



# CURRENT CONNECT SEPTEMBER- 18

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S.N.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
GS- I	Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.	Indian history significant events, personalities, issues and the Freedom Struggle	Post independence issues, National boundary and disputes	Indian society features, 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.	Legislative, executive and judicial processes.	Constitutional, non-constitutional, judicial, quasi judicial, administrative and other types of bodies.	Federal structure and local bodies. Their powers and functions.	Government policies and various governance issues like transparency, 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, 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/e-Governance	Ethics in international issues	Personalities and their teachings	Other important topics			
Mis.											

## INDEX

1. Family Law Reform	5
2. Department of Official Language	6
3. Draft rules for E Pharmacies	7
4. <b>Draft charter of Patients' Rights</b>	8
5. SC on Section 377	10
6. Clemency power of Governor	12
7. HIV Act	13
8. Ethics Committee of Lok Sabha	15
9. Section 498A	16
10. Supreme Court allows live streaming of cases	17
11. National Communications Policy 2018	18
12. Zonal Council	19
13. Lokpal Appointment	20
14. Medical Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018	22
15. Decriminalization of Politics	23
16. PM-AASHA	25
17. District Disability Rehabilitation Centre (DDRC)	26
18. Swayangsiddha Scheme	27
19. e-Sahaj portal	27
20. Portals to strengthen Women Safety	28
21. National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA)	28
22. Krishna Kutir	29
23. National Mission on GeM	30
24. Bharat Ke Veer	31
25. NALSA compensation scheme	31
26. Irrigation facilities get ICID heritage tag	32
27. e-VBAB Network Project	33
28. BIMSTEC Summit	34
29. 6th East Asia Summit	35
30. Indus Waters Treaty mandated tours	36
31. International Ayurveda Congress	37
32. International Women Entrepreneurs Summit	38
33. International Aviation Summit	38
34. Asia-Europe Meeting	39
35. PISA (Program for International Student Assessment)	39
36. COMCASA	40
37. First Global Mobility Summit 2018	40
38. Chabahar Port	41
39. World Hindu Congress	42
40. 4thWorld Summit on Accreditation	42
41. International Telecommunication Union (ITU)	43
42. Global Summit on Urban Tourism	44
43. Pakistan invited <b>Saudi Arabia to join the CPEC as third "strategic partner"</b>	44
44. IAEA	45
45. Global Media Compact	46
46. International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons	46
47. Sustainable Development Framework for 2018-2022	47
48. Western Ghats	48
49. IOWave18	49
50. Himalayan springs	50
51. Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats	51
52. Ganga cleaning project	52
53. Snow Leopard	53
54. 70% chance of El Nino event this year	53
55. River Pollution	55
56. India to launch agriculture project with UN's FAO	55

57. Ethanol Blended Petrol Program	56
58. CHILLER STAR LABELLING PROGRAM	57
59. TX2 goal	57
60. Kerala floods	58
61. WAYU (Wind Augmentation Purifying Unit)	58
62. SATAT initiative	59
63. Rashtriya Poshan Maah	60
64. NASA's Cassini spacecraft	60
65. Model International Center for Transformative AI (ICTAI)	61
66. Apsara – U Reactor	62
67. <b>NASA's Orion spacecraft</b>	62
68. ICESat-2	63
69. Fixed dose combination (FDC) drugs	63
70. Block Chain Technology	64
71. ISRO's PSLV-C-42 launches two U.K. satellites	65
72. Cyclone-30	65
73. NASA balloon mission	66
74. Agmark online system	67
75. Drugs and Blockchain	67
76. Total Expense Ratio (TER)	68
77. Consolidation of Public Sector Banks	69
78. Catastrophe Bond	71
79. <b>State's Financial Inclusion Index</b>	72
80. Country Partnership Framework for India	72
81. Debts Recovery Tribunals (DRT)	73
82. Exporting corruption report 2018	75
83. Internal Ombudsman Scheme-2018	76
84. Capacity Development Scheme (CDS)	77
85. Measuring human capital: A systematic analysis of 195 countries And territories (1990-2016)	78
86. Malnourishment in India	79
87. 2018 Global Multi-dimensional Poverty Index	81
88. Two-layer Ballistic Missile Defence system	83
89. <b>India's first indigenous anti-nuclear medical kit</b>	83
90. Missile Prahar	84
91. Umbrella scheme of Border Infrastructure and Management (BIM)	84
92. Multilateral Exercises	86
93. Bilateral Exercises	87
94. Khirki mosque	88
95. Battle of Haifa	88
96. Police forces in 6 UTs merged	89
97. Concept Clearing Assignment	89
98. P.T Oriented Questions	90

## Family Law Reform

### In News

Law Commission floats Consultation Paper on Family Law Reform.

### Background

This consultation on family law reforms in India, discusses a range of provisions within all family laws, secular or personal, and suggests a number of changes to in the form of potential amendments and fresh enactments. The issues touched are Marriage & Divorce, Custody & Guardianship, Adoption & Maintenance and Succession & Inheritance.

### Summary of the recommendations:

1. As general suggestions to reforming family law, the paper discusses the introduction of new grounds for **'no fault' divorce** accompanied by corresponding changes to provisions on alimony and maintenance, rights of differently-abled individuals within marriage, the thirty-day period for registration of marriages under Special Marriage Act; uncertainty and inequality in age of consent for marriage, compulsory registration of marriage, bigamy upon conversion etc.
2. Under Hindu law the paper among other issues discusses problems with provisions like restitution of conjugal rights, and further suggests the inclusion of concepts such as 'community of property' of a **married couple, abolition of coparcenary, rights** of illegitimate children etc. There are further suggestions for addressing self-acquired property of a Hindu female.
3. Under Muslim law the paper discusses the reform in inheritance law through codification of Muslim law on inheritance, but ensuring that the codified law is gender just. The paper also discusses the rights of a widow, and the changes application to general laws such as introduction of community of (self-acquired) property after marriage, inclusion of irretrievable breakdown of marriage as a ground for divorce.
4. Under Parsi law **there are suggestions relating to protecting married women's right** to inherit property even if they marry outside their community.
5. The paper also suggests the expansion of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015, to make it into a robust secular law that can be accessed by individuals of all communities for adoption. There are suggestions for amending the guidelines for adoption and also a suggestion to alter the language of the Act to accommodate all gender identities.
6. The paper discusses lacunae within custody and guardianship laws, statutory or **customary, and suggests that the 'best interest of the child' has to remain the** paramount consideration in deciding matters of custody regardless of any prevailing personal law in place.
7. Although the sixth schedule provides exemptions and exemptions to states in the North East and tribal areas, it **suggest that efforts of women's organisations** in these areas be acknowledged and relied upon in this regard to suggest ways in which family law reform could be aided by the state even when direct intervention may not be possible.
8. Since a number of these issues such as polygamy, nikah halala, settlement of a Parsi **wife's property for benefit of children, as well as the law on adultery among others is** presently *sub judice* before the Supreme Court, they have been discussed in the paper but comprehensive changes on some of these issues have not been suggested at this stage.
9. The Commission advocates for change in the age of consent for marriage, opining that the current difference of eighteen years for girls and twenty-one years of age for boys **"simply contributes to the stereotype that wives must be younger than their husbands"**. The age of majority must be recognized uniformly as the legal age for marriage for men and women alike as is determined by the Indian Majority Act, 1875, i.e. eighteen years of age.
10. Rights of Differently-Abled Persons in Marriage: The paper recommends amendments to exclude from grounds for divorce forms of illnesses that can be cured or controlled with

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II						■	■				
III											
IV											
M											

PEPPER IT WITH  
Uniform Civil Code,  
Article 44, CARA

adequate medical treatment or counselling. It further suggests that general reference to **terms such as 'unsound mind', 'lunacy', 'mental disorder', need to be broken down and analysed further.**

### Significance

- Rights of females related to agricultural land
- Need for relocation and reconciliation of heirs
- Steps towards gender equality
- **Addressing the issue of „self-acquired property“** of a Hindu female
- Rights of a Childless Widow
- Inheritance rights of illegitimate children

## Department of Official Language

### In News

First review meeting of the Department of Official Language of MHA was held recently to discuss the functioning and issues related to implementation of Hindi language in official work.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

### Department of Official Language

- ✓ The Department of Official Language was set up as an independent Department of the Ministry of Home Affairs with an aim of ensuring compliance of the constitutional and legal provisions regarding official language and to promote the use of Hindi for the official purposes of the Union.
- ✓ It has nodal responsibility for all matters relating to the progressive use of Hindi as the Official Language of the Union including Hindi Teaching Scheme for Central Government Employees and publication of magazines, journals & other literature related.

### Constitution on Official Language

Part 17 of the constitution of India (Articles 343 to Article 351) makes elaborate provisions dealing with the official language of the Republic of India. The Official languages have been listed in the 8th schedule of Constitution of India.

### Article 343. Official language of the Union-

- The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devnagari script. The form of numerals to be used for the official purposes of the Union shall be the international form of Indian numerals.
- The President may by order authorise the use of the Hindi language in addition to the English language and of the Devnagari form of numerals in addition to the international form of Indian numerals for any of the official purposes of the Union.
- The original constitution provided that for a period of 15 years from the commencement of the constitution, English will continue to be used for all official purposes of the Union. The constitution also makes it clear that even after 15 years, the Parliament by law may provide for the continued use of English for any specific purpose.

- **Hindi is not India's National Language.** Neither is it language of communication between states & centre. Both Hindi and English are Official languages.
- The department has developed a computer software called **"Kanthasth"** for translating the all kinds of official files from English to Hindi and vice versa to make the translation work simpler and quicker.
- Lila Mobile App for making the learning of Hindi language easier, which was launched on the occasion of Hindi Diwas in 2017.
- An E-learning platform called the **"Pravah"** also being developed by the department for use in 16 Indian languages including English. It will be launched on Hindi Diwas 2018.
- Recently, Bodo, Dongri, Maithili and Santhali were added to 8<sup>th</sup> Schedule by the 92nd Amendment Act of 2003.

Article 120: Language to be used in Parliament

- Notwithstanding anything in part XVII, but subject to the provisions of article 348, business in Parliament shall be transacted in Hindi or in English.
- Chairman of the Council of States or Speaker of the House of the People, permit any member who cannot adequately express himself in Hindi or in English to address the House in his mother-tongue.

Article 210: Language to be used in the Legislature

- Notwithstanding anything in part XVII, but subject to the provisions of article 348, business in the Legislature of a State shall be transacted in the official language or languages of the State or in Hindi or in English.
- Speaker of the Legislative Assembly or Chairman of the Legislative Council, may permit any member who cannot adequately express himself in any of the languages aforesaid to address the House in his mother-tongue.

PEPPER IT WITH  
8<sup>th</sup> Schedule, Dickinsonia

Draft rules for E Pharmacies

In News

The Union Health Ministry has come out with draft rules on sale of drugs by e-pharmacies with an aim to regulate online sale of medicines across India and provide patients accessibility to genuine drugs from authentic online portals.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II	■										
III											
IV											
M											

Key Highlights

1. All the e-pharmacies have to be registered compulsorily with the Central Drugs Standard control organisation.
2. Any person who intends to conduct business of e-pharmacy shall apply for the grant of registration to the Central Licensing Authority in Form 18AA through the online portal of the Central Government.
3. The application of registration of e-pharmacy will have to be accompanied by a sum of Rs 50,000 while asserting that an e-pharmacy registration holder will have to comply with provisions of Information Technology Act, 2000.
4. The details of patient shall be kept confidential and shall not be disclosed to any person other than the central government or the state government concerned
5. Requirement for prescription from Registered Medical Practitioner to a patient, written in hand or in any electronic mode for sale is mandatory.
6. A cash or credit memo generated through the e-pharmacy portal and such memos shall be maintained by the e-pharmacy registration holder as record.
7. These pharmacies will be purchasing directly from the drug manufacturer so they will also be able to give 20-30 per cent discounts, thus benefiting the patients
8. Sale of tranquillisers, psychotropic drugs, narcotics and habit forming drugs have been prohibited through these portals.
9. The premises from where the e-pharmacy business is conducted shall be inspected, every two years, by a team of officers authorised by the Central Licensing Authority, with or without the experts in the relevant field or the officers authorised by the concerned State Licensing Authority.

The data shared online for drugs purchase needs to be strictly protected. European **Union’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** treats **“data concerning health”** as a special category of personal data. Similar is the recommendation by the Justice Srikrishna Committee in its report on **“Data protection and Privacy.**

Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Karnataka, Kerala, Mizoram, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have prohibited manufacture, import, sale and distribution of ENDS or e-cigarettes.

- 10. The registration issued to any person for e-pharmacy will remain valid for a period a three years.
- 11. E-pharmacy shall not advertise any drug on radio or television or internet or print or any other media for any purpose.

Shortcomings

- This definition of **“prescription”** is vague. A digitally signed prescription from the Doctor only or a directly communication by the Doctor to an e-pharmacy is not mandated. A scanned document is sufficient. An old prescription or a fabricated prescription could still be used to buy drugs.
- An equally crucial issue is the availability of Schedule H and H 1 Drugs of Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 through e-pharmacies, while drugs under the NDPS Act, tranquilizers and Schedule X drugs have been prohibited.
- Online pharmacies had no alert system in place to identify multiple orders to the same address.
- **The policy for “e-Commerce in India” is in draft stage.** Likewise, the law on data protection is still in pipeline. E – **Pharmacies would be bound by the norms laid down for “electronic commerce.”** Ideally, till the norms for e-commerce are not finalised, law for e-pharmacies would continue to be in a flux.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Schedule G, H, H1& X  
drugs, Rx, NRx & XRx labels  
on drugs, E-prescribing,  
Staphylococcus epidermidis

Conclusion

Technology is evolving at an exponential pace and generally law always has to catch up. It needs to do so for e – pharmacies in India as well. The diagnosis of the problems with e – pharmacies in India is not correct. So is the prescription in the form of Draft Rules. A more robust regime is essential to take care of interests of all stakeholders, specially, in the sensitive area of health care and accessibility of drugs.

**Draft charter of Patients’ Rights**

In News

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has released the draft on **Charter of Patients’ Rights.**

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II		■									
III											
IV											
M											

Background

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) emphasizes the fundamental dignity and equality of all human beings. Based on this concept, the notion of Patient Rights has been developed across the globe.
- **This Charter of Patient’s Rights adopted by the National Human Rights Commission** draws upon all relevant provisions, inspired by international charters and guided by national level provisions.
- There is an expectation that this document will act as a guidance document for the Union Government and State Governments to formulate concrete mechanisms so that **Patient’s Rights are given adequate protection and operational mechanisms are set up** to make these rights functional and enforceable by law.

Objective

The objective of this Charter is to generate widespread public awareness and educate citizens regarding what they should expect from their governments and health care providers—about the kind of treatment they deserve as patients and human beings, in health care settings. NHRC firmly believes that informed and aware citizens can play a vital role in elevating the standard of health care, when they have guidance provided by codified rights.

The draft charter includes 17 rights with description, draws upon all relevant provisions inspired by international charters.

Duties recommended for patience

1. Patients should provide all required health related information to their doctor, in response to the **doctor's queries** without concealing any relevant information, so that diagnosis and treatment can be facilitated.
2. Patients should cooperate with the doctor during examination, diagnostic tests and treatment, and should **follow doctor's advice**, while keeping in view their right to participate in decision making related to treatment.
3. Patients should follow all instructions regarding appointment time, cooperate with hospital staff and fellow patients, avoid creating disturbance to other patients, and maintain cleanliness in the hospital.
4. Patients should respect the dignity of the doctor and other hospital staff as human beings and as professionals. Whatever the grievance maybe, patient / caregivers should not resort to violence in any form and damage or destroy any property of the hospital or the service provider.

Charter of Patient Rights	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to information</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to choose source for obtaining medicines or tests</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to records and reports</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to proper referral and transfer, free from perverse commercial influences</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to emergency medical care</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to protection of patients involved in clinical trials</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to informed consent</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to protection of participants involved in biomedical and health research</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to confidentiality, human dignity and privacy</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to take discharge of patient or receive body of deceased from hospital</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to second opinion</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to patient education</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to transparency in rates, and care according to prescribed rates, wherever relevant</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to be heard and seek redressal</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to non-discrimination</b></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to safety and quality care according to set standards</b></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Right to choose alternative treatment options, if available</b></li> </ul>	

Significance

- ✓ Right to non-discrimination is an important right. Every patient has the right to receive treatment without any discrimination based on his or her illnesses or conditions, including HIV status or other health condition, religion, caste, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, linguistic or geographical /social origins.
- ✓ The hospital management has a duty to ensure that no form of discriminatory behaviour or treatment **takes place with any person under the hospital's care**. The hospital management must regularly orient and instruct all its doctors and staff.
- ✓ The government and private sector medical care are duty-bound to provide basic **emergency medical care to injured persons irrespective of the patient's paying capacity**.
- ✓ The hospital management has a duty to ensure that any decision to seek such second opinion by the patient / caregivers must not adversely influence the quality of care being provided by the treating hospital as long as the patient is under care of that hospital. Any kind discriminatory practice adopted by the hospital or the service **providers will be deemed as Human Rights' violation**.
- ✓ Every hospital and clinical establishment has a duty to ensure that essential medicines under NLEM as per Government of India and World Health Organisation, devices, implants and services are provided to patients at rates that are not higher than the prescribed rates.

PEPPER IT WITH CEHAT, NHP 2017, AMRUT, SABLA, PMSSY, NCD-1, UIP
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SC on Section 377

In News

In a historic judgment, the Supreme Court (SC) recently ruled that consensual adult gay sex is not a crime saying sexual orientation is natural and people have no control over it.

Background

After the Privacy judgment of 2017, and the Common Cause (Euthanasia-Living Will), Hadiya and Shakti Vahini (fundamental right to choose a life partner) decisions of 2018, the Supreme Court has taken yet another step to widen the ambit of individual autonomy and decisional privacy by decriminalising homosexuality. Individuals have sovereignty over their bodies, and their intimacy in privacy is a matter of their choice with which state or society should have no concern, the court has ruled. In overruling Suresh Koushal (2014), the court has again privileged constitutional morality over social or majoritarian morality.

“Equality is the edifice on which the entire non-discrimination jurisprudence rests. Respect for individual choice is the very essence of liberty under law and, thus, criminalising carnal intercourse under Section 377 IPC is irrational, indefensible and manifestly arbitrary,” quoted the CJI.

WHO removed homosexuality from the list of diseases in the International Classification of Diseases in the publication of ICD-10 in 1992.

What is Section 377 of IPC?

Section 377 of the IPC states:

“Whoever voluntarily has carnal inter-course against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with [imprisonment for life], or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.” This archaic British law dates back to 1861 and criminalises sexual activities against the order of nature.

Constitutional Validity

- The petitioners had argued that Section 377, in so far as it criminalizes homosexuality, violates Article 14 (equality before law), Article 15 (prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth), Article 19 (freedom of speech and expression, and to form associations or unions) and Article 21 (right to Life) of the Constitution of India.
- The right to sexuality, sexual autonomy and freedom to choose a sexual partner form the cornerstone of human dignity. Section 377 has a “chilling effect” on the right of equality, liberty, life, dignity and non-discrimination on the ground of sex.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I		■									
II											
III											
IV											
M											

**TWISTS AND TURNS AGAINST 150-YEAR-OLD BAN ON HOMOSEXUALITY**

- 1994**: ABVA, an NGO, files petition in Delhi HC seeking repeal of Sec 377, after Tihar male inmates denied condoms; fails to follow through
- 2001**: PIL by Naz Foundation in Delhi HC seeks repeal of British-era Sec 377, around since 1862
- 2004-2008**: **Back & forth in courts**
  - HC dismisses petition
  - Activists move SC, which asks it to reconsider
  - Centre plays for time; home, health ministries file contradictory affidavits
  - Centre submits gay sex is immoral, argues against decriminalisation
  - HC shoots down 'immoral' argument, calls for scientific evidence
  - Centre says Parliament must decide
- JUL 2, 2009**: Delhi HC decriminalises homosexuality
- 2009-2012**: Religious groups, individuals challenge SC's decriminalisation verdict
- DEC 11, 2013**: SC sets aside 2009 Delhi HC order, leaves matter for Parliament to decide
- 2015**: Lok Sabha votes against introduction of private member's Bill by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor to decriminalise homosexuality
- FEB 2016**: 3-judge SC bench says all pleas will be reviewed afresh by a 5-judge constitutional bench
- AUG 2017**: SC upholds right to privacy, says sexual orientation is an "essential component of identity" and the rights of LGBTQ persons are "real rights founded on sound constitutional doctrine"
- JAN 2018**: SC bench headed by CJI Dipak Misra says 2013 ruling to be reconsidered, sends it to larger bench
- JUL 2018**: SC says it's up to bench to take a call on the 150-year-old ban on gay sex
- SEP 6, 2018**: **SC decriminalises homosexuality**

### Verdict

1. SC ruled that consensual adult gay sex is not a crime saying sexual orientation is natural and people have no control over it by reversing the Delhi high court ruling in 2013.
2. The bestiality will continue as an offence. Any kind of unnatural sexual activity with animals shall remain penal offence under Section 377 of the IPC.
3. **India's new mental illness law does not consider homosexuality to be a mental illness.**
4. It is not left to majoritarian governments to prescribe what shall be orthodox in matters concerning social morality. The fundamental rights chapter is like the north-star in the universe of constitutionalism.

### Constitutional morality and Section 377 IPC

- ❖ In the garb of social morality, the members of the LGBT community must not be outlawed by the society. If this happens or if such a treatment to the LGBT community is allowed to persist, then the constitutional courts, which are under the obligation to protect the fundamental rights, would be failing in the discharge of their duty. The Court has to be guided by the conception of constitutional morality and not by the societal morality.
- ❖ The concept of constitutional morality is not limited to the mere observance of the core principles of constitutionalism as the magnitude and sweep of constitutional morality is not confined to the provisions and literal text which a Constitution contains, rather it embraces within itself virtues of a wide magnitude such as that of ushering a pluralistic and inclusive society, while at the same time adhering to the other principles of constitutionalism.
- ❖ The society as a whole or even a minuscule part of the society may aspire and prefer different things for themselves. They are perfectly competent to have such a freedom to be different, like different things, so on and so forth, provided that their different tastes and liking remain within their legal framework and neither violates any statute nor results in the abridgement of fundamental rights of another citizen.

Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to men, women or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviours, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions. - *American Psychological Association*

### Challenges Ahead

- ✓ Marriages: legalising same-sex marriages and bringing amendment in Special Marriage Act.
- ✓ Adoption: Indian Law prohibits adoption of a child by gay couple.
- ✓ Inheritance: Unless a will is drawn in favour of same-sex partner, one cannot inherit the properties left behind.
- ✓ Child abuse: Many child rights activists had criticised the Delhi HC verdict decriminalising homosexuality on the ground that Section 377 was needed to be on the statute book to tackle cases of child abuse.
- ✓ Reservation: reservation in employment as they may come under minority status like transgender.

PEPPER IT WITH  
LGBTIQ, Suresh Kumar Koushal v. Naz Foundation, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, Homophobia Report

### Conclusion

Section 377 is founded on moral notions which are an anathema to a constitutional order in which liberty must trump over stereotypes and prevail over the mainstreaming of culture. Our Constitution, above all, is an essay in the acceptance of diversity. It is founded on a vision of an inclusive society which accommodates plural ways of life.

## Clemency power of Governor

### In News

After failing to get the seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case released by exercising its statutory power to remit life sentences, the government in Tamil Nadu has taken recourse to a possible **constitutional remedy**. It has decided to invoke the Governor's clemency power under Article 161 of the Constitution.

GS CONNECT											
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I											
II		■									
III											
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### Issue Background

- In 2014, the Tamil Nadu government tried to invoke its remission powers under Section 432 of the Code of Criminal Procedure to release the convicts. The Centre opposed the move, arguing that since the case had been prosecuted by the Central Bureau of Investigation, the state first needed to take the Centre's "concurrence" as required by Section 435 of the code.
- The dispute went to the Supreme Court, which decided in the Centre's favour in 2015, ruling that the word "**consultation**" in Section 435 in spirit meant "**concurrence**".

### The Legal debate

- Legal opinion is sharply divided on the pardon powers of the governor under Article 161 of the Constitution. One view is that the governor exercises discretionary powers in granting pardon, but this cannot be done independently. He will also have to abide by the "**aid and advice**" of the council of ministers.
- According to former Attorney General of India, the governor need not consult the central government. "He should act on the advice of the council of ministers of the concerned state government and not heed the advice of others. Here the Tamil Nadu government has recommended the release of seven convicts and the governor has to accept it.
- The constitution bench lately also made it crystal clear that the state governments throughout India cannot release any convict if the cases against them were conducted by any central agency and in this case, the probe was conducted by the CBI.
- Lately, the Centre denied concurrence to Tamil Nadu on the grounds that releasing the people convicted of assassinating a former prime minister would "**set a very dangerous precedent and lead to international ramifications**" for India.
- Exercise of executive clemency is a matter of discretion and yet subject to certain standards. It is not a matter of privilege. It is a matter of performance of official duty. It is vested in the President or the Governor, as the case may be, not for the benefit of the convict only, but for the welfare of the people who may insist on the performance of the duty.

#### Section 435: State Government to act after 'consultation' with Central Government in certain cases.

The powers conferred by sections 432 and 433 upon the State Government to remit or commute a sentence, in any case where the sentence is for an offence-

- Which was investigated by the Delhi Special Police Establishment or by any other agency empowered to make investigation under any Central Act
- Which involved the misappropriation or destruction of, or damage to, any property belonging to the Central Government
- Which was committed by a person in the service of the Central Government while acting or purporting to act in the discharge of his official duty, shall not be exercised by the State Government except after consultation with the Central Government

### What governor can do?

- Governor can sit on the cabinet recommendation endlessly, as Article 161 of the Constitution does not prescribe any time limit for him to take a decision on the cabinet resolution.

- Governor can return (if it is not a money bill) the resolution to the cabinet for clarification or reconsideration. However if the bill/resolution is passed again with/without any changes by state legislature, the governor has to give his assent.
- Governor can reject the resolution prompting the stake-holders to take the issue to courts.

However, governor’s decision, even if made on the aid and advice of the Cabinet, is subject to judicial review. In two separate judgements, the apex court has reiterated that **governor’s** power to pardon cannot be used mechanically. In Epuru Sudhakar case, the court ruled that political considerations cannot be the basis for granting pardon, and set aside **the governor’s clemency order.**

Article 161

Power of Governor to grant pardons, etc, and to suspend, remit or commute sentences in certain cases  
The Governor of a State shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the State extends

Implications on release of convicts

- This ruling is relevant to the matter of Rajiv Gandhi’s assassins if the gravity of their crime is considered. The Tamil Nadu governor has to satisfy **that releasing a former prime minister’s killers would be “for the welfare of the people”.** But can the governor reach such a conclusion when the Centre has made it clear that freeing the convicts would be detrimental to the country?
- There is a possibility that the Centre will challenge the **governor’s order if governor accepts the state Cabinet’s** advice, not least because it will cause several legal and diplomatic complications.
- Since three of the convicts are Sri Lankan nationals, what will be their legal status after they are released? Will the Indian government be willing to let foreign nationals convicted of assassinating a former prime minister live in the country? Will it deport them to Sri Lanka, where they are bound to be arrested again? If they propose to move to another country, can India be expected to facilitate such a move?

PEPPER IT WITH  
Powers & Functions of Governor, Pardoning power of Governor & President, Art 72, Art 32

HIV Act

In News

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued a notification for bringing the Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017 in force from September, 2018.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II	■							■			
III											
IV											
M											

Objective

The Act, safeguards the rights of people living with HIV and affected by HIV. The provisions of the Act address HIV-related discrimination, strengthen the existing programme by bringing in legal accountability, and establish formal mechanisms for inquiring into complaints and redressing grievances.

Key Highlights

Prohibition of discrimination:

- The Act lists various grounds on which discrimination against HIV positive persons and those living with them is prohibited. These include the denial, termination, discontinuation or unfair treatment with regard to: (i) employment, (ii) educational establishments, (iii) health care services, (iv) residing or renting property, (v) standing for public or private office, and (vi) provision of insurance (unless based on actuarial studies).

- It prohibits isolation or segregation of an HIV-positive person. Every HIV-positive person has the right to reside in a shared household and use facilities in a non-discriminatory manner.

Informed consent and disclosure:

- No person is compelled to disclose his HIV status except by an order of the court. A breach of violation attracts a jail sentence of up to two years or a fine of up to Rs 1 lakh, or both.
- Under the law, no HIV-affected person can be subject to medical treatment, medical interventions or research without informed consent. Further, no HIV positive woman, who is pregnant, can be subjected to sterilisation or abortion without her consent.

- ❖ The National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) has released the report HIV Estimations 2017. Goal of attaining the **'End of AIDS' by 2030.**
- ❖ NACO undertakes HIV estimations biennially in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) – National Institute of Medical Statistics (NIMS).
- ❖ As per the report, in 2017, India had around 21.40 lakh people living with HIV (PLHIV) with adult prevalence of 0.22%.
- ❖ Around 87.58 thousand new HIV infections and 69.11 thousand AIDS related deaths happened in 2017 while around 22,675 mothers needed Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) for prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV.

- Every establishment is obligated to keep HIV-related information protected. Every HIV-positive person is compelled to take reasonable precautions to prevent the transmission of HIV to other persons.

Role of the central and state governments:

- The state and Centre must make diagnostic facilities, anti-retroviral therapy and opportunistic infection management available to all HIV-infected people, and ensure wide dissemination of the same.
- The central and state governments shall take measures to: (i) prevent the spread of HIV or AIDS, (ii) provide anti-retroviral therapy and infection management for persons with HIV or AIDS, (iii) facilitate their access to welfare schemes especially for women and children, (iv) formulate HIV or AIDS education communication programmes that are age appropriate, gender sensitive, and non-stigmatizing.

Approximately 21 lakh persons estimated to be living with HIV in India and the percentage of patients receiving anti-retroviral therapy (ART) treatment currently stands at a mere 25.82% as against the global percentage of 41%, according to the 2015 Global Burden of Diseases (GBD).

Guardianship: As per provisions of the Act, a person between the age of 12 to 18 years who has sufficient maturity in understanding and managing the affairs of his HIV or AIDS affected family shall be competent to act as a guardian of another sibling below 18 years of age to be applicable in the matters relating to admission to educational establishments, operating bank accounts, managing property, care and treatment, amongst others.

PEPPER IT WITH  
NACO, Art 14, Art19, MTP  
Act, National Mental Health  
Policy

Role of the Ombudsman: Every state has to appoint one or more Ombudsmen to inquire into violations of the provisions of the Act. Within 30 days of receiving a complaint, the Ombudsman is required to pass an order as he deems fit. Failing to comply with the orders of the Ombudsman attracts a penalty of up to Rs 10,000.

Court proceedings: Cases relating to HIV positive persons shall be disposed-off by the court on a priority basis.

## Ethics Committee of Lok Sabha

### In News

L K Advani has been renominated as Chairman of Ethics Committee of Lok Sabha by Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II			■								
III											
IV											
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### Background

The Committee of Privileges without any prejudice to the earlier recommendations made in the 11th Lok Sabha, recommended that a separate Ethics Committee in Lok Sabha to be constituted which came into being in 2000.

### Functions of Committee

- to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of the Members
- to examine the cases referred to it with reference to ethical and other misconduct of the Members
- the committee can also initiate suo motu investigation into matters related to unethical conduct of a member and make recommendations

### Constitution on Committee

- In the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, a new Chapter viz. Chapter XXA **containing provisions regarding** "Procedure for ethics complaints" (Rules 233A, 233B) was added.
- Power of Speaker: As per 233B the Speaker may refer any question involving unethical conduct of a member in Lok Sabha to the Committee on Ethics for examination, investigation and report.
- There shall be a Committee on Ethics consisting of not more than fifteen members including Chairman.
- The Committee shall be nominated by the Speaker and shall hold office for a term not exceeding one year.
- The recommendations of the Committee shall be presented in the form of a report to the Speaker.

## Ethics Committee of Rajya Sabha

### Background

The Ethics Committee of Rajya Sabha was the first such Committee by any legislature in India constituted by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha in 1997, to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of the Members and to examine the cases referred to it with reference to ethical and other misconduct of Members.

It was provided that in all respects of procedure and other matters, the rules applicable to the Committee of Privileges shall apply to the Ethics Committee with such variations and modifications as the Chairman, Rajya Sabha may, from time to time, make.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Members of Rajya Sabha  
(Declaration of Assets  
and Liabilities) Rules,  
2004, LokPal, Lok Adadat

### Functions

- to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of members;
- to prepare a Code of Conduct for members and to suggest amendments or additions to the Code from time to time in the form of reports to the Council;
- to examine cases concerning the alleged breach of the Code of Conduct by members as also cases concerning allegations of any other ethical misconduct of members; and
- to tender advice to members from time to time on questions involving ethical standards either suo motu or on receiving specific requests.

### Constitution on Committee

- The procedure and functioning of the Committee on Ethics of Rajya Sabha is based on the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business and the Members of Rajya Sabha (Declaration of Assets and Liabilities) Rules, 2004.
- The Chairman shall, from time to time, nominate a Committee on Ethics consisting of ten members.

- The Chairman of the Committee shall be appointed by Chairman of Rajya Sabha from amongst the members of the Committee.
- The quorum of the Committee shall be five years.
- Power of Chairman: The Chairman may refer any question involving ethical and other misconduct of a member to the Committee for examination, investigation and report.
- The recommendations of the Committee shall be presented in the form of a report to the Speaker.

## Section 498A

### In News

The Supreme Court has held that prosecution under Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code and Sections 3 and 4 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, is not sustainable when the complaint is filed long after the divorce.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

### Background

The directive laid in Rajesh Sharma vs State of UP was criticised for allegedly diluting the spirit of Section 498A and subsequently a PIL was filed by an NGO Nyayadhar, seeking a direction to include two women members in a three-member FWC.

### Verdict

1. The Supreme Court recently scrapped its earlier direction to set up district-level committees to look into dowry harassment complaints before making arrests, saying this was **“impermissible”** and **“not in accord with the statutory framework.”**
2. Function of this Court is not to legislate but only to interpret the law. No doubt in doing so laying down of norms is sometimes unavoidable. Just and fair procedure being part of fundamental right to life, interpretation is required to be placed on a penal provision so that its working is not unjust, unfair or unreasonable. The top court left it to Parliament to make suitable rules to check abuse of the law.
3. The SC quoted that they are not in agreement with the decision rendered in Rajesh Sharma vs State of UP case because they are disposed to think that it really curtails the rights of the women who are harassed under Section 498A of the IPC.
4. The SC has asked the police to follow its directions regarding arrest as laid down in the 2014 cases of Arnesh Kumar vs State of Bihar i.e. all state governments to instruct its police officers not to automatically arrest when a case under Section 498-A IPC is registered, but to satisfy themselves about the necessity for arrest under the parameters laid down above flowing from Section 41 of CrPC.
5. The court said there are in-built remedies in Criminal Procedure to check the misuse of law like Section 41A and anticipatory bail among others.
6. There should be gender justice for women as dowry has a chilling effect on marriage on the one hand, and on the other hand, there is right to life and personal liberty of the man.
7. The apex court in a judgment said courts are there to protect harassed husbands and their relatives, who are not remotely connected to matrimonial cruelty, by granting them anticipatory bail.

#### What is Section 498A?

Husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty.—Whoever, being the husband or the relative of the husband of a woman, subjects such woman to cruelty shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine.

- ❖ As per NCRB report 21 dowry deaths are reported across the country every day, but the conviction rate is only 34.7 per cent.
- ❖ 7,634 women died in the country due to dowry harassment as per NCRB 2015 report.

**Directions in Rajesh Sharma’s under scope of scrutiny**

- In every district one or more Family Welfare Committees be constituted by the District Legal Services Authorities preferably comprising of three members.
- Every complaint under Section 498A received by the police or the Magistrate be referred to and looked into by such committee.
- Till report of the committee is received, no arrest should normally be effected.
- Complaints under Section 498A and other connected offences may be investigated only by a designated Investigating Officer of the area.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Anti-Dowry Act, Delegated  
Legislation, Judicial Overreach,  
Judicial Activism, Section 497

**Concerns**

- The increasing number of Dowry Deaths is a matter of serious concern. The extent of evil has been commented upon by the Joint Committee of the Houses constituted to examine the working of Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. Cases of cruelty by the husband and the relatives of the husband which culminate in suicide by, or murder of the hapless woman concerned, constitute only a small fraction of the cases involving such cruelty. The recent NCRB report on dowry death is alarming showing increase and the cases goes unreported many a time.
- A growing trend is being observed among women involved in marital discord to abuse **Section 498A of IPC to rope in their husbands’ relatives** — including parents, minor children, siblings and grandparents — in criminal cases. Therefore, it is high time such frivolous cases which violate the human rights of innocent is checked. The court suggested that legislation should be made likewise that the frivolous charges against the innocent family be tackled with great strictness which is maligning the 498A for being gender-biased and causing social unrest.

**Conclusion**

Provision of 498A is not unconstitutional and ultra vires. Mere possibility of abuse of a provision of law does not per se invalidate legislation. The object of the provisions is prevention of the dowry menace. But many instances have come to light where the complaints are not bona fide and have been filed with oblique motive. In such cases acquittal of the accused does not in all cases wipe out the ignominy suffered during and prior to trial.

**Supreme Court allows live streaming of cases**

**In News**

The Supreme Court recently pushed for greater transparency in the judicial system by setting the stage for live-streaming of court proceedings of cases of constitutional importance. The court directed the centre to frame rules for this and said the project will be carried out in phases.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II					■						
III											
IV											
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**About the project**

1. A pilot project may initially be taken up for about three months by live streaming only cases of national and constitutional importance presided over by the Chief Justice.
2. Progressively, as and when the infrastructure is ready, this court can expand the ambit of live streaming to cover all cases (except for the ones which are excluded).
3. Not all cases may be live streamed like matrimonial or sexual assault cases, matters where children and juveniles are involved, like Protection of Children from Sexual Offences cases, should be excluded.
4. Consent of parties to the proceedings must be insisted upon, and if there is no unanimity between them, the court concerned can take the appropriate decision in the matter. The court concerned will also have the power to revoke permission at any stage of the proceedings.
5. The final authority to regulate suspension or prohibition of live streaming in a particular case, where the administration of justice so requires, must be with the

presiding Judge of each court.

- 6. The copyright over all the material recorded and broadcast in this court shall vest with this court only and the recordings and broadcast may not be used by anyone for commercial purposes.

Significance

- Live streaming as an extension of the principle of open courts will ensure that the interface between court hearings with virtual reality will result in the dissemination of information in the widest possible sense, imparting transparency and accountability to the judicial process.
- It will encourage the principle of open court, effectuate the **public’s right to know and reduce dependence on second-hand views.**
- Citizens will be able to view court proceedings first-hand and form reasoned and educated opinions about the functioning of courts. This will help reduce misinformation and misunderstanding about the judicial process.
- It will help the law students and interns to have more access to courtroom which will help them in academia.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Judicial Review,  
 Judicial overreach,  
 Power of SC, IT Act

National Communications Policy 2018

In News

The Union Cabinet has approved the National Digital Communications Policy-2018 (NDCP-2018) and re-designation of the Telecom Commission as the “Digital Communications Commission”.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

The NDCP aims to accomplish the following Strategic Objectives by 2022:

1. Provisioning of Broadband for All
2. Creating 4 Million additional jobs in the Digital Communications sector
3. Enhancing the contribution of the Digital Communications sector to **8% of India’s GDP from ~ 6% in 2017**
4. Propelling India to the Top 50 Nations in the ICT Development Index of ITU from 134 in 2017
5. **Enhancing India’s contribution to Global Value Chains**
6. Ensuring Digital Sovereignty

Implementation of the following broadband initiatives, to be funded through USOF and Public Private Partnerships:

- BharatNet – Providing 1 Gbps to Gram Panchayats upgradeable to 10 Gbps
- GramNet – Connecting all key rural development institutions with 10 Mbps upgradeable to 100 Mbps
- NagarNet – Establishing 1 Million public Wi-Fi Hotspots in urban areas
- JanWiFi – Establishing 2 Million Wi-Fi Hotspots in rural areas

NDCP-2018 envisages three Missions:

1. Connect India: Creating Robust Digital Communications Infrastructure
2. Propel India: Enabling Next Generation Technologies and Services through Investments, Innovation and IPR generation
3. Secure India: Ensuring Sovereignty, Safety and Security of Digital Communications

Connect India 2022 Goals:

- a. Provide Universal broadband coverage at 50 Mbps to every citizen
- b. Provide 1 Gbps connectivity to all Gram Panchayats of India by 2020 and 10 Gbps by 2022
- c. Achieve ‘unique mobile subscriber density’ of 55 by 2020 and 65 by 2022
- d. Enable deployment of public Wi-Fi Hotspots; to reach 5 million by 2020 and 10 million by 2022
- e. Ensure connectivity to all uncovered areas

Propel India 2022 Goals:

- a. Attract investments of USD 100 Billion in the Digital Communications Sector
- b. **Increase India’s** contribution to Global Value Chains
- c. Creation of innovation led Start-ups in Digital Communications sector
- d. Train/ Re-skill 1 Million manpower for building New Age Skills
- e. Expand IoT ecosystem to 5 Billion connected devices
- f. Accelerate transition to Industry 4.0

Previously known as the National Telecom Policy 2012, the NDCP marks a clear shift in priorities from just telecommunications to digital infrastructure, services and security.

Secure India 2022 Goals:

- a. Establish a comprehensive data protection regime for digital communications that safeguards the privacy, autonomy and **choice of individuals and facilitates India’s** effective participation in the global digital economy
- b. Ensure that net neutrality principles are upheld and aligned with service requirements, bandwidth availability and network capabilities including next generation access technologies
- c. Develop and deploy robust digital communication network security frameworks
- d. Address security issues relating to encryption and security clearances
- e. Enforce accountability through appropriate institutional mechanisms to assure citizens of safe and secure digital communications infrastructure and services

PEPPER IT WITH Fibre First Initiative, National Digital Grid, M2M, IoT, Accelerating Industry 4.0, USOF

Significance

- ✓ The NDCP-2018 seeks to unlock the transformative power of digital communications networks - to achieve the goal of digital empowerment and well-being of the people of India; and towards this end, attempts to outline a set of goals, initiatives, strategies and intended policy outcomes
- ✓ NDCP-2018 fulfil the information and communication needs of citizens and enterprises by establishment of a ubiquitous, resilient, secure and affordable Digital **Communications Infrastructure and Services; and in the process, support India’s** transition to a digitally empowered economy and society.

Way forward

Digital infrastructure and services are increasingly emerging as the key enablers and **critical determinants of a country’s growth and well-being**. With significantly advanced capabilities in both telecommunications and software, India, more than most countries, stands poised to benefit from harnessing the new digital technologies and platforms; as a means to unlock productivity, as well as to reach unserved and underserved markets; thus catalysing economic growth and development, generating new- age jobs and livelihoods, and ensuring access to next generation services for its citizens. At the current pace of **digitisation and digitalisation, it is estimated that India’s digital economy has the potential** to reach one trillion USD by 2025.

Zonal Council

In News

The 28th meeting of the Southern Zonal Council was recently held under the Chairmanship of the Union Home Minister in Bengaluru.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

Zonal Councils

Zonal Councils are statutory bodies set up under the States Re-organization Act, 1956 to provide a common meeting ground to the States and UTs in each zone for resolution of inter-State and regional issues, fostering balanced socio-economic regional development and building harmonious Centre-State relations. The Zonal Council meetings are chaired by

KSG – (DELHI VN) 9717380832, (DELHI RN), (JAIPUR) 8290800441, (BHOPAL) 7509975361, (PATNA) 7463950774, (INDORE) 7314977441, (BENGALURU) 7619166663, www.ksgindia.com

the Union Home Minister. In case of UTs, there are two members from each UT.

There are 5 five Zonal councils namely:

1. Central Zonal Council - Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
2. Eastern Zonal Council - Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, and West Bengal.
3. Northern Zonal Council - Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh.
4. Southern Zonal Council - Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry.
5. Western Zonal Council - Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Swadesh Darshan Scheme,  
NESID 2018, Indian Culinary  
Institute

Composition

- Chairman- Union Home Minister nominated by President
- Vice Chairman – Chief Ministers of the States of each zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of one year at a time.
- Members- Chief Minister and two other Ministers as nominated by the Governor from each of the States and two members from Union Territories included in the zone.

The main objectives of setting up of Zonal Councils are as under:

1. Bringing out national integration;
2. Arresting the growth of acute State consciousness, regionalism, linguism and particularistic tendencies;
3. Enabling the Centre and the States to co-operate and exchange ideas and experiences;
4. Establishing a climate of co-operation amongst the States for successful and speedy execution of development projects.

Lokpal Appointment

In News

Government Constitutes Eight-Member Lokpal Search Committee to recommend names for posts of Lokpal chairperson and members of the anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II	■			■							
III											
IV											
M											

About Search Committee and Selection Committee

- As per the Lokpal Act, a search committee was required to consist of at least seven persons **of standing and having** “special knowledge and expertise in matters relating to anti -corruption policy, public administration, vigilance, policy -making, finance, including insurance and banking, law and management or in any other matter which, in the opinion of selection committee, may be useful in making the selection of the chairperson and members of the Lokpal.
- The Lokpal Search Committee will be headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai. The committee has former chief of SBI Arundhati Bhattacharya, Prasar Bharati chairperson, ISRO head and 4 other member as per the order by Personnel Ministry.
- The process of Lokpal selection is going as per the guidelines laid down in the Lokpal Act.
- As per the Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, only the leader of the opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha is a member of the selection committee. A party should have at least 55 seats or 10% of the strength of the Lok Sabha for its leader to get the LoP status.
- The Lokpal selection committee a 5 member panel headed by the prime minister has as its members the Lok Sabha speaker, LoP in the lower house, the chief justice of India or a judge of the apex court nominated by him and an eminent jurist who

could be nominated by the president or any other member.

## Key Highlights of LOKPAL AND LOKAYUKTAS ACT, 2013

1. The Act allows setting Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayukta at the level of the states.

### 2. Composition

Lokpal will consist of a chairperson and a maximum of eight members.

#### Chairperson

The Chairperson should be

- either the former Chief Justice of India
- Or the former Judge of Supreme Court.

#### Judicial Member

Out of the maximum eight members, half will be judicial members. The judicial member of the Lokpal should be

- either a former Judge of the Supreme Court
- or a former Chief Justice of a High Court

#### Non Judicial Member

The non-judicial member should be an eminent person with impeccable integrity and outstanding ability, having special knowledge and expertise of min 25 years in the matters relating to anti-corruption policy, public administration, vigilance, finance including insurance and banking, law and management.

#### Following persons cannot become chairperson of Lokpal:

1. MPs and MLAs
2. Persons convicted of any offense involving moral turpitude
3. Less than 45 years
4. Members of Panchayats or Municipality
5. A person who was removed or dismissed from the public service;
6. A person who holds any office of trust / profit; if so, he would need to resign from Lokpal
7. A person who is affiliated to a political party
8. Carries on some business / profession; if so, he would need to resign from Lokpal

### 3. Jurisdiction

**Lokpal's jurisdiction will cover all categories of public servants.** Prime Minister has been brought under the purview of the Lokpal. The armed forces do not come under the ambit of Lokpal.

The Act also incorporates provisions for attachment and confiscation of property acquired by corrupt means, even while the prosecution is pending.

### 4. Term

The term of office for Lokpal Chairman and Members is 5 years or till attaining age of 70 years.

### 5. Appointment

The members are to be appointed by President on the recommendations of a selection committee.

6. 50 per cent of members of Lokpal shall be from SC/ST/OBCs, minorities and women.

7. The Act also ensures that public servants who act as whistleblowers are protected.

### Powers of Lokpal

1. The Lokpal will have the power of superintendence and direction over any investigation agency including CBI for cases referred to them by the ombudsman.

2. As per the Act, the Lokpal can summon or question any public servant if there exists a prima facie case against the person, even before an investigation agency (such as vigilance or CBI) has begun the probe. Any officer of the CBI investigating a case referred to it by the Lokpal, shall not be transferred without the approval of the Lokpal.

3. An investigation must be completed within six months. However, the Lokpal or Lokayukta may allow extensions of six months at a time provided the reasons for the need of such extensions are given in writing.

4. Special courts will be instituted to conduct trials on cases referred by Lokpal.

5. The Lokpal can award fine **up to Rs. 2 lakh** for “false, frivolous or vexatious” complaints.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Whistle Blowers Protection  
Act, Model Code of  
Conduct, EC

## Medical Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018

### In News

President has given his assent to Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018, which will supersede the Medical Council of India (MCI) and pave the way for strengthened medical education in the country.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

### Issue Background

- The Supreme Court in its judgment dated May 2, 2016, issued directions to the central government to constitute an Oversight Committee (OC) with the authority to oversee all statutory functions of the MCI till a new legislation comes in.
- The OC cited instances of non-compliance of their instructions by MCI and reported that MCI has not only misinterpreted orders of the Supreme Court but has also challenged the authority of the OC. Subsequently, all members of the OC resigned.
- When the Supreme Court-mandated OC is unable to function due to non-cooperation of MCI and the NMC Bill is pending in Parliament and its passage is likely to take some time, certain immediate steps were required to be taken. Accordingly, an ordinance to supersede the MCI was promulgated, with powers of the council vested in a Board of Governors (BoG).

PEPPER IT WITH  
AYUSH, AMRUT, Pradhan  
Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana

### What will this Ordinance bring?

- The Ordinance will also pave way for the creation of a Board of Governors (BoG), who will be tasked with implementing much-required reforms in the field of medical education, enhanced tertiary care and expanded access to medical education in underserved areas.
- The BoG will continue to perform till a new Council is constituted.
- The Board members include persons of eminence in the medical field under Chairmanship of V K Paul, Member of NITI Aayog, namely:
  - ❖ Director, AIIMS New Delhi
  - ❖ Director, PGIMER, Chandigarh
  - ❖ Director, NIMHANS Bangalore
  - ❖ Professor, AIIMS Delhi, Department of Endocrinology and Metabolism.
  - ❖ DGHS, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
  - ❖ Director, Indian Council for Medical Research, New Delhi

A bill to replace the MCI with a National Medical Commission (NMC) has already been presented in parliament. A parliamentary standing committee has also made its **recommendations, but due to time factor, the bill “has gone into an area of uncertainty.”**

### Highlights of the National Medical Commission Bill, 2017

1. The Bill sets up the National Medical Commission (NMC). The NMC will regulate medical education and practice. It will determine fees for up to 40% seats in private medical institutions and deemed universities.
2. The NMC will consist of 25 members. A Search Committee will recommend names to the central government for the post of Chairperson, and the part time members.
3. Four autonomous Boards have been set up under the supervision of the NMC. These Boards will focus on undergraduate and postgraduate medical education, assessment and rating, and ethical conduct.
4. There will be a National Licentiate Examination for doctors to obtain a licence to practice after graduation. This examination will also be the basis for admission to post-graduate medical courses.
5. State Medical Councils will receive complaints relating to professional or ethical misconduct against a doctor. If the doctor is aggrieved of a decision of the State Medical Council, he may appeal to successively higher levels of authority.

## Decriminalization of Politics

### In News

The Supreme Court has asked the Parliament to make a law to prevent persons with serious criminal cases pending against them from entering legislature and be part of law making.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
V											

### Present Scenario

Criminalization of politics is a vital topic to be discussed in any democratic platform. This **issue is on focus every now and then. The Government and the governance system's** credibility is questioned. Sometimes the government loses its legitimacy and authenticity due to the involvement of persons with criminal backgrounds. The frequency with which alleged or convicted criminals manage to gain public office threatens the ideals and the functioning of the Indian democracy. The members of the legislature are expected and directed to represent vicariously the aspirations and concerns of the people whom they represent. Hence it is important for the legislature of a representative democracy to be a true reflection of the aspirations and dreams of the people and also to be fair, honest and accountable to the people they represent.

### Legislative measures to prevent criminalisation of politics

- Chapter IX Aof Indian Penal Code deals with offences relating to elections. It comprises of nine sections. It defines and provides punishment for offences, such as bribery, undue influence and personation at elections etc.
- Section 171 Gof IPC provides the punishment of fine for false statement in connection with elections and for illegal payment in connection with an election. Thus, in IPC, provisions have been made to check election evils but nominal punishments have been provided and interest is not taken in prosecution of election offenders.
- Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951(RPA) deals with disqualification on conviction for certain offences. Under this Section, disqualification arises only on conviction and there is no disqualification prior to conviction even if a person is facing several serious charges.
- Section 29A **in The RPA, 1951 states that “Any association or body of individual citizens of India calling itself a political party and intending to avail itself of the provisions of this Part shall make an application to the Election Commission for its registration as a political party for the purposes of this Act.”Section 29A requires a political party to swear to uphold the principles of socialism, secularism, democracy, sovereignty, unity and integrity of India. The violation of provision of 29A allow ECI to disband the party and decision of the Commission shall be final.**
- Under Article 324 of the Constitution the power of the Election Commission to conduct an election and register/de-register political parties can be invoked.
- Section 125A **in The RPA, 1951 states that “Penalty for filing false affidavit, etc.—A candidate who himself or through his proposer, with intent to be elected in an election”.**
- Under the existing law i.e. Section 123(3) and (3A) of the RPA, 1951 appeal on grounds of religion, race etc. And promotions of feelings of enmity between different classes of religion constitute corrupt practice and the same can be questioned only by way of an election petition.
- Section 123(1) of The RPA 1951defines "Bribery" as any gift, offer or promise by a candidate or his agent or any other person with the consent of a Candidate or his election agent giving gratification, to any person whomsoever, with the object, directly or indirectly influencing elector to vote or refrain from voting at an election.

### Judicial Efforts to decriminalise the politics

- The Court may direct the Election Commission to insist that parties get new members to **declare in an affidavit their criminal antecedents and publish them so that the “entire country knows how many criminals there are in a party.”**
- The court said the EC could de-register a party or withdraw its symbol if it refused to comply.
- The law, presently, bars only convicted persons from fighting elections or continuing as

law makers. A person is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

- The verdict referred to past efforts to usher in transparency within political parties. It quotes the efforts to bring political parties under the Right to Information regime.
- In 2002, it made it obligatory for all candidates to file an affidavit before the returning officer, disclosing criminal cases pending against them.
- The famous order to introduce NOTA was intended to make political parties think before giving tickets to the tainted.
- In its landmark judgment of March 2014, the SC accepted the urgent need for cleansing politics of criminalisation and directed all subordinate courts to decide on cases involving legislators within a year, or give reasons for not doing so to the chief justice of the high court.
- Though the Representation of the People Act disqualifies a sitting legislator or a candidate on certain grounds, there is nothing regulating the appointments to offices within the party.
- A politician may be disqualified from being a legislator, but he may continue to hold high positions within his party, thus also continuing to play an important public role which he has been deemed unfit for by the law. Convicted politicians may continue to influence law-making by controlling the party and fielding proxy candidates in legislature, the Chief Justice wrote in the judgment.

<u>Law</u>	<u>Commission</u>
<u>Recommendations</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per the concerns of the court the Law Commission has suggested <b>recommendations titled “Electoral disqualifications”</b> in its 244th report on Electoral Reforms to disqualification on the ground of filing false affidavit under Section 125A of the RPA 1951.</li> <li>• The Law Commission, in its report, had suggested various measures including expeditious trials involving a sitting MP and MLA on a day-to-day basis with an outer limit of completing it within one year.</li> <li>• If a person is found guilty by a Commission of Inquiry then he shall be disqualified from contesting elections.</li> </ul>

**Election Commission’s Measures and Recommendations**

- In 1997, Election Commission directed all the Returning Officers (ROs) to reject the nomination papers of any candidate who stands convicted on the day of filing the nomination papers even if his sentence is suspended.
- The Election Commission proposed in its set of proposals of 1998 and 2004 that Section 8 of the RPA1951 should be amended to disqualify those persons from contesting election who are accused of an offence punishable by an imprisonment of 5 years or more even when trial is pending, given that the Court has framed charges against the person.
- Persons charged with cognisable offences shall be debarred from contesting in the elections, at the stage when the charges are framed by the competent court provided the offence is punishable by imprisonment of at least 5 years, and the case is filed at least 6 months prior to the election in question.
- As per Section 123(3) and (3A) the way of questioning malpractice is via election petition, further the same cannot be a subject of enquiry before the Commission when the election is in progress. Ironically these provisions will have application only during the period of election and there is no provision to challenge the corrupt practise of the candidate who lost the election. The Commission proposed that for giving effect to the recommendations in the Liberhan Commission Report.
- The proposal of the Commission was that immediately to include bribery as a cognisable offence with minimum 2 years of Imprisonment to discourage corrupt practices which has long plagued Indian election.

<p>Main Reasons for Criminalisation in Politics</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Corruption</li> <li>2. Vote bank</li> <li>3. Lack of governance</li> </ol>
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<p>PEPPER IT WITH Liberhan Commission Report, Model Code of Conduct</p>
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### Solution to curb criminalization

- political parties should themselves refuse tickets to the tainted
- the RP Act should be amended to debar persons against whom cases of a heinous nature are pending from contesting elections
- fast-track courts should decide the cases of tainted legislators quickly
- There is need for legislation to regulate party funds, distribution and expenditure during non- election and election times Maintenance, audit and publication of regular accounts by the political parties should be available for open inspection.

### Conclusion

The entry of criminals in election politics must be restricted at any cost. If it is not checked, it will erode the system totally. The dearth of talented persons in politics may collapse the country internally as well as externally. The Law Commission of India, Election Commission, and Vohra Committee etc. have examined the issue of criminalization of politics and recommended various reforms but the menace is increasing day by day.

The parliament has taken efforts by amending the laws, such as, IPC and the RP Act but the exercise has proved futile. The Supreme Court of India has also made efforts to check the evil but the problem remains unabated.

Actually the roots of the problem lie in the political system of the country. There is lack of political will to combat the problem. The political parties also do not believe in higher ethical norms. They should untidily make efforts to prevent criminalization of politics.

## PM-AASHA

### In News

Union Cabinet approved a new Umbrella Scheme 'Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan' (PM-AASHA) giving a major boost to the pro-farmer initiatives of the government.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

### About Scheme

- The Scheme is aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce as announced in the Union Budget for 2018.
- Components of PM-AASHA:
  1. Price Support Scheme (PSS)
  2. Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS)
  3. Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS)
- The Cabinet has decided to give additional government guarantee of Rs.16,550 crore making it Rs. 45,550 crore in total.
- In addition to this, budget provision for procurement operations has also been increased and Rs. 15,053 crore is sanctioned for PM-AASHA implementation. The scheme **henceforth is a reflection of Government's commitment and dedication to our 'Annadata'.**

The other existing schemes of Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) for procurement of paddy, wheat and nutri-cereals/coarse grains and of Ministry of Textile for cotton and jute will be continued for providing MSP to farmers for these crops.

### PSS

- ❖ In PSS, physical procurement of pulses, oilseeds and Copra will be done by Central Nodal Agencies with proactive role of State governments.
- ❖ It is also decided that in addition to NAFED, Food Cooperation of India (FCI) will take up PSS operations in states /districts. The procurement expenditure and losses due to procurement will be borne by Central Government as per norms.

### PDPS

- ❖ Under PDPS, it is proposed to cover all oilseeds for which MSP is notified. In this direct payment of the difference between the MSP and the selling/modal price will be made to pre-registered farmers selling his produce in the notified market yard through a

transparent auction process.

- ❖ All payment will be done directly into registered bank account of the farmer. This scheme does not involve any physical procurement of crops as farmers are paid the difference between the MSP price and Sale/modal price on disposal in notified market.

PPSS

- ❖ It has been decided that for oilseeds, states have the option to roll out PPSS on pilot basis in selected district/APMC(s) of district involving the participation of private stockiest.
- ❖ The pilot district/selected APMC(s) of district will cover one or more crop of oilseeds for which MSP is notified.
- ❖ Since this is akin to PSS, in that it involves physical procurement of the notified commodity, it shall substitute PSS/PDPS in the pilot districts.
- ❖ The selected private agency shall procure the commodity at MSP from the registered farmers in consonance with the PPSS Guidelines, whenever the prices in the market fall below the notified MSP and whenever authorized by the state/UT government to enter the market and maximum service charges up to 15% of the notified MSP will be payable.

PEPPER IT WITH  
eNAM, GeM, PMKSY, PMFBY,  
SHC, APMC, MSP

Why is it important?

1. Government of India is working with the holistic approach of solving any issue rather than in fragments. Increasing MSP is not adequate and it is more important that farmers should get full benefit of the announced MSP. With this approach, Cabinet has approved the Umbrella Scheme of PM-AASHA under which State Government and Central Government should purchase either at MSP or work in a manner to provide MSP for the farmers.
2. **The Government is committed to realizing the vision of doubling farmers’ income by 2022.** The emphasis is on enhancing productivity, reducing cost of cultivation and strengthening post-harvesting management, including market structure. Several market reforms have been initiated. These include Model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing Act, 2017 and Model Contract Farming and Services Act, 2018. Many States have taken steps to adopt these through legislation.
3. Efforts are on for a new market architecture, so as to ensure that farmers get remunerative prices on their produce. These include setting up of Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs); competitive and transparent wholesale trade at APMC through eNAM and a robust and pro-farmer export policy.
4. Besides, several other pro-farmers’ initiatives such as implementation of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri KrishiSinchai Yojana, ParamparagatKrishi Vikas Yojana and distribution of Soil Health Cards have been undertaken. The commitment for farmer welfare is also reflected by unprecedented decision of announcing minimum support price based on the formula of 1.5 times the cost of cultivation.

District Disability Rehabilitation Centre (DDRC)

In News

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is organising a **‘National Conference of District Disability Rehabilitation Centres’**.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

About DDRC

- It seeks to provide comprehensive services to the persons with disabilities at the grass root level through creation of the infrastructure and capacity building at district level for awareness generation, rehabilitation, training guiding of grassroots level functionaries.
- The District Disability Rehabilitation Centres are set up under the Plan Scheme- **“Scheme for implementation of Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities,**

protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995 (SIPDA).”

- DDRC scheme is under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- DDRCs is a joint venture of Central and State Government

Salient features of DDRC

1. Awareness generation, early intervention and assessment of the need of assistive devices to divyangjans.
2. Therapeutic services such as Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy etc. to divyangjans through rehabilitation professionals.
3. Equipment for rehabilitation services.

**Swayangsiddha Scheme**

In News

To combat human trafficking, the West Bengal government has launched Swayangsiddha Scheme.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

About Scheme

- Swayangsiddha means self-reliance. It envisions empowering young girls and boys with knowledge and skills so that they are aware, alert, able to make informed choices and are less vulnerable to violation and abuse of their rights.
- Swayangsiddha initiative by West Bengal Police aims to combat human trafficking and prevent child marriage.
- These groups were formed with students between the age group of 12 to 21 years. Child Protection Committee is monitoring and guiding these groups.

As the per the NCRB data West Bengal has highest recorded case of trafficking among the States.

Mission of Scheme

1. Raising awareness on human, gender and child rights and strengthening prevention of human trafficking and child marriage using a converging approach
2. Engaging youth from different schools and colleges to combat human trafficking and child marriage
3. Strengthening response mechanism in collaboration with Police and child protection committees to build safe community
4. Strengthening access to schemes and entitlements on education, training, livelihood and food security for vulnerable groups

Swachhata Hi Seva movement  
Over the next two weeks leading to October 2 – Gandhi Jayanti – the Swachhata Hi Seva movement aims to ensure a high standard of cleanliness across the country, which was **Mahatma Gandhi’s dream** for the nation. The campaign is being coordinated by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, the convening Ministry for the Swachh Bharat Mission.

**e-Sahaj portal**

In News

**Union Home Secretary launches ‘e-Sahaj’ portal for grant of Security Clearance.** The portal will facilitate an applicant to submit application online and also to view the status of his application from time to time.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

About Initiative

- o This website allows organizations/firms/companies/individuals to apply for security clearance from anywhere over Internet.
- o The objective of national security clearance is to evaluate potential security threats, including economic threats, and provide risk assessment before clearing investment and project proposals in key sectors.
- o eSahaj portal does not cover processing of applications for grant of license/ permission/

- approval of any type.
- o Introduction of online portal, the process will become standardized, resulting in a process which will be faster, transparent and easy to monitor. Reducing manual interface.
- o The aim is to strike a healthy balance between meeting the imperatives of national security and facilitating ease of doing business and promoting investment in the country.
- o MHA is the nodal Ministry for security clearances in certain sensitive sectors before issue of licence/permit, permission, contract etc, to companies/ bidders/individuals by the administrative Ministry.

PEPPER IT WITH  
e-Sansad, Whip, Meghraj

Portals to strengthen Women Safety

In News

Union Home Minister launches two portals to strengthen Women Safety.

1. Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) portal to check objectionable online content.
2. National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO) to aid in monitoring & investigation of sexual crimes.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

CCPWC portal

- It is convenient and user friendly platform that will enable complainants in reporting cases without disclosing their identity.
- This will not only aid the victims/complainants but also help the civil society organizations and responsible citizens to anonymously report complaints pertaining to child pornography, child sexual abuse material or sexually explicit material such as rape and gang rape.
- Complainants can also upload the objectionable content and URL to assist in the investigation by the State Police. There are other features such as a victim or complainant can track his/her report by opting for **“report and track” option using his/her mobile number.**
- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) will proactively identify such objectionable content and take up with intermediaries for its removal. For this NCRB has already been notified as the Government of India agency to issue notices under Section 79(3) b of IT Act.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Women in Prison,  
Ayushman Bharat, Aarambh  
India, Internet Watch  
Foundation

NDSO portal

- It is a central **database of “sexual offenders” in the country** which will be maintained by the NCRB for regular monitoring and tracking by the State Police.
- The database is accessible only to the law enforcement agencies for investigation and monitoring purpose.
- The database will include offenders convicted under charges of rape, gang rape, POCSO and eve teasing. At present the database contains 4.4 lakh entries. However, the **database will not compromise any individual’s privacy.**

National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA)

In News

Two-day National Orientation workshop on National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) launched.

About NeVA

- NeVA, an initiative by Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, aims to make all the Legislatures of the country paperless by making the proceedings of the Houses digital. It is an attempt to provide the information about the functioning of House to the

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

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common citizen at the click of a button.

- The mNeVA (NeVA-mobile app) is a device neutral and user friendly app that has made information on conduct of business in Legislatures accessible anytime, anywhere to everyone.
- NeVA is member-centric, decentralised digital application that makes information available on digital platform about day to day functioning of legislative houses. It hosts secure page for each Member of House for submitting Questions and other Notices.
- It is a work-flow based app deployed in Cloud (Meghraj) which helps the Chair of the House to conduct the proceedings of the House smoothly and the members to carry out their duties in the House efficiently.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Sahaj, national digital  
library, Connect India

Significance

- The NeVA aims to live up to its potential of being **‘One Nation, One Application’**. This uniformity of database will lead to easy and effective engagement of citizens with the Government, which will lead to efficient delivery of services and ensure reliability, efficiency, transparency and accountability of all the stakeholders.
- NeVA will bring Legislatures closer to citizens, thereby taking a decisive step in achievement of substantive democracy.
- There would be massive cost-savings on turning to paperless and digitize system.

E-Vidhan

- ✓ e-Vidhan is a Mission Mode Project to digitize and make the functioning of State Legislatures paperless. This is part of Digital India programme and Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, being the Nodal Ministry for this project, desires to roll out e-Vidhan as NeVA covering all 40 Houses including two Houses of Parliament and thereby putting all them on a single platform and proving the theory of **‘One Nation One Application’**.
- ✓ This initiative with a pilot project executed in Himachal Pradesh with the central assistance of Rs.8.12 crores which made the Shimla Legislative Assembly the first Assembly in India to go paperless in 2014.

Krishna Kutir

In News

The Ministry of Women & Child Development recently inaugurated the widows’ home ‘Krishna Kutir’ at Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II						■					
III											
IV											
M											

About

- Krishna Kutir is a special home for 1000 widows set up by the Ministry of Women & Child Development under Swadhar Greh scheme of the Ministry and is the largest ever facility of its kind created by a government organization.
- Vrindavan home will offer shelter and protection to the large number of helpless widows of Vrindavan. The WCD Minister further added that widows will be a part of various committees which will be formed to manage the **widows’ home**.
- ‘Krishna Kutir’ has been developed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development under the ‘Swadhar Greh’ scheme. It has been constructed through the National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC).

Significance

The widows’ home has been constructed by the WCD Ministry to mitigate the plight of widows living in pathetic condition in Vrindavan. The Ministry took cognizance of this shocking condition of widows living in Vrindavan who refused to go back to their native place or their home. In order to provide a dignified and humane living conditions to them, the Ministry, as a special case, constructed this Krishna Kutir at the temple town of Vrindavan with all the required facilities.

### About Swadhar Greh Scheme

- The scheme envisions a supportive institutional framework for women victims of difficult circumstances so that they could lead their life with dignity and conviction.
- The Swadhar scheme was launched by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- The scheme provides primary need of shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment and care of the women in distress, legal aid and guidance, rehabilitate them economically and emotionally.
- The benefit could be availed by women above 18 years include women who are deserted, survivors of natural disasters, released from jail, victims of domestic violence, trafficked women/girls rescued.

### National Mission on GeM

#### In News

The government has launched the National Mission on Government e-Marketplace (GeM).

The aim of the National Mission is to promote inclusiveness, transparency and efficiency in public procurement and achieve cashless, contactless and paperless transaction. This will increase overall efficiency and lead to cost saving on government expenditure in procurement.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

#### Key Highlight of initiative

1. It aims at creating awareness about GeM, train buyers and sellers, get them registered on GeM and increase the procurement through GeM.
2. It is for the promotion of inclusiveness of all sections of categories of sellers and service providers, highlighting and communicating the value addition in joining GeM.
3. The National Mission will cover all central government departments, states and public sector undertakings in a mission mode.
4. It is aimed at highlighting and communicating the value addition in joining GeM, achieving cashless, contactless and paperless transactions, increasing overall efficiency and maximising ease of availability of goods and services.
5. The government is open to allowing the private sector to source goods and services through the Government e-Market (GeM) portal.
6. Late delivery (LD) is applicable for all payment methods including PFMS, Internet Banking, Railways, Others etc. This will be imposed by the buyer as per the delivery schedule. The amount would be calculated by the system at 0.5% per week or part subject to maximum 5% of bill value.

<u>Benefits of GeM</u>	
1.	Transparency
2.	Efficiency
3.	Secure and safe
4.	Potential to support Make in India
5.	Savings to the Government

<p>PEPPER IT WITH MTP Act, SCHIS, RSBY, GSTN, DRIP</p>
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#### About GeM

- GeM is an online marketplace to facilitate procurement of goods and services by various Ministries and agencies of the Government.
- GeM aims to enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement. It provides the tools of e-bidding, reverse e-auction and demand aggregation to facilitate the government users, achieve the best value for their money.
- DGS&D with technical support of NeGD (MeitY) has developed GeM.
- GeM facilitates participation in Jan Andolan – POSHAN Abhiyaan – by offering products under these 6 categories viz. Stadiometer, weighing machine, babu hanging scale, smartphone and powerbanks.

## Bharat Ke Veer

### In News

Govt. grants **'trust' status to 'Bharat Ke Veer' initiative.**

### Key Highlights

- The main objective of the portal is to enable the public to help the families of soldiers by donating money **online directly to the individual braveheart's** account or to Bharat Ke Veer corpus.
- Bravehearts from Central Reserve Police Force, Border Security Force, Central Industrial Security Force, Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force, Sashastra Seema Bal, Assam Rifles, National Disaster Response Force and National Security Guards are included in the portal for contribution.
- It has been recently bestowed with **'Trust'** status which mean all the donations made to it will come under 80(G) which in effect means that all contributions to the trust will be exempted under the income tax.
- To ensure maximum coverage, a cap of 15 lakh rupees is imposed and the donors would be alerted if the amount exceeds, so that they can choose to divert part of the donation to another braveheart account or to **the "Bharat Ke Veer" corpus.**
- This website is technically supported by National Informatics Centre (NIC) and powered by State Bank of India.
- **"Bharat Ke Veer" corpus would be managed by a committee made up of eminent persons of repute and senior Government officials, who would decide to disburse the fund equitably to the braveheart's family on need basis.**

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

- ✓ The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, under the aegis of Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban has partnered with Google to launch the #LooReview Campaign.
- ✓ This campaign is part of a feature which allows all citizens to locate public toilets in their cities on Google Maps, Search and the Assistant and also provide feedback on the same.
- ✓ **'Public toilets near me'** is a feature that is supported across Google Maps, Search and the Assistant.

PEPPER IT WITH  
National Informatics Centre, NDRF, Surgical Strike

## NALSA compensation scheme

### In News

SC recently issued set of guidelines for the child abuse survivors.

### Background

- The SC took note of the fact that no rules have been framed by the Centre under the POCSO Act on the basis of which special courts could award compensation to minor victims of cases under the law.
- The Supreme Court emphasised that the National Legal Services Authority's (NALSA) scheme for compensating the victims of sexual assault and acid attacks should be used as a guiding model by special courts in awarding compensation to minor victims of sexual abuse.

### SC guidelines

1. Special Judges under the POCSO Act should disburse compensation to minor victims of sex abuse **as per the NALSA's 'Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault/Other Crimes-2018'.**
2. In holding the trial of child sex abuse or rape, a screen or some such arrangement may be made where the victim or witnesses who may be equally vulnerable like the victim, do not have to face the accused.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
M											

PEPPER IT WITH  
Nirbhaya Fund, Nirbhaya Act, Triple Talaq Ordinance, NALSA Compensation rules, Lok Adalat

3. Questions directly relating to the incident put in cross-examination on behalf of the accused should be given in writing to trial judge who may put them to the victim or witnesses in a language which is clear and is not embarrassing.

GST Network

- ✓ Union cabinet has cleared a proposal to convert GST Network (GSTN) into a government-owned company.
- ✓ 50 per cent stake will be owned by the Centre and the remaining by the states on pro-rata basis in the new structure.
- ✓ The proposal to convert GSTN into 100% government-owned company was also approved by the GST Council.
- ✓ Currently, the Centre & states together hold 49% stake in the GSTN, the company that provides IT backbone to the GST regime. The remaining 51% is held by five private financial institutions.
- ✓ GSTN was incorporated as a private limited company in 2013. It is a Section 8 company under the new Companies Act and hence is a not-for-profit entity.

About NALSA

The NALSA has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to provide free Legal Services to the weaker sections of the society. The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief and the senior most Hon'ble Judge, Supreme Court of India is the Executive Chairman of the Authority.

Functions

1. To legally empower the marginalized and excluded groups of the society by providing effective legal representation, legal literacy and awareness and bridging the gap between the legally available benefits and the entitled beneficiaries
2. To provide free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of the society.
3. The functions of NALSA include spreading legal literacy and awareness, undertaking social justice litigations etc.
4. To strengthen the system of Lok Adalats and other Alternate Dispute Resolution mechanisms in order to provide for informal, quick, inexpensive and effective resolution of disputes and minimize the load of adjudication on the overburdened judiciary.

Irrigation facilities get ICID heritage tag

In News

At a meeting of the International Executive Council, the highest decision making body of International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), at Saskatoon in Canada has accepted **Telangana government's nomination of Sadarmatt anicut** across river Godavari in Nirmal district and Pedda Cheruvu in Kamareddy district in the ICID Register of Heritage Irrigation Structures.

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II											
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Sadarmatt anicut

- The Sadarmatt barrage across Godavari near Medampalli village in Khanapur of Nirmal district is an iconic structure installed by the then Hyderabad ruler Nawab Iqbal-ud-Dowla in 1891-92.
- Designed by JJ Ottley a French engineer, it was constructed during the regime of the Taluqdar (governor), CE Wilkinson.
- It is situated 50 km downstream of the Sri Ram Sagar Project (SRSP) and is chiefly fed by Sawrnavagu stream.
- The anicut was constructed for irrigation purpose to provide water to 13,100 acres of land. While major crop being irrigated under Sadarmatt is paddy (contributing 80% of irrigated area), the other crops include maize and turmeric.

anicut, which is English word for Telugu's anakatta, meaning a rainfall bund.

Pedda Cheruvu

The Pedda Cheruvu (big tank in Telugu) located on the outskirts of this district headquarters town is spread over an area of 618 acres and was built in 1897 during the rule of Mir Mahaboob Ali Khan, the sixth Nizam of Hyderabad State. It has a 1.8-km-long

tank bund and 145-metre weir and three sluices.

### ABOUT ICID

- The International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) is a leading scientific, technical, international not-for-profit, non-governmental organization. ICID is a professional network of experts from across the world in the field of irrigation, drainage, and flood management.
- **The main mission is to promote ‘Sustainable agriculture water management’ to achieve ‘Water secure world free of poverty and hunger through sustainable rural development’.**
- ICID is a knowledge sharing platform dedicated to issues that covers the entire spectrum of agricultural water management practices ranging from rain fed agriculture to supplemental irrigation, land drainage, deficit irrigation to full irrigation, etc.
- ICID has been involved in the global discussions leading to Agenda 21, World Water Vision, and World Water Forums etc., which have become the focal point of several of its technical activities.

### e-VBAB Network Project

#### In News

The Ministry of External Affairs recently signed an agreement with the Telecommunications Consultants India Ltd (TCIL) for the implementation of e-VidyaBharati and e-AarogyaBharati (e-VBAB) Network Project between India and Africa.

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#### About Project

- E-VBAB Network project is a technological upgrade and extension of the Pan-African e-Network Project (Phase 1) which was implemented in 48 partner countries across Africa from 2009 till 2017.
- The Phase 1 of the Project successfully imparted tele-education and tele-medicine by linking educational institutions and hospitals in India with those of African countries.
- Over the five-year project duration, e-VBAB Network Project will provide free tele-education courses to 4000 students every year from African countries. In addition, it will help provide free continuing medical education to 1,000 candidates comprising African doctors, nurses and paramedical staff.
- Further, Indian doctors, through this project will provide free medical consultancy to those African doctors who seek such consultancy.
- The project will be completely funded by the Government of India for its entire duration and will be open for participation to all our partner countries in Africa.
- In order to operationalize the e-VBAB Network Project, a Data Centre and Disaster Recovery Centre will be established in India along with Learning Centres in various African countries which decide to be part of the Project. There will be two separate platforms for e-VidyaBharati (tele-education) and e-AarogyaBharati (tele-medicine) which will link, through a web-based technology, various educational institutions and hospitals in India and the participating African countries.

#### Rail Sahyog web portal

- Union Ministry of Railways has launched Rail Sahyog web portal
- It will provide platform for Corporates and PSUs to fund creation of amenities at railway stations through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds.
- It will provide opportunity for industry, companies, and associations to collaborate with Indian Railways. Fund utilized for creation of amenities will be beneficial for passengers and for neighbourhood of railway vicinity

#### Way Forward

- ✓ **India’s support in the education sector has received huge support in Africa for decades and the new project will serve as a digital bridge of knowledge and health between India**

and Africa.

- ✓ **The initiative comes amid domestic criticism of President Xi Jinping’s \$60 billion package for Africa and rising concern over Chinese debts in African countries. This may muddy the waters between India and China.**

## BIMSTEC Summit

### In News

The 4th BIMSTEC summit was successfully concluded with Nepal handing over the chairmanship of the grouping to Sri Lanka. Indian Prime Minister and the top leaders of other BIMSTEC member states attended the two-day summit in Kathmandu.

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The theme of the fourth BIMSTEC summit was 'Towards a Peaceful, Prosperous and Sustainable Bay of Bengal Region'.

### Kathmandu declaration

- At the end of the summit, Kathmandu declaration was unanimously adopted by the member states which deplored terror attacks in all parts of the world, including in BIMSTEC countries, and stressed that there could be no justification for any act of terrorism.
- The unanimously adopted **declaration said the “fight against terrorism should target not only terrorists, terror organisations and networks but also identify and hold accountable states and non-state entities that encourage, support or finance terrorism, provide sanctuaries to terrorists and terror groups and falsely extol their virtues.”**
- The declaration underlined the importance of multidimensional connectivity, which promotes synergy among connectivity frameworks in the region, as a key enabler to economic integration for shared prosperity.

### BIMSTEC-MILEX

- ✓ The first BIMSTEC Multi-National Military Field Training Exercise, named MILEX-18, was held in September-18 at the Foreign Training Node in Aundh, Pune.
- ✓ While Nepal and Thailand decided not to participate, and just be observers, armies of India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar took part.
- ✓ **India and Thailand’s defence cooperation is** guided by a MoU on defence cooperation, signed in 2012.
- ✓ Nepal, which had agreed to participate, was forced to withdraw at the last minute, after there was political opposition.
- ✓ The long-term goal of the initiative is to explore possibility of creating viable regional security architecture to deal with the challenge of terrorism and transnational crimes.

### Other Outcomes

- o MoU was signed on establishment of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection. The MoU provides for optimisation of using energy resources in the region & promotion of efficient & secure operation of power system.
- o Though BIMSTEC has 14 priority sectors, this summit integrated two more priority sectors - Blue Economy and Mountain Economy.
- o **Describing terrorism as a “great threat”** to international peace and security, India with 6 other BIMSTEC nations called for identifying and holding accountable states and non-state entities that encourage, support or finance terrorism, provide sanctuaries to terrorists and falsely extol their virtues.

### Raxaul-Kathmandu Railway Line

India will build a railway link between Raxaul in Bihar and Kathmandu as part of its efforts to push Delhi-led connectivity projects in Nepal amid the proposed Chinese economic corridor through the Himalayan state to India.

China proposes to build a railway line between Lhasa in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and Kathmandu by 2022, with an apparent aim of reducing **Kathmandu’s dependence on India.**

BIMSTEC

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organization comprising seven Member States lying in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal constituting a contiguous regional unity. This sub-regional organization came into being in 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration.
- It constitutes seven Member States: five deriving from South Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand.
- The regional group constitutes a bridge between South and South East Asia and represents a reinforcement of relations among these countries. BIMSTEC has also established a platform for intra-regional cooperation between SAARC and ASEAN members.
- The BIMSTEC region is home to around 1.5 billion people which constitute around 22% of the global population with a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of 2.7 trillion economy.
- It is important for India in terms of New Delhi's Act East Policy and Neighborhood First Policy, with northeastern India acting as a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia.

PEPPER IT WITH  
SAARC, MILEX-18, IOR, South China Sea Dispute, ASEAN, BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection, Act East Policy

6th East Asia Summit

Why in News?

India recently attended the 6th East Asia Summit- Economic **Ministers' Meeting (EAS-EMM)** and 15th India-ASEAN Economic **Ministers' Meeting (AEM)** in Singapore. Singapore is currently holding the Chair of ASEAN.

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Outcomes of East Asia Summit

- The Ministers welcomed the higher global economic growth forecast for 2018 and took note of the increasing importance of trade and investment relations among the EAS economies.
- Acknowledging the potential for disruptions in the macro-economy that could affect overall market sentiments and global growth, EAS-EMM forum expressed the hope that the economic linkages among the EAS members will enable them to address these challenges.
- The Ministers agreed to the importance of keeping markets open and fair as well as improving transparency and predictability of the business environment.
- The meeting recognized the importance of ongoing work to maximize the opportunities of, and address the challenges presented by, the digital economy and the rise of regional and global value chains, as part of their efforts to promote economic growth and integration in the region.

China-Maldives Friendship Bridge  
China-Maldives Friendship Bridge, the first cross-sea bridge in the Maldives, was opened to traffic. The bridge is an iconic project of the Maldives and China in co-building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

Connecting capital Male and neighboring Hulhule Island where the Maldives' main international airport is located, the two-km bridge makes it possible for locals and tourists to transfer between the two islands on land within five minutes.

EAS

- East Asia Summit is a unique Leaders-led forum of 18 countries of the Asia-Pacific region formed to further the objectives of regional peace, security and

PEPPER IT WITH  
ASEAN, ASEAN+3, RCEP, ASEAN Economic Community, South China Sea framework

prosperity. It has evolved as a forum for strategic dialogue and cooperation on political, security and economic issues of common regional concern and plays an important role in the regional architecture.

- o Established in 2005, EAS allows the principal players in the Asia-Pacific region to discuss issues of common interest and concern, in an open and transparent manner, at the highest level. EAS is an initiative of ASEAN and is based on the premise of the centrality of ASEAN.
- o The membership of EAS consists of ten ASEAN Member States (i.e. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam), & Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and the USA.
- o There are six priority areas of regional cooperation within the framework of the EAS. These are – Environment and Energy, Education, Finance, Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases, Natural Disaster Management, and ASEAN Connectivity. India endorses regional collaboration in all six priority areas.
- o Following the 12th EAS in November 2017 in Manila, Philippines and following the adoption of the Manila Plan of Action, Maritime Cooperation has been identified as an important area of cooperation under the EAS.

Ramon Magsaysay Award  
 Two Indians Bharat Vatwani and Sonam Wangchuk are among the winners of this year's Ramon Magsaysay Award, regarded as the Asian version of the Nobel Prize. The two are among six individuals declared winners.

Established in 1957, the Ramon Magsaysay Award is Asia's highest honour. It celebrates the memory and leadership example of the third Philippine president after whom the award is named, and is given every year to individuals or organisations in Asia who manifest the same selfless service and transformative influence that ruled the life of the late and beloved Filipino leader.

15th ASEAN Economic Ministers - India Consultation

The 6th EAS-EMM was followed by the 15th ASEAN Economic Ministers - India Consultation. It was co-chaired by Singapore and India. The meeting attended by Economic Ministers from 10 ASEAN countries took stock of the current level of trade and economic engagement between India and ASEAN and reaffirmed the commitment to further strengthen ASEAN-India economic relations. ASEAN has emerged as the second largest trade partner of India in 2017-18 with bilateral trade valued at USD 81.33 billion, comprising 10.58% of India's total trade with the world.

It was also announced in the Singapore meeting that the next ASEAN-India Business Summit will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in November 2018 with the theme "Towards Building Strategic Partnership between ASEAN and India in the Era of the 4th IR and Digital Economy" which will be followed by the 4th India-ASEAN Dialogue Partner Expo and Summit scheduled for 21-23 February 2019, in New Delhi.

Indus Waters Treaty mandated tours

In News

India and Pakistan have agreed to undertake the Indus Waters Treaty mandated tours by their Commissioners in the Indus basin on both sides to resolve issues on the various hydroelectric projects, including the Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai in Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistan's demands included reduction of the height of Pakal Dul's reservoir up to five metres, maintenance of 40-metre height above sea level while making spillways' gates of the Pakal Dul project, besides clarifying the pattern and mechanism for the water storage and releases and some technical concerns over design of the Lower Kalnai hydropower project.

Indus Water Treaty

The Treaty was signed in 1960 after nine years of negotiations between India and Pakistan with the help of the World Bank, which is also a signatory. The negotiations were the

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initiative of former World Bank President Eugene Black. Seen as one of the most successful international treaties, it has survived frequent tensions, including conflict, and has provided a framework for irrigation and hydropower development for more than half a century. Former U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower described it as "one bright spot ... in a very depressing world picture that we see so often."

How the Treaty works:

The Treaty sets out a mechanism for cooperation and information exchange between the two countries regarding their use of the rivers, known as the Permanent Indus Commission, which has a commissioner from each country. The Treaty also sets forth distinct procedures to handle issues which may arise: **"questions"** are handled by the **Commission**; **"differences"** are to be resolved by a Neutral Expert; and **"disputes" are to be referred to a seven-member arbitral tribunal called the "Court of Arbitration."** As a signatory to the Treaty, the World Bank's role is limited and procedural.

UNIATF Award

Shri Manoj Jhalani, Additional Secretary & Mission Director (NHM), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, has been conferred with the prestigious UN Interagency Task Force (UNIATF) Award for his outstanding contribution towards prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and related Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations Interagency Task Force (UNIATF) on the Prevention and Control of NCDs coordinates the activities of relevant UN organizations and other inter-governmental organizations to support Governments to meet high-level commitments to respond to NCD epidemics worldwide. The commitments were made by Heads of State and Government in the 2011 Political Declaration on NCDs. The Task Force was established by the UN Secretary-General in 2013 and placed under the leadership of WHO.

In particular, its role in relation to "differences" and "disputes" is limited to the designation of people to fulfill certain roles when requested by either or both of the parties.

What the disagreement is about:

India and Pakistan disagree about the construction of the Kishenganga (330 megawatts) and Ratle (850 megawatts) hydroelectric power plants being built by India (the World Bank is not financing either project). The two countries disagree over whether the technical design features of the two hydroelectric plants contravene the Treaty. The plants are on respectively a tributary of the Jhelum and the Chenab Rivers.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Indus River, 114th Permanent Indus Commission Meeting, Kishanganga and Ratle hydroelectric project, Pakul Dam, Lower Kalnai

The Treaty designates these two rivers as well as **the Indus as the "Western Rivers"** to which Pakistan has unrestricted use. Among other uses, under the Treaty, India is permitted to construct hydroelectric power facilities on these rivers subject to constraints specified in Annexures to the Treaty. Talks related to the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric power plants are ongoing.

International Ayurveda Congress

In News

The fourth International Ayurveda Congress (IAvC) aimed at promotion and propagation of Ayurveda took place in Netherlands.

The Congress was jointly organized by the International Maharishi Ayurveda Foundation, the Netherlands, All India Ayurvedic Congress, New Delhi, and the International Academy of Ayurveda, Pune, in association with the Indian Embassy in that country.

- It focused on promotion and propagation of Ayurveda in the Netherlands and its neighbouring countries of Europe. A special Seminar was organized by the Indian Embassy titled "India-Netherlands collaboration in Healthcare, including Ayurveda".

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- To give further impetus to promotion of AYUSH Systems of Medicine in Netherlands and its neighbouring countries, a high-level meeting has also been proposed in addition to the Congress by Embassy of India and Netherland between the Minister and government Authorities of Netherland.
- An exposure visit of the delegation was proposed to the University of Maastricht, the Netherlands, to discuss on establishing an Ayurveda Chair.

PEPPER IT WITH  
WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia, Jan Arogya scheme, Ayushman Bharat, AMRIT Deendayal

### International Women Entrepreneurs Summit

In News

The International Women Entrepreneurs Summit 2018 was held in Kathmandu, Nepal. The theme of the 3-day event was “Equality begins with Economic Empowerment”. Delegates from the SAARC, ASEAN, EU, Africa, Arab countries and China participated in the summit. The event was organised by the South Asian Women Development Forum.

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The main objective of the summit was to bring together achievers, women business leaders, professionals, international service providers, resource organizations, experts, government representatives and other stakeholders with a focus on innovative economic transformation through discussions and collaborations.

South Asian Women Development Forum

South Asian Women Development Forum (SAWDF) with a SAARC Recognized Body status is a member based regional body representing national women entrepreneurs’ associations/organizations; institutions working towards the economic issues of women entrepreneurs in the SAARC Region. SAWDF membership is based on organizations with extensive work around women’s entrepreneurship.

PEPPER IT WITH  
International Dam Safety Conference, India Energy Congress, Radio Festival, World Sustainable Development Summit

SAWDF, incorporated under the Organization Registration Act 1977, is an autonomous, non-profit organization based in Kathmandu. As the first SAARC Recognized Body organisation, working on women entrepreneurs issues, SAWDF facilitates in taking forward the recommendations, drawn from the deliberations of national programs, as regional instruments for developing women SMEs friendly policies.

### International Aviation Summit

In News

India's Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), the Airports Authority of India (AAI) and IATA organized a special event to commemorate the 50th consecutive month of double-digit market growth in India.

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Looking ahead, India is forecast to become the 3rd fastest-growing aviation market in the world by 2025, and expected to grow to over 500 million in 2037. The 2-day event focused on what it takes for aviation in India to thrive sustainably and to maximize the economic and social benefits of the potential growth.

The Summit brought together CEOs, government authorities, key industry players and subject matter experts to share insights, explore opportunities and challenges that will shape the aviation industry in India in the next 20 years.

IATA

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is the trade association for the world’s airlines. It support many areas of

Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bangalore is set to become the first airport in Asia next year to use face recognition as the boarding procedure for passengers to board flights and move across different sections of the airport.  
  
CEO’s of Bangalore International Airport Ltd. (BIAL) & Vision Box, a Portuguese software firm, signed an agreement to this effect in Portugal.

aviation activity and help formulate industry policy on critical aviation issues.

From 57 founding members in 1945, IATA now represents some 290 airlines in 120 countries. Carrying 82% of the world's air traffic, IATA members include the world's leading passenger and cargo airlines. IATA membership is open to airlines operating scheduled and non-scheduled air services that maintain an IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) registration.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Airport Authority of India,  
Directorate General of Aviation,  
UDAN Scheme

### Asia-Europe Meeting

#### IN News

3rd ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) Conference on 'Global Ageing and Human Rights of Older Persons' was jointly organised in Seoul by the Republic of Korea and the National Human Rights Commission of Korea.

#### About the meeting

The 3-day Conference reaffirmed the universal value of the human rights of older persons, shared information on discrimination against the elderly and exemplary cases of long-term and palliative care in Asia and Europe, and also discussed operation and tasks of the ASEM Global Ageing Centre as an implementing institution for mutual cooperation among ASEM members for the protection and promotion of the human rights of older persons.

The Conference was attended by International Institutions including the United Nations, Regional Institutions such as UNESCAP, UNECE, European Union, ASEAN, GANHRI and also International NGOs, Experts etc.

#### ASEM

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) was established as a dialogue forum in 1996 with 26 partners to bridge Asia and Europe. Its 53 partners include 51 member countries and 2 regional organisations (ASEAN Secretariat and European Commission).

ASEM Summit Level meetings are held biennially. India's first Summit level participation was at the 7th Summit held in Beijing in 2008. India hosted the 11th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM11) in Delhi-NCR in 2013.

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III									■		
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PEPPER IT WITH  
Global Ageing Centre, ASEAN,  
OPEC, SAARC, RCEP, G4,  
Catalonia crisis, Comprehensive  
Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

### PISA (Program for International Student Assessment)

#### In News

The Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry has decided to participate in PISA, an international assessment of student ability, after a gap of almost 10 years.

#### Background

Till date, India has participated only once in PISA. The country made its debut in the "extended cycle" of the test for 2009, with 16,000 students from 400 schools in Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu participating. India was placed 72nd among the 74 participating countries. The government of that time blamed "out of context" questions for the poor show and chose not to participate in the 2012 and 2015 cycles.

The Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, at the government's behest, set up a committee to review the matter and its report, submitted in December 2016, recommended that the country participate in the 2018 test cycle. HRD Minister formally approved the decision to participate in the 2021 cycle of PISA. The government will request OECD to administer the test across all schools in Chandigarh in 2021.

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III									■		
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PEPPER IT WITH  
Bhaskar Ramamurthy  
Committee, RTE Amendment  
Bill 2017, NCPDR, National  
Digital Library of India

PISA

PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) was first administered in 2000. A triennial international survey, coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), it assesses the quality of education systems across the world by evaluating students in science, mathematics and reading.

The two-hour computer-based test focuses on 15-year-old students as they have either completed or are near the end of their compulsory education in most countries. PISA requires the examinees to have finished at least six years of formal schooling.

**COMCASA**

In News

India and the U.S. signed the foundational or enabling agreement COMCASA on the side-lines of the inaugural 2+2 dialogue.

GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II											
III											
IV											
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About COMCASA

- COMCASA stands for Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement and is one of the four foundational agreements that the U.S. signs with allies and close partners to facilitate interoperability between militaries and sale of high end technology.
- COMCASA is an India-specific version of the Communication and Information on Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA). It comes into force immediately, and is valid for a period 10 years.
- It allows India to procure transfer specialised equipment for encrypted communications for US origin military platforms like the C-17, C-130 and P-8Is. Currently, these platforms use commercially available communication systems.

India had signed the General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002 and the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016. The last one remaining is the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA).

PEPPER IT WITH GSOMIA, LEMOA, BECA, Major Defence Partner Status

Significance

- o It would facilitate access to advanced defence systems and enable India to optimally utilize its existing U.S.-origin platforms. Specific additional provisions have been incorporated in the text to safeguard our security and national interests.
- o This will also enable greater communications interoperability between the militaries of India and the US. Data acquired through such systems cannot be disclosed or **transferred to any person or entity without India's consent.**
- o Both countries will implement this agreement in a manner that is consistent with the national security interests of the other.

**First Global Mobility Summit 2018**

Why in News?

Prime Minister of India inaugurated **MOVE: India's ever first Global Mobility Summit** organized by NITI Aayog in Delhi. The focus of the summit is on raising awareness about various aspects of Mobility and bringing various stakeholders involved in enhancing mobility across different platforms.

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The Global Mobility Summit is the first of its kind, with participants expected from across the world including leaders from the government, industry, research organizations, academia, think tanks and civil society. Components of the Summit include: the core conclave, digital exhibition, Mobility Week with Featured Events and a variety of stakeholder consultations.

The summit will deliberate on five themes:

- i. Maximising asset utilisation and services
- ii. Comprehensive electrification and alternative fuels
- iii. Reinventing public transport
- iv. Goods transport and logistics
- v. Data analytics and mobility

International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, 16 September

The theme for World Ozone Day 2018 is a motivational rallying call urging all of us to carry on with the exemplary work of protecting the ozone layer and the climate under the Montreal Protocol. The theme has two connotations – that our work of protecting the ozone layer also protects climate and that the Montreal Protocol is a “cool” treaty, as exemplified by its outstanding success.

Significance

- The summit aims to bring together stakeholders from across the sectors of mobility and transportation to co-create a public interest framework to revolutionize transport.
- As mobility is what keeps the engine of life running, it is a key to unlock the potential of India's economy and people.
- The summit also aims to set the base for a transport system which is safe, clean, shared and connected, affordable, accessible and inclusive.
- The main aim through the summit is to revolutionise the way people travel in India, along with making mobility more connected, shared and seamless.

PEPPER IT WITH  
National Electric Mobility Mission Plan, Mobility Hackathon, Fame India Scheme, Mobility Pitch Competition, Mobility-as-a-Service

Chabahar Port

Why in News?

Iran will hand over the strategic Chabahar port to Indian company within a month for operation as per an interim pact.

Under the agreement signed between India and Iran earlier, India is to equip and operate two berths in Chabahar Port Phase-I with capital investment of USD 85.21 million and annual revenue expenditure of USD 22.95 million on a 10-year lease.

Chabahar Port

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



- Chabahar port in the Sistan-Balochistan province in the energy-rich nation's southern coast is easily accessible from India's western coast and is increasingly seen as a counter to Pakistan's Gwadar Port located at distance of around 80 kms from

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III											
IV											
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Chabahar.

- The first phase of the Chabahar port was inaugurated in December 2017 by Iranian President, opening a new strategic route connecting Iran, India and Afghanistan bypassing Pakistan.

Significance

- ❖ The port will make way for India to bypass Pakistan in transporting goods to Afghanistan using a sea-land route. At present, Pakistan does not allow India to transport through its territory to Afghanistan. It has, however, recently allowed some Afghan shipments to come to India.
- ❖ This will also give momentum to the International North-South Transport Corridor of which both are initial signatories along with Russia. Iran is the key gateway in this project. It entails the ship, rail, and road routes for moving freight between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and Central Asia. The route primarily involves moving freight from India, Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia. The objective of the corridor is to increase trade connectivity between major cities such as Mumbai, Moscow, Tehran, Baku, Astrakhan etc.
- ❖ It would counter Chinese presence in the Arabian sea through the support to Pakistan in developing Gwadar port. It can be used to station security vessels for merchant ships off the African coast apart from giving the country a foothold in the western Arabian Sea, which is important as many of its energy imports pass through the route.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Farzad-B gas field, Gwadar Port, North-South Transport Corridor, SCO, B&R Initiative, Iran Nuclear Deal

World Hindu Congress

In News

The second World Hindu Congress was held in Chicago, Illinois, U.S. It is Inspired by the Hindu principle, Sumantrite Suvikrante or THINK COLLECTIVELY, ACHIEVE VALIANTLY.

**On the eve of the 125th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda’s historic**

address to the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago, Hindus from around the world and of all backgrounds were invited to actively participate.

WHC

The World Hindu Congress (WHC) is a global platform for Hindus to connect, share ideas, inspire one another, and impact the common good. It offers Hindus an opportunity to introspect towards improvement and tap into our collective resources to seek tangible solutions to the most pressing issues of our age.

Held once every four years, **WHC’s seven parallel conferences showcase how the values, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit of the global Hindu community find expression in a variety of spheres, including economic, education, media, organizational, and political, as well as the unique leadership and contributions of Hindu women and youth.** WHC also serves as a platform to address critical issues impacting Hindus worldwide, including human rights, discrimination, and cultural assaults.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 G4, UNSC Reforms, Sustainable Development Goals, G20, FATF, World Coustom Organisation

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4thWorld Summit on Accreditation

In News

World Summit on Accreditation (WOSA) is a biennial Summit organised by NBA (National Board of Accreditation), which provides platform to stakeholders to share their knowledge and information on accreditation.

NBA has already organised three Summits in 2012, 2014 and 2016. Continuing this

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tradition, NBA organised WOSA 2018 in New Delhi. The focus of WOSA 2018 was on “CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN OUTCOME BASED ACCREDITATION”.

About the Summit

The Summit facilitated exchange of information on various challenges being faced during the transition between input-output based accreditation to outcome based accreditation. The discussion and global participation in WOSA 2018 brought about new ideas and help in establishing new trends of identifying opportunities and challenges in professional and technical education world-wide.

PEPPER IT WITH  
UN Resolution 2428, UN Resolution 2427, Asia Pacific Trade Agreement, International Organisation for Migration

NBA

The National Board of Accreditation (NBA) is an autonomous organisation under Ministry of Human Resource Development engaged in quality assurance of the programs offered by the professional and technical institutions in India through accreditation. NBA has been accorded Permanent Signatory Status of Washington Accord (an International Agreement among bodies responsible for accrediting undergraduate engineering degree programs) since 2014. It has adopted internationally implemented outcome based assessment and accreditation to ensure that the graduates of the NBA accredited programs are globally competent and relevant.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Why in News?

The ITU South Asia Area Office and Technology Innovation Centre will be established in New Delhi. This was announced by International Telecommunication Union (ITU), during the 4th BRICS Communications Ministers Meeting held in Durban, South Africa recently.

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The ITU South Asia Office will serve nine countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, in addition to the host country – which together account for nearly 24% of the global population.

Significance

- It signifies global recognition of the progress India has made in the field of ICT. It also places India on the responsibility to work with its neighbouring countries to take the benefits of the rapid developments in this technology-driven industry to people in the South Asia region.
- This local area office will play a key role in organising capacity and capability building programmes for the region, and in accelerating the structured **implementation of ITU’s** development programs with focus on Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Land-Locked Developed Countries (LLDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and other similarly placed nations in the region.
- The ITU Local Area Office will also impart a significant boost to technological reach and benefits for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which act as catalysts in the **inclusive growth of a region’s economy and employment.**

India-Bangladesh Friendship Product Pipeline Project  
 Indian PM and his Bangladesh counterpart jointly flagged off the construction of India-Bangladesh Friendship Product Pipeline Project through video conferencing.

The 130-kilometre pipeline will connect Siliguri in West Bengal in India and Parbatipur in Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. The capacity of the pipeline will be 1 million metric tons per annum. The six-kilometre Indian leg of the pipeline project will be implemented by the Assam-based Numaligarh Refinery Limited and the remaining 124 kilometres of the pipeline project will be implemented by Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation.

ITU

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ITU is a United Nations specialized agency for Information and Communication Technologies, with membership of 193 countries and nearly 800 private sector entities and academic institutions. As a member of the ITU since 1869, India has traditionally played a harmonising role in the deliberations and exchanges of the body, always respecting the core principles of equality and consensus-building. The country has also been a regular member of the ITU Council since 1952.

PEPPER IT WITH Quantum Communication, QUESS Satellite, USSD, Bangabandhu satellite, APSTAR-6C, TDRSS

Global Summit on Urban Tourism

In News

7th UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Global Summit on Urban Tourism was held in Seoul, capital of South Korea. The theme of the summit was 'A 2030 Vision for Urban Tourism'.

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About the summit

- The summit is expected to set out a vision towards 2030 for urban tourism and its potential for advancing more sustainable and inclusive cities.
- It seeks to encourage new strategic approaches to the challenge of a growing tourism sector and its impact on urban destinations through the sharing of innovative ideas and experiences.
- Among the topics featured were innovative approaches to: competitiveness in urban destinations; impacts of technology on urban tourism; rejuvenation of cities; and increasing inclusion in city development.
- It is organized by the UNWTO and the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG), with support from the Government of the Republic of Korea.

Paryatan Parv  
 The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India in collaboration with other Central Ministries, State Governments and Stakeholders is organizing a "Paryatan Parv" across the country from the 16-27 September 2018. The Paryatan Parv had three main components as like last year, viz. Dekho Apna Desh, Tourism for All and Tourism & Governance.

UNWTO

- o The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.
- o As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.
- o It encourages the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, to maximize tourism's socio-economic contribution while minimizing its possible negative impacts, and is committed to promoting tourism as an instrument in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, geared towards reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development worldwide.

PEPPER IT WITH Swadesh Darshan Scheme, Restricted India Permit scheme, e-VISA scheme, Ramayan Circuit, e-FRRO scheme

Pakistan invited Saudi Arabia to join the CPEC as third "strategic partner"

In News

Pakistan has invited Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) to join the CPEC as the third "strategic partner".

CPEC

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- The CPEC is the flagship project of the multi-billion dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a pet project of Chinese President Xi Jinping, aimed at **enhancing Beijing's influence** around the world through China-funded infrastructure projects.
- The CPEC aims to construct and upgrade the transportation network, energy projects, a deep-water port at Gwadar and special economic zones **to eventually support Pakistan's industrial development** as a manufacturing hub by 2030.
- CPEC eventually aims at linking the city of Gwadar in South Western Pakistan to **China's North Western region Xinjiang through a vast network of highways and railways**. The proposed project will be financed by heavily-subsidised loans that will be disbursed to the Government of Pakistan by Chinese banking giants.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Indus Water Treaty, Gwadar port, Siachin dispute, Sir Creek Dispute, Balochistan, SCO SAARC minus Pakistan

India

India **doesn't support CPEC**. Its **principal objection was that CPEC** passed through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). According to India, the so-called '**China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**' violates **India's sovereignty and territorial integrity**. **No country can accept a project that ignores its core concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity."**

IAEA

Why in News?

India has decided to place four more reactors under the IAEA safeguards. Accordingly, two Russian-designed Pressurised Light Water Reactors and two Pressurised Heavy Reactors being built with Indian technology will be covered.

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With this, a total of 26 Indian nuclear facilities will be under the international nuclear energy watchdog. This step reiterates the primacy to IAEA in its central role in promotion of atomic energy for peaceful uses and prosperity of the mankind while maintaining its due support in safeguards.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, UNESCO, International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

International Atomic Energy Agency

**Widely known as the world's "Atoms for Peace"** organization within the United Nations family, the IAEA is the international centre for cooperation in the nuclear field. The Agency works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.

Functions

- Assists its Member States, in the context of social and economic goals, in planning for and using nuclear science and technology for various peaceful purposes, including the generation of electricity, and facilitates the transfer of such technology and knowledge in a sustainable manner to developing Member States;
- Develops nuclear safety standards and, based on these standards, promotes the achievement and maintenance of high levels of safety in applications of nuclear energy, as well as the protection of human health and the environment against ionizing radiation;
- Verifies through its inspection system that States comply with their commitments, under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and other non-proliferation agreements, to use nuclear material and facilities only for peaceful purposes.

India contributes \$1 mn to UN solar project  
 India has contributed USD 1 million for the installation of solar panels on the roof of the imposing **UN building at the world body's headquarters**. The contribution will help reduce carbon footprint and promote sustainable energy.

## Global Media Compact

### In News

The United Nations announced the launch of the SDG Media Compact, an initiative marking a new drive to advance awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were unanimously adopted by all world leaders at the United Nations in 2015.

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### About the Compact

- The Compact seeks to inspire media and entertainment companies around the world to leverage their resources and creative talent to advance the Goals.
- Collectively, the founding members of the SDG Media Compact already comprise an audience in the billions spanning over 80 countries on 4 continents and many more companies are expected to join.
- The Compact is an initiative of the United Nations, in collaboration with the UN Foundation and with the support of FleishmanHillard.
- The SDG Media Compact is inclusive and aims to embrace media companies from all regions and all platforms.
- Participating organizations will have the opportunity to create content partnerships with the United Nations, whereby the organization will increase its efforts to source and share high-value media content and newsworthy opportunities relating to the SDGs. Regular monitoring and review meetings will gauge engagement.

PEPPER IT WITH  
SDG's, Rio 20+, UN  
Development Partnership Fund,  
UNOSSC, SDG Index

### About the SDGs

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by world leaders at the historic Sustainable Development Summit in 2015. Encompassing everything from health, to gender equality, and education, the Goals will mobilize efforts around the world to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

## International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

### In News

UN General Assembly designated 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. This Day provides an occasion for the world community to reaffirm its commitment to

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global nuclear disarmament as a high priority.

### Details

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/32 and subsequent resolutions, the purpose of the International Day is to further the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons through enhancing public awareness and education about the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons and the necessity for their total elimination. In so doing, it is hoped that these activities will help to mobilize new international efforts towards achieving the common goal of a weapon.

### New Agenda Coalition

- ✓ It is a group of geographically diverse, middle power countries which formed in response to the divide between nuclear weapon states (NWS) and non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) in 1998.
- ✓ Today, the NAC is a ministerial level group of states within the framework of the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) focused on building international consensus to make progress on nuclear disarmament, as legally called for in the Nonproliferation Treaty.
- ✓ It calls for an unequivocal commitment to nuclear disarmament and to begin multilateral negotiations that would lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons through a Nuclear Weapons Convention.
- ✓ It has 6 members (originally 8) Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, and South Africa.

Background

Achieving global nuclear disarmament is one of the oldest goals of the United Nations. It was the subject of the General Assembly’s first resolution in 1946, which established the Atomic Energy Commission, which was dissolved in 1952, with a mandate to make specific proposals for the control of nuclear energy and the elimination of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction. The United Nations has been at the forefront of many major diplomatic efforts to advance nuclear disarmament since then. In 1959, the General Assembly endorsed the objective of general and complete disarmament. In 1978, the first Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament further recognized that nuclear disarmament should be the priority objective in the field of disarmament. Every United Nations Secretary-General has actively promoted this goal.

The United States and Morocco, under the auspices of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), launched the GCTF Terrorist Travel Initiative in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly. Formally named the “Initiative on Improving Capabilities for Detecting and Interdicting Terrorist Travel through Enhanced Terrorist Screening and Information Sharing,” the Terrorist Travel Initiative will bring together national and local governments, law enforcement and border screening practitioners, and international organizations to share expertise on how to develop and implement effective counterterrorism watchlisting and screening tools.

Present scenario

- Presently, more than 14,500 nuclear weapons remain. Countries possessing such weapons have well-funded, long-term plans to modernize their nuclear arsenals.
- **More than half of the world’s population still lives in countries that either have such weapons or are members of nuclear alliances.**
- As of 2018, while the number of deployed nuclear weapons has appreciably declined since the height of the Cold War, not one nuclear weapon has been physically destroyed pursuant to a treaty.
- In addition, no nuclear disarmament negotiations are underway. Meanwhile, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence persists as an element in the security policies of all possessor states and many of their allies.
- In recent years, there has been growing frustration amongst Member States regarding what is perceived as the slow pace of nuclear disarmament. This frustration has been put into sharper focus with growing concerns worldwide over the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of even a single nuclear weapon, let alone a regional or global nuclear war.

PEPPER IT WITH NSG, NPT, India-Japan nuclear cooperation agreement, Ind-Australia Nuclear Deal, Uranium exporting countries to India, IAEA, Low Enriched Uranium bank in Kazakhstan

**Sustainable Development Framework for 2018-2022**

Why in News?

NITI Aayog and United Nations in India signed the Sustainable Development Framework for 2018-2022. The agreement is a reflection of the commitment and efforts made by India towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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About UNSDF

- UNSDF outlines the development cooperation strategy between the Government of India **and the United Nations Country Team in India, in support of the achievement of India’s** key national development priorities and the SDGs.
- It was framed following a highly participative process, in consultation with government

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entities, civil society representatives, academia, and the private sector.

- The focus areas include poverty and urbanization; health, water, and sanitation; education; nutrition and food security; climate change, clean energy, and disaster resilience; skilling, entrepreneurship, and job creation; and gender equality and youth development.
- Across outcome areas, the UN will support the Government of India on south-south cooperation, in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs.
- The total planned budget outlay for the implementation of the UNSDF 2018-2022 is approximately INR 11000 crore, of which 47 percent is planned to be mobilized through the course of implementation from multiple sources, including the private sector and the government.

**India Cooling Action Plan**  
 Union Environment Ministry released a draft India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP) which lists out actions which can help reduce the cooling demand, thus helping in reducing emissions. India is the first country in world to develop such a document – ICAP, which also gives thrust towards looking for synergies in actions for securing both environmental and socio-economic benefit.

The ministry underlined the need to work consistently under the aegis of the Montreal Protocol to phase out Ozone Depleting Substances. Apart from the ICAP, the ministry **also release a booklet on ‘Montreal Protocol – India’s Success Story’**. A refurbished website on the Ozone Cell of the ministry and a Management Information System (MIS) for Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) were also launched.

Significance

- o 2018-2022 will be a crucial **phase in India’s development** story since the year 2022 marks **the 75 years of India’s independence**. In this backdrop, partnership instruments such as the UNSDF assume even more significance to accelerate the pace towards building a New India by 2022, an India that is free of poverty and equal for all.
- o The UNSDF is underpinned by the overarching principle of the SDGs to leave no one behind, **echoing the Government of India’s message of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas** (development for all).
- o The programmatic work outlined in the UNSDF targets the seven low-income states (Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, MP, Odisha, Rajasthan, UP), the North-East region, and the aspirational districts identified earlier this year by the NITI Aayog.
- o Work will focus on improving the lives of the most marginalized, poor, and vulnerable communities and people in the country, especially women and girls.
- o UNSDF also includes a set of UN flagship programs that are aligned with major government schemes. The flagship programs will be scalable innovative, multi-sectoral solutions to some of the most pressing development challenges that India faces, while also serving as catalysts for increased investment of development finance.
- o The programmes range from affordable housing for the poor to increasing access to clean energy in rural off-grid areas; from protecting all children from vaccine-preventable diseases to quality education for all children and skilling for young people, especially young girls; and from ending stunting to improving the child sex ratio.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 UNCCD, UN Road Safety Trust Fund, UN Youth Envoy Office, ICJ, PCA, UNSC Reforms

**Western Ghats**

Why in News

The six Western Ghats States, including Kerala, have been restrained by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) from giving environmental clearance to activities that may adversely impact the eco-sensitive areas of the mountain ranges.

The panel directed that the extent of Eco-Sensitive Zones of Western Ghats, which was notified by the Central government earlier, should not be reduced in view of the recent

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floods in Kerala.

- The Tribunal Bench, in its order, noted that any alteration in the draft notification of zones may seriously affect the environment, especially in view of recent incidents in Kerala. It was on a petition filed by the Goa Foundation that the Bench issued the order.
- The Principal Bench of the panel, which permitted the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to re-publish the draft notification on Eco-Sensitive Zones, which expired on August 26, ordered that the matter may be finalised within six months. It also ordered that the draft of the republished notification be placed on the record of the tribunal.
- The Madhav Gadgil-led Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) report had created a political furore in the State with most of the political parties and a section of the church opposing it.
- The WGEEP had earlier proposed “much larger areas for being included in the eco-sensitive zone” though the Kasturirangan-led High Level Working Group, also appointed by the MoEF and CC to look into the WGEEP report, had reduced it. The Ministry had accepted the Kasturirangan report and issued the draft notifications on ecologically sensitive zones.

The report of a panel headed by ecologist Madhav Gadgil had suggested that the whole ESA should be divided into three categories with different rules for each. It had said that 90% of the Western Ghats should be a no-go area.

Dickinsonia

Scientists have discovered an ancient fossil of the earliest animal on geological record -- Dickinsonia -- a strange oval creature with rib like segments running along its body that lived on Earth 558 million years ago. The animal, which grew up to 1.4 metres in length, was part of the Ediacara Biota that lived on Earth 20 million years prior to the 'Cambrian explosion' of modern animal life. The 'Cambrian explosion' is the term given to the period of time in history when complex animals and other macroscopic organisms -- such as molluscs, worms, arthropods and sponges -- began to dominate the fossil record.

Kasturirangan committee Recommendations

- It recommends to turn approximately 60,000 square kilometres of the Western Ghats (37% area) across six states into an ecologically sensitive area (ESA).
- It said that cultural landscapes, which include human settlements, agricultural fields and plantations, covered 58.44% of the Western Ghats. It identified 90% of the remaining natural landscape area marked as an ESA. The panel called for a complete ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining in this area.
- All current mining areas in the ESA should be phased out within the next five years, or at the time of expiry of mining lease, whichever is earlier.
- No thermal power projects should be allowed in the ESA and hydropower projects **should be allowed only after “a cumulative study which assesses the impact of each project on the flow pattern of the rivers and forest and biodiversity loss” is conducted.**
- The report had said that all red category industries which are identified as heavily polluting by the environment ministry and include fertilizer plants, oil refineries, tanneries and copper smelters in a list of more than 60 items should be strictly banned

PEPPER IT WITH  
Oommen V Oommen Committee,  
Gadgil Committee, Lion-tailed  
macaque, malabar large-spotted  
civet, Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary

IOWave18

Why in News?

India, along with 23 other Indian Ocean nations, participated in a major tsunami mock exercise — IOWave18 — being organised by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO on September 4 and 5, first on the west coast and then the east coast the following day.

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ITEWC provides operational tsunami information to all Indian Ocean rim countries and participated in the IOWave18 exercise as both National Tsunami Warning Centre (NTWC) and Tsunami Service Provider (TSP) for the region.

The Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC), based out of INCOIS, is capable of detecting tsunamigenic earthquakes within 10 minutes of the occurrence of earthquake on the seabed and issue timely tsunami advisories to disaster management officials as well as to vulnerable communities.

About IOWave 18

- o It involved the evacuation of over 1.25 lakh people from the coastal communities of Odisha, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Gujarat and Goa.
- o The aim of the exercise is to increase tsunami preparedness, evaluate response capabilities in each state and improve coordination throughout the region.

PEPPER IT WITH INCOIS, Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre, RIMES, WMO, NDRF, Staphylococcus epidermidis, MDR, INMAS Nuclear kit, Maralal Camel Derby

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission

- ❖ The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO), established in 1960 as a body with functional autonomy within UNESCO, is the only competent organization for marine science within the UN system.
- ❖ UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) promotes international cooperation and coordinates programmes in marine research, services, observation systems, hazard mitigation, and capacity development in order to understand and effectively manage the resources of the ocean and coastal areas.
- ❖ IOC has coordinated setting up of Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWMS) in the aftermath of the tsunami on December 26, 2004.

Himalayan springs

In News

A NITI Aayog constituted group of experts has urged the government to set up a dedicated mission to salvage and revive spring water systems in the country's Himalayan States given their vital importance as a source of water for both drinking and irrigation for the region's inhabitants. They presented a report titled 'Inventory and Revival of Springs in the Himalayas for Water Security.'

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Issues

- Almost half of the perennial springs have already dried up or have become seasonal and tens of thousands of villages are currently facing acute water shortage for drinking and other domestic purposes.
- Almost 60% of low-discharge springs that provided water to small habitations in the Himalayan region have reported clear decline during the last couple of decades.
- The extent of the crisis plaguing the mountainous region was recently evident when more than half a dozen districts of Himachal Pradesh and the State capital Shimla faced a severe drinking water crisis. While poor water management was said to be the key cause, according to State authorities, they also attributed reduced snowmelt and depressed flow from springs as contributors to the crisis.

While Meghalaya with 3,810 villages with springs had the highest number of these water sources in the Eastern Himalayan States, Sikkim had the greatest density with 94% of its villages having a spring. In the Western Himalayas, Jammu & Kashmir had both the highest number of villages with springs at 3,313 and the greatest density of 50.6%.

PEPPER IT WITH Banihal pass, Zoji-la, Chang-la, Terai belt, Bhabhar belt, Secure Himalaya project

- With almost 64% of the cultivable area in the Himalayas fed by natural springs, they are often the only source of irrigation in the region.
- There are multiple sources of pollution in springs and they are due to both geogenic, or ‘natural’ causes and anthropogenic, or man-made, ones.

### Recommendations Made

The group recommends a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach of managing springs that will involve building upon the existing body of work on spring water management. The programme could be designed on the concept of an action-research programme as part of a hydrogeology-based, community-support system on spring water management.

The task force moots an 8-year programme to overhaul spring water management. This includes: preparing a digital atlas of the country’s springsheds, training ‘para-hydrogeologists’ who could lead grassroots conservation and introduction of a ‘Spring Health Card.’

## Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats

### In News

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, has approved continuation of the Centrally Sponsored Umbrella Scheme of Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-IDWH) beyond the 12th Plan period from 2017-18 to 2019-20. The Scheme consists of Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger (CSS-PT), Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-DWH) and Project Elephant (CSS-PE).

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### Benefits

A total of 18 tiger range States, distributed in five landscapes of the country would be benefitted under the Project Tiger scheme. Similarly, for other two schemes, the coverage is entire country in case of Development of Wildlife Habitats (DWH) and 23 elephant range States for Project Elephant. It would foster wildlife conservation in general with specific inputs for tiger in Project Tiger area and elephant in Project Elephant area.

PEPPER IT WITH ADG (Project Tiger), NTCA, Project Elephant, Man and Biosphere Program, Tiger Range States

### Implementation

The implementation of the schemes would be done through the respective States in designated Tiger Reserves, Protected Areas and Elephant Reserves.

### Significance

- Besides immense environmental benefits, the schemes would result in overall strengthening/consolidation of tiger, elephant and wildlife conservation in the country.
- The schemes would address the human wildlife conflict effectively.
- These schemes would generate employment opportunities resulting in economic upliftment of people in and around tiger reserves/ Protected Areas besides leading to reduction in natural resource dependency with substitution by clean energy use. It will generate direct employment of about 30 lakh mandays annually which shall include many local tribes besides non-tribal local workforce.
- These schemes would foster imparting various skills towards making people self-dependent through various eco-development projects, thereby enabling them to go for self-employment.
- These schemes would result in resource generation through tourist visits, thereby fostering in securing tiger source areas and other areas important for wildlife

### **Eight avian species declared “extinct”**

Scientists have declared eight species of birds to be extinct in what are being seen as the first avian extinctions of the 21st century.

**These include Spix’s macaw, the Alagoas foliage-gleaner, the cryptic treehunter, the Pernambuco pygmy-owl, the poo-uli, or black-faced honeycreeper and the glaucous macaw.** Five of these new extinctions have occurred in South America and have been attributed by scientists to deforestation.

The study was conducted by non-profit “BirdLife International” and was published in the journal Biological Conservation. Four out of the eight species declared extinct belong to Brazil.

conservation, besides being helpful in sustaining life support systems as well as ensuring the food, water and livelihood security.

### Project Tiger

- The Government of India has taken a pioneering initiative for conserving its national animal, the tiger, by launching the 'Project Tiger' in 1973.
- The tiger reserves are constituted on a core/buffer strategy. The core areas have the legal status of a national park or a sanctuary, whereas the buffer or peripheral areas are a mix of forest and non-forest land, managed as a multiple use area. Project Tiger aims to foster an exclusive tiger agenda in the core areas of tiger reserves, with an inclusive people oriented agenda in the buffer.
- Project Tiger is an ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change providing central assistance to the tiger States for tiger conservation in designated tiger reserves.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is a statutory body of the Ministry, with an overarching supervisory / coordination role, performing functions as provided in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

## Ganga cleaning project

### In News

With an aim to clean the river Ganga, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation has prepared a draft bill. The draft bill has provisions for several stringent measures. The draft bill has measures such as constitution of an armed Ganga Protection Corps (GPC) whose personnel will have the authority to arrest those who pollute the river. The offenders may face a prison term of up to three years and a fine of up to Rs 5 lakh.

### Background

In July 2016, a committee was constituted under retired judge Justice Girdhar Malviya who had submitted a draft Bill last year named The National River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Bill, 2017. Subsequently, a four-member committee was set up by the Ministry to examine that and the Ministry has circulated a Cabinet note which includes a revised version of that draft Bill.

### Highlights of the bill

- The draft says that present environmental laws **aren't adequate to restore and protect the river.** The Bill calls for a National Ganga Council and a National Ganga Rejuvenation Authority to enforce the law and protect the river which flows over 2500 km.
- Cognizable offences marked in the draft Bill include: construction activities causing obstruction in the river; withdrawal of ground water for industrial or commercial consumption from the land fronting the river and its tributaries; commercial fishing or aqua culture in the river and its tributaries; discharging untreated or treated sewage into the river.
- **The draft Bill envisages the Ganga Protection Corps as an armed force "constituted and maintained" by the Central government. "If any member of GPC has reason to believe that any person has committed an offence punishable under this Act, he may take such person in custody to the nearest police station."** GPC will follow Code of Criminal

GS CONNECT											
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III											
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### Bonnethead shark

According to US researchers, one of the most common sharks in the world, a relative of the hammerhead which patrols the shores of the Americas, is the first variety of shark to be outed as a bona fide omnivore.

The bonnethead shark is abundant in the shallow waters of the eastern Pacific, the Western Atlantic, and the Gulf of Mexico, where they feed on crab, shrimp, snails and bony fish. It has been categorized by IUCN as Least Concern.

### PEPPER IT WITH

Ganga Manthan, Namami Ganga, NMCG, National Ganga Council, Central Water Commission, National Ganga Rejuvenation Authority, NGRBA

Procedure. It will be provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs and will be deployed by National Ganga Rejuvenation Authority.

- The draft Bill says that commercial fishing or aqua culture activities in the Ganga and any of its tributaries shall be punishable with imprisonment for two years or a fine of Rs 2 lakh or both. Similarly, construction of permanent structure for residential, commercial and residential purposes in the active flood plain area of Ganga will be punishable with a two-year imprisonment or fine up to Rs 50 lakh or both.
- The draft makes it clear that no person or municipal authority will establish or take any steps to set up any industrial or residential or commercial premises or structure which may result in discharge of any sewage or trade effluent into the Ganga, otherwise he may face a five-year prison term or a fine of Rs 50,000 per day or both.

### Snow Leopard

#### In News

A snow leopard was spotted at a height of about 4,000 metres in Lippa-Asra wildlife sanctuary in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh. It was only last year that the snow leopard improved from 'endangered' to 'vulnerable' in terms of conservation status. The recent findings have ascertained that snow leopards are inhabiting new areas.

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#### Snow Leopard

- Snow leopards live in the mountainous regions of central and southern Asia. In India, their geographical range encompasses a large part of the western Himalayas including the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh in the eastern Himalayas.
- The snow leopard is listed as Endangered on the IUCN-World Conservation Union's Red List of the Threatened Species.
- Snow leopard, like all big cats, is listed on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES), which makes trading of animal body parts (i.e., fur, bones and meat) illegal in signatory countries. It is also protected by several national laws in its range countries.
- The Government of India has identified the snow leopard as a flagship species for the high altitude Himalayas. It has developed a centrally-supported programme called Project Snow Leopard for the conservation of the species and its habitats.

PEPPER IT WITH IUCN, CITES, Schedules of Wildlife Protection Act, WWF, Animal Welfare Board of India, Bishkek Declaration

### 70% chance of El Nino event this year

#### Why in News?

An El Nino event that could disrupt global weather is likely by the end of what has already been a hot year. The World Meteorological Organisation forecast "a 70 percent chance of an El Nino developing by the end of this year."

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II											
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El Nino is triggered by periodic warming in the eastern Pacific Ocean which can trigger drought in some regions, heavy rain in others.

#### Details

- ❖ WMO does not expect the anticipated El Nino to be as powerful as the 2015-2016 event, but it will still have considerable impacts. The organisation sees increased odds of higher surface temperatures in most of Asia-Pacific, Europe, North America, Africa and along much of South America's coastline.

**National Water Awards 2018**  
Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation has instituted National Water Awards with the objective to encourage all stakeholders to manage their water resources efficiently and create a water consciousness in the country. The entries for National Water Awards 2018 are now invited in 13 categories.

- ❖ Interior parts of South America, Greenland, many south Pacific islands and some in the Caribbean were identified as possible exceptions. 2018 "is on track to be one of the warmest on record," after especially high temperatures in July and August across several parts of the world.
- ❖ The rise in sea surface temperature may be intensified by global warming. From the current study, we learn that El Nino can exacerbate global warming and hence the process could become a vicious circle.

El Nino

- El Niño means The Little Boy, or Christ Child in Spanish. El Niño and La Niña are opposite phases of what is known as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle. The ENSO cycle is a scientific term that describes the fluctuations in temperature between the ocean and atmosphere in the east-central Equatorial Pacific.
- El Nino is a climatic cycle characterised by high air pressure in the Western Pacific and low air pressure in the eastern. In normal conditions, strong trade winds travel from east to west across the tropical Pacific, pushing the warm surface waters towards the western Pacific. The surface temperature could witness an increase of 8 degrees Celsius in Asian waters.
- At the same time, cooler waters rise up towards the surface in the eastern Pacific on the coasts of Ecuador, Peru, and Chile. This process called upwelling aids in the development of a rich ecosystem.
- An El Nino or La Nina episode lasts nine to 12 months. Some may prolong for years. Its average frequency is every 2 to 7 years. El Nino is more frequent than La Nina.

Rajasthan's first lion safari  
 Rajasthan first lion safari was inaugurated at Nahargarh Biological Park. To start with, three sub-adult Asiatic lions have been shifted in the area. The park is located on the Delhi-Jaipur National Highway, nearly 12 kilometers from Jaipur. Located in the Aravalli foothills, it offers a panoramic view of the landscape.

Germany rolls out world's first hydrogen train  
 Germany rolled out the world's first hydrogen-powered train, signalling the start of a push to challenge the might of polluting diesel trains with costlier but more eco-friendly technology. Hydrogen trains are equipped with fuel cells that produce electricity through a combination of hydrogen and oxygen, a process that leaves steam and water as the only emissions. Excess energy is stored in ion lithium batteries on board the train.

Effects

- o El Nino affects global weather. It favours eastern Pacific hurricanes and tropical storms. Record and unusual rainfall in Peru, Chile and Ecuador are linked to the climate pattern.
- o El Nino reduces upwelling of cold water, decreasing the uplift of nutrients from the bottom of the ocean. This affects marine life and sea birds. The fishing industry is also affected.
- o Drought caused by El Nino can be widespread, affecting southern Africa, India, Southeast Asia, Australia, and the Pacific Islands. Countries dependent on agriculture are affected.
- o Australia and Southeast Asia get hotter.
- o A recent WHO report on the health consequences of El Nino forecasts a rise in vector-borne diseases, including those spread by mosquitoes, in Central and South America. Cycles of malaria in India are also linked to El Nino.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 ENSO, La Nina, Southern Oscillation ITCZ, Trade Winds, Horse Latitude, Ocean Currents

## River Pollution

### In News

The number of polluted stretches of the country's rivers has increased to 351 from 302 two years ago, and the number of critically polluted stretches — where water quality indicators are the poorest — has gone up to 45 from 34, according to an assessment by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

### Details

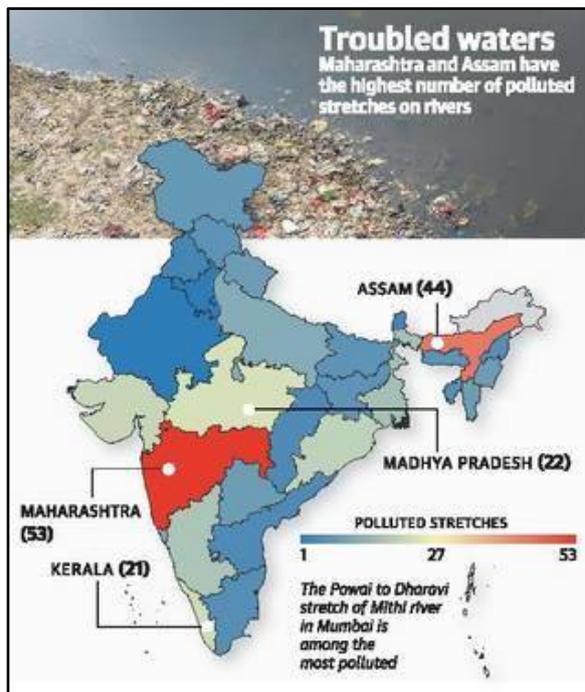
While the ₹20,000 crore clean-up of the Ganga may be the most visible of the government's efforts to tackle pollution, the CPCB says several of the river's stretches — in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh — are actually far less polluted than many rivers in Maharashtra, Assam and Gujarat. These three States account for 117 of the 351 polluted river stretches.

The most significant stretches of pollution highlighted include the Mithi river — from Powai to Dharavi — with a BOD (Biochemical Oxygen Demand) of 250 mg/l; the Godavari — from Someshwar to Rahed — with a BOD of 5.0-80 mg/l; the Sabarmati — Kheroj to Vautha — with a BOD of 4.0-147 mg/l; and the Hindon — Saharanpur to Ghaziabad — with a BOD of 48-120 mg/l. In its compilation of polluted stretches in Uttar Pradesh, the Ganga, with a BOD range of 3.5-8.8 mg/l is indicated as a 'priority 4' river.

### BOD

The CPCB, since the 1990s, has a programme to monitor the quality of rivers primarily by measuring BOD, which is a proxy for organic pollution — the higher it is, the worse the river. The health of a river and the efficacy of water treatment measures by the States and municipal bodies are classified depending on BOD, with a BOD greater than or equal to 30 mg/l termed 'priority 1,' while that between 3.1-6 mg/l is 'priority 5.' The CPCB considers a BOD less than 3 mg/l an indicator of a healthy river.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
National water digest award, World Water Day, Atal Bhujal Yojana, Central water board, Green Climate Fund

## India to launch agriculture project with UN's FAO

### In News

The government along with United Nations body FAO has launched an agriculture project with \$33.5 million grant from Global Environment Facility (GEF) that seeks to bring transformative change in the farm sector through conservation of biodiversity and forest landscape.

### About the Project

- The project is being implemented by the government of India (agriculture and environment ministries) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
- The project aims to transform agricultural production to generate global environmental benefits by addressing biodiversity conservation, land degradation, climate change mitigation and sustainable forest management.
- The project, to be implemented in five landscapes in Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, strives to bring harmony between conservation and development efforts of the country.

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FAO

- o The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- o Its goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives. With over 194 member states, FAO works in over 130 countries worldwide.

Scheme for the protection of the exotic Neela Kurinji plants

Tamil Nadu government has announced a novel scheme for the protection of the exotic Neela kurinji (Strobilanthus kunthianus) plants that flower only once in 12 years.

The Neela Kurinju, native to the Western Ghats, is a major attraction to foreign and native tourists and one of the prime foreign exchange earners from tourism.

GEF

- The Global Environment Facility was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Today, the GEF is an international partnership of 183 countries, international institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector that addresses global environmental issues.
- It provides funding to assist developing countries in meeting the objectives of international environmental conventions.
- The GEF serves as "financial mechanism" to five conventions, which are Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and Minamata Convention on Mercury.

PEPPER IT WITH World Food Day, World Hunger List, National Adaptation fund, Clean Development Mechanism, Joint Implementation

Ethanol Blended Petrol Program

In News

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, has given its approval to revise / fix the price of ethanol derived from B heavy molasses / partial sugarcane juice and fix a higher price for 100% sugarcane juice based ethanol for the forthcoming sugar season 2018-19 during ethanol supply year from 1st December 2018 to 30th November 2019.

Additionally, GST and transportation charges will also be payable. OMCs have been advised to fix realistic transportation charges so that long distance transportation of ethanol is not disincentivised.

Significance

- The decision will serve multiple purposes of reducing excess sugar in the country, increasing liquidity with the sugar mills for settling cane farmer's dues and making higher ethanol available for Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme.
- All distilleries will be able to take benefit of the scheme and large number of them is expected to supply ethanol for the EBP programme. Remunerative price to ethanol suppliers will help in reduction of cane farmer's arrears, in the process contributing to minimizing difficulty of sugarcane farmers.
- Ethanol availability for EBP Programme is expected to increase significantly due to higher price being offered for procurement of ethanol from B heavy molasses / partial sugarcane juice and 100% sugarcane juice for first time.
- Increased ethanol blending in petrol has many benefits including reduction in import dependency, support to agricultural sector, more environmental friendly fuel, lesser pollution and additional income to farmers.

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PEPPER IT WITH World biofuel day, Integrate to innovate program, Invest India, Natural gas, Global wind summit

### Background

Ethanol Blended Petrol Programme was launched by the Government in 2003 on pilot basis which has been subsequently extended to the Notified 21 States and 4 Union-Territories to promote the use of alternative and environment friendly fuels. This intervention also seeks to reduce import dependence for energy requirements and give boost to agriculture sector. It seeks to reduce import dependency for energy requirements and give boost to agriculture sector.

## CHILLER STAR LABELLING PROGRAM

### In News

Ministry of Energy has launched an ambitious Chiller Star Labelling Program to encourage the use of low energy consumption across the country. The Chiller Star labeling program has been prepared by the Energy Efficiency Bureau. It runs on the fact that electricity consumption in the country is way too much and what best we could do to save energy. Under this program, it envisages to provide star ratings depending upon the amount of energy consumption. This program has been started on voluntary basis and it will be valid till 31 December 2020.

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### Chiller

- The chiller is considered to be an energy intensive system, therefore, chillers consume more than 40 percent of the energy in commercial buildings.
- The size of Indian Chiller Bazaar was estimated to be 1 million tonne annually in 2017, which has been projected to increase at the rate of CAGR of 3.6 percent.
- Chiller is widely used in the buildings, in the cooling of the indoor air conditioning and industrial process.
- It has been presumed considering the increasing number of retail, hospitality and infrastructure projects.

PEPPER IT WITH Energy transition index, Methanol economy fund, Energy architecture performance index, IEA

## TX2 goal

### Why in News?

On the occasion of National Conservation Day, Nepal announced that there are now an estimated 235 wild tigers in the country, nearly doubling the baseline of around 121 tigers in 2009.

If these trends continue, Nepal could become the first country to double its national tiger population since the ambitious TX2 goal – **to double the world’s wild tiger population by 2022** – was set at the St. Petersburg Tiger Summit in 2010.

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### Details

The success in Nepal has been largely attributed to the country’s political commitment and the adoption of innovative tools and approaches towards tiger conservation. Nepal was the first country to achieve global standards in managing tiger conservation areas, an accreditation scheme governed by the Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CA|TS). With four more years to go, the TX2 goal of doubling tiger numbers globally can only be achieved if all the tiger range countries step up and commit to a similar level of excellence.

PEPPER IT WITH Flemingo Festival, National Board of Wildlife, Chilika Lake, Blackbuck, Turtle sanctuary at Allahabad

### TX2 Goal

- Tigers are the largest species of cat. There may have been over 100,000 tigers roaming this planet about a century ago. But by 2010, **95% of the world’s wild tiger population** was lost to rampant poaching and habitat loss. As few as 3,200 of them were left.
- An ambitious and visionary species conservation goal was set by the governments of the 13 tiger range countries: to double the number of wild tigers by 2022 – the

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next Chinese year of the tiger. This is the Tx2 goal of WWF (World Wide Foundation).

- Wild tigers are found in a variety of habitats across Asia. There are currently 13 tiger range countries; Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Viet Nam.

### Kerala floods

#### In News

Kerala witnessed an unprecedented deluge, said to be the worst in the last 100 years. The landslides and floods had claimed 493 lives in the state since the onset of South West Monsoon on May 29. Over 14 lakh people were displaced from their homes and forced to take shelter in relief camps as their homes were waterlogged or damaged in the rain fury.

#### Reason

A combination of four factors led to extreme flooding across Kerala this year, a study says.

- The summer monsoon rainfall in Kerala from May to August this year was 2,290 mm, which was 53% above normal. The average rainfall during the summer monsoon period (June-September) is about 1,619 mm. This makes **2018 Kerala's third wettest** year in the last 118 years.

- Second, till August 21, the State witnessed few extreme rainfall events covering almost the entire State. These extreme rainfall events have very low probability of recurrence in any given year.

- Third, Kerala received 1634.5 mm rainfall during the period May 1 to August 7, which is more than the average rainfall (1619.37 mm) during the summer monsoon period (June-September). As a result, six of the seven major reservoirs in the State had over 90% storage before August 8, well before Kerala received the unprecedented extreme rainfall events.

- Finally, the catchment areas of major reservoirs in the State received extreme rainfall never before witnessed in the State. The role of other factors such as changes in how infrastructure has grown at the expense of vegetation and drainage remains to be studied.

- The State-wide flooding shows that reservoirs can play a major role in improving or worsening the flood situation.

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#### Chola Naikar Tribe

- ✓ For a second time in less than a decade, the rains have shaken the tranquility of Chola Naikar Tribes lives.
- ✓ The 42 member tribe, the true forest dwellers live in Parappanpara region of the Meppadi forest range under the South Wayanad forest division.
- ✓ **Kerala's reclusive tribe is leaving the forests** for the plains as most of the members have decided to leave their home.
- ✓ They were living in caves till 2009, when heavy rains forced them to move to out. They were bundled into make-shift tenements and have been living there ever

PEPPER IT WITH  
Flash floods, Operation Madad,  
Operation Sahyog, Cyclone Warning  
System, Rajiv Kumar Committee,  
Jhelum-Tawi Flood Recovery Project

### WAYU (Wind Augmentation PurifYing Unit)

#### In News

Air pollution control device WAYU (Wind Augmentation PurifYing Unit) was inaugurated for traffic junctions at ITO intersection and Mukarba Chowk in Delhi. By 15th of October, the ministry plans to install 54 more WAYU devices at various traffic intersections across Delhi.

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III								■			
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- WAYU is developed by Council of Scientific and Industrial Research – National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI) as a part of Technology Development Project being funded by Department of Science and Technology.
- The prototype device that has been indigenously developed has the capacity to purify air in an area of 500 meter square. The device consumes only half a unit of electricity for 10 hours of running and has a maintenance cost of only Rs. 1500 per month.
- It works on two principles mainly Wind generation for dilution of air pollutants and Active Pollutants removal. The device has filters for Particulate Matter removal and activated carbon (charcoal) and UV lamps for poisonous gases removal such as VOCs and Carbon Monoxide.
- It has one fan and filter for sucking and removing Particulate Matter. There are two UV lamps and half kg of activated carbon charcoal coated with special chemical Titanium Dioxide.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Air Quality Index, SAFAR  
App, PM 2.5, Indian Solar  
Alliance, Stubble burning

**SATAT initiative**

Why in News?

Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas kicked off an innovative initiative in New Delhi, with PSU Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs ,i.e. IOC, BPCL and HPCL) inviting Expression of Interest (Eoi) from potential entrepreneurs to set up Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG) production plants and make available CBG in the market for use in automotive fuels.

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II											
III									■		
IV											
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- o Titled SATAT, the initiative is aimed at providing a Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) as a developmental effort that would benefit both vehicle-users as well as farmers and entrepreneurs.
- o It is planned to roll out 5,000 Compressed Bio-Gas plants across India in a phased manner, with 250 plants by the year 2020, 1,000 plants by 2022 and 5,000 plants by 2025. These plants are expected to produce 15 million tonnes of CBG per annum, which is about 40% of current CNG consumption of 44 million tonnes per annum in the country.

Significance

- This significant move has the potential to boost availability of more affordable transport fuels, better use of agricultural residue, cattle dung and municipal solid waste, as well as to provide an additional revenue source to farmers.
- The initiative holds great promise for efficient municipal solid waste management and in tackling the problem of polluted urban air due to farm stubble-burning and carbon emissions. Use of CBG will also help bring down dependency on crude oil imports and in realising the vision of **enhancing farmers’ income, rural employment and entrepreneurship.**

PEPPER IT WITH  
GOBAR-DHAN, CNG, Methanol  
economy, Ethanol blending, Pet  
coke, Hydrogen fuel

Background

- Bio-gas is produced naturally through a process of anaerobic decomposition from waste / bio-mass sources like agriculture residue, cattle dung, sugarcane press mud, municipal solid waste, sewage treatment plant waste, etc. After purification, it is compressed and called CBG, which has pure methane content of over 95%.
- Compressed Bio-Gas is exactly similar to the commercially available natural gas in its composition and energy potential. With calorific value (~52,000 KJ/kg) and other properties similar to CNG, Compressed Bio-Gas can be used as an alternative, renewable automotive fuel.
- Given the abundance of biomass in the country, Compressed Bio-Gas has the potential to replace CNG in automotive, industrial and commercial uses in the coming years.
- There are multiple benefits from converting agricultural residue, cattle dung and

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municipal solid waste into CBG on a commercial scale:

- ❖ Responsible waste management, reduction in carbon emissions and pollution
- ❖ Additional revenue source for farmers
- ❖ Boost to entrepreneurship, rural economy and employment
- ❖ Support to national commitments in achieving climate change goals
- ❖ Reduction in import of natural gas and crude oil
- ❖ Buffer against crude oil/gas price fluctuations
- ❖ The potential for Compressed Bio-Gas production from various sources in India is estimated at about 62 million tonnes per annum.

Conclusion

Compressed Bio-Gas networks can be integrated with city gas distribution (CGD) networks to boost supplies to domestic and retail users in existing and upcoming markets. Besides retailing from OMC fuel stations, Compressed Bio-Gas can at a later date be injected into CGD pipelines too for efficient distribution and optimised access of a cleaner and more affordable fuel.

**Rashtriya Poshan Maah**

In News

Poshan Maah is being celebrated across the country in September. It aims to reach every household in the country with the message of the importance of optimum nutrition. The effort will further the objectives of Poshan Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission).

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II											
III											
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- National Nutrition Month has eight Key Themes, namely, Antenatal Care, Optimal Breastfeeding, Complementary Feeding, Anemia, Growth Monitoring, Education; diet and right age of marriage for girls, Hygiene and Sanitation and Food fortification.
- All the Departments of the Government and other associated organisations have adopted an integrated approach towards accomplishing a target of malnutrition-free India.

National Nutrition Mission

POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Government of India, which ensures convergence with various programmes i.e., Anganwadi Services, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) of MWCD Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), National Health Mission (NHM), Swachh-Bharat Mission, Public Distribution System (PDS), Department Food & Public Distribution, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation.

PEPPER IT WITH Aspirational District Program, SATH-E project, Hamburg Action Plan

The goals of NNM are to achieve improvement in nutritional status of Children from 0-6 years, Adolescent Girls, Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers in a time bound manner during the next three years beginning 2017-18. NNM targets to reduce stunting, under- nutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively. Although the target to reduce Stunting is atleast 2% p.a., Mission would strive to achieve reduction in Stunting from 38.4% (NFHS-4) to 25% by 2022 (Mission 25 by 2022).

**NASA's Cassini spacecraft**

In News

Using data from NASA's Cassini spacecraft, scientists have spotted a surprising feature emerging at Saturn's northern pole as it nears summertime - a warming, high-altitude jet stream with a hexagonal shape.

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The vortex is akin to the famous hexagon seen deeper down in Saturn's clouds. The results suggest that the lower-altitude hexagon may influence what happens above, and that it could be a towering structure hundreds of miles in height.

The Hexagon

The hexagonal pattern at Saturn's North Pole had been shrouded in mystery for a long time. Some believe it to be a natural phenomenon, while others think it to be the result of some alien activity.

The hexagon is a wavy jet stream of 200-mile-per-hour winds (about 322 kilometres per hour) with a massive rotating storm at the centre. The mysterious hexagon in Saturn's north pole is thought to be nearly 20,000 miles (32,190 km) wide and can fit inside it almost four Earths. The hexagon is just a current of air, and weather features out there that share similarities to this are notoriously turbulent and unstable.

Cassini-Huygens

Cassini-Huygens, U.S.-European space mission to Saturn, launched on October 15, 1997. The mission consisted of the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA's) Cassini orbiter, which was the first space probe to orbit Saturn, and the European Space Agency's Huygens probe, which landed on Titan, Saturn's largest moon. Cassini-Huygens was one of the largest interplanetary spacecraft.

NASA's Kepler probe

NASA's planet hunting Kepler space telescope, which has led to the discovery of over 2,300 planets so far, was roused from sleep mode and has restarted its scientific operations. The spacecraft went into sleep mode after successfully downloading data from its 18th observation campaign.

The Kepler Mission, NASA Discovery mission #10, is specifically designed to survey our region of the Milky Way galaxy to discover hundreds of Earth-size and smaller planets in or near the habitable zone and determine the fraction of the hundreds of billions of stars in our galaxy that might have such planets.

PEPPER IT WITH  
VIKAS Engine, REMOVE  
Debris, Tiangong Satellite,  
BeiDou, Yaogan-30 project

Model International Center for Transformative AI (ICTAI)

In News

NITI Aayog, Intel, and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) announced that they are collaborating to set up a Model International Center for Transformative Artificial Intelligence (ICTAI) towards developing and deploying AI-led application-based research projects.

This initiative is part of NITI Aayog's 'National Strategy for **Artificial Intelligence**' Discussion Paper that focuses on establishing ICTAI in the country through private sector collaboration.

Details

- Based in Bengaluru, the Model ICTAI aims to conduct advanced research to incubate AI-led solutions in three important areas – healthcare, agriculture and smart mobility – by bringing together the expertise of Intel and TIFR.
- The model Centre also plans to develop AI foundational technologies to promote applied research that can scale for national impact and will lead to the creation of a vibrant and self-sustaining ecosystem.

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Emirates Mars Mission

- ✓ Emirates Mars Mission, also known as Al-Amal or Hope, is the first Arab mission to Mars. It is under development at the UAE Space Agency.
- ✓ The Mission will focus on the Martian atmosphere and climate.
- ✓ It will study how the lower and upper layers of the atmosphere interact with each other.
- ✓ **It will search for connections between today's** Martian weather and the ancient climate of the Red Planet.
- ✓ Launch is planned for 2020 on a Japanese H-2A-202 rocket and arrival at Mars will be in 2021.

- Another key area of its focus will be collaboration with industry leaders, startups, and AI services and product companies to productize technologies and IP that are developed at the model ICTAI. And finally, the goal is to support skilling and talent development for world-class AI talent.
- The learning and best practices developed through this model ICTAI will be used by NITI Aayog to set up the future ICTAIs across country.

PEPPER IT WITH TIFR, AI, Big Data, Internet of Things, Siri (Apple), National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence

Significance

Artificial Intelligence is going to be a transformative driver of economic growth and social progress, and Intel’s vision is to drive human-centric AI to benefit humanity in an inclusive manner.

In India, through the AI-for-All initiative, it aim to deliver the twin goals of solving hard problems of humanity, and helping India achieve its vision of global AI leader, by bringing together a rich ecosystem of research, innovation, technology development and deployment.

Apsara – U Reactor

- **“Apsara”, the first research reactor in Asia** became operational in Trombay campus of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in 1956. After providing more than five decades of dedicated service to the researchers, the reactor was shut down in 2009.
- Nearly sixty-two years after Apsara came into existence, a swimming pool type research reactor **“Apsara-upgraded”, of higher capacity was born at** Trombay. The reactor, made indigenously, uses plate type dispersion fuel elements made of Low Enriched Uranium (LEU).
- Apsara is a light water swimming pool-type reactor with a maximum power output of one megawatt thermal (MWT) and is utilized for various experiments, including neutron activation analysis, radiation damage studies, forensic research, neutron radiography, and shielding experiments.
- By virtue of higher neutron flux, this reactor will increase indigenous production of radio-isotopes for medical application by about fifty percent and would also be extensively used for research in nuclear physics, material science and radiation shielding.
- The reactor can also be used for research and production of radioisotopes for medical application and would also be extensively used for research in nuclear physics, material science and radiation shielding. This development has re-emphasised the capability of Indian scientists and Engineers to build, complex facilities for health care, science education and research.

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PEPPER IT WITH Low Enriched Uranium, Radio-Isotopes, BARC, Nuclear Suppliers Group, NPT, Kudankulam Nuclear Reactor, India-Japan Civil Nuclear Deal

**NASA’s Orion spacecraft**

In News

NASA has completed the final test to qualify Orion’s parachute system for flights with astronauts, checking off an important milestone on the path to send humans on missions to the Moon and beyond.

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Orion spacecraft

Orion is a new NASA spacecraft for astronauts. The spacecraft will play an important part in NASA's journey to Mars. Orion will carry astronauts farther into the solar system than ever before. Orion will carry astronauts into deep space and then return them home to Earth. Orion will be able to travel to an asteroid or even Mars.

PEPPER IT WITH HORIZON 2020, Jatropha seeds, OSIRIS-REX, Fabless chip design incubator

Orion has three main parts. The upper section is the launch abort system, or LAS; the crew module is the middle part; and the service module is the lower portion of the spacecraft. Astronauts will sit in the middle section, the crew module. This will be their living quarters. If an emergency occurs during launch or the climb to orbit, the LAS would activate in milliseconds. It would propel the crew module away from the rocket to safety.

ICESat-2

In News

NASA has launched a satellite designed to precisely measure changes in Earth's ice sheets, glaciers, sea ice and vegetation. The \$1 billion mission will monitor our planet's ice sheets from space using a laser-scanning satellite to measure the planet's ice sheet balance and sea level.

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- The mission is focused on understanding how the ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica in particular contribute to sea level rise. The melt from those ice sheets alone has raised global sea level by more than 1 millimeter (0.04 inch) a year recently, according to NASA.
- It will also measure the tops of trees, snow and river heights to aide research into the amount of carbon stored in forests, flood and drought planning and wildlife behaviour.
- The mission is a successor to the original Ice, Cloud and Land Elevation Satellite that operated from 2003 to 2009. Since then the agency's Operation IceBridge has continued to carry out measurements with airborne instruments.
- ICESat-2 carries a single instrument, a laser altimeter that measures height by determining how long it takes photons to travel from the spacecraft to Earth and back.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Thermal Batteries, Project Shakti, Digital literacy library, TESS spacecraft, Scutoid

Significance

- ❖ Scientists will then be able to determine how climate change is affecting global ice levels and serve as a reality check for computer models that predict the future impact of global warming.
- ❖ The laser-scanning instrument will be capable of measuring Earth's elevation every 30 inches across a 30-foot-wide track as it circles the planet.
- ❖ It will collect more than 250 times as many measurements as the first ICESat.

Fixed dose combination (FDC) drugs

In News

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has prohibited the manufacture for sale, sale or distribution for human use of 328 Fixed Dose Combinations (FDCs) with immediate effect. It has also restricted the manufacture, sale or distribution of six FDCs subject to certain conditions.

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Background

- Earlier, the Central Government had, through its notifications published in the Gazette of India, prohibited the manufacture for sale, sale and distribution for human use of 344 FDCs under section 26 A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. Subsequently, the Government had prohibited five more FDCs in addition to the 344 under the same provisions.
- In compliance with the directions given by the Supreme Court (where the matter was contested) of India in its judgment, the matter was examined by the Drugs Technical Advisory Board constituted under section 5 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 which furnished its report on these drugs to the Central Government.

- The Drugs Technical Advisory Board recommended, amongst other things, that there is no therapeutic justification for the ingredients contained in 328 FDCs and that these FDCs may involve risk to human beings.
- The Board recommended that it is necessary to prohibit the manufacture, sale or distribution of these FDCs under section 26 A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, in the larger public interest.
- With regard to six FDCs, the Board recommended that their manufacture, sale and distribution be restricted subject to certain conditions based on their therapeutic justification.

**HAYABUSA2 SPACE PROBE**

A Japanese space probe released a pair of exploring rovers towards an egg-shaped asteroid to collect mineral samples that may shed light on the origin of the solar system. The 'Hayabusa2' probe jettisoned the round, cookie tin-shaped robots toward the Ryugu asteroid.

If the mission is successful, the rovers will conduct the world's first moving, robotic observation of an asteroid surface.

PEPPER IT WITH Blood Moon, Ebola, Zika Virus, Jaitapur Nuclear power plant, Oxytocin

**FDC**

Combination products, also known as fixed dose drug combinations (FDCs), are combinations of two or more active drugs in a single dosage form. FDCs are highly popular in the Indian pharmaceutical market. Studies of several antibiotic combinations, such as meropenem and sulbactam, have reported no additional advantage over their individual constituents, and have been reported to cause toxic reactions and promote resistance.

**Block Chain Technology**

**In News**

The Union Cabinet has given its ex-post facto approval for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Collaborative Research on Distributed Ledger and Block chain Technology in the context of Development of digital economy by Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) with the participating member banks, under the BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism.

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**Background**

The Xiamen Declaration signed in China on digital economy by the BRICS leaders had highlighted the importance of the digital economy and how the BRICS nations could leverage the thriving and dynamic digital economy that will foster global economic development and benefit everyone. Accordingly, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Collaborative Research on Distributed Ledger and Block chain Technology in the Context of the Development of the Digital Economy was suggested to be inked by all member banks.

**Significance**

Distributed Ledger/Block chain technology holds potential for solutions to various challenges being faced in the financial sector space of the BRICS nations. The MoU intends to enhance understanding of Distributed Ledger/Block Chain technology, through the joint research efforts to identify areas within respective business operations

**NASA's MAVEN spacecraft**

NASA's MAVEN spacecraft has beamed back a selfie to mark its four years orbiting Mars and studying the upper atmosphere of the red planet.

The MAVEN mission was launched on November 18, 2013, and went into orbit around Mars on September 21, 2014. During its time at Mars, the spacecraft has acquired compelling evidence that the loss of atmosphere to space has been a major driver of climate change on Mars. It also discovered two new types of Martian auroras — diffuse aurora and proton aurora.

PEPPER IT WITH GLONASS, EPIC Planet, Indian Science Congress, CSIR, Nipah virus, Oumuamua asteroid

where it may have the potential for applications aimed at enhancing the operational efficiencies.

Distributed Ledger/Block chain technology

- Blockchain is one type of a distributed ledger. Distributed ledgers use independent computers (referred to as nodes) to record, share and synchronize transactions in their respective electronic ledgers (instead of keeping data centralized as in a traditional ledger). Blockchain organizes data into blocks, which are chained together in an append only mode.
- **Blockchain/ DLT are the building block of “internet of value,” and enable recording of interactions and transfer “value” peer-to-peer, without a need for a centrally coordinating entity.**
- Distributed ledger technology (DLT) could fundamentally change the financial sector, making it more efficient, resilient and reliable.
- This could address persistent challenges in the financial sector and change roles of financial sector stakeholders. DLT has the potential to transform various other sectors as well, like manufacturing, government financial management systems and clean energy.

**ISRO's PSLV-C-42 launches two U.K. satellites**

- India has launched 239 foreign satellites of 28 nations so far, as it marches on with improvements in launch of vehicle technology and position itself in the commercial business space.
- The launch of two satellites of the United Kingdom — NovaSAR and S1-4 from Sriharikota Space Port by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) through the trusted PSLV demonstrated a technology upgrade.
- The satellites belong to the UK-based Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd (SSTL), which has a contract with Antrix Corporation Ltd, the commercial arm of ISRO.
- NovaSAR carries S-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) and an Automatic Identification Receiver payload. The satellite applications include forestry mapping, land use and ice cover monitoring, flood and disaster monitoring and maritime missions.
- On the other hand, S1-4 is a high resolution earth observation satellite meant for surveying resources, environment monitoring, urban management and disaster monitoring.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
 Antrix, Deep Ocean Mission,  
 PSLV, RH 300, IRNSS,  
 RemoveDEBRIS, TESS  
 Satellite

**Cyclone-30**

In News

**The country’s biggest cyclotron facility that will produce radioisotopes** vital for diagnosis and treatment of cancer became operational. The machine – Cyclone-30 — is housed at the Kolkata-based Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre (VECC) under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and will start regular production by mid-next year after supporting nuclear systems are commissioned and regulatory clearances are obtained.

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Significance

- A new study in the Lancet Global Health released, found that 8.3% of the total number of deaths in India in 2016 was because of cancer, and the number of new cases has increased from 5.48 lakh in 1990 to 1.1 million in 2016.
- With increasing number of Indians diagnosed with cancer every year, the cyclotron machine will produce radioisotopes for nuclear imaging specifically for cancer detection.

- At present, many radioisotopes are imported while some are produced in nuclear research reactors such as the Apsara at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), and remaining in cyclotrons facilities run by large private hospitals.
- The addition of Cyclone-30, will increase the availability of radioisotopes and bring down the cost of treatment.

Atomic Energy Commission

- ✓ The Indian Atomic Energy Commission was first setup in 1948 in the Department of Scientific Research, which was created a few months earlier. The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) was setup in 1954 under the direct charge of the Prime Minister through a Presidential Order.
- ✓ Subsequently, in accordance with a Government Resolution dated March 1, 1958, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) was established in the Department of Atomic Energy.
- ✓ According to the Resolution constituting the AEC, the Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Atomic Energy is ex-officio Chairman of the Commission.

Radioisotopes

- ❖ Radioisotopes are the unstable form of an element that emits radiation to transform into a more stable form. Radiation is easily traceable and can cause changes in the substance it falls upon.
- ❖ These special attributes make radioisotopes useful an effective tool used in radiopharmaceutical sciences, industrial applications, environmental tracing and biological studies.
- ❖ Of the 118 elements listed in the periodic table, only 94 occur naturally. While there are 254 stable isotopes, more than 3,000 radioisotopes are known, of which only about 84 are seen in nature.

PEPPER IT WITH  
International Atomic Energy Agency, Heavy Water Board, Atomic Energy (Amendment) Bill, 2015, National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission

NASA balloon mission

Why in News?

The images of a thin group of seasonal electric blue clouds on the cusp of our atmosphere were captured by a new NASA balloon mission.

Data from these clouds, known as noctilucent clouds or polar mesospheric clouds (PMCs), may help scientists better understand turbulence in the atmosphere, as well as in oceans, lakes and other planetary atmospheres.

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About the Mission

**NASA's PMC Turbo mission launched a giant balloon**

to study PMCs at a height of 50 miles above the surface. For five days, the balloon floated through the stratosphere from its launch at Erange, Sweden, across the Arctic to Western Nunavut, Canada. During its flight, cameras on board the balloon captured six million high-resolution images filling up 120 terabytes of data storage — most of which included a variety of PMC displays, revealing the processes leading to turbulence.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Cirrus Clouds, Cumulus Clouds, Artificial rain, Stratus clouds, International cloud atlas

Noctilucent clouds or polar mesospheric clouds

- Noctilucent clouds are composed of very small water ice crystals formed on minute particles of dust, possibly of cosmic origin from micrometeors. The average diameter of noctilucent clouds particles is thought to be about 0.3 μm.
- Noctilucent clouds form only during the summer when temperatures in the mesosphere are coldest. Temperatures lower than about -120 °C are required for formation of noctilucent clouds.
- Noctilucent clouds coalesce as ice crystals on tiny meteor remnants in the upper

atmosphere.

- These clouds are affected by what is known as atmospheric gravity waves — caused by the convecting and uplifting of air masses, such as when air is pushed up by mountain ranges. The waves play major roles in transferring energy from the lower atmosphere to the mesosphere.

### Agmark online system

#### Why in News?

The government launched an online platform for processing applications related to quality **certification mark 'Agmark' for agricultural products**. The existing procedures for Agmark certification were in physical form and time consuming. The process of application will be simple, quick, transparent and 24x7.

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Through the Agmark online system, certificate of authorisation, permission of printing press, permission of laboratories and services related to laboratory information management system will be provided. The use of modern technologies by the National Informatics Center has made these processes easy, reliable and cost effective by providing online electronic mode.

#### Agmark

- AGMARK is a certification mark employed on agricultural products in India, assuring that they conform to a set of standards approved by the Directorate of Marketing and Inspection, an agency of GoI.
- It is legally enforced in India by the Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Act of 1937 (and amended in 1986). The present AGMARK standards cover quality guidelines for 205 different commodities spanning a variety of Pulses, Cereals, Essential Oils, Vegetable Oils, Fruits & Vegetables, and semi-processed products like Vermicelli.
- The term agmark was coined by joining the words 'Ag' to mean agriculture and 'mark' for a certification mark. This term was introduced originally in the bill presented in the parliament of India for the Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Act.
- The testing done across these laboratories include chemical analysis, microbiological analysis, pesticide residue, and aflatoxin analysis on whole spices, ground spices, ghee, butter, vegetable oils, mustard oil, honey, food grains (wheat), wheat products (atta, suji, and maida), gram flour, soyabean seed, bengal gram, ginger, oil cake, essential oil, oils and fats, animal casings, meat and food products.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Bureau of Indian Standards,  
BEE Star Rating Program,  
TERI, TERI University, GRIHA

### Drugs and Blockchain

#### In News

NITI Aayog signed an agreement with cloud services provider Oracle, hospital chain Apollo Hospitals, and pharmaceutical manufacturer Strides Pharma Sciences to curb the distribution of fake drugs using new technologies.

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The partners will pilot a real drug supply chain using blockchain decentralised ledger and IoT software. By piloting a real drug supply chain using blockchain and IoT software, they can support governments and healthcare experts to quickly detect fake drugs and aide authorities to enforce penalties on wrong-doers with easy, proof-based data.

#### How it works

Oracle's blockchain software permanently registers a drug's record in the manufacturer's drug supply chain (serial number, labelling, scanning), leaving no scope for record tampering. At every **point of hand change, it records the drug's movement** — from manufacturer to logistics, from stockist to hospital, or from pharmacy to consumer. In case of a fake drug, the software will detect irregularity and notify the concerned nodal point.

### Why is it needed?

The Indian pharmaceutical industry is the third largest in the world in volume, accounting for **10% of the world's production**. A recent report by World Health Organisation estimates 20% of all drugs sold in India are fake. Also, as the largest producer of generic drugs in the world, India is reported to be the source of 35% of all counterfeit drugs sold worldwide.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Golden Crescent, Golden Triangle,  
United Nations Office on Drugs  
and Crime, Oxytocin, NPPA

## Total Expense Ratio (TER)

### Why in News?

SEBI recently lowered the TER that a fund house can charge its investors. The reduction is higher for larger funds and lower for smaller funds (larger and smaller being a measure of how much money a fund manages). **The reduction has been of "between" 0.01% to 0.44%.**

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For very small funds, SEBI has actually increased the allowable expense ratio a little. However, in general, mutual fund investors should see a marginal reduction in the fee they were paying, which would mean they would see an increase in the returns they were getting.

### What is TER

- Total expense ratio is associated with the total costs involved in managed funds like mutual funds (MF). These costs include fund management fees, operational expenses, administrative expenses and distributor commission. The aggregate of these costs as a proportion of the total assets under management of a fund is what constitutes TER.
- In India, for mutual funds there are two separate TERs for the same fund mandated by the capital market regulator. The difference in the two is the distribution commission expense for the fund.
  - TER for regular plans, where distributor commission is included.
  - TER for direct plans, where commission is not included.
- For investors, TER is embedded in the price (net asset value) paid to buy the fund or its daily NAV, which means there cost is not shown separately.
- It is an important number to focus on for an investor since it has a direct impact on their returns. However, it is not the only number to look at and investors should evaluate funds based on various parameters such as consistency of performance and risk levels.
- Goods and Services Tax (GST) on mutual funds is also a part of total expense ratio. At present, mutual funds charge 18% of GST.

### IL&FS

- ✓ It defaulted recently on a commercial paper repayment. This was followed by a default on repayment of a ₹1,000 crore deposit to SIDBI
- ✓ Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Ltd. (IL&FS), a large Systemically Important Non-Deposit Accepting Core Investment Company was set up in 1987 to finance and promote infrastructure projects in the country.
- ✓ It is now a financial behemoth with assets of over ₹1,15,000 crore and debt of ₹91,000 crore.
- ✓ IL&FS is a holding company that operates through 169 other companies that are subsidiaries, group companies or joint ventures with others.
- ✓ It is/has been associated with landmark projects such as the tunnel under the Zoji La Pass, Delhi-Noida toll bridge, Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT).
- ✓ It was originally promoted by the Central Bank of India, Unit Trust of India and HDFC. Orix Corporation of Japan, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, LIC and SBI joined in as co-promoters later.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Exchange Traded Fund, Fund  
of Funds, Net Asset Value,  
Asset Management Company

## Consolidation of Public Sector Banks

### Why in News?

The Alternative Mechanism (AM) recently decided that Bank of Baroda, Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank may consider amalgamation of the three banks. The envisaged amalgamation will be the First-ever three-way consolidation of banks in **India and will make it India's** Third Largest Bank.

Last year, the Union Cabinet gave in-principle approval for Public Sector Banks to amalgamate through AM among the Nationalised Banks to create strong and competitive banks.

### Salient features of FCPSB:

The salient features of the approval Framework for Consolidation of Public Sector Banks (FCPSB) are as follows:

- The decision regarding creating strong and competitive banks would be solely based on commercial considerations.
- The proposal must start from the Boards of Banks.
- The proposals received from Banks for in-principle approval to formulate schemes of amalgamation shall be placed before the Alternative Mechanism (AM).
- After in-principle approval, the Banks will take steps in accordance with law and **SEBI's requirements**.
- The final scheme will be notified by Central Government in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India.

### Background:

In 1991, it was suggested that India should have fewer but stronger Public Sector Banks.

However, it was only in 2016 that effective action to consolidate public sector banks began to be taken. The current merger **comes after the government let State Bank of India's** associate banks merge with their parent last year and the Life Insurance Corporation of India take over the troubled IDBI Bank this year.

### Alternative Mechanism

Alternative Mechanism a ministerial panel headed by Finance Minister, that oversees merger proposals of state-owned banks. The other members of the panel include Railways Minister and Defence Minister.

### About the merger

The proposed merger is seen as a test of the capacity of a large bank, which itself is

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### Consolidation of RRBs

- ✓ The government recently decided to start the consolidation process of Regional Rural Banks (RRB) after a gap of six years and bring down the number of such entities to 38 from 56 now.
- ✓ Finance ministry asked the chiefs of public sector banks, which are the sponsors of the RRBs to amalgamate the RRBs within a State. The ministry also mentioned the list of RRBs which could be merged.
- ✓ Consolidation process would enable RRBs to minimise their overhead costs, optimise use of technology, and enhance capital base and area of operation and their exposure.
- ✓ It will bring about better scale efficiency, higher productivity, robust financial health of RRBs, improved financial inclusion and greater credit flow to rural areas.
- ✓ This is the third phase of consolidation among RRBs. The first phase of consolidation was in 2004-05 when RRBs of same sponsor banks, within a state, were merged. As a result, the number of RRBs came down from 196 to 82.
- ✓ The second phase was in 2011-12, when RRBs with geographical contiguous areas of operation within a state were merged, across sponsor banks. As a result, the number of RRBs further declined to 56.
- ✓ While RRBs have taken deep roots in the last four decades of their existence and become an important entity for rural credit, their financial viability became a matter of concern since 1980, just five years after their existence. As a result, the government decided to start merging RRBs with commercial banks.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Three-tier banking structure,  
India Post Payment Bank

facing pressure on asset quality, to absorb a weaker peer. Bank of Baroda, the largest among the three is more than five times the size of Dena Bank — the weakest of the three. Dena also faces certain operational restrictions as it is currently under the Reserve Bank of India's prompt corrective action framework. Vijaya Bank is one of only two public sector banks that reported a profit in the last financial year, the other being Chennai-based Indian Bank. The bank boards of the three banks will examine the amalgamation proposal.

### How Mergers take place

Any merger between two public sector banking entities takes place under an Act that stipulates that two banks can initiate merger talks, but the scheme of the merger must be finalized by the government in consultation with the central bank and it must be placed in Parliament, which reserves the right to modify or reject the scheme. In case of a merger between a public sector bank and a private bank too, parliamentary approval is a must. Section 44A of Banking Regulation Act 1949 lays down the norms for **voluntary mergers and "forced" mergers are done under Section 45 of the Act.**

### Benefits of Consolidation

- The consolidation will help create a strong globally competitive bank with economies of scale and enable realisation of wide-ranging synergies and will lead to higher ratings.
- It improves operational efficiency, substantial rise in customer base, market reach and reduces cost.
- Larger size of the Bank will help the merged banks to offer more products and services and help in integrated growth of the Banking sector. Merger will help in improving the professional standards.
- The objectives of financial inclusion and broadening the geographical reach of banking can be achieved better with the merger of large public sector banks and leveraging on their expertise.
- Merger will result in better NPA and Risk management. With the large scale expertise available in every sphere of banking operation, the scale of inefficiency which is more in case of small banks, will be minimised.
- A large bank can manage its short and long term liquidity better. There will not be any need for overnight borrowings in call money market and from RBI under Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) and Marginal Standing Facility (MSF).
- With a larger capital base and higher liquidity, the burden on the central government to recapitalize the public sector banks again and again will come down substantially.

[www.psbloansin59minutes.com](http://www.psbloansin59minutes.com), a web portal was launched recently which will enable in principle approval for MSME loans up to Rs. 1 crore within 59 minutes from SIDBI and 5 Public Sector Banks (PSBs). The Portal sets a new benchmark in loan processing and reduces the turnaround time from 20-25 days to 59 minutes. Subsequent to this in principle approval, the loan will be disbursed in 7-8 working days.

### Menace of Bank Consolidation

- ❖ Plenty of prospective bank mergers and acquisitions only look at the two banks on paper without taking their people or culture into account. Failure to assess cultural fit (not just financial fit) is one reason why many bank mergers ultimately fail.
- ❖ Co-existence of the big, medium and regional banks would be preferable in the present scenario. Most acquisitions in India were borne out of compulsions and over many of past acquisitions had failed to achieve the objectives.
- ❖ Many banks focus on regional banking requirements. With the merger the very purpose of establishing the bank to cater to regional needs is lost.
- ❖ Large bank size may create more problems also. Large global banks had collapsed during the global financial crisis while smaller ones had survived the crisis due to their strengths and focus on micro aspects.
- ❖ With the merger, the weaknesses of the small banks are also transferred to the bigger bank.
- ❖ Small scale losses and recapitalization could revive the capital base of small banks. But after merger, if a bank book loss or incurs high NPAs as it had been incurring, it will be difficult for the entire banking system to sustain.

### Issues Involved

- Trade unions of all government-owned banks and a few private banks had issued a strike call to protest, among others, against the merger of public sector banks with one another.
- There is no doubt that Indian banks need to scale up. Merger with one another is one way of gaining stature but such a process is best brought about over time and taking into account the special characteristics of the banks concerned.
- There are too many public sector banks in India; given this, consolidation is a good idea in principle. But ideally, mergers ought to be between strong banks.
- With the imminent applicability of Basel II norms and the easing of barriers for foreign banks, size will matter even more and hence the government needs to frame and articulate a clear strategy for consolidation.

### Way forward

Indeed, bank consolidation is the flavour of the season, but one should not lose sight of the fact that India needs more banks. RBI should continue to give licences to more small banks as well as universal banks along with the experiment on consolidation.

## Catastrophe Bond

### Why in News?

The recent floods in Kerala have set off a debate about the need for timely aid required to kick-start the relief process.

There is a market mechanism for providing relief to the people in a timely manner. The idea that catastrophe risk could be securitised and that it could be dispersed among a wide number of investors was first mooted in the **1990's after hurricane 'Andrew'** caused massive damages in the United States.

### About CAT Bonds

- Catastrophe bonds, also called cat bonds, are an example of insurance securitization to create risk-linked securities which transfer a specific set of risks (generally catastrophe and natural disaster risks) from an issuer or sponsor to investors.
- Catastrophe bonds are issued by insurance companies which have exposure to property and calamity insurance. The cost of issuing and managing catastrophe bonds is cheaper than the cost of reinsuring these risks and does the same function of transferring risk. Hence, insurance companies prefer issuing catastrophe bonds.
- The instrument is a bond where the investor loses a part or whole of the capital based on certain pre-agreed conditions being triggered. These could be: Indemnity on losses faced by the insurer; or modeled losses; or, losses indexed to the total loss faced by the industry.
- For investors, there are two advantages. One is that of diversifying risk. This is perhaps the only class of bonds that is not tied to economic performance parameters which would be the case in equity. Second, the investors are compensated by a rate of return which is higher than that of normal government or corporate bonds.
- The primary investors in catastrophe bonds are long-term bond investors such as life insurers, and primary pension fund managers. Most rating agencies have started to rate

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### Factsheet

- ✓ The economic cost of disasters averages \$250 billion to \$300 billion annually, according to the 2015 United Nations Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction.
- ✓ Considering that only about 30% of the damage from natural disasters are insured, such losses can impose severe financial burden on governments.
- ✓ One way to bridge this financial gap is through the issuance of catastrophe bonds. It reduces the stress on the balance sheets of the governments.
- ✓ The market for catastrophe bonds was initially pegged in the range of \$1-2 billion dollars in the initial years of 1998-2001. Today, the total size of the catastrophe bond market is more than \$30 billion.

these class of bonds. The rating given is normally a notch below the investment grade.

- It leads to drive preparedness. Since investors will always have an eagle eye on the preparedness of dealing with catastrophes, it cuts the slack and bolsters more investments into technology and into people keeping an eye out for such events.
- It is high time that such instruments are introduced in India so that relief and reconstruction work in areas affected by natural disasters goes on unimpeded and are no stalled for only want of capital.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Commercial Papers,  
Reinsurance, Treasury Bills

**State's Financial Inclusion Index**

Why in News?

Union Government recently launched the Annual Financial Inclusion Index which will be released in January 2019 and would rate states on their performance on last-mile banking services availability.

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About FII

It will be released by Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance and will be a measure of access and usage of a basket of formal financial products and services that includes savings, remittances, credit, insurance and pension products. The index will have three measurement dimensions;

- 1) Access to financial services
- 2) Usage of financial services &
- 3) Quality.

The single composite index gives a snap shot of level of financial inclusion that would guide Macro Policy perspective. The utility of the index lies in the following:

- The various components of the index will help to measure financial services for use of internal policy making.
- It would create an element of competition among states with each of them vying for last mile connectivity in banking.
- Financial Inclusion Index can be used directly as a composite measure in development indicators.
- It enables fulfilment of G20 Financial Inclusion Indicators requirements.
- It will facilitate researchers to study the impact of financial inclusion and other macro-economic variables.

"Jan Dhