	8	Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura
Union Territories	7	Andaman & Nicobar, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Delhi, Lakshadweep, Puducherry

Objectives

- To develop a composite Health Index based on key health outcomes and other health systems and service delivery indicators.
- To ensure States’ participation and ownership through Health Index data submission on a web-based portal with requested mentor support.
- To build transparency through independent validation of data by an independent agency.
- To generate Health Index scores and rankings for different categories of the States and UTs based on year-to-year progress (annual incremental performance) and overall performance.

PEPPER IT WITH
Indian Health Fund, STH,
World Government Summit

What are the limitations of the Index?

The lack of acceptable quality data on annual basis presented challenges:

- Critical areas such as infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, mental health, governance, and financial risk protection could not be fully captured
- For several indicators, the data was limited to service delivery in public facilities
- Weights had to be determined based on expert opinion

- 4. For SRS related key outcome indicators, data was available only for Larger States. Hence, the Health Index scores and ranks for Smaller States and UTs were calculated excluding these indicators
- 5. Field verification of HMIS and program data by IVA due to lack of feasibility of conducting independent annual field surveys

Performance Stats

- Among the Larger States, Kerala, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu ranked on top in terms of overall performance, while Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, and Uttar Pradesh are the top three ranking States in terms of annual incremental performance.
- Among Smaller States, Mizoram ranked first followed by Manipur on overall performance, while Manipur followed by Goa were the top ranked States in terms of annual incremental performance.

Way Ahead

The Health Index is an important aid in understanding the heterogeneity and complexity of the nation’s performance in health. It is the first attempt at establishing an annual systematic tool for measurement of performance across States and UTs on a variety of health parameters within a composite measure. In its first year, it may not have achieved perfection; however, it does set the foundation for a systematic output and outcome based performance measurement. In linking this Index to incentives under the NHM, the MoHFW has underlined the importance of such an exercise.

SC stays new Tribunal Rules

In News

The Supreme Court recently effectively stayed the applicability of provisions of the Central Tribunal, Appellate Tribunal and other Authorities (Qualification, experience and other conditions of service of members) Rules, 2017 which gave the government primacy in making key appointments to tribunals, including the National Green Tribunal.

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Background

The new Tribunal rules notified under the Finance Act 2017 gave the Central government the power to “make rules to provide for qualifications, appointment, term of office, salaries and allowances, resignation, removal and the other terms and conditions of service “for judges appointed to 19 tribunals. However, the validity of these rules was questioned on the grounds that they were violative of the doctrine of the separation of powers and the principles of independence of the judiciary.

PEPPER IT WITH NGT Act 2010, 323 A, Finance Act 2017

It has been questioned whether a provision vesting in the government, the powers to merge tribunals and appoint members, denying CJI any say, could be brought by way of Finance Bill. It is argued that the new law would destroy independent functioning of tribunals as they give primacy to the executive in deciding the constitution, qualifications of members, their appointments and removal.

Key highlights of judgment

- 1. The bench directed that the terms and conditions of service of members of the National Green Tribunal shall be governed by the provisions of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.

2. It has been argued that the Finance Act (and the rules framed thereunder) strikes at the root of the independence of quasi-judicial bodies, such as the National Green Tribunal.
3. The Bench also accepted the suggestions made by the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) Bar Association which froze the implementation of the new Rules framed under the Finance Act of 2017.
4. Primarily, the court accepted the formation of an interim search-cum-selection committee in respect for appointment of both judicial and administrative members to CAT and staying the new term of office of three years — fixing it at five years instead.
5. The search panel includes, the Chief Justice of India or his nominee, Chairman of the Central Administrative Tribunal, and two secretaries nominated by the Government of India.
6. Appointment to the post of chairman (of tribunals) will be made by nomination by the CJI. All appointments to be made pursuant to the selection made by the interim search-cum-selection committee shall abide by the conditions of service as per the old Acts and the Rules.

About CAT

- The Central Administrative Tribunal had been established under Article 323 - A of the Constitution for adjudication of disputes and complaints with respect to recruitment and conditions of service of persons appointed to public services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or other authorities under the control of the Government.
- There are 17 Benches and 20 Circuit Benches in the Central Administrative Tribunal all over India.
- The Tribunal is headed by the Chairman and 65 Members, 33 from Judicial (including Chairman) and 33 from the Administrative stream. The Chairman is normally a retired Chief Justice of a High Court.

National Productivity Council

In News

The National Productivity Council (NPC) is observing National Productivity Day recently, and National Productivity Week till 18th February. It is the 60th Anniversary of the National Productivity Council and is being celebrated as Diamond Jubilee Year. **"Industry 4.0 Leapfrog Opportunity for India"** has been selected as the theme for the National Productivity Week -2018.

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What is Industry 4.0?

Industry 4.0 or the fourth industrial revolution as it is called, is emerging globally as a powerful force and is being called as the next industrial revolution. It is characterized by the increasing digitization and interconnection of products, value chains and business models. Industry 4.0 would mean the convergence of real and virtual worlds-the next phase in bringing together conventional and modern technologies in manufacturing. This will result in the "Smart Factory", which is characterized by versatility, resource efficiency, ergonomic design and direct integration with business partners.

The first industrial revolution was triggered by water and steam power to move from human labour to mechanical manufacturing. The second industrial revolution built on electric power to create mass production. The third used electronic and information technology to automate manufacturing. The fourth is the current trend of automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies.

NPC

NPC is national level organization to promote productivity culture in India. Established by the Ministry of Industry, Government of India in 1958, it is an autonomous, multipartite, non-profit organization with equal **representation from employers' & workers' organizations and Government**, apart from technical & professional institutions and other interests. NPC is a constituent of the Tokyo-based Asian Productivity Organisation (APO), an Inter-Governmental Body, of which the Government of India is a founder member.

PEPPER IT WITH MSMEs, Make in India

Objective

Development, dissemination and application of knowledge and experience in productivity, for promoting consciousness and improvement in productivity, with the objective of strengthening the performance and competitiveness of the economy as well as of improving the working conditions and quality of life.

Composition

The Union Minister for Industry is the President of the NPC, and the Secretary (Industrial Policy and Promotion) is its Chairman. The Director General is the CEO.

MCI on Screening Test Regulations

In News

The Medical Council of India (MCI) has proposal to amend the Screening Test Regulations 2002 which has been approved by Health Ministry recently.

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Background

A common National Entrance Exam viz. National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) has been made mandatory for admission to all medical courses in the country. Indian students can also pursue medical education abroad and have to qualify a Screening Test called Foreign Medical Graduates Exam (FMGE), for registration to practice in India after obtaining primary medical qualification (MBBS) overseas. It has come to notice that medical institutions / Universities of foreign **countries admit Indian students without proper assessment or screening of the students'** academic ability to cope up with medical education with the result that many students fail to qualify the Screening Test.

PEPPER IT WITH Medical Advisory Council, NMC

In this regard, the proposal of Medical Council of India (MCI) to amend the Screening Test Regulations, 2002, making it mandatory to qualify NEET to pursue foreign medical course has been approved by this Ministry.

The Indian Citizens / Overseas Citizen of India intending to obtain primary medical qualification from any medical institution outside India, on or after May 2018, shall have to mandatorily qualify the NEET for admission to MBBS course abroad.

- **India's biggest Annual** Conference on Pharma Industry and Medical Devices – India Pharma 2018 and India Medical Device 2018 – has begun at Bengaluru.
- **Theme: 'Affordable, Quality Healthcare'**.
- Organized by Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, in collaboration with FICCI.

MCI

The Medical Council of India was established in 1934 under the Indian Medical Council Act, 1933, now repealed, with the main function of establishing uniform standards of higher

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qualifications in medicine and recognition of medical qualifications in India and abroad. It is decreed to be replaced by National Medical Commission (NMC) under National Medical Commission Bill, 2017.

Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY)

In News

In order to manage water resources efficiently and strengthen groundwater recharge, the government has decided to fast-track Atal Bhujal Yojana conceived at a cost of Rs 6000 crore.

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Atal Bhujal Yojana

- The Centre has formulated an ambitious water conservation scheme to tackle ever-deepening crisis of depleting groundwater level. Rs 6,000-crore Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY), which is piloted under the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, is **awaiting cabinet's** clearance.
- The objective of this scheme is to recharge ground water and create sufficient water storage for agricultural purposes. This scheme also focuses on revival of surface water bodies so that ground water level can be increased, especially in the rural areas.
- **The scheme, after Cabinet's clearance, will soon be launched in water-stressed states: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Haryana, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.**
- Half of the total cost of this central scheme, named Atal Bhujal Yojana, will be supported by the World Bank as loan while the remaining half (Rs 3,000 crore) will be funded by the government.
- The CGWB report shows that Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi are worst among **them. Though Tamil Nadu has the maximum number of 'dark zones', Punjab is the worst** in percentage assessed units falling in this category.

Rajasthan Government has signed a new loan agreement with the New Development Bank for restructuring of Indira Gandhi Canal. The restructuring and repairing of Indira Gandhi Canal and its distributaries will help solve the problems of loss of water and water-locking in the agricultural fields. It will also ensure the supply of irrigation water to the farmers at the tail-ends of the Indira Gandhi Canal Project.

Reasons for groundwater depletion

1. Groundwater depletion most commonly occurs because of the frequent pumping of water from the ground in unsupervised and sometimes in illegal way without proper license.
2. Growing food consumption across the globe and efforts by governments to boost agricultural trade in order to improve incomes of farmers has put increasing pressure on groundwater sources.
3. Some 11 per cent of global non-renewable groundwater drawn up for irrigation is used to **produce crops that are traded on the international market. It's not just individual countries that experience groundwater depletion, but also their trade partners.**

PEPPER IT WITH PMKSY, Atal Pension Yojna,

Way Forward

It is well evident that our farmers are hard impacted by the acute shortage of ground water for the past several years. This scheme will surely help those who are in the need for constant ground water supply. The focus is primarily on involvement of communities and convergence with

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different water schemes. The major component of this project is making society responsible and bringing about behaviour change to manage groundwater resource. This scheme as an effective step that will help improve overall outlook towards water resource.

Prasar Bharati

In News

Prasar Bharati has turned down proposals of the ministry of information & broadcasting to restructure the public broadcaster, including hires for top editorial jobs and the appointment of a serving IAS officer on the board.

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Issue

As the Prasar Bharati Act states that ‘member personnel’ is a full-time post and cannot be filled by a ministry official, I&B ministry wanted the board to make an exception. The broadcaster concluded that accepting the resolutions moved by the ministry would “amount to infringing Prasar Bharati’s autonomy”. (As per the PB Act of 1990, there is no provision to have a serving bureaucrat on the board.)

PEPPER IT WITH
CBFC, Cinematograph Act

About Prasar Bharti

Prasar Bharati is a statutory autonomous body established under the Prasar Bharati Act and came into existence on 23.11.1997. It is the Public Service Broadcaster of the country. The objectives of public service broadcasting are achieved in terms of Prasar Bharati Act through All India Radio and Doordarshan, which earlier were working as media units under the Ministry of I&B and since the above said date became constituents of Prasar Bharati.

AIR motto ‘BahujanHitaya :BahujanSukhaya’

India’s first radio festival was recently held in Delhi. The festival was organised by the International Association of Women in Radio and Television, in collaboration with UNESCO. The event theme of World Radio Day – sports and radio – and traced the journey of creativity, music and social changes on the radio.

Composition

Prasar Bharati Board comprises of a Chairman, an Executive Member (Chief Executive Officer), a Member (Finance), a Member (Personnel), six Part-time Members, one representative of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and the Directors General of All India Radio and Doordarshan as ex-officio Members.

Appointment process

PB Act says that the Chairman and all the members of the board are to be appointed by the President of India on recommendation of a committee consisting of the Vice-President, Chairman Press Council of India and a nominee of the President of India.

Central Geological Programming Board

In News

The 57th Meeting of the Central Geological Programming Board (CGPB) was inaugurated here recently where apart from discussion on achievements of GSI (Geological Survey of India) during the current year, the proposed Annual Programme for ensuing 2018-19 was presented before all Board members.

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About CGPB

- The Central Geological Programming Board (CGPB) is the apex body at the national level to overview the programme of geo-scientific activities including mineral exploration in the country.
- The revamped CGPB coordinates activities on geological mapping, mineral prospecting, exploration and exploitation in the country.
- It is responsible for providing the general strategic direction of geosciences activity; effecting programmatic coordination among agencies; enabling better interaction between central agencies and state level organizations; human resource, and research capability; identifying new areas and new technologies for geo-scientific activities
- The Secretary (Mines) is the chairman of CGPB. Geological Survey of India is the nodal department (Member Secretary) and the State Geology and Mining departments and Central Government institutions, permanent and special invitees are its participating members.

1821-First Geological Map of parts of India was of Hyderabad region by Dr H. W. Voysey.

PEPPER IT WITH
Multi-sensor Aero-geophysical
Surveys, Regional Mineral Targeting

About GSI

- The Geological Survey of India (GSI) was set up in 1851 primarily to find coal deposits for the Railways. The arrival of Sir Thomas Oldham, Professor of Geology at Trinity College Dublin and the Chief of Irish Geological Survey at Calcutta on 4th March 1851, marked the beginning of the continuous period of the Geological Survey of India.
- It comes under Ministry of Mines.
- GSI is the nodal agency for landslide studies in India. (Bhukosh)
- The main functions of GSI relate to creation and updation of national geo-scientific information and mineral resource assessment. These objectives are achieved through ground surveys, air-borne and marine surveys, mineral prospecting and investigations, multi-disciplinary geo-scientific, geo-technical, geo-environmental and natural hazards studies, glaciology, seismotectonic study, and carrying out fundamental research.

Northeast Venture Fund

In News

The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space invited young Start-Ups from all over India to come to Northeast and try their fortune through unexplored potentials of the region.

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About Northeast Venture Fund

North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFi) in association with Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (M-DoNER) has launched the first dedicated venture capital fund for the North Eastern Region Namely **“North East Venture Fund”**.

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Objective of the fund

- Investments in startups, early stage and growth stage companies.
- Invest in new products and technologies.
- Invest in innovative business models with superior value proposition and potential for high growth in earnings and profitability.
- To contribute to the entrepreneurship development of the North Eastern Region.

Investment size

- Min: Rs. 25.00 lakhs
- Max: Rs.10.00 crores

Prime focus of the fund will be to Investment in Projects/unit in the following sectors:

- Food Processing
- Tourism
- Health Care
- IT&ITES
- Aggregation of Service

PEPPER IT WITH
North East Council,
NERAMAC,

Venture Capital Funds

- Venture capital funds are investment funds that manage the money of investors who seek private equity stakes in startup and small- to medium-sized enterprises with strong growth potential. These investments are generally characterized as high-risk/high-return opportunities.
- Venture capital funds differ from mutual funds and hedge funds in that they focus on a very specific type of early-stage investment. All firms that receive venture capital investments have high-growth potential, are risky and have a long investment horizon. Further, venture capital funds take a more active role in their investments by providing guidance and often holding a board seat.

A regional centre for agriculture has been set up with Israeli collaboration in Mizoram — the first of its kind in the northeast region. The centre has been set up to exclusively process citrus fruits.

Venture Capital

Venture capital is financing that investors provide to startup companies and small businesses that are believed to have long-term growth potential. Venture capital generally comes from well-off investors, investment banks and any other financial institutions. However, it does not always take just a monetary form; it can be provided in the form of technical or managerial expertise.

About NITI Forum

The NITI Forum for Northeast is tasked to identify various constraints on the way of accelerated, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the North East Region of the country and to recommend suitable interventions for addressing identified constraints. It will also review the development status in the NER.

The forum will be co-chaired by the Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog and Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region (DoNER). The forum will have its Secretariat in the Ministry of DoNER.

Composition

1. Members of the Forum will include Secretaries of Ministries of Road Transport & Highways, Railways, Power, Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, New & Renewable Energy, Health & Family Welfare, Human Resource Development, Environment, Forest & Climate Change.

- Chief Secretaries of Northeastern states of Assam, Sikkim, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram will also be members of the Forum. Secretary, North East Council (NEC), Shillong will be Member Secretary.
- Joint Secretary (NE), MHA, besides a number of experts from various fields will also be members of the Forum.

Operation Greens

In News

Rs. 500 crore allocated for ‘Operation Greens’ to address price volatility of perishable commodities like Tomato, Onion and Potato (TOP) Specialized Agro Processing Financial Institutions to be established to ensure Timely, Accessible and Affordable Credit to Food Processing sector.

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About Operation Green

- Operation Greens aims to promote farmer producers organisations (FPOs), agri-logistics, processing facilities and professional management. The operation aims to aid farmers and help control and limit the erratic fluctuations in the prices of onions, potatoes and tomatoes.
- The idea behind Operation Greens is to double the income of farmers by the end of 2022. Operation is essentially a price fixation scheme that aims to ensure farmers are given the right price for their produce. The MSP regulation has a key role to play here.
- Operation Greens follows on the lines of Operation Flood, with a seed capital of Rs 500 crore with an intent of replicating the success of Operation Flood.

India is the global host of World Environment Day (June 5, 2018)

Theme: “Beat Plastic Pollution”

Way Ahead

The government aims to focus on basic ingredients and not on additional commodities in agriculture. Operation Greens will work to increase demand in the economy as well with its demand forecasting model. The litmus test of this scheme would be in containing the booms and busts in prices. It will need to avert situations where farmers have been forced to dump potatoes and tomatoes on roads. Also, checking the prices from going through the roof has compelled the government to ban exports. It has resorted to de-stocking and conducted income tax raids on traders — the raids on onion traders in September last year is a case in point.

Operation Flood changed the face of milk production in India, making the country the largest producer of milk in the world — in 2016-2017, the country produced 164 million **metric tonnes (MMT)**. But it’s important to note that Operation Flood was driven largely by smallholders and the AMUL model has ensured that 75-80 per cent of the price paid by milk consumers goes to the farmers.

Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)

In News

The Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC), a mega infrastructure project with an estimated investment of \$100 billion, has attracted interest from companies based out of Canada, the U.S., Singapore and Taiwan.

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Key Highlights

1. Delhi - Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) is India's most ambitious infrastructure programme aiming to develop new industrial cities as "Smart Cities" and converging next generation technologies across infrastructure sectors.
2. Government of India has announced the establishment of Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) between Delhi and Mumbai, covering an overall length of 1504km with estimated investment of 100 billion USD.
3. DMIC will pass through 6 States covering 200 km² each of U.P, Delhi NCR, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra, with end terminals at Dadri in the Delhi NCR and Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNPT) near Mumbai.
4. The objective is to expand India's Manufacturing & Services base and develop DMIC as a "Global Manufacturing and Trading Hub". The programme will provide a major impetus to planned urbanization in India with manufacturing as the key driver.
5. Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) Project is a flagship programme of Government of India with the aim of creating futuristic Industrial Cities by leveraging the "High Speed - High Capacity" connectivity backbone provided by Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC).
6. A soft loan (with concessional conditions) to the tune of \$4.5 billion to be extended by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), will shortly be utilised to develop two Mass Rapid Transit Systems (MRTS) — one each in Gujarat and Haryana — that will be part of the DMIC.
7. The first phase of the DMIC Project will cover five Investment Regions (or IR — 'specifically delineated industrial region with a minimum area of more than 200 square kilometres) and three Industrial Areas (or IA — developed with a minimum area of more than 100 square kilometres).



Silkyara Bend-Barkot Tunnel

In News

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved Silkyara Bend-Barkot Tunnel in Uttarkhand as part of 'ChardhamMahamargPariyojana'.

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Key Highlights

- ❖ The CCEA has given its approval to the construction of 4.531 km long 2-Lane Bi-Directional Silkyara Bend - Barkot Tunnel with escape passage including approaches on Dharasu -Yamunotri section between Chainage 25.400 Km. and Chainage 51.000 Km in Uttarakhand.
- ❖ The project will be falling along NH-134 (old NH-94) in the State of Uttarakhand.
- ❖ The project will be implemented by the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH), through National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (NHIDCL).
- ❖ The project will be built under Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Mode. This is funded under NH (O) Scheme of Ministry of RT&H and forms part of ambitious ChardhamMahamargPariyojana.
- ❖ The construction of this tunnel will provide all weather connectivity to Yamunotri which will reduce the travel distance from Dharasu to Yamunotri by about 20 km and travel time by about an hour.

PEPPER IT WITH

ChardhamMahamargPariyojana

- ✓ The ChardhamMahamargVikasPariyojna, or the Chardham highway project, is an ambitious initiative to improve connectivity to the Char Dham pilgrimage centres(Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath) in the Himalayas.
- ✓ **The project's main objective is to develop** around 900 km of national highways. These highways will be built in Uttarakhand at an approximate cost of Rs 12,000 crore.
- ✓ Apart from widening, the road transport and highways ministry plans to improve the stretches to two-lane carriageway with paved shoulders, protect landslide hazard zones, construct bypasses, long bridges, tunnels and elevated corridors to ensure safety for the users.

Sl.No.	NH	From	To
1	NH-58	Km 228.00 (Rishikesh)	Km 368.00 (Rudraprayag)
2	NH-58	Km 368.00 (Rudraprayag)	Km 528.00 (Mana village)
3	NH-94	Km 0.00 (Rishikesh)	Km 144.00 (Dharasu)
4	NH-108	Km 0.00 (Dharasu)	Km 124.00 (Gangotri)
5	NH-94	Km 144.00 (Dharasu)	Km 220.00 (Yamunotri)
6	NH-109	Km 0.00 (Rudraprayag)	to Km 76.00 (Gaurikund)
7	NH-125	Km 52.00 (Tanakpur)	Km 202.00 (Pithoragarh)

'Strategic Plan' for synergy among PSUs

In News

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) on recently announced a "strategic plan" to bring synergy among the seven public sector units (PSUs) under it — BSNL, MTNL, BBNL, TVIL, ITI, C-DoT, TVIL, BBNL and TEC.

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Strategic plan recommendations

1. Effective utilization of human resources –Recommendations pertain to training and deployment of manpower among the organizations. For training of manpower a common web based platform will be developed by BSNL for use of all the organizations.
2. Settlement of legal issues – Contesting legal cases against each other by the PSUs has been considered as an unhealthy practice and should be stopped. If required, DoT will intervene to resolve the disputes amicably. If the dispute is not resolved in DoT it will be referred to Law Ministry for settlement through PMA (Permanent Machinery of Arbitration), which is a mechanism prescribed by DPE for resolving disputes among Government organizations.
3. Optimum utilization of vacant land and building spaces -The plan aims at promoting greater operational synergy among the PSUs, including pooling in of resources and effective utilisation of human resources as well as land and buildings. There is also a proposal to develop a Unified Information Portal for all the organizations to share information on vacant land and building spaces to make the process simpler.
4. Standards and certifications – TEC is the nodal agency in DoT for drawing up specifications & product certification. TEC & C-DOT to work together and prepare roadmaps on different technologies for policy formulation and technological guidance.
5. **Promoting ‘Make in India’** – Despite a huge telecom market, manufacturing in India has not really taken off. Recommendations pertain to the PSUs and other organizations to have **suitable policies to support ‘Make in India’ through Educational Orders, PMA (Preferential Market Access) policy of Government, focus on development of products for projects of national importance etc.**

PEPPER IT WITH
National Telecom Policy, Smart
City Mission, Sick PSU

Way Ahead

With the launch of new initiatives of government of India such as ‘Smart City’ development; Digital India and Skill India, a host of new business opportunities have emerged. PSUs can benefit from these by leverage their existing including their extensive networks and R&D and manufacturing capabilities. Such services will ride on network created by Telecom Service Provider. This constitute an opportunity for telecom PSUs and would entails a quantum shift in their business strategies which would definitely need *Strategy Planas* mentioned above.

Citizenship Act

In News

The Supreme Court decided to refer to a fresh Constitution Bench pleas to examine the validity of various aspects of a provision of the Citizenship Act 1955, including the cut-off date for awarding citizenship to Bangladeshi immigrants in Assam.

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Issue Background

- A five-judge bench of the apex court in April last year had said it would deal with 13 questions related to the constitutional validity of section 6A of the Act, which were referred to it for consideration by a two-judge bench in December 2014.
- Whether section 6A violates the basic premise of the Constitution and the Citizenship Act in that it permits citizens who have allegedly not lost their citizenship of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to become deemed citizens of India, thereby conferring dual citizenship to such persons.

PEPPER IT WITH
NRC, Foreigner Act, Jus Soli,
Citizenship Act 1995

- It had also framed a question about the scope of fundamental right contained in Article 29(1), relating to the right to conserve a distinct language, script or culture, and also about the **meaning of expressions ‘culture’ and ‘conserve.’**
- The two-judge bench had formulated questions whether section 6A of the Citizenship Act 1955 violates Article 14 (equality before law) and Article 21 (right to life) of the Constitution.

Assam Accord

- ✓ The Assam Accord was signed on 15th August, 1985 amongst Union of India, Govt. of Assam, All Assam Student Union, All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad. To implement the various Clauses of Assam Accord a new Department has been established in the name of “Implementation of Assam Accord Department” **during the year 1986.**
- ✓ As per the Accord, those Bangladeshis who came between 1966 and 1971 will be barred from voting for ten years. The Accord also mentions that the international borders will be sealed and all persons who crossed over from Bangladesh after 1971 are to be deported.
- ✓ As per clause 15 of the Assam Accord the Ministry of Home Affairs is the nodal Ministry for the implementation of the various clauses of Assam Accord.

Section 6A of the Act relates to provisions for citizenship of people covered by the Assam Accord.

all persons of Indian origin who came before the 1st day of January, 1966 to Assam from the specified territory (including such of those whose names were included in the electoral rolls used for the purposes of the General Election to the House of the People held in 1967) and who have been ordinarily resident in Assam since the dates of their entry into Assam shall be deemed to be citizens of India as from the 1st day of January, 1966.

Pakistan added to FATF grey-list

In News

The plenary meeting of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global watchdog on money laundering and terrorism financing, issued a list of **‘Jurisdictions with strategic deficiencies’** after the meeting which included Ethiopia, Iraq, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Syria, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Vanuatu and Yemen. It will also put **Pakistan on ‘grey list’ in June.**

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FATF

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 by the Ministers of its Member jurisdictions. The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system. **The FATF is therefore a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.**
- The FATF has developed a series of Recommendations that are recognised as the international standard for combating of money laundering and the financing of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- The FATF’s decision making body, the FATF Plenary, meets three times per year.

- The FATF currently comprises 35 member jurisdictions and 2 regional organisations, representing most major financial centres in all parts of the globe.
- FATF Observers are Israel & Saudi Arabia.

PEPPER IT WITH
Grey list, Black list, GAFI,
OCED, IMF, WB

Fallouts of being on grey list

1. the grey-listing will squeeze Pakistan’s economy and make it harder for the country to meet its mounting foreign financing needs, including potential future borrowings from the International Monetary Fund
2. the grey-listing could lead to a downgrade in Pakistan’s debt ratings, making it more difficult to tap into the international bond markets
3. could make it harder for foreign investors and companies to do business in Pakistan.
4. The financial sector might take a hit as Standard Chartered, the largest international bank in Pakistan with 116 branches -- as well as Citibank and Deutsche Bank, which mostly deal with corporate clients --might decide to pull out
5. A decline in foreign transactions and foreign currency inflows could lead to further widening of Pakistan’s already large current account deficit (CAD)
6. may also invite punitive action by the European Union as the bloc might put the country on its own blacklist

Corruption Perceptions Index 2017

In News

India’s ranking in the annual corruption index, released by Berlin-based non-government organisation Transparency International (TI), slid to 81 among a group of 180 countries. The Corruption Perception Index 2017 also singled out India as one of the “worst offenders” in the Asia-Pacific region.

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What is the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)?

The CPI scores and ranks countries/territories based on how corrupt a country’s public sector is perceived to be by experts and business executives. It is a composite index, a combination of 13 surveys and assessments of corruption, collected by a variety of reputable institutions. The CPI is the most widely used indicator of corruption worldwide.

CPI source data captures the following aspects of corruption, based on the specific question wording used to collect the data:

1. Bribery
2. Diversion of public funds
3. Prevalence of officials using public office for private gain without facing consequences
4. Ability of governments to contain corruption and enforce effective integrity mechanisms in the public sector
5. Red tape and excessive bureaucratic burden which may increase opportunities for corruption
6. Meritocratic versus nepotistic appointments in the civil service
7. Effective criminal prosecution for corrupt officials
8. Adequate laws on financial disclosure and conflict of interest prevention for public officials
9. Legal protection for whistleblowers, journalists, investigators when they are reporting cases of bribery and corruption
10. State capture by narrow vested interests
11. Access of civil society to information on public affairs

PEPPER IT WITH
Transparency International,
Global Corruption Barometer

Performance of India:

- India has been ranked 81st. While it maintained its score at 40 on a 100-point scale where anything below 30 is considered seriously corrupt, its ranking changed from 79th last year.
- The index also characterised India as **“among the worst regional offenders”** in the Asia Pacific region on grounds of journalists, activists, opposition leaders and even staff of law enforcement or watchdog agencies being threatened or even murdered. In this, it was clubbed with the Philippines and Maldives.
- Pakistan with a score of 32 and China with 41 are perceived to be more corrupt than India. Russia is more corrupt than all three counties with a score of 29. South Africa is at 71st, having dropped seven places from 2016.

Bhutan stood out in neighbourhood		Bangladesh lagged in subcontinent		
INDIA		Country	Rank	Score
2017	Tied with	Bhutan	26	67
81 rank	Ghana,	Sri Lanka	91	38
40 score	Morocco,	Pakistan	117	32
	Turkey	Nepal	122	31
		Myanmar	130	30
		Bangladesh	143	28
2016	Tied with	New Zealand, Scandinavian nations top of heap		
79 rank	Belarus	Country	Rank	Score
40 score	(2017 ranking: 68),	New Zealand	1	89
	Brazil(96),	Denmark	2	88
	China(77)	Finland,Norway		
		Switzerland	3	85

Transparency International India (TII) is a leading non-political, independent, non-governmental anti-corruption organisation of India. TII has extensive expertise and understanding of issues of corruption in India.

Vision

To create a corruption-free India, so that the poor do not lose their voice to corruption.

Mission

To lead and support a committed effort to improve transparency and accountability by eradicating corruption through widening of knowledge and catalyzing action.

Priority Areas

Good governance, research, capacity building, communication and advocacy, participatory monitoring, engaging with Government, private sector and NGOs.

International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq

International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq was held in Kuwait recently, where major world powers met to chalk out a plan of recovery for the country. The three-day event mobilized nearly USD 30 billion of additional international support to the country following ISIL's territorial defeat in 2017. The conference focused on the physical and human dimensions of reconstruction, e.g. infrastructure, private investment and societal issues such as humanitarian needs, social protection, good governance and accountability.

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It was co-chaired by Kuwait and Iraq, as well as the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank. United Nations also launched the United Nations Recovery and Resilience programme for Iraq. Following are the details of the programme:

- This two-year programme is designed to help the Government fast-track the social dimensions of reconstruction.

- It aims to make immediate and **tangible improvements to people's** daily lives, rather than the long timelines associated with major infrastructure projects and economic reforms.
 - It will revitalize areas that are at risk of violence, and support broad political participation and inclusive social development.
 - The Recovery and Resilience programme will help those who have suffered most. It will offer hope, and opportunity.
- ❖ India has called for a comprehensive political settlement and reconciliation in Iraq at the International Conference.
 - ❖ India also announced that India will play its part in the reconstruction, and called for an end to global terrorism.
 - ❖ India also said that Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism, a draft which was proposed by India as early as 1996 must be adopted early.

Education, culture and heritage will also be key elements for successful reconstruction. UNESCO's initiative to coordinate international efforts for the reconstruction of the Old City of Mosul deserves our full support.

International Conference on Sustainable Biofuels 2018

In News

The two day international conference on Sustainable Biofuels is jointly being organized by Department of Biotechnology, Govt. of India and Biofuture platform.

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What is sustainable biofuel innovation challenge?

The sustainable biofuel innovation challenge under MI is co-led by India, Brazil, Canada and China. The other participating countries include Australia, the European Commission, Finland, France, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, UK and US.

The Biofuture Platform aims to be an action-oriented, country-led, multistakeholder mechanism for policy dialogue and collaboration among leading countries, organizations, academia and the private sector conscious of the need to accelerate development and scale up deployment of modern sustainable low carbon alternatives to fossil based solutions in transport, chemicals, plastics and other sectors.

Key Highlights

- ❖ The sustainable biofuel innovation challenge will build on existing knowledge of individual participating countries and international institutes like IEA, IRENA and in collaboration of Biofuture Platform. A major aim of these cooperation is to avoid duplication of efforts and define clear areas of collaboration for speeding up of innovations in this area.
- ❖ Use of fossil fuels for transportation contributes significantly to global greenhouse gases (GHG) emission. The sustainable biofuels have ability to reduce the GHG emission load and this consideration led to establishment of Sustainable Biofuel Innovation Challenge (SBIC) under Mission Innovation (MI).
- ❖ Advanced or second-generation biofuels produced from non-food biomass materials and specially grown high yielding plants or algae, if managed sustainably can contribute to significantly reduce emissions.

Objective

This event aims to provide a common platform to Government policy makers, industry, investors and research community to exchange experiences and challenges related to development and scaling of advance biofuels. Besides this the conference is focusing on concerns of the private sectors to speed up large scale production of sustainable biofuels. It share information and best practices, and build consensus on the actions most needed to move forward.

Mission Innovation (MI) is a global initiative of 22 countries and the European Union to dramatically accelerate global clean energy innovation. As part of the initiative, participating countries have committed to double Clean Energy Research and Development investments over five years.

Way Ahead

The conference will seek to a clear understanding of the development in bio-economy made by participating countries, increase awareness of policy makers about the challenges faced by the industry-investor for commercial scale up of advanced biofuels. The need for collaboration-cooperation to speed up commercialisation and focus on latest R&D in advanced biofuels will be the expected outcomes of this International event.

India Joins the Ashgabat Agreement

In News

India has been admitted to Agreement on the Establishment of an International Transport and Transit Corridor between the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Sultanate of Oman, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan (Ashgabat Agreement).

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Turkmenistan, as depository State of Ashgabat Agreement, informed India that all the four founding members have consented to the Accession of India **and that India's accession to the Agreement will enter into force on 3 February 2018.**

Significance

1. Ashgabat Agreement envisages facilitation of transit and transportation of goods between **Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. Accession to the Agreement would diversify India's connectivity options with Central Asia and have a positive influence on India's trade and commercial ties with the region.**
2. Its accession to the Ashgabat Agreement would
3. enable India to utilise the existing transport and transit corridor to facilitate trade and commercial interactions with the Eurasian region. Further, this would **synchronize with India's efforts to implement the INSTC for enhanced connectivity.**
4. The Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan (ITK) railway line will be the major route under the Ashgabat Agreement. It had become operational in December 2014 and has also been included as part of the India-funded INSTC. Therefore, the Ashgabat Agreement and INSTC will be easily synchronized. The operationalisation of the INSTC is inching closer to becoming a reality. It encompasses ship, rail and road routes connecting India with Russia, Central
5. Asia and Europe via Iran.
6. In general, joining the Ashgabat Agreement would make it easier for India to reach out to Central Asia which houses strategic and high-value minerals including uranium, copper, titanium, ferroalloys, yellow phosphorus, iron ore, rolled metal, propane, butane, zinc, coking

PEPPER IT WITH
INSTC, Chabahar Port,
Gwadar Port, CPEC

coal, etc. Kazakhstan alone wants to increase its non-oil exports by 50 per cent by 2025. And, without direct transport access, India cannot procure the Central Asian riches needed for its manufacturing economy.

7. **India’s current trade with Central Asia is minimal at a little over \$1 billion and is not growing much. The volume of trade with the region accounts for a mere 0.11 per cent of India’s total trade. And, India’s share in Central Asia’s total trade is only about one per cent. Only by improving transport connectivity can the prospect of commercial ties with the region be enhanced.**

Ashgabat Agreement

It was instituted in April 2011 to establish an international multimodal transport and transit corridor between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. The Agreement was first signed by Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Oman and Qatar on 25 April 2011. While Qatar subsequently withdrew from the agreement in 2013, Kazakhstan and Pakistan joined the grouping in 2016. The Ashgabat Agreement came into force in April 2016. Its objective is to enhance connectivity within the Eurasian region and synchronize it with other regional transport corridors, including the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

International Labour Organization (ILO)

In News

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for placing the new Instrument adopted by International Labour Organization (ILO) Recommendation concerning “**The Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience (No.-205)**” before the Parliament. The International Labour Conference of ILO at its 106th Session held in Geneva in June, 2015 adopted the Recommendation. India supported the adoption of Recommendation.

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Key Highlights

- The adoption and placing of the Instrument for the information of the Parliament does not create any immediate obligation. An ILO Recommendations is a non-binding instrument which seeks to serve as a guiding principle for national policy process.
- The Recommendation provides guidance to member States on the measures to be taken to generate employment and decent work for the purposes of prevention, recovery, peace and resilience with respect to crisis situations arising from conflicts and disasters.
- The Recommendation No. 205 is applicable to all workers and jobseekers, and to all employers, in all sectors of the economy affected by crisis situations arising from conflicts and disasters and to workers engaged in crisis response, including in the immediate response.

PEPPER IT WITH

International labour standards, Cook Island, Migrant workers

About ILO

- ILO is only tripartite U.N. agency, since 1919 the ILO brings together governments, employers and workers of 187 member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.
- The ILO was founded in 1919, in the wake of a destructive war, to pursue a vision based on the premise that universal, lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice. The ILO became the first specialized agency of the UN in 1946.

- The main aims of the ILO are to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.

Tanzania Withdraws From UN Refugee Programme

In News

Tanzania has decided to withdraw for reasons of security and lack of funds.

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Background

- ❖ Tanzania informed the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in January that it was suspending the granting of citizenship to some Burundian refugees and that it would discourage new asylum applications.
- ❖ Tanzania has long been considered a safe haven for refugees, particularly from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- ❖ Tanzania blames the international community for failing to release funds pledged to help Tanzania integrate refugees.

Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework

- ✓ The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants is a milestone for global solidarity and refugee protection at a time of unprecedented displacement across the world.
- ✓ Adopted by all 193 Member States of the United Nations in September 2016, it contains historic and wide-ranging commitments that reaffirm the commitment by Member States to respect the human rights of refugees and migrants and to support the countries that welcome them.

The World Government Summit

Key Highlights

- 6th edition of World Government Summit took place in Dubai with **the theme “Shaping Future Governments”**.
- The World Government Summit is a global platform dedicated to shaping the future of governments worldwide, a knowledge centre at the intersection between government, futurism, and technology.
- The summit includes six global forums that will focus on unifying efforts to create a better future and a safe world that is blessed with peace, prosperity, and sustainability.
- India has been named guest country **at this year’s event, and Indian Prime Minister delivered the inaugural speech of the guest country on day one.**

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India’s Aadhaar won the best emerging technology award at the World Government Summit 2018 in Dubai. India was the ‘Guest of Honour’ country at the summit.

India’s Umang App also won the best M-Government Service Award in the Accessible Government category.

About World Government Summit

The World Government Summit is an annual event held in Dubai,UAE. It brings together leaders in government for a global dialogue about governmental process and policies with a focus on the issues of futurism, technology and innovation, as well as other topics. The summit acts as a knowledge exchange hub between government officials, thought leaders, policy makers and private sector leaders, and as an analysis platform for the future trends, issues and opportunities facing humanity.

PEPPER IT WITH
Watan ko
Jaanoprogramme, Exam
Warriors

World Sustainable Development Summit 2018

In News

Indian Prime Minister inaugurated the 2018 edition of the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS 2018).

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Background

The theme of the Summit this year was **‘Partnerships for a Resilient Planet’**, WSDS 2018 seeks to create action frameworks to resolve some of the most urgent challenges facing developing economies in the backdrop of climate change. The Summit addressed a wide variety of issues, including combating land degradation, effective waste management mechanisms to make cities free of landfills free, combat air pollution effectively, measures to increase resource and energy efficiency, facilitate transition to clean energy and create financial mechanisms to enable effective **climate change mitigation. The ‘Greenovation Exhibition’ at WSDS 2018 showcased the latest technological advancements to meet Sustainable Development Goals.**

WSDS

- ❖ The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS), TERI's flagship event, has been conceptualized as a single platform to accelerate action towards sustainable development and especially climate change.
- ❖ The WSDS series seeks to bring together the finest minds and leading thinkers of the world to focus attention on the challenge of sustainable development and has emerged as a landmark event addressing issues pertinent to the future of humanity.
- ❖ The second edition of WSDS builds on the success and legacy of the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS) which was the leading forum for discussing sustainable development issues. The DSDS held under the aegis of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change with support from the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India was an epitome of Track 2 diplomacy.
- ❖ With an aim of expanding the scope and reach of the Summit to the global community, DSDS transitioned to WSDS in 2016.

World Congress on IT 2018

In News

The Telangana government announced that the World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT) to be held in 2018, will be hosted by Hyderabad, India.

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In Focus

1. The Nasscom India Leadership Forum (NILF), the annual flagship event of the IT-BPO industry trade body, began in Hyderabad.

KSG – (DELHI VN) 9717380832, (DELHI RN) 9811293743, (JAIPUR) 8290800441, (BHOPAL) 7509975361, (PATNA) 7463950774, (INDORE) 7314977441, www.ksgindia.com

2. **This year’s NILF also hosted the World Congress** of Information Technology (WCIT), a global event happening in the country for the first time.
3. **The WCIT and NILF would focused on the theme ‘Amplify Digital - Disrupt The Core’**, reflecting the digital transformation taking place at a fast pace across businesses and organisations.

About WCIT

- First held in 1978, the World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT) is unique in its global perspective on ICT issues and its ability to draw users, providers, media and academia from around the world.
- The congress is held after every two years, during which senior global business, government and academic leaders discuss emerging markets, legal and policy issues, political and economic trends, emerging technologies, ICT user perspectives and business opportunities in the global marketplace.

Dust mitigation plan must for firms

The Environment Ministry has made it mandatory for companies seeking environment clearance to ensure that they put in place a dust mitigation plan.

- The requirements, say that roads leading to or at construction sites must be paved and black-topped.
- There could be no soil excavation without adequate dust mitigation measures in place. No loose soil, sand, construction waste could be left uncovered.
- A water sprinkling system was mandatory, and the measures taken should be prominently displayed at the construction site.
- Moreover, the grinding and cutting of building materials in open area were prohibited and no uncovered vehicles carrying construction material and waste would be permitted.

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PEPPER IT WITH

United States Environment Protection Agency, Clean Air Act, Air Pollutants

The standards were developed by the Central Pollution Control Board as part of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), and will now empower the organisation to fine companies and agencies for not complying with norms.

Significance

- ✓ A study by the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur and commissioned by government reported, mentioned that road dust, burning of biomass and municipal solid waste, **constituted the lion’s share of the city’s air pollution.**
- ✓ Road dust contributed 56% of all PM10 pollution, while it was 38% for PM2.5.
- ✓ Another estimate by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune had different numbers but still ranked dust as the major contributor — 52% — **to the city’s PM10 load.**

Ambient Air Quality Standards

Ambient air quality refers to the condition or quality of air surrounding us in the outdoors. National Ambient Air Quality Standards are the standards for ambient air quality set by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) that is applicable nationwide. The CPCB has been conferred this power by the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

New Project to Control Pollution of River Sal

Key Points

1. The Centre sanctioned a new project to control pollution in River Sal at Navelim town in Goa. The project was sanctioned under the National River Conservation Plan. Both the Centre and State will share the cost on 60:40 basis.
2. Under the project, around 32 kms of sewers will be laid and sewage treatment plant of 3 million litres per day (MLD) constructed. The project is scheduled for completion by January, 2021.
3. The project will help in reduction of pollution load in the river and improvement in its water quality, besides improving the environment and sanitation in the town.

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National River Conservation Plan

National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) is a centrally funded scheme launched in 1995 aimed at preventing the pollution of rivers. It provides information of each state on amount sanctioned under NRCP to which city and for what purpose. Purposes included under the plan are construction of STP, river front development, low cost sanitation, afforestation etc. The details of number of schemes sanctioned and total expenditure for each state is provided.

PEPPER IT WITH
Changes in Rainfall, World Wide Nature for Fund, Rio Bravo River

Minamata Convention

In News

The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for ratification of Minamata Convention on Mercury and depositing the instrument of ratification enabling India to become a Party of the Convention.

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About Minmata Convention

- ❖ The Minamata Convention on Mercury is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury.
- ❖ The Minamata Convention entered into force on 16 August 2017.
- ❖ The Convention draws attention to a global and ubiquitous metal that, while naturally occurring, has broad uses in everyday objects and is released to the atmosphere, soil and water from a variety of sources. Controlling the anthropogenic releases of mercury throughout its lifecycle has been a key factor in shaping the obligations under the Convention.
- ❖ The Minamata Convention on Mercury will be implemented in the context of sustainable development with the objective to protect human health and environment from the anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds.
- ❖ The approval entails Ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury along with flexibility for continued use of mercury-based products and processes involving mercury compound up to 2025.

PEPPER IT WITH
Sustainable development goals, Legionnaires disease, Conversion disorder

Significance

- ✓ The Convention protects the most vulnerable from the harmful effects of mercury and also protects the developmental space of developing countries. Therefore, the interest of the poor and vulnerable groups will be protected.
- ✓ The Minamata Convention on Mercury will further urge enterprises to move to mercury-free alternatives in products and non-mercury technologies in manufacturing processes. This will drive research & development, and promote innovation.

Rhodendron Park in Tawang

In News

Foundation stone of a Rhodendron Park in Tawang district was laid.

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Background

- The Army and Border Roads Organisation (BRO) was requested to sensitise their personnel in carrying out Rhodo conservation effort as the high altitude border areas are beyond the reach of forest officials.
- The park would be built in a total area of 1.15 hectares and would be partly funded under border area development programme (BADP).
- More than 30 species of rhododendrons would be planted and conserved in the park where terrace cutting would also be done to raise the beauty and scenic component.

Significance

1. The park would not only add to the scenic enhancement of the city, but would also offer an opportunity for conservation of rhodo species, which are under serious threat due to various ongoing road and land acquisition projects by the Army and BRO.
2. The park would also have modern nursery, information center on rhododendron, resting sheds, vehicle parking facility, public toilet facility, signage and lightings and iron security gate.
3. Once Tawang district was home to about 100 species of rhododendron but has been reduced to only 50 plus species due to construction activities in border areas.

About Rhodendron

- ✓ Rhododendron — literally rose tree in Greek — are flowering plants 18 species endemic to India.
- ✓ There are 132 taxa (80 species, 25 sub species and 27 varieties) of Rhododendron found in India, of which 129 are found in the north-eastern India alone.
- ✓ Only three taxa — Rhododendron arboretum nilagiricum found in south India and Rhododendron colletianum and Rhododendron rawatti from the western Himalayas are not found in the north-east.
- ✓ Arunachal Pradesh is home to the highest number with 119 taxa (74 species, 21 sub species and 24 varieties) of the Rhododendron. The small State of Sikkim is home to 42 taxa (25 species, 11 sub-species and six varieties) while 10 taxa are found in Manipur, four in Mizoram and 11 in Nagaland.

The India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2017

In News

The India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2017 was released by Environment Ministry recently. ISFR is released every two years.

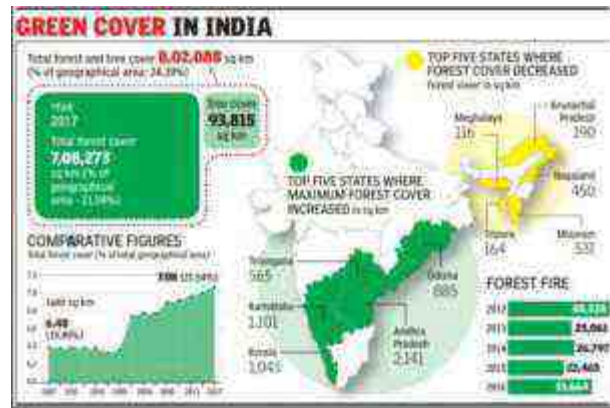
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Forest Survey of India (FSI) has been assessing the forest and tree resources of our country on a biennial basis since 1987. The results of the assessment are published in its **biennial report titled "India State of Forest Report (ISFR)"**.

Highlights

- **India's** tree and forest cover has registered an increase of 1% or 8,021 sq. km in two years since 2015.
- India has shown an increasing trend in the forest and tree cover as against the global trend of decreasing forest cover during the last decade.
- The total forest cover is 7,08,273 sq. km, which is 21.54% of the total geographical area of the country. Forest and tree cover combined is 8,02,088 sq. km or 24.39% of the total geographical area.
- The very dense forest in India has also increased by 1.36% as compared to 2015.
- There is an increase of 8,021 sq. km [about 80.20 million hectare] in the total forest and tree cover of the country, compared to the previous assessment in 2015.
- The increase in the forest cover has been observed as 6,778 sq. km and that of tree cover as 1,243 sq. km.
- Encouraging sign was that much of the increase in forest cover has been observed in very dense forest (VDF) category, as they absorb maximum carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- The increase in forest cover in VDF is followed by increase in open forest.
- Madhya Pradesh (77,414 sq. km) has the largest forest cover in the country in terms of area, followed by Arunachal Pradesh (66,964 sq. km) and Chhattisgarh (55,547 sq. km).
- In terms of percentage of forest cover with respect to the total geographical area, Lakshadweep with (90.33%) has the highest forest cover, followed by Mizoram (86.27%) and Andaman and Nicobar Island (81.73%).
- The top five States where maximum forest cover has increased are Andhra Pradesh (2,141 sq. km), Karnataka (1,101 sq. km), Kerala (1,043 sq. km), Odisha (885 sq. km) and Telangana (565 sq. km).
- The survey, which has for the first time assessed water bodies, said that these bodies inside forest cover have increased by 2,647 sq. km during last decade.
- Maharashtra (432 sq. km), Gujarat (428 sq. km), Madhya Pradesh (389 sq. km) are top three states showing increase in water bodies within forest areas.
- The five States where forest cover has decreased most are Mizoram (531 sq. km), Nagaland (450 sq. km), Arunachal Pradesh (190 sq. km), Tripura (164 sq. km) and Meghalaya (116 sq. km). The main reasons for the decrease are shifting cultivation, other biotic pressures, rotational felling, diversion of forest lands for developmental activities, submergence of forest cover, agriculture expansion and natural disasters.

- The present assessment also reveals that 15 States and Union Territories (UTs) have above 33% of the geographical area under forest cover. Out of these States and UTs, Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Manipur have more than 75% forest cover, while eight — Tripura, Goa, Sikkim, Kerala, Uttarakhand, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Chhattisgarh and Assam have forest cover between 33% and 75%.
- The extent of bamboo-bearing area in the country has been estimated at 15.69 million ha. In comparison to the last assessment done in 2011, there has been an increase of 1.73 million ha in bamboo area. The growing stock of the bamboo in forest has been estimated to be 189 million tonnes.
- As per the ISFR 2017, the total mangrove cover stands at 4,921 sq km and has shown an increase of 181 sq km. All the 12 mangrove states have shown a positive change in the mangrove cover, as compared to the last assessment. Mangrove ecosystem is rich in biodiversity and provides a number of ecological services.



Significance

The information given in the report will serve as an important tool to monitor the country’s forest resources and plan suitable scientific and policy interventions for its management. It will also serve as a useful source of information for the policy makers, planners, State Forest Departments, line agencies involved in various developmental works, academicians, civil society and others interested in natural resource conservation and management.

The India State of Forest Report 2017 is 15th such report in the series. In line with the **Government of India’s vision of Digital India and the consequent need for integration of digital data sets**, the Forest Survey of India has adopted the vector boundary layers of various administrative units upto districts developed by Survey of India along with digital open series topo sheets, bringing about full compatibility with the geographical areas as reported in Census, 2011.

ONGC plans to use unconventional tech

About

Moving beyond conventional techniques, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) plans to introduce carbon dioxide injection in its Gandhar field to recover an extra 20 million barrels of crude oil under the enhanced oil recovery (EOR) programme which is being undertaken to improve India’s energy security.

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Injected gas is miscible with residual oil and reduces its viscosity, making it easier to displace the oil from the rock pores. The carbon dioxide also swells oil, thereby pushing it towards the

producing well for extraction. Total oil production in India from established fields has been declining due to their maturity.

Significance

- While the technology is a proven concept in the West specially the US and Canada, ONGC's project would be the first large scale CO2-injected project in Asia. The Gandhar experience would be replicated at other mature fields, said a company official. At present, steam and natural gas are pumped into the reservoir to loosen the crude oil and maintain well pressure.
- The power utility will provide the land in their project campus as well as power while investments would be from ONGC. NTPCs gain would be carbon neutrality while the nation would get extra oil.
- The EOR programme is set to play a crucial role within the country for recovering up to 20 percent of residual oil from such ageing fields.

Mass nesting of olive ridleys begins in Odisha

In News

Starting the mass nesting this year, more than 3,100 female olive ridley turtles came out of the sea to the sandy beach of the Rushikulya rookery coast in Ganjam district of Odisha.

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The Rushikulya coast is considered to be a major nesting site in the world and lakhs of olive ridleys come here every year to lay eggs.

Olive Ridley Turtles

- ❖ The Olive ridley turtles are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world, inhabiting warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans. These turtles, along with their cousin the Kemps ridley turtle, are best known for their unique mass nesting called Arribada, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- ❖ Though found in abundance, their numbers have been declining over the past few years, and the species is recognized as Vulnerable by the IUCN Red list.
- ❖ Olive ridley gets its name from its olive colored carapace, which is heart-shaped and rounded. They are carnivores, and feed mainly on jellyfish, shrimp, snails, crabs, molluscs and a variety of fish and their eggs. These turtles spend their entire lives in the ocean, and migrate thousands of kilometers between feeding and mating grounds in the course of a year.
- ❖ The coast of Orissa in India is the largest mass nesting site for the Olive-ridley, followed by the coasts of Mexico and Costa Rica.
- ❖ WWF-India, along with the fishermen community, has been involved in protecting the Olive ridley rookery at the mass nesting site at Rushikulaya, in Orissa, by fencing off the nesting area and patrolling it till hatching and ensuring a safe passage for the hatchlings to the sea.
- ❖ Though international trade in these turtles and their products is banned under CITES Appendix I, they are still extensively poached for their meat, shell and leather, and their eggs, though illegal to harvest, have a significantly large market around the coastal regions. However, the most severe threat they face is the accidental killing of adult turtles through entanglement in trawl nets and gill nets due to uncontrolled fishing during their mating season around nesting beaches.

PEPPER IT WITH
 CITES, Tortoise preservation group, galapagos

- ❖ To reduce accidental killing in India, the Orissa government has made it mandatory for trawls to use Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs), a net specially designed with an exit cover which allows the turtles to escape while retaining the catch.

DrypetesKalamii

- ❖ A new species, *Drypeteskalamii*, collected from the subtropical forests of two different Protected Areas, Buxa National Park and Jaldapara National Park in the state of West Bengal, India.
- ❖ The new species is found in wet, shaded areas of subtropical moist semi-evergreen forests, at a height ranging 50-100 metres. With pale yellow flowers in clusters and bright orange to red fruits, the plant is exclusive to the two national parks.
- ❖ Standing just 1 metre tall, the newly described plant is *unisexual in nature*, which means they have separate male and female plants
- ❖ By following the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) rules, the scientists have provisionally **assessed the plant to be “Critically Endangered**
- ❖ This new species closely resembles *Drypetesellisii*, but differs in being small shrub (female plants) or scrambling shrub (male plants) with corrugated branches and puberulous branchlets, longer petioles, laminae abruptly acuminate with pointed apices, slender and puberulent fruiting pedicels with bracts and bracteoles and smaller, ovoid-globose drupes.
- ❖ This new species is a close relative of a medicinal plant known in Sanskrit as *Putrajivah*.
- ❖ NASA had recently named a new bacterium after DrKalam, and we also chose his name as he is a big inspiration for students and young researchers

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Doctors in UK to create first 'three-parent baby'

In a move aimed at preventing passage of incurable genetic diseases from mothers to offsprings, authorities in the UK have permitted doctors to create the country's first three-parent babies.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), which works independently under the UK's Department of Health, recently approved the procedures to be applied on two women.

However, critics of the treatment have flagged concern over parents misusing the technique to get "genetically modified" babies.

HOW DOES THIS WORK?

The procedure will use mitochondrial donation therapy for the women, who know that any children they have could inherit a neurodegenerative disorder, which causes problems with movement or mental functioning.

There are two different procedures used in mitochondrial donation - one carried out before fertilisation, called Maternal Spindle Transfer and the other after, called Pronuclear Transfer.

MATERNAL SPINDLE TRANSFER

In Maternal Spindle Transfer, the nuclear DNA containing chromosomes from the mother is removed from her egg, which contains defective mitochondria, and inserted into the donor egg, which has already had the nucleus removed and contains healthy mitochondria.

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The donor egg with the mother's nucleus is then fertilised with sperm from the father and inserted into the mother's womb.

PRONUCLEAR TRANSFER

The Pronuclear Transfer technique, however, sees the mother's egg fertilised first. Its nuclear DNA is then transferred to a fertilised donor egg, which contains the healthy mitochondria, whose own nucleus has already been removed.

The healthy fertilised egg is then implanted.

Concerns

- The procedure has been seen as controversial because any offspring from such a procedure will then have DNA from three parents. However, experts believe that because mitochondrial DNA is separate from core DNA in cells, there will be no impact on the personality or looks of the offspring from the third DNA set
- However, records from the HFEA approval committee meeting reveal the two women to undergo the first such procedure carry mutations in a gene that causes a rare condition known as myoclonic epilepsy with ragged red fibres, or Merrf syndrome -- a severe neurodegenerative disorder that worsens over time and often results in an early death
- The condition, which affects one in 100,000 people, is typically diagnosed in early childhood or adolescence when people develop sudden spasms which progress to a loss of muscle control, weakness, deafness and dementia.

Espresso

- Echelle Spectrograph for Rocky Exoplanet and Stable Spectroscopic Observations (Espresso) an instrument known as a spectrograph, has a humble appearance that belies its cutting-edge technology. It is the most precise instrument of its kind ever built, 10 times stronger than its most powerful predecessor HARPS.
- In the Atacama desert, in northern Chile, Espresso will be hooked up to four telescopes so big that scientists simply named them the Very Large Telescope (VLT). Together, they will search the skies for exoplanets i.e those outside our own solar system looking for ones that are similar to Earth.
- It will analyse the light of the stars observed by the VLT, enabling it to determine whether planets orbit around them, and important information about those planets themselves: what their atmosphere is like, whether they have oxygen, nitrogen and carbon dioxide, and whether there is water—all essential for supporting life.
- Espresso will be available on all four telescopes at once, which is something that had never been done before. That means the likelihood of finding planets similar to Earth in mass and size, or the conditions for life, are greater.
- The most precise spectrograph until now, HARPS (High Accuracy Radial Velocity Planet Searcher), could only measure planets far larger than Earth—and less likely to harbor life.
- **Espresso is currently in testing phase. But in 10 months' time it will officially begin its big mission—which is also a solitary one.**
- The Atacama is a particularly good place for this kind of exploration. Its skies are completely cloudless most of the year, which is why the highly respected European Southern Observatory, which runs the VLT program, set up shop there in the first place.

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By 2020, the Atacama is expected to be home to about 70 percent of the world's astronomy infrastructure.

WFIRST

Why in News?

The White House budget proposal has called for the cancellation of the Wide Field Infrared Survey Telescope (WFIRST), a move that could be interpreted as a warning to the mission's leaders to rein in the program's expanding costs. But if the cancellation goes through, some it could hurt the international standing of the U.S. astrophysics community.

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PEPPER IT WITH Sherin's Law

About WFIRST

WFIRST was tentatively scheduled to launch in the mid-2020s, to become NASA's next "flagship mission" a classification applied to large-scale missions with broad science objectives. Other NASA flagship missions include the Hubble Space Telescope, the Chandra X-Ray Telescope, and the upcoming James Webb Space Telescope.

WFIRST was designed to search for and study planets around other stars and answer key questions in cosmology. That also included a focus on understanding the nature of dark energy, that mysterious force that is believed responsible for the universe's accelerating expansion.

The importance of WFIRST's science program was emphasized when it was selected as the top mission priority for the U.S. astronomy and astrophysics community in the 2010 decadal survey titled New Worlds, New Horizons in Astronomy and Astrophysics. That report, put out once every 10 years by the National Academy of Sciences, is a multiyear project that ultimately provides a roadmap for funding agencies regarding which mission or mission concepts should be pursued. Typically, NASA (as well as other agencies like) follow the recommendations of the decadal survey.

Task force set up to study AI application in military

The Department of Defence Production constituted a task force headed by Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran to study use of artificial intelligence, which it said has potential to provide military superiority apart from driving technology-driven economic growth.

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On Thursday, in his speech for Union Budget 2018-19, finance minister said that the Centre's think-tank Niti Aayog will initiate a national programme to direct the government's efforts in the areas of artificial intelligence, including research and development of its applications.

Significance

Experts believe that future progress of artificial intelligence (AI) has potential to have transformative impact on national security. It is also seen that AI is essentially a dual use technology. While it can fuel technology driven economic growth, it also has potential to provide military superiority. India has a strong talent pool of engineers which are advantages which need to be leveraged.

Combining cyber and physical systems have great potential to transform not only innovation ecosystem but also our economies and the way we live.

SpaceX Falcon Heavy

Recently Falcon Heavy successfully lifted off from Launch Complex 39A at Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

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For this test mission, the Falcon Heavy launched a dummy payload. Specifically, it'll send a cherry red Tesla (TSLA) roadster from Musk's personal collection into deep space. There's no scientific reason to send the car to space. But it does serve as self-promotion for Musk, who is also the CEO of Tesla.

About Falcon Heavy

- Falcon Heavy is the name of a highly anticipated SpaceX rocket with thrust equal to 18 Boeing 747 jetliners.
- It'll also be the most powerful rocket currently in operation -- and one of the most powerful ever built. The most powerful rocket in history was NASA's Saturn V rocket, which was used for the Apollo moon landings and was retired in the 1970s.
- The more thrust a rocket has, the farther it can travel and the bigger the satellite, spacecraft or other payload it can send into orbit.
- The Falcon Heavy has a \$90 million sticker price. That's 45% more expensive than the Falcon 9 rocket SpaceX has used for every mission going back to 2012. But the Falcon Heavy is essentially three Falcon 9s strapped together, and it'll boast about three times the thrust of the Falcon 9.
- SpaceX says it's been able to undercut the competition on price because of its reusable rocket parts. The company is the only rocket builder in the world that safely returns first-stage rocket boosters back to Earth.

India ranks 44 out of 50 nations in global IP index

In Focus

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- India has "increased substantially" its score in the latest international Intellectual Property (IP) index released by the US Chambers of Commerce, ranking 44th out of 50 countries.
- The report analyses the intellectual property (IP) climate in 50 world economies based on 40 unique indicators that benchmark activity critical to innovation development surrounding patent, trademark, copyright, and trade secrets protection.
- India's overall score has increased substantially from 25 per cent (8.75 out of 35) in the fifth edition of the Index to 30 per cent (12.03 out of 40) in the sixth edition.
- Despite improvement in the score, India continues to remain towards the bottom of the ladder. It now ranks 44 out of 50 countries. Last year, India ranked 43rd out of 45 countries in the index, with an overall score of 8.4 points.
- The US tops the list with 37.98 points, followed by United Kingdom (37.97) and Sweden (37.03).

Significance

- ✓ For the first time, India has broken free of the bottom ten per cent of economies measured, and its score represents the largest percentage improvement of any country measured. This is further evidence of a country on the move.
- ✓ India's ranking, reflects a relatively strong performance in the new indicators as well as positive reform efforts on patentability of computer-implemented inventions (CIIs) and registration procedures for well-known marks.
- ✓ However, India's score continues to suggest that additional, meaningful reforms are needed to complement the policy.
- ✓ In what is otherwise a very challenging environment for IP rights holders, India has demonstrated a long-standing and clear commitment to increasing awareness of the importance of IP rights and respect for creators and innovators. However, India has a long way to go.
- ✓ Several factors figure into the improved score. India passed guidelines to strengthen the patentability environment for technological innovations, improved the protection of well-known marks, and initiated IP awareness and coordination programmes, thereby implementing some tenets of the 2016 National IPR Policy.
- ✓ However, additional, meaningful reforms are still needed to incentivize domestic innovation, attract foreign investors, and improve access to innovation.

Swachh Bharat Sanitation Park

The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, in collaboration with the Environmental Sanitation Institute and Tata Trusts, has developed a Sanitation Park which was inaugurated in Delhi.

The Sanitation Park was developed at CGO Complex in New Delhi with an objective to create awareness on various safe technological options. The Park demonstrates various options pertaining to toilet technologies and solid and liquid waste management technologies, with a brief description of these technologies.

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India gets access to strategic Oman port Duqm

In a strategic move to expand its footprint in the Indian Ocean region, India has secured access to the key Port of Duqm in Oman for military use and **logistical support. This is part of India's maritime strategy** to counter Chinese influence and activities in the region

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The Port of Duqm is situated on the southeastern seaboard of Oman, overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. It is strategically located, in close proximity to the Chabahar port in Iran. With the Assumption Island being developed in Seychelles and Agalega in Mauritius, Duqm **fits into India's proactive maritime security roadmap.**

Three new eel species

- ✓ Scientists have discovered three new species of eel along the northern Bay of Bengal coast in the past few months.
- ✓ Dark brown with white dots on the dorsal side, Gymnothoraxpseudotile was discovered at the Digha coast of the Bay of Bengal. The other two species, Gymnothoraxvisakhaensis (uniformly brown) and

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Enchelycorepropinqua (reddish brown body mottled with irregular creamy white spots), were discovered from the Visakhapatnam coast of the Bay of Bengal.

- ✓ Eels are found mostly at the bottom of rivers and seas. Across the world about 1,000 species of eels have been identified. In India, the number is around 125. For species belonging to the family Muraenidae, referred commonly as Moray eels, there are records of about 200 species of which more than 30 species are found in India.

Strategic Petroleum Reserve-India

- To ensure energy security, the Government of India had decided to set up 5 million metric tons (MMT) of strategic crude oil storages at three locations namely, Visakhapatnam, Mangalore and Padur (near Udipi). These strategic storages would be in addition to the existing storages of crude oil and petroleum products with the oil companies and would serve as a cushion during any external supply disruptions.
- The construction of the Strategic Crude Oil Storage facilities is being managed by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL), a Special Purpose Vehicle, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas. Engineers India Limited (EIL) is taken as the Project Management Consultant for all three projects.
- The crude oil storages are constructed in underground rock caverns and are located on the East and West coast of India. Crude oil from these caverns can be supplied to the Indian Refineries either through pipelines or through a combination of pipelines and ships. Underground rock caverns are considered the safest means of storing hydrocarbons.
- Presently, under Phase – I program of SPR, storage of 5.33 million tons of crude oil at three locations, namely, Vishakhapatnam (1.33 million tons), Mangalore (1.50 million tons) and Padur (2.5 million tons) have been created. India is now seeking finance the Phase – II of its SPR to speed up construction and filling of its SPR. Under this phase, four more caverns are to be established in Chandikhol, Bikaner, Rajkot and Padur of which detailed feasibility report has been prepared.
- Besides the case for emergency, SPR in India can offer a great business opportunity by creation of major hub in South and South East Asia for storage of crude. This calls for serious look on development and expansion of hydrocarbon value chain through investments in required infrastructure. With the provision of sufficient SPR in place, India would help West Asian refiners to reduce their freight costs for both South Asia and South East Asia.
- India shall also reap the benefits of volatile markets by releasing and recharging its SPR inventories in case of rise and fall in global crude prices, respectively. Thus, India can gain both economically and politically by protecting itself for a future oil embargo while offering a hedge against its economic impact.

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PEPPER IT WITH OPEC, ISIS, Venezuela

Compensatory Afforestation (CA) Fund

Why in News?

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) is in deliberation with the Ministry of Finance over the future of compensatory afforestation (CA) funds collected by the Centre.

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Currently, the CA funds, amounting to roughly Rs 50,000 crore, are with the ad hoc Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA). The ad hoc

body was created by the order of Supreme Court on July 10, 2009. The CAMPA was created as National Advisory Council under the chairmanship of the environment minister for monitoring, technical assistance and evaluation of compensatory afforestation activities.

Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act 2016 (CAF) was recently passed, so the fund has to be transferred to the states for utilisation.

CAF Act-2016

The CAF Act has a provision for creating a national fund with contributions from user agencies—any person, organisation, company or department of the Central Government or state government making a request for diversion or de-notification of forest land for non-forest purpose.

PEPPER IT WITH
CAMPA, T.N.
GodavarmanThirumulpad vs.
Union of India and Others,
Kanchan Chopra Committee,
Sixth schedule, NGT

According to the Act, the fund will be used for “compensatory afforestation, additional compensatory afforestation, penal compensatory afforestation, net present value, catchment area treatment plan or any money for compliance of conditions stipulated by the Central Government while according approval under the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.” The Act does not extend to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Myanmar dam

- A dam being constructed by Myanmar across a river close to the boundary with India has stoked fears of submergence and water scarcity among border villagers in Manipur.
- The dam, called Tuidimjang, is on the Twigem river flowing into Myanmar from Manipur. Khangtung, inhabited by the Thadou tribe, is 137 km south of Manipur capital Imphal.
- **International rules warrant border countries to check activities in No Man’s Land** – a 150-metre strip on either side of the boundary line.
- The topography of the area is such that Khangtung and other Indian villages will be submerged if the dam comes up. The villagers, dependent on the river, are already facing water scarcity. Efforts to get in touch with officials and contractors in Myanmar have been in vain.

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India contributes \$1 million for Tonga

- India is contributing \$1 million for relief efforts in the Pacific Ocean kingdom of Tonga that was devastated by cyclone Gita.
- Of that \$500,000 would be given as immediate relief to Tonga and another \$500,000 would be allocated to it from the India-UN Development Partnership Fund (I-UNDPF).
- The United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that the **Category 4 cyclone was the worst on record to hit Tonga. The nation’s parliament was destroyed by the storm, which caused extensive damage across the archipelago.**
- The International Red Cross said that according to initial assessments about 70 per cent of **Tonga’s population are affected. Tongatapu, where the capital of the country’s capital NukuEalofa is situated, is among the worst hit areas.**

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Cyclone Gita

Cyclone Gita hit the Pacific island nations of Fiji and Tonga with winds of up to 171mph. While Fiji escaped major damage, Tonga suffered widespread destruction and flooding. Earlier, the storm had caused extensive damage in Samoa and American Samoa.

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)

Why in News?

The Defence Acquisition Council recently gave approval for a series of **proposals to shore up the Army's infantry firepower. It also** accorded approval to Capital Acquisition Proposals of the Services valued at over Rs 1850 crore.

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These include procurement of essential quantity of Infantry Combat Vehicle (BMPs-2/2k) for Mechanised Infantry and other Arms and Services from the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB). This procurement will meet the operational requirement of the troops in rapid deployment of Mechanised Forces.

About DAC

An overarching structure, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), under the Defence Minister was constituted for overall guidance of the defence procurement planning process. It is headed by defence minister.

Under the so-called Make II category of the Defence Procurement Procedure, (where no government funding is involved in production) industries can now make suomotu proposals to the armed forces, offering to supply products based on their own assessment of requirements. So far the armed forces could seek supplies as per their requirement.

The objective of the Defence Acquisition Council is to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces in terms of capabilities sought, and time frame prescribed, by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.

The functions of the DAC include:

1. In-principle approval of 15 Year Long-Term Integrated Perspective Plan for Defence Forces
2. Accord of Acceptance of Necessity to acquisition proposals.
3. Categorization of the acquisition proposals relating to 'Buy', 'Buy & Make' and 'Make';
4. Issues relating to Single vendor clearance.
5. Decision regarding 'offset' provisions in respect of acquisition proposals above Rs. 300 crores.
6. Decisions regarding Transfer of Technology under 'Buy & Make' category of acquisition proposals and
7. Field Trial evaluation.

PEPPERITWITH
Make in India in Defence, NATO, HAWS, Operation Rahat, Border Road Organisation

IAAMS

- **Integrated Automatic Aviation Meteorological System (IAAMS)** was recently inaugurated at INS Garuda. INS Garuda is the fourth air station to have been installed with this integrated system.
- IAAMS is an ambitious project of the Indian Navy to modernise the Meteorological infrastructure of the nine Naval Air Stations. The

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IAAMS project at INS Garuda will give a major fillip to aviation safety through automation of weather monitoring process.

- Equipped with the state of the art Meteorological Sensors viz., Radar Vertical Wind Profiler, Transmissometer, Ceilometer and Automatic Weather Observation System, IAAMS undertakes automatic and continuous recording of relevant weather parameters that are vital for accurate weather forecasting.
- It has a special alarm feature that alerts the duty staff about any abnormal change of weather parameters that may affect safe flying operations. The system can also provide automatic dissemination of routine weather reports of the air station as per World Meteorological Organization (WMO) standards to other Air Stations and to ATC tower without human intervention.
- First IAANS was inaugurated at INS Rajali in 2017. The IAAMS project will give a major fillip to aviation safety, through automation of weather monitoring process. Installation of the system at remaining stations is expected to be completed by March 2019.

PEPPER IT WITH Security check kia campaign

Endangered Languages Going to be Extinct

- More than 40 languages or dialects in India are considered to be endangered and are believed to be heading towards extinction as only a few thousand people speak them. They are spoken by less than 1000 people.
- According to a report of the Census Directorate, there are 22 scheduled languages and 100 non-scheduled languages in the country, which are spoken by a large number of people. Apart from the 22 scheduled languages, there are 31 other languages in the country which were given the status of official language by various state governments and Union territories.
- A list prepared by UNESCO has also mentioned about the 42 languages or dialects in India that are endangered and they may be heading towards extinction. Andaman and Nicobar Island have maximum (11) number of languages or dialects which are considered endangered.
- According to the criteria adopted by the UNESCO, a language becomes extinct when nobody speaks or remembers the language. The UNESCO has categorized languages on basis of endangerment as follows:

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1. Vulnerable
 2. Definitely Endangered
 3. Severely Endangered
 4. Critically Endangered
- According to the census data, there are 1,635 rationalised mother tongues, 234 identifiable mother tongues and 22 major languages in the country.
 - The language data collected in 2011 have still not been made public. The last time a complete list of languages claimed during the Census as 'mother tongues' was disclosed was in 1961.

- ❖ There are believed to be around 6,000 living languages in the world.
- ❖ UNESCO has been promoting the idea of language as an inalienable cultural right. It has already built it into the charter of sustainable development goals. India is a formal signatory to the charter.
- ❖ General Assembly of the UN has proclaimed 2008 to be the International Year of Languages, and named UNESCO as the lead agency.
- ❖ Recently, the Telangana government has decided to make all educational institutions, both in private and public, teach Telugu as a compulsory subject from Classes 1 to 12.

- **The Union Government launched** “Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages of India (SPPEL)” **in 2013. Under this scheme, the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore, works on protection, preservation and documentation of all the mother tongues/languages of India spoken by less than 10,000 people in the country.**
- The scheme is implemented by the CIIL in coordination with universities across the country. It identifies, documents and take measures to protect the endangered languages.
- However, there has been no proper enumeration of languages in India for nearly a century. The last comprehensive exercise was carried out by George Grierson, an Irish linguistic scholar who carried out the first linguistic surveys in India between 1894 and 1928, listing 189 languages and several hundred dialects.
- The findings of the **People’s Linguistic Survey** of India indicate that between 1961 and 2011, nearly 250 Indian languages disappeared altogether.
- International Mother Language Day has been observed every year since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. This **year’s theme** for International Language day was Linguistic diversity and multilingualism count for sustainable development. It is celebrated on 21st February.
- International Mother Language Day also supports target 6 of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): “Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.”
- To foster sustainable development, learners must have access to education in their mother tongue and in other languages. It is through the mastery of the first language or mother tongue that the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy are acquired. Local languages, especially minority and indigenous, transmit cultures, values and traditional knowledge, thus play an important role in promoting sustainable futures.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Article 344, Official Language Commission, CIIL, Gujral Committee, Global Partnership for Girls’ and Women’s Education

Summary of Budget 2018-19

The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs presented the General Budget 2018-19 in Parliament and said that Indian society, polity and economy had shown remarkable resilience in adjusting with the structural reforms. IMF, in its latest Update, has forecast that India will grow at 7.4% next year in the backdrop of services resuming high growth rates of 8% plus, exports expected to grow at 15% in 2017-18 and manufacturing back on good growth path.

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Summary

- The government has decided to keep MSP for all unannounced kharif crops at least one and half times of their production cost after declaring the same for the majority of rabi cops. The volume of institutional credit for agriculture sector from year-to-year has increased.
- Scheme to support the efforts of the governments of Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and the NCT of Delhi to address air pollution in the Delhi-NCR region by subsidizing machinery required for in-situ management of crop residue was also announced.
- After the establishment of Dairy Infrastructure Fund, setting up a Fisheries and Aqua culture Infrastructure Development Fund (FAIDF) for fisheries sector and an Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF) for financing infrastructure requirement of animal husbandry sector with a total corpus of Rs.10,000 crore has been announced.
- To step up investments in research and related infrastructure in premier educational institutions, including health institutions, a major initiative named **“Revitalising**

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Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) by 2022” with a total investment of Rs.1,00,000 crore in next four years was announced.

- An announcement was also made to develop and upgrade existing 22,000 rural haats into Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs) to take care of the interests of more than 86% small and marginal farmers.
- To further boost tourism, the Budget proposes to develop ten prominent tourist sites into Iconic Tourism destinations by following a holistic approach involving infrastructure and skill development, development of technology, attracting private investment, branding and marketing.
- NABH-Nirman: The budget has also proposed to expand the airport capacity more than 5 times to handle a billion trips a year. The balance sheet of Airport Authority of India will be leveraged to raise more resources for funding this expansion.
- To encourage raising funds from bond market, the FM has urged regulators **to move from ‘AA’ to ‘A’ rating for** investment eligibility. He said that the Government will establish a unified authority for regulating all financial services in International Finance Service Centre (IFSCs) in India.
- The allocation on digital India programme has been doubled. Department of Science & Technology will launch a Mission on Cyber Physical Systems to support establishment of centres of excellence for research, training and skilling in robotics, artificial intelligence, digital manufacturing, big data analysis, quantum communication and internet of things.
- Private investment in defence production opened up including liberalising Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Measures also being taken to develop two defence industrial production corridors. Industry friendly Defence Production Policy 2018 has been proposed to be brought out to promote domestic production by public sector, private sector and MSMEs.
- In fulfilment of the promise to reduce the corporate tax rate in a phased manner, it has been proposed to extend the reduced rate of 25 percent currently available for companies with turnover of less than 50 crore (in Financial Year 2015-16), also to companies reporting turnover up to Rs. 250 crore in Financial Year 2016-17. This would benefit the entire class of micro, small and medium enterprises, which account for almost 99 percent of companies filing tax returns, he said. This lower corporate income tax rate would leave such companies with higher investible surplus, which would create more jobs.

- ❖ Fiscal Deficit of 3.3% of GDP for the year 2018-19
- ❖ The number of Effective Tax Payers increased to 8.27 crore at the end of 2016-17
- ❖ Increase in allocation of National Rural Livelihood Mission
- ❖ Relief to Senior Citizens has been proposed in the budget
- ❖ The 2017-18 disinvestment target has been exceeded.
- ❖ Budget also proposed to revise emoluments for president, Vice president and governors which was last revised in 2006.
- ❖ To incentivise make in India, customs duty increased on mobile phones and TV parts.
- ❖ Key recommendations of the Fiscal Reform and Budget Management Committee to bring **down Central Government’s Debt to GDP ratio to 40%**.
- ❖ Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) to be renamed as Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).
- ❖ New regulator for GIFT city
- ❖ RBI to handover NHB to Government
- ❖ Roll out E-assessment across the country which was introduced as a pilot project in 2016.

- Three Public Sector Insurance companies- National Insurance Co. Ltd., United India Assurance Co. Ltd., and Oriental India insurance Co. Ltd., will be merged into a single insurance entity.
- A comprehensive Gold Policy will be formulated to develop gold as an asset class. The Government will also establish a system of consumer friendly and trade efficient system of regulated gold exchanges in the country. Gold Monetization Scheme will be revamped to enable people to open a hassle-free Gold Deposit Account.
- In order to take care of the education and health care needs of Below Poverty Line (BPL) and rural families, the Budget proposes to increase the cess on personal income tax and corporation tax to 4 percent from the present 3 percent. The new cess will be called the “Health and Education Cess”.
- It is also proposed to abolish the Education Cess and Secondary and Higher Education Cess on imported goods. In its place it is proposed to impose a Social Welfare Surcharge at the rate of 10 percent of the aggregate duties of Customs, on imported goods, to provide for social welfare schemes of the government.
- RBI to have Uncollateralized Deposit Facility to absorb excess liquidity (banks can park surplus funds overnight just like European Central Bank). 80k crores on PSB recapitalization has also been proposed.
- RBI, SEBI to encourage corporate bond market which facilitate 25% of government borrowing. Unique IDs have also been proposed for enterprises for tracking loans, schemes and Ease of Doing Biz.

PEPPER IT WITH
Bamboo as Green Gold, Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, SampadaYojna, Alternate Minimum Tax, LTCG

National Urban Housing Fund

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet recently approved the creation of National Urban Housing Fund (NUHF) for Rs.60,000 crores. This fund will be situated in Building Materials and Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC), an autonomous body registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. BMPTPC primary task is the mainstreaming of new construction technologies.

- The fund will be raised from non-budgetary sources and could tap into existing government entities such as the Housing and Urban Development Corp.
- To monitor NUHF, a committee will be formed in the ministry of housing and urban affairs which will be chaired by the joint secretary/ mission director of Pradhan Mantri Awasyojan (PMAY) Urban.
- The newly created fund is expected to raise the requisite funds as per requirement for the next four years and plug any budgetary shortfalls. The projected overall funding envisaged by the government is around Rs1.7 lakh crore.

The housing industry of India is one of the fastest growing sectors. A large population base, rising income level and rapid urbanization leads to growth in this sector. In the Federal structure of the Indian polity, the matters pertaining to the housing and urban development have been assigned by the Constitution of India to the State Governments. However, the Union government is responsible for formulation and implementation of social housing schemes.

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- Finance minister had proposed the creation of such a fund in his budget speech and said that 3.7 million homes would be built in urban areas in 2018-19 and 5.1 million in rural areas.
- For this fiscal year, the budget proposes to raise Rs25,000 crore as extra-budgetary support in order to finance housing programmes under the PMAY. The urban component of the flagship scheme targets more than 4,300 cities and towns.
- **Union government's** Housing for All programme aims to build 12 million affordable housing units in urban areas by 2022. Out of the proposed 12 million houses, about 0.5 million have been completed and a further 1.7 million houses have been launched.

PEPPER IT WITH
Silkyara Bend-Barkot Tunnel,
Credit linked Subsidy Schemes

GOBAR-DhanYojna

- The Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBAR-DHAN) scheme was first announced during latest budget. The scheme would focus on managing and converting cattle dung and solid waste in farms to compost, biogas and bio-CNG.
- The Gobar-Dhan Yojana will help in keeping the village clean while increasing the income of farmers and cattle herders. It will also be an alternate source of income for the farmers.
- An online trading platform to connect farmers to buyers of agricultural waste facilitating the GOBAR-dhan scheme has also been opened. Citizens should make efforts to create **self-help groups and creative societies that would help in the “clean energy and green jobs” initiative.**
- The government has made a selection of 115 districts for implementation of the scheme. Besides the government has made it clear that with implementation of the scheme in these villages, it shall try and improve the facilities as well as infrastructure.
- Under the scheme the farmers will also be able to make use of easily available compost fertiliser for their farmland. The government will help in educating the farmers to set up their own compost plants.
- Presently, India stands at 6th place for bio-gas manufacturing.

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India Health Fund

Why in News?

The IHF aims to support new products and strategies that impact the entire lifecycle of TB and malaria, from prevention to post-cure recovery. It has recently invited project proposals.

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- The India Health Fund (IHF), an initiative led by Tata Trusts, in collaboration with The Global Fund serves as an engine for social investment to fight the grave public health challenges of tuberculosis (TB) and malaria in India.
- Tuberculosis & Malaria, together, account for over 4.23 lakh deaths and around 15 million lab-confirmed cases every year. annually in India alone. The Government of India (GoI) is committed to eradicating TB by 2025 and malaria by 2030. The India Health Fund is conceptualized to be an able private-sector partner for the GoI.

PEPPER IT WITH
Sustainable Development
Goals, UNDP, Medical
Council of India

- The fund endeavours to supplement and augment the Gol's efforts by optimising resources and expertise to create comprehensive solutions for the combat against TB and malaria.
- IHF aims to accelerate the fight against TB and malaria by supporting causes that are aligned with national strategies. Main objectives of IHF are as under:
 - Advance the fight against TB and malaria through innovative solutions thereby reducing burden, costs and human suffering.
 - Engage India's creative and innovative minds to create solutions for TB and malaria.
 - Bring together resources and expertise through partnerships to ensure easy access to experiment with innovative solutions.
 - Harness the unique energy of entrepreneurship to take innovations to scale and create impact by tapping private sector expertise and finance.
 - Build an expanding network of programmes and partners to create comprehensive solutions for TB and malaria.

Ayushman Bharat: a new India -2022

In News

The Government recently announced two major initiatives in health sector, as part of Ayushman Bharat programme while presenting the General Budget 2018-19 in Parliament.

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Ayushman Bharat

The Ayushman Bharat programme is apparently driven by two main aims:

1. to strengthen primary health care which has been lacking in the country
2. to offer financial protection from catastrophic expenditure, often encountered once a family member is sick and needs long-term health care

It is aimed at making path breaking interventions to address health holistically, in primary, secondary and tertiary care systems, covering both prevention and health promotion. It has two initiatives as mentioned in the budget.

PEPPER IT WITH
RSBY, AABY, JBY

- I. Health and Wellness Centre: The National Health Policy, 2017 has envisioned Health and **Wellness Centres as the foundation of India's health system. Under this 1.5 lakh centres will** bring health care system closer to the homes of people. These centres will provide comprehensive health care, including for non-communicable diseases and maternal and child health services. These centres will also provide free essential drugs and diagnostic services. The Budget has allocated Rs.1200 crore for this flagship programme. Contribution of private sector through CSR and philanthropic institutions in adopting these centres is also envisaged.
- II. National Health Protection Scheme: The second flagship programme under Ayushman Bharat is National Health Protection Scheme, which will cover over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage upto 5 lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization. This will be the **world's largest government funded health care programme. Ultimately, NHPS could help country move towards universal health coverage and equitable access to healthcare which is one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs.**

Way Ahead

The scheme is innovative and path-breaking in the history of public health in India, which may have a transformative impact if implemented in an effective and coordinated manner. The

enduring interest and level of discussion in the media does reflect the wider realization in the country that only healthy people can build a strong and prosperous nation.

For the success of the programme, effective implementation is the key. For this an independent body or unit may be set up within the ministry of health & family welfare to plan, coordinate, and provide technical backstopping to states, including in capacity building and development of standards and guidelines for the programme. Such a unit will ensure uniform and systematic approach to programme implementation across the country.

Budget summary on Education

Ekalavya Model

The ministry of tribal affairs recently stated that it is working towards a target of 562 Ekalavya schools in tribal areas of the country to deliver on Budget announcement of providing every block with more than 50% tribal population high quality education through Ekalavya model residential schools by 2022.

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PEPPER IT WITH
SSA, RMSA, RTE Act,
SDG-4

Key Highlights

- I. In recent Budget it was announced that the Government is committed to provide the best quality education to the tribal children in their own environment. By the year 2022, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, will have an Ekalavya school.
- II. In these schools there will be special facilities for preserving local art and culture besides providing training in sports and skill development.

Ekalavya Model Residential Schools

1. In the context of the trend of establishing quality residential schools for the promotion of education in all areas and habitations in the country, the EMRS for ST students take their place among the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas and the Kendriya Vidyalayas. Ekalavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) are set up in States/UTs with grants under Article 275(1) of the Constitution of India.
 - 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers is being held at Fiji.
 - The theme for 20CCEM is *Sustainability and Resilience: Can Education Deliver?*
 - Kenya has formally undertaken to host the 21st Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers in 2021. Bahamas hosted the 19th Conference.
2. The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.
3. As per existing EMRS Guidelines of 2010, at least one EMRS is to be set up in each Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) / Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) having 50% ST population in the area.
4. The objective of EMRS is to provide quality middle and high level education to Scheduled Tribe (ST) students in remote areas, not only to enable them to avail of reservation in high and professional educational courses and as jobs in government and public and private sectors but also to have access to the best opportunities in education at par with the non ST population.

Key Focus

1. Education for sustainable development
2. Building resilience through education
3. Education governance & management

Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE)

- To step up investments in research and related infrastructure in premier educational institutions, including health institutions, a major initiative named RISE by 2022 with a total investment of Rs.1,00,000 crore in next 4 years was announced.
- Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) would be suitably structured for funding this initiative. The manner in which investment in institutions is provided is likely to be the same as is practised in HEFA, but there may be different windows for different institutions.
- Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF) scheme will help improving the quality of research by attracting the best talents across the country. The minister added that high technology research labs are being developed to promote brain gain.

Significance

The Government of India is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG- 4) for education – **“Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning”** by 2030. With a view to achieve the goal of universalization of elementary education, the Right to Free & Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 had been enacted in 2010 that provides a justiciable legal framework entitling all children between the ages of 6-14 years free and compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education. It provides for **children’s right to an education of equitable quality, based on principles of equity and non-discrimination.**

Ombudsman scheme for NBFC

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently launched 'Ombudsman Scheme' for non-banking financial companies (NBFC) for redressal of complaints against them. The scheme will provide a cost-free and expeditious complaint redressal mechanism relating to deficiency in the services by NBFCs covered under the Scheme.
- The appointment of Ombudsman under the above Clause may be made for a period not exceeding three years at a time and will be of the rank of not less than general manager.
- The Non-banking Financial Company - Infrastructure Finance Company (NBFC-IFC), Core Investment Company (CIC), Infrastructure Debt Fund - Non-banking Financial Company (IDFNBF) and an NBFC under liquidation, are excluded from the ambit of the Scheme.
- To begin with, the Scheme will be operationalized for all deposit accepting NBFCs and based on the experience gained, the Scheme would be extended to include the remaining identified categories of NBFCs.

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What is difference between banks & NBFCs?

NBFCs lend and make investments and hence their activities are akin to that of banks; however there are a few differences as given below:

- NBFC cannot accept demand deposits.
- NBFCs do not form part of the payment and settlement system and cannot issue cheques drawn on itself.
- Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is not available to depositors of NBFCs, unlike in case of banks.

- It is initially being introduced at the four metro centers viz. Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai and New Delhi for handling complaints from the respective zones, so as to cover the entire country.
- Any person can file a complaint with the Ombudsman on grounds of non-payment or inordinate delay in the payment of interest on deposits. The scheme provides for an appellate mechanism in which the complainant and NBFC can appeal against the decision of the Ombudsman.
- The **Ombudsman will not entertain a complaint unless the NBFC had rejected a customer's** written complaint or the complainant had not received any reply within a period of one month after the NBFC received his representation or the complainant is not satisfied with the reply given to him by the NBFC. Also, the complaint is made not later than one year after the complainant has received the reply of the NBFC to his representation.
- It will be the obligation of the NBFC concerned to implement the settlement arrived with the complainant or the Award passed by the Ombudsman when it becomes final and send a report in this regard to it within 15 days of the award becoming final.
- The Scheme is introduced with the objective of enabling resolution of complaints free of cost, relating to certain aspects of services rendered by certain categories of non-banking financial companies registered with the Reserve Bank, to facilitate the satisfaction or settlement of such complaints, and matters connected therewith.

PEPPER IT WITH
MFI, Dodd-Frank Act,
Section 45-IA of the RBI
Act, 1934, Shadow banking

What is NBFC?

- A NBFC is a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956 engaged in the business of loans and advances, acquisition of shares/stocks/bonds/debentures/securities issued by Government or local authority or other marketable securities of a like nature, leasing, hire-purchase, insurance business, chit business but does not include any institution whose principal business is that of agriculture activity, industrial activity, purchase or sale of any goods (other than securities) or providing any services and sale/purchase/ construction of immovable property.
- A non-banking institution which is a company and has principal business of receiving deposits under any scheme or arrangement in one lump sum or in instalments by way of contributions or in any other manner, is also a non-banking financial company (Residuary non-banking company).
- NBFCs whose asset size is of ₹500 cr or more as per last audited balance sheet are considered as systemically important NBFCs. The rationale for such classification is that the activities of such NBFCs will have a bearing on the financial stability of the overall economy.
- A company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956 and desirous of commencing business of non-banking financial institution should have a minimum net owned fund (NOF) of ₹ 200 lakh (The minimum NOF required for specialized NBFCs like NBFC-MFIs, NBFC-Factors, CICs is different).

Long-Term Capital Gains Tax (LTCG)

Why In News?

Finance Minister in his budget speech re-introduced LTCG tax on equity shares. Investors have to pay 10% LTCG tax on gains exceeding ₹1 lakh on the sale of shares or equity mutual funds held for more than one year. Previously, short-term capital gains (STCG) tax of 15% was levied.

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Long-term capital gains refer to the gains made on any class of asset held for a particular period of time. In case of equity shares, it refers to the gains made on stocks held for more than one year. In other words, if the shares are bought and held for more than a year before selling, then the gains, if any, on the said sale are referred to as LTCG.

- ❖ The new tax regime for LTCG is effective for transactions done from April 1, 2018
- ❖ The definition of Long-term Capital Gains, or LTCG, is different for various products.
- ❖ It will be paid without the benefit of indexation
- ❖ It is proposed as a direct tax

- Such a tax existed until October 2004 when it was replaced by the securities transaction tax (STT) which was levied on all trades made on the stock exchanges.
- The issue of tax evasion through stock exchanges by paying a small STT component instead of LTCG had been raised regularly. Further, a study in 2016 stated that between 2005-06 and 2011-12, the Centre lost about ₹3.5 lakh crore by replacing LTCG tax with STT.
- Typically, when such a levy is introduced, it is structured in a manner so that prior investments get some kind of relief. In technical parlance, it is called the grandfathering benefit. The government, while reintroducing the LTCG tax, said all gains made prior to January 31 would be grandfathered.
- The Centre has brought in LTCG tax while retaining STT as well. So, investors will have to pay both the taxes. However, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), who invest in India from places like Mauritius and Singapore, would not be subject to LTCG tax, courtesy tax avoidance treaties.
- This benefit, however, would be available only till the time the treaty benefit exists as the Centre is reworking all such so-called double tax avoidance agreements (DTAA).
- The introduction of LTCG tax can only increase the cost of trading stocks at a time when **various market participants have been highlighting the ‘export of capital’ to other countries** due to lower transaction costs in those nations. Incidentally, there are already reports that the government might look at the possibility of at least allowing the benefit of indexation while computing LTCG that would be a partial relief to investors.

PEPPER IT WITH DTAA, Indexation, Direct, Capital Gain, Alternative Minimum Tax

New criteria for classifying MSMEs

In News

The Union Cabinet has approved change in the basis of classifying Micro, Small and Medium enterprises **from ‘investment in plant & machinery/equipment’ to ‘annual turnover’**.

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Present proposal scenario

Section 7 of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006 will accordingly be amended to define units producing goods and rendering services in terms of annual turnover as follows:

- ❖ A micro enterprise will be defined as a unit where the annual turnover does not exceed five crore rupees;
- ❖ A small enterprise will be defined as a unit where the annual turnover is more than five crore rupees but does not exceed Rs 75 crore;
- ❖ A medium enterprise will be defined as a unit where the annual turnover is more than seventy five crore rupees but does not exceed Rs 250 crore.

- ❖ Additionally, the Central Government may, by notification, vary turnover limits, which shall not exceed thrice the limits specified in Section 7 of the MSMED Act.

Background

The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (Amendment) Bill, 2015 was introduced in the Lok Sabha by the Ministry for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, 2015. The Bill amends the MSMED Act, 2006. The Act classifies and regulates enterprises as micro, small and medium enterprises.

At present the MSMED Act (Section 7) classifies the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) on the basis of investment in plant and machinery for manufacturing units, and investment in equipment for service enterprises. The criterion of investment in plant and machinery stipulates self-declaration which in turn entails verification if deemed necessary and leads to transaction costs.

Table 1: Comparison of investment limits for enterprises in manufacture/production

Type of Enterprise	MSME Act, 2006	MSME Bill, 2015
Micro	25 lakh	50 lakh
Small	25 lakh-5 crore	50 lakh-10 crore
Medium	5 crore-10 crore	10 crore-30 crore

Table 2: Comparison of investment limits for enterprises providing services

Type of Enterprise	MSME Act, 2006	MSME Bill, 2015
Micro	10 lakh	20 lakh
Small	10 lakh-2 crore	20 lakh-5 crore
Medium	2 crore-5 crore	5 crore-15 crore

- ❖ The central government may change these investment limits, up to three times the specified limits, through a notification.
- ❖ Under the Act, the central government may classify micro, tiny or village enterprises as small enterprises. The Bill seeks to extend this to allow the classification of micro, tiny or village enterprises as small as well as medium enterprises.

Significance

1. This will encourage ease of doing business, make the norms of classification growth oriented and align them to the new tax regime revolving around GST (Goods & Services Tax).
2. It will help in having a non-discretionary, transparent and objective criteria and will eliminate the need for inspections, make the classification system progressive and evolutionary, help in overcoming the uncertainties associated with the classification based on investment in plant & machinery/equipment and employment.
3. In addition the amendment will provide flexibility to the Government to fine-tune the classification of MSMEs in response to changing economic scenario without resorting to the amendment of MSMED (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises Development) Act.

The primary responsibility of promotion and development of MSMEs is of the State Governments. However, the Government of India, supplements efforts of the State Governments through various initiatives. The long standing demand of the MSMEs and associations to extend the time limit to declare them NPAs has also been extended from 90 days to 180 days.

- The change in the norms of classification will enhance the ease of doing business. The consequent growth and will pave the way for increased direct and indirect employment in the MSME sector of the country.

Inverted Duty Structure (IDS)

Why in News?

The Union Budget has reinforced the correction of the inverted duty structure (IDS) which has adversely impacted manufacturing for decades. An important drawback of commercial policy or the import tariff policy is the problem of inverted duty structure prevailing in different industries.

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Inverted duty structure is a situation where import duty on finished goods is low compared to the import duty on raw materials that are used in the production of such finished goods. Finished goods often enjoy concessional custom duty under some schemes also.

PEPPER IT WITH
National Board for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Khadi and Village Industries, Coir Industry

- When the import duty on raw materials is high, it will be more difficult to produce the concerned good domestically at a competitive price. Several industries depend on imported raw materials and components.
- High tax on the raw materials compels them to raise price. On the other hand, foreign finished goods will be coming at a reduced price because of low tax advantage. In conclusion, manufactured goods by the domestic industry becomes uncompetitive against imported finished goods.
- What inverted duty structure brings to the home country is that its industries are less protected as the tariff on the imported finished commodities are low. At the same time, the tariff on the import of raw materials used in the production of the finished goods domestically is high. This discourages the local production of goods using the imported raw materials as the price of imported finished goods may seem more attractive.
- The disadvantage of the inverted duty structure increases with the increased use of imported raw materials. An inverted duty structure discourages domestic value addition.
- The goods and services tax (GST), especially the IGST or Integrated GST component, has begun to erode the advantage that the IDS was giving to foreign exporters in Indian markets.

For example, suppose the tariff (import tax) on the import of tyres is 10% and the tariff on the imports of natural rubber which is used in the production of tyres is 20%; this is a case of inverted duty structure.

For India, there are several examples of inverted duty structure especially after the signing of the India-ASEAN FTA.

Laghu Udyog Bharati (LUB)

About LUB

LUB is a registered all India organization of Micro and Small Industries in India since 1994. Presently LUB has its membership spread over the length and breadth of the country. It has membership in more than 400 Districts with 250 Branches all over the Country. In a genuine effort to organise MSE sector LUB is fighting the various ills plaguing the sector and to remove impediments coming in the way to MSEs.

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Objectives of Laghu Udyog Bharati

- Removal of inspector raj & simplification procedures
- Availability & distribution of power.
- Guidance for improving productivity
- Quality & technological upgradation & modernisation
- Better management
- Sales promotion & marketing assistance
- Raw material procurement
- Encouraging women entrepreneurs
- Organise conferences, seminars and workshops.
- Creating congenial environment for better entrepreneur, worker and customer relations
- Making various panels for better representation
- Participation in Trade-Fairs and Exhibitions for better product exposure

Implications

Worldwide, micro and small enterprises (MSEs) have been accepted as the engine of economic growth and for promoting equitable development. MSEs constitute over 95% of total enterprises in most of the economies and are credited with generating the highest rates of employment growth and account for a major share of industrial production and exports. It contributes more than 45% of total manufacturing production and 40% of exports, while employing 10 crores people, it suits the Indian conditions in the following manner:

1. It is only source which has the potential to absorb about 10 million new youths which enter the workforce every year, as there are hardly any job opportunities in Government sector; the agriculture sector is already super saturated; and the large / corporate sector has had less employment growth in last 2 decades.
2. For country like India which has very scarce capital, promoting MSE is essential as only one tenth of capital investment is required to generate one employment in MSE sector as compared to investment required per capita employment in large sector.
3. It mitigates the problem of migration to cities and slum dwellings in urban areas.
4. It also ensure inclusive growth.

Hike in MSP for Copra for 2018 season

In News

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Fair Average Quality (FAQ) of "Milling Copra" to Rs.7500/- per quintal for 2018 season from Rs. 6500/- per quintal in 2017. The MSP for FAQ of "Ball Copra" has been increased to Rs.7750/- per quintal for 2018 season from Rs. 6785/- per quintal in 2017.

Key highlights

2. The approval is based on recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). CACP, an expert body, which takes into account the cost of production, trends in the domestic and international prices of edible oils.
3. The MSP of Copra is expected to ensure appropriate minimum prices

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Determinants of MSP

- 1) demand and supply;
- 2) cost of production;
- 3) price trends in the market, both domestic and international;
- 4) inter-crop price parity;
- 5) terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture; and
- 6) likely implications of MSP on consumers of that product.

to the farmers and step up investment in Coconut cultivation and thereby production and productivity in the country.

- 4. The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED) and National Cooperative Consumer Federation of India Limited (NCCF) would continue to act as Central Nodal Agencies to undertake price support operations at the Minimum Support Prices in the Coconut growing states.

CACP

- The Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) is an attached office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India. Currently, the Commission comprises a Chairman, Member Secretary, one Member (Official) and two Members (Non-Official). The non-official members are representatives of the farming community and usually have an active association with the farming community.
- CACP submits its recommendations to the government in the form of Price Policy Reports every year, separately for five groups of commodities namely Kharif crops, Rabi crops, Sugarcane, Raw Jute and Copra.

CACP Mandate

- ✓ It is mandated to recommend minimum support prices (MSPs) to incentivize the cultivators to adopt modern technology, and raise productivity and overall grain production in line with the emerging demand patterns in the country.
- ✓ Assurance of a remunerative and stable price environment is considered very important for increasing agricultural production and productivity since the market place for agricultural produce tends to be inherently unstable, which often inflict undue losses on the growers, even when they adopt the best available technology package and produce efficiently.

Education Development Impact Bond

In News

Britain's Prince Charles has launched a new 10-million-dollar Development Impact Bond (DIB) to help improve education for over 200,000 children in India.

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Key Highlights

- The concept of education DIB is intended as a result-oriented way to attract new capital into development projects of education system, with a strong emphasis on data and evidence
- The DIB, the largest bond of its type in South Asia, is the latest fundraising initiative by the British Asian Trust (BAT), set up by the royal 10 years ago to fight poverty in South Asia.
- The new bond has been launched by the trust with the support of the UK government's Department for International Development (DfID), Comic Relief, the Mittal Foundation and the UBS Optimus Foundation.
- Under the initiative, the DIB will provide funding to local not-for-profit delivery partners in India over four years, delivering a range of operational models including principal and teacher training, direct school management, and supplementary programmes.
- It is intended to improve literacy and numeracy learning levels for primary school students from marginalised communities in the country.

PEPPER IT WITH
Educate Girls DIB, IDinsight,
Centre for Global Development

About DIB

- DIBs bring together private investors, non-profit and private sector service delivery organizations, governments and donors to deliver results that society values. They provide upfront funding for development programs by private investors, who are remunerated by donors or host-country governments—and earn a return—if evidence shows that programs achieve pre-agreed outcomes.
- If the project succeeds, the investors are repaid by the Government (Social Impact Bonds) or an aid agency or other philanthropic funder (Development Impact Bonds) with capital plus interest.
- Development Impact Bonds are based on the model of Social Impact Bonds, first launched in the UK as a way to shift incentives and accountability to results.
- Unlike SIBs, DIBs involve donor agencies, either as full or joint funders of outcomes. Because repayment to investors is contingent upon the achievement of specified social outcomes, DIBs are not “bonds” in the conventional sense.

The Social Impact Bond (SIB) is a public-private partnership where one or more **investor(s) provide “upfront” capital for the realization of public projects that generate verifiable social and/or environmental outcomes.** Under a typical model, the Government contracts an intermediary (or project sponsor) to implement a social/environmental project in exchange for a promise of a payment contingent on the social outcomes delivered by the project.

Social Impact Bonds” in the U.K. and Ireland; “Pay for Success” in the U.S.; and “Social Benefit Bonds” in Australia.

YH Malegam Committee

- The recent fraud at the Punjab National Bank has prompted the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to set up a 5 committee under former board member Y.H. Malegam to look into the reasons and suggest steps to prevent such occurrences.
- The committee will also look into the issue of huge non-performing asset divergences between what banks classify and what is detected in RBI inspection and recommend steps to address the issue.
- It will also highlight the role and effectiveness of various types of audits conducted in banks in mitigating the incidence of such divergences and frauds.
- RBI, in order to strengthen the supervisory framework in the country, has been issuing necessary instructions to banks from time to time on a variety of issues of prudential supervisory concern, including the management of operational risks inherent in the functioning of banks.
- Employees of PNB are suspected of having unscrupulously steered loan to overseas accounts by fraudulently issuing Letters of Undertaking (LoUs) without following proper procedure while transmitting instructions through the SWIFT system to the overseas branches of Indian banks to raise buyers credit.
- RBI has also set an April 30 deadline for all banks to link the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT) with their core banking solution (CBS).

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SWIFT System

Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT), promoted in 1973 is a messaging network that financial institutions use to securely transmit information and instructions through a standardized system of codes. SWIFT assigns each financial organization a unique code that has either eight characters or 11 characters. The code is called the bank identifier code (BIC)/SWIFT code/SWIFT ID/ISO 9362 code.

- I. First 4 characters represent the institute code
- II. Next 2 characters are the country code
- III. The next 2 characters are the location/city code and
- IV. Last 3 characters are optional, but organizations use it to assign codes to individual branches

PEPPERITWITH
Letter of Undertaking, Fedwire,
Ripple, CHIPS, Telex, Malegam
committee for MFI sector

SWIFT is a cooperative society owned by its members. SWIFT charges users for each message based on message type and length. These charges also vary depending upon the bank's usage volume. Different charge tiers exist for banks that generate different volumes of messages. SWIFT messages are programmed in a language known as FIN.

N Gopalaswami Panel

- Govt recently appointed former Chief Election Commissioner N Gopalaswami as the head of a 4-member committee that will select 20 institutes of higher education in India that will be developed into **“world-class” institutes**. He was also chief of the 13-member panel that was constituted to recommend ways of Sanskrit promotion.
- Last year, the Union ministry of Human resources Development, through the University Grants Commission, had invited institutes from across the country to be upgraded into **“world-class universities.”**
- Following this the Commission had received 100 applications, maximum being from public institutions, including seven IITs, Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jadhavpur University, Goa University and Mangalore University.
- It is said that in a few months, 10 each (from public and private category) institutions will be accorded the eminence status with a mandate, and supported, to achieve the world-class status over a period of 10 years.
- These institutes will be provided with the following without UGC permission:
 1. Greater autonomy to admit up to 30 per cent foreign students,
 2. To recruit up to 25 per cent foreign faculty,
 3. To offer online courses up to 20 per cent of its programmes and
 4. To enter into academic collaboration with top 500 in the world ranking institutions.
- The institutes of eminence scheme under the Union human resource development (HRD) ministry aims to project Indian institutes to global recognition.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Appointments Committee of
the Cabinet, CEC, QS
World University Rankings,
Gross enrolment ratio

KUSUM (KisanUrja Suraksha Evam UtthaanMahaabhiyan)

In News

The government has recently announced KUSUM scheme under Union Budget 2018-19. As per the announcement of this program, the Finance Minister and the power department announced that has budget around Rs. 48, 000 crores. The allocation of funds will be done in four separate segments.

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Objective of the scheme

The main aim of this scheme is to provide the farmers with advanced technology to generate power. The solar pumps will not only assist to irrigate the farmers, but will also allow each farmer to generate safe energy. Due to the presence of the energy power grid, the agricultural labors will be able to sell the extra power directly to the government. It will provide them with extra income as well. So, this scheme will bring double benefits

Components of the scheme

1. Solar pump distribution
2. Construction of solar power factory
3. Setting up tube-wells
4. Modernization of present pumps

PEPPER IT WITH
Ease of Living,

Key facts about the KUSUM scheme

- KUSUM scheme will provide 1.75 million off-grid agricultural solar pumps
- It will build 10,000 MW solar plants on barren lands for solar farming
- The energy produced by the farmers on their barren land will be bought by the state electricity distribution companies (DISCOMS)
- KUSUM scheme also includes the distribution of 17.5 lakh solar pumps for which 60 per cent subsidy will be given to the farmers.

24x7 Power for All (24x7 PFA) is a Joint initiative of Government of India (GoI) and State Governments with the objective to ensure availability of 24x7 power supply to all households, industries, commercial businesses, public needs & any other electricity consuming entities and adequate power to agriculture consumers by FY 2018-19 as per the state policy.

Significance

- ✓ Promote decentralized solar power production
- ✓ Reduce transmission losses
- ✓ To support the financial health of DISCOMs by reducing the burden of subsidy to the agriculture sector
- ✓ To support States to meet the RPOs targets
- ✓ To promote energy efficiency and water conservation
- ✓ Provide water security to farmers through provision of assured water sources through solar water pumps – both off-grid and grid connected
- ✓ To provide reliable power to utilise the irrigation potential created by state irrigation departments
- ✓ To fill the void in solar power production in the intermediate range between roof tops and large parks

CriSidEx

In News

The Union Ministry for Finance and Corporate Affairs launched CriSidEx , **India's first sentiment index for micro and small enterprises (MSEs)** developed jointly by CRISIL & SIDBI recently.

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About CriSidEx

1. CriSidEx is based on a diffusion index of 8 parameters (5 manufacturing and 3 services parameters) with equal weights. It measures MSE business sentiment on a scale of 0 to 200, where 0 indicates extremely negative sentiment, 100 neutral sentiment and 200 extremely positive sentiment.
2. CriSidEx will have 2 indices, one for the **'survey quarter'** and another for the **'next quarter'** once a trend emerges after few rounds of the survey, providing independent time series data.
3. The crucial benefit of CriSidEx is that its readings will flag potential headwinds and changes in production cycles and thus help improve market efficiencies. And by capturing the sentiment of exporters and importers, it will also offer actionable indicators on foreign trade.

Objectives of CriSidEx

- ❖ Improving market efficiency by assessing the factors that push or curb growth
- ❖ Gauging the sentiment of the MSE sector and its constituents
- ❖ Assessing trends, predicting headwinds and the factors responsible in the MSE sector
- ❖ Anticipating and planning changes in production cycles
- ❖ Altering business strategies on time and helping businesses plan their growth
- ❖ Providing valuable information to policy makers and other stakeholders to study the changes in the economic environment that may occur

What's limiting MSE growth?

According to the survey, the limiting factors, in descending order, are:

1. Access to capital
2. Skilled labour
3. Availability of technology
4. Power and infrastructure
5. Availability of raw material

PEPPER IT WITH
MUDRA Yojana, NABH-
Nirman

Significance

MSME sector is backbone of the economy. It is one of the largest employer in the country and with the vast population where employment either in government or in the large industry itself has limited potential. This is one sector where people not only exhibit their entrepreneurial skills, become part of large value chains but also become job creators in the process. And that is the reason why a bulk of the jobs in manufacturing, trading have been created in this particular sector. The data on micro and small enterprises (MSEs) comes with a significant lag, a comprehensive and concise lead + lag indicator of ground-level sentiment becomes a crucial tool for policy makers, lenders, trade bodies, economists, rating agencies and the MSEs themselves. CriSidEx will help reduce this lag and help policymaker to assess the impact of MSE policies at ground zero.

Demetrios Galanos

In News

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) is organizing the 8-days International Conference on, 'Demetrios Galanos and His Legacy'. The 8-day long convention is being held in Delhi and Varanasi, in addition to organizing the exhibition and folk music of Greece.

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Key Highlights

IGNCA Trustee Shri Bharat Gupta said that “Demetrios Galanos (1760–1833) has a special place among the foreign scholars who came to India to study in the nineteenth century. He was the only one who stayed in India for 47 years, and except for the first seven years when he lived in Calcutta, for 40 years he lived in the city of Varanasi. He translated the Bhagvad Gita into Greek among many other Sanskrit texts. His major contribution was the compilation of a Sanskrit-English-Greek lexicon of about 9000 words.

Demetrios Galanos can be seen as a symbol of coming together of these two great civilizations, as he embraced and enriched both these cultures by his immense knowledge and deep insight. **For the last one and a half year we have started a new project called ‘Bharat Vidya Prayojana’ and we are trying to reconceive Indology from Bharat perspective. Bharat Vidya Prayojana is the principle host of this conference.**

Smart museums with virtual tours

In News

“Jatan” and “Darshak” named software has been developed by Centre for Development for Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Pune, to give virtual tour and 3D view of rare artifact.

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Jatan

The objective was to make a digital imprint of all the objects preserved in museums. It will help **researchers, curators and also people interested in the field. Using the team’s software, a digital base of more than one lakh museum artifacts has been created, so far, thereby promising better preservation.**

Darshak

It is a mobile-based application aimed at improving the museum visit experience among the differently-abled. It allows real-time museum visitors gather all details about objects or artifacts simply by scanning a QR code placed near the object.

In focus

President has approved the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Karnataka Amendment) Bill making Kambala a legal rural sport in Karnataka. With this, all apprehensions and obstacles that were preventing kambala have been cleared.

Floating island to come up on Nekkampur Lake

Dhruvansh, a voluntary organisation working for protection of water bodies, is going to introduce a floating island of 2,500 sq.ft with about 3,500 wetland **plants on the Nekkampur Lake on February 2, also observed as ‘World Wetland Day’, .**

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The 'island platform' has been designed using styrofoam, bamboo, gunny bags, coir and so on and could bear the weight of four persons.

New tunnel at Sela pass in Arunachal Pradesh

Government's is planning to build a tunnel through the Sela Pass located at an elevation of 13,700 ft which will ensure faster movement of troops in Tawang, a strategically- located town in Arunachal Pradesh bordering China.

Significance

It will give further impetus to the defence preparedness. The proposal to build the Sela pass comes amid concerns in the defence establishment over China's growing assertiveness along the nearly 4,000 km-long Sino-India border.

The Sela pass is located between the Tawang and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh and considered crucial from strategic perspective.

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PEEPER IT WITH Rohtang tunnel

New wildlife sanctuary at Ghodazari

The Maharashtra government has approved Ghodazari in Chandrapur district as a new wildlife sanctuary in the state. The sanctuary, in the North East of Tadoba, will include 159 sq km of Brahmmapuri forest.

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WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2018

- The Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands approved "Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future" as the theme for World Wetlands Day in 2018.
- World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on 2 February. This day marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.
- Since 1997, the Ramsar Secretariat has provided outreach materials to help raise public awareness about the importance and value of wetlands.

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Pelican Festival

Andhra Pradesh government held the first-of-its kind, one-day Pelican Festival at the Atapaka Bird Sanctuary on Kolleru, one of the largest freshwater lakes in the country. Elaborate arrangements were made to attract tourists for the 'PakshulaPanduga' at Atapaka village, located on the borders of the Krishna and the West Godavari districts.

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Over 5,000 pelican birds from various countries reach Kolleru lake every year during winter by travelling over 3500 km.

Green, Good Deeds Movement

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, appealed to the **teaching community to join the people oriented “Green Good Deeds” campaign**, launched by the Ministry to sensitise the people and students, in particular, about climate change and global warming.

Teachers were reminded of their “Green Social Responsibility” (GSR), similar to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Referring to the crucial role played by “Polio Sainiks” from municipal corporation schools in the Pulse Polio campaign, he underlined the need for “Green Sainiks” to broad-base the Green Good Deeds movement and to take it down to the grassroots level successfully.

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60 Solar Cities to be developed across country

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy under its scheme “Development of Solar Cities” has approved/sanctioned 60 Cities including 13 Pilot and 5 Model Cities up to 12th Five-year Plan period.

Development of Solar Cities

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is implementing a programme on ‘Development of Solar Cities’ which aims to reduce a minimum of 10% of the projected demand of conventional energy of the city through renewable energy installations and energy efficiency measures. Sixty Cities were proposed to be developed as Solar Cities during the Eleventh Plan period including four Model Solar Cities and 10 Pilot Solar Cities. The Master plan for each Solar City to be prepared to assess and utilize various renewable sources including Solar, Wind, Municipal Waste etc.

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Jogighopa-India’s new gateway to South-East Asia

- **Jogighopa, a small town in Assam, is set to become India’s gateway to South-East Asia** as well as the rest of the North-East with the road ministry gearing up to develop a multimodal logistics park (MMLP) there with road, rail, waterways and air transport facilities.
- A special purpose vehicle, backed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), will be created to execute the project, which will be executed in two phases—Phase I of around Rs155.46 crore and Rs115.88 crore for Phase II.
- Recent developments, like the announcement of the Northeast Economic Corridor under the Bharatmalaprogramme of the road ministry and the signing of the MoU (memorandum of understanding) between India and Bangladesh for developing the Dalu-Tura-Goalpara-Gelephu multimodal trade route strengthen Jogighopa’s case for MMLP.

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- The current transit corridors from mainland India to the North-East region pass through an area known as the **“Chicken’s Neck”**—a narrow tract of land in India between the borders with Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan.
- Since it is close to these borders and cannot be expanded, the North-East region requires an alternative route for providing connectivity to the rest

- ❖ The road ministry has shortlisted 35 MMLPs across India, of which four are being executed in collaboration with ADB.
- ❖ Since last year the government has started prioritizing the logistics sector by granting it infrastructure status and anticipates major investments in it.
- ❖ The Logistic Performance Index published by the World Bank shows India jumping 19 spots in the global ranking from 54 in 2014 to 35 in 2016.

of India—a route with adequate expansion potential. The Indo-Bangladesh road route, along with the National Waterways-2, provides such an option.

Baal Adhar

- Unique Identification Authority of India (UIAD) recently introduced a **‘Baal Aadhaar’** card. This blue-coloured card will be given to children below the age of five years. To get a Baal Aadhaar, no biometric details will be needed.
- A mandatory biometric update will be required when the child turns five. A child’s school ID (Photo ID issued by Recognized Educational Institution) can also be used for his/ her Aadhaar enrolment.
- The process of updating these Baal Aadhaar cards will be same as that of a normal Aadhaar. It will require a biometrics of 10 fingers, iris and the facial photograph. The same process has to be repeated when the child turns 15.
- Even though it is not mandatory for children of this age to get an Aadhaar card, it is needed for attending educational programmes overseas and availing other government scholarships.

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Kaleshwaram project

- The Kaleshwaram project is an off-shoot of the original Pranahitha-Chevella Lift Irrigation Scheme taken up by in 2007 when Andhra Pradesh was not divided. After the formation of Telangana in 2014, it was redesigned on the ground that the original plan had too many environmental obstacles and had water storage provisions of 16.5 tmc only.
- After conducting a highly advanced Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) survey for a couple of months, the government separated the original component serving the Adilabad area as the Pranahitha project and renamed the rest as Kaleshwaram by redesigning the head works, storage capacity and the canal system based on the data of availability of water at different locations along the course of the Godavari and its tributaries.

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- The Kaleshwaram project has provision for the storage of about 148 tmc ft with plans of utilising 180 tmc ft by lifting at least 2 tmc ft water every day for 90 flood days. The project is designed to irrigate 7,38,851 hectares (over 18.47 lakh acres) uplands in the erstwhile districts of Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Warangal, Medak, Nalgonda and Ranga Reddy.
- KLIP has many unique features, including the longest tunnel to carry water in Asia, running up to 81 km, between the Yellampally barrage and the Mallannasagar reservoir. It also Claims to be the costliest irrigation project to be taken up by any State till date with an estimated cost of ₹80,500 crore
- This flagship project of Telangana government would not only irrigate the parched lands of the State, but also provide drinking water and livelihood to lakhs of people.

LIDAR is a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure ranges (variable distances) to the Earth. These light pulses—combined with other data recorded by the airborne system generate precise, three-dimensional information about the shape of the Earth and its surface characteristics. LIDAR systems allow scientists and mapping professionals to examine both natural and manmade environments with accuracy, precision, and flexibility.

World Cities Culture Forum

Why in News?

Mumbai recently announced that it will join the World Cities Culture Forum (first Indian city to join the forum), the leading collaborative network of world cities that share a belief in the importance of culture for creating thriving metropolitan environments.

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The World Cities Culture Forum is an initiative of the Mayor of London, organised and coordinated by BOP Consulting

- The Forum launched in London in 2012 is a leading collaborative network that has grown from 12 to 33 member cities that share research and best practices, advancing the vital role of culture in their cities. Recently cities have more and more in common and the Forum provides the opportunity for members to learn from each other and the pioneering work on culture happening in cities around the world.
- The Forum which was established by London publishes reports and convenes members through a programme of events including the annual World Cities Culture Summit which is hosted on a rotating basis by member cities. Summits have been held in London, Istanbul, Amsterdam, Moscow and Seoul. San Francisco will host the next Summit in 2018.
- The Forum has just launched a new Leadership Exchange Programme, funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies and Google Arts & Culture. It is the first-ever exchange designed for cities to share ideas to solve common challenges across the globe. It is initiative to bring together.
- The WCCF enables the policy makers of member cities to share research and intelligence, while exploring the vital role of culture in prosperity. Forum members collaborate via a program of events including themed symposia, regional summits and workshops.

PEPPER IT WITH
RashtriyaSanskriti Mahotsav,
World Cities Culture Report,

International Kala Mela

The First International Kala Mela was inaugurated by the Vice President of India in New Delhi. It has been organised by the Lalit Kala Akademi in partnership with Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) of the Ministry of Culture.

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The First International Kala Mela provides an open forum to all the creative artists of the country and abroad. The Mela will serve as a meeting ground for various styles, Schools of art, works for young and old artists, veteran and novice, rural and urban, sophisticated and rustic. Like rivers joining the sea, artists of all kinds and temperaments will come and mingle in this great art event.

About Lalit Kala Akademi

Lalit Kala Akademi, National Academy of Art, New Delhi was set up by the Government of India as an autonomous body, on 5th August, 1954. The Akademi was given statutory authority in 1957, under the Societies Registration Act 1860. Since its establishment it has been serving the entire country by promoting the creative endeavors of Indian artists and bringing their arts to bear upon a large number of people, thereby playing an important role in defining and redefining, the sensibility of an entire culture, falling under the visual arts spectrum.

Khajuraho Dance Festival

- Khajuraho Festival is organized by the Kala Parishad under the Madhya Pradesh government whereby many popular classical dancers from all over India perform. Khajuraho Dance Festival 2018 was a week long festival.
- The festival is held to showcase the beauty of human emotions with dance. The event is held at open air auditoriums in two of the most popular temples of Khajuraho, the Chitragupta & Vishwanatha Temple.
- Although the event is a display of dance forms, homage is given to the numerous unnamed artisans who brought to life the exquisite carvings of Khajuraho. It is a remembrance to the heritage that withstood the ravages of time and whose glory still shines through and draws visitors from all over the globe.
- The Khajuraho Dance Festival is the celebration of the traditional dance forms against the backdrop of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The practice to organize the festival started from 2002.
- Khajuraho is an ancient site of India. The temples of the area were built during the rule of Rajput Chandela Dynasty dating back to the 10th century. The temples had exquisite treasure of carvings. The carved art ranges from day to day lifestyle to karmic sexual activities.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Chandela Dynasty, Classical Dance of India, Nagara Architecture

Prachi Valley civilisation

Why in News?

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has discovered pottery pieces, and tools made of stones and bones believed to be of the pre-Christian era from a mound in Jalalpur village of Cuttack district.

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Discoveries of ancient artefacts indicated that a rural settlement might have thrived in that period. What is important in these latest discoveries is that it has been found that there was continuity in the progress of rural culture from a pre-historic era.

- Rich materials found from excavation sites indicate that the people had a subsistence economy and they largely relied on agriculture, fishing and hunting.
- Discovery of tortoise shell, dolphin and shark teeth and fish bones indicated that the settlement could have been closer to the sea coast. Some rice grains have also been detected.
- The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) recently launched the Project "Documenting the Monuments of the Prachi Valley". Similar to early civilizations like the Aryan, Egyptian, Babylonian and Assyrian, the Prachi Valley Civilization too flourished on the banks of Prachi river.
- Archaeological evidence reveals that the Prachi Valley Civilization predates both Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.
- Prachi Valley civilisation has contributed a lot towards amalgamation, assimilation and proliferation of different religious faiths and cults. Major religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Saivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism grew chronologically without attacking the religious and philosophical sentiments of the people of those days.



About Prachi River

- The Prachi, a small river of over 60 km in length with a catchment area of around 600 sq. km, a part of the Mahanadi delta in Odisha along the eastern coast of India is an important topographical as well as cultural landscape.
- Like the mythological origin of other rivers such as the Narmada, the Ganga, and the Godavari the sacred origin of the river Prachi is not an exception in the history of the Indian civilization. Its origin and importance have been depicted in the Uttarakhanda of Padma Purana in the name of Prachi Mahatmya.
- It is considered as the holiest river of Odisha and rightly called the Eastern Saraswati. The river now runs dry for most of the year and only in the monsoon does it bear any resemblance to its glorious past.

PEPPER IT WITH
Bakreswar Temple,
Archaeological Survey
Of India, Harappan
Civilisation

Mahamastakabhisheka

- Located on the Vindhyagiri hills at the Jain pilgrimage site of Shravanabelagola near Bangalore is the colossal sized monolithic statue of the Jain God Bahubali or Gomateshwara. The 57-foot piece of granite has been meticulously carved out to produce a majestic figure with half-closed eyes and a gentle, serene smile.

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- Every 12 years, this Jain craftsmanship is visited by thousands of pilgrims from around the world for a ceremony known as the Mahamastakabhisheka, or the anointing of the statue in the presence of Jain acharyas. The BahubaliMahamastakabhisheka Mahotsav is believed to be one of the most important religious occasions for Jains.
- Widely believed to be one of the largest free-standing statues in the world, the Gomateshwara at Shravanabelagola was built in 983 AD. It is known to have been commissioned by the ruler and minister of the Ganga dynasty, Chamunda-Raya. Although, it is uncertain whether Chamunda-Raya actually got the statue built or whether it already existed at the site and the minister discovered it through a divine intervention.
- The son of the first Tirthankara of Jainism, Bahubali is a revered figure among the Jains. Jain mythology holds up Bahubali as the one who succeeded in attaining liberty from worldly desires through a long period of sustained meditation.

The Mauryan ruler Chandra Gupta Maurya left patliputra and reached Shravanabelagola along with Bhadrabahu (The greatest exponent of Jain Philosophy and spiritual guru of Chnadra Gupta Maurya) were on Chandra hills he performed fast unto death and attained Kaivalya after 170 years of nirvana of Mahavira

PEPPER IT WITH
Vindhyagiri Hills, Chandragiri
Hills, All-India Jain
DigambaraJainaMahasabha,
Kalpasutra, Bhadrabahu,

What is the Bahubali Mahamastakabhisheka Mahotsav?

Chamunda-Raya did not just install the Gomateshwara statue at Shravanabelagola but also performed the great ceremony of consecration of the image in 981 AD. The event was carried out in the precise manners prescribed in the Jain scriptures and in the scale and grandeur befitting the enormity of the image. Eventually, this ceremony of anointing came to be referred to at the Mahamastakabhisheka Mahotsav and was carried out every 10 to 15 years at an auspicious moment decided on the basis of the positioning of heavenly bodies. Over time, the event is decidedly carried out every 12 years.

Concept Clearing Assignment

1. India has slipped 10 places in the Democracy Index 2017 to 42, in the rankings released by The Economist Intelligence Unit. Bring out the main manifestation in the Indian democracy ranking recession.
2. The Gol has recently announced Ayushman Bharat at Budget 2018-19, briefly discuss about it. What are the salient features of this new initiative?
3. The infrastructure and conditions in government school is horrendous that even very poor parents are removing their children from government schools and sending their children to private schools. Critically analyse recent initiatives by Gol undertook in recent Budget 2018-19 to combat this daunting problem.
4. Present an account on Health Index Report by Niti Aayog. How this index will help various health care institutions to provide better health opportunities to common masses and induce healthy competition among states to improve their healthcare system effectively?
5. Examine the main provision of Operation Greens and shed light on the economical, ecological and agricultural implication of the initiative.
6. Briefly discuss Corruption Perceptions Index. Critically analyse the performance of India at global platform shedding light on the reasons and briefly examine the role of Transparency International India in combating corruption.
7. India has been admitted to Agreement on the Establishment of an International Transport and Transit Corridor between the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Ashgabat Agreement). Comment, how this will provide India the opportunity to increase its volume of trade in Central Asia and improve its commercial prospects.
8. Recently, Indian Prime Minister inaugurated the 2018 edition of the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS 2018). Present an account on WSDS and how will it help combat the lurking challenges of the economies in the backdrop of climate change?
9. Present an account on Dust Mitigation Plan. How will it help in controlling the pollution the urban cities? How can the municipalities play a vital role in the implementation of this initiative effectively?
10. Government recently reintroduced long-term capital gains tax. It also talked about grandfathering in relation to LTCG. Discuss Grandfathering in this respect and critically analyse the benefits of LTCG.
11. What about an institution that looks like a bank, acts like a bank and behaves like a bank but is not a bank. Do we have shadow banks in India? Critically analyse the importance of NBFCs in India.
12. Investors may have been shocked when one of India's biggest banks disclosed a \$1.77 billion fraud but the central bank has recorded data that shows the problem runs far deeper and wider. Do you think merely forming committees after a fraud is a solution to these problems? Discuss.
13. For any country both primary and higher education are needed. Primary education has its own importance just like higher education has its own importance. However higher education is very important for growing an economy. Higher education in India has many challenges and issues. Discuss the steps by which government can resolve such issues.
14. Aiming to widen the scope of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) 2002, government of India recently introduced a bill regarding this. What is the main aim of this bill and how will it be able to control money laundering. Discuss.
15. The recent troubles in Maldives have again highlighted the problems with the **Maldivian political establishments. India's relationship with other counties is based on neighbourhood first policy.** Do you think India lacked in its diplomatic approach towards Maldives?

PT Oriented questions

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| <p>1. Consider the following statements about Long-Term Capital Gains (LTCG) Tax</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is a direct tax proposal 2. It will be paid without the benefit of Indexation 3. It is paid on the gains exceeding Rs 1 lakh <p>Code:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above <p>2. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/ones</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coir Industry is an agro-based traditional industry, which originated in the state of Kerala 2. MSME sector provides second highest employment in India after agriculture <p>Code:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2 <p>3. Consider the following statements about Prachi Valley Civilisation.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The civilization is older than the Harappan civilisation 2. Prachi river is a part of Mahanadi delta <p>Which among the following is/are correct?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2 <p>4. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/ones?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. President addresses both the houses of parliament assembled together at the commencement of | <p>the first session after each general election to the Lok Sabha</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Motion of Thanks do not have the constitutional backup <p>Code:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2 <p>5. Consider the following statements about Prithvi II missile</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is nuclear capable missile 2. It is indigenously developed surface to surface missile with a range of 350 kms 3. It is a strategic missile developed by DRDO <p>Which among the following are correct?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above <p>6. Which among the following is India's first all women railway station?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Matunga railway station (b) Koli railway station (c) Ernakulam Junction railway station (d) Ernakulam town railway station <p>7. Which among the following releases the Democracy Index?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Nation of equality (b) International institute for democracy and electoral assistance (c) Economic Intelligence unit (d) None of the above <p>8. Which among the following are correct after new classification of MSME's?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A micro enterprise is a unit where annual turnover does not cross 5 crore |
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2. A small enterprise is a unit whose annual turnover is between 5-50 crore
3. A medium enterprise is above 50 crore but up to 200 crore

Code:

- (a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above

9. Which among the following given above is/are correct?

1. The main responsibility of promotion and development of MSME is of state government
2. A payment turns Non-Performing Asset in 180 days in case of **MSME's**

Code:

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

10. Which among the following is correct about Inverted Duty Structure (IDS)

1. Disadvantage of the inverted duty structure increases with the increased use of imported raw materials
2. It makes the industry of host country vulnerable
3. It raises the price in the importing country

Code:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above

11. Which among the following is correct?

- (a) MILAN is a congregation of Navy of various nations
- (b) Recently Sri Lanka declined **India's invitation**
- (c) It is a biennial naval exercise
- (d) All of the above

12. Village resource centre is an initiative of which among the following.

- (a) DRDO
(b) ISRO
(c) Ministry of rural development
(d) BARC

13. Consider the following statements about Prasar Bharti.

1. It is a statutory and autonomous body
2. It is the public service broadcaster of the country
3. Prasar Bharti president is appointed by president of India

Which of the following are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above

14. Which among the following is/are correct about venture capital fund?

1. It is provided to start up companies
2. It is also known as angle fund

Code:

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

15. Which among the following is correct about Operation greens?

1. It aims to double the forest area in India with the process of afforestation
2. The idea behind operation green is to double farmer income by 2022

Code:

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

16. What will follow if a Money Bill is substantially amended by the Rajya Sabha? (UPSC 2013)
- The Lok Sabha may still proceed with the Bill, accepting or not accepting the recommendations of the Rajya Sabha
 - The Lok Sabha cannot consider the Bill further
 - The Lok Sabha may send the Bill to the Rajya Sabha for reconsideration
 - The President may call a joint sitting for passing the Bill
17. With reference to the history of Indian rock-cut architecture, consider the following statements: (UPSC 2013)
- The caves at Badami are the oldest surviving rock-cut caves in India.
 - The Barabar rock-cut caves were originally made for Ajivikas by Emperor Chandragupta Maurya.
 - At Ellora, caves were made for different faiths.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3
18. Variations in the length of daytime and nighttime from season to season are due to (UPSC 2013)
- The earth's rotation on its axis
 - The earth's revolution round the sun in an elliptical manner
 - latitudinal position of the place
 - revolution of the earth on a tilted axis
19. Consider the following: (upsc 2013)
- Electromagnetic radiation
 - Geothermal energy
 - Gravitational force
 - Plate movements
 - Rotation of the earth
 - Revolution of the earth
- Which of the above are responsible for bringing dynamic changes on the surface of the earth?
- 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
 - 1, 3, 5 and 6 only
 - 2, 4, 5 and 6 only
 - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6
20. In the grasslands, trees do not replace the grasses as a part of an ecological succession because of
- insects and fungi
 - limited sunlight and paucity of nutrients
 - water limits and fire
 - None of the above
21. Which of the following express runs between India and Pakistan?
- Thar Express
 - Samjhauta Express
 - Link Express
 - Maitree Express
- Code:
- 1 and 2
 - 1 and 3
 - 2,3 and 4
 - all the above
22. VINBAX is an Army exercise between
- India-Maldives
 - India-Singapore
 - India-Vietnam
 - India-Afghanistan
23. Which of the following state won best tableau award in republic day 2018 parade?
- Telangana
 - Maharastra
 - Assam
 - Manipur
24. Consider the following statements about Rotavac and choose the correct one/s

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| <p>1. It is the first indigenously developed vaccine manufactures by Hindustan group.</p> <p>2. It is a vaccine for childhood diarrhoea.</p> <p>Code:</p> <p>(a) 1 only</p> <p>(b) 2 only</p> <p>(c) 1 and 2</p> <p>(d) None of the above</p> <p>25. Consider the following about Global centre for Cybersecurity and choose the correct one/s</p> <p>1. It is an autonomous organisation under WTO.</p> <p>2. It has been established in Geneva.</p> <p>Code:</p> <p>(a) 1 only</p> <p>(b) 2 only</p> <p>(c) 1 and 2</p> <p>(d) None of the above</p> <p>26. Which of the following has been named World Book Capital for 2019 by UNESCO?</p> <p>(a) Sharjah</p> <p>(b) Wroclaw</p> <p>(c) New Delhi</p> <p>(d) Montreal</p> <p>27. Consider the following about UN Tax Committee</p> <p>1. It is an independent body of UN</p> | <p>2. India is the first country to make voluntary contribution to this body.</p> <p>Which among the following is/are correct?</p> <p>(a) 1 only</p> <p>(b) 2 only</p> <p>(c) 1 and 2</p> <p>(d) None of the above</p> <p>28. Voter Registration Reminder has been launched by ECI and</p> <p>(a) Facebook</p> <p>(b) Google</p> <p>(c) Jio</p> <p>(d) Yahoo</p> <p>29. Lodha Panel reforms were associated with</p> <p>(a) ECI</p> <p>(b) BCCI</p> <p>(c) MCI</p> <p>(d) FRBM act</p> <p>30. Consider the following about Coral Reefs and choose the correct one/s</p> <p>1. They grow in warm tropical ocean</p> <p>2. In India Gulf of Kutch is the biggest coral reef</p> <p>Code:</p> <p>(a) 1 only</p> <p>(b) 2 only</p> <p>(c) 1 and 2</p> <p>(d) None of the above</p> |
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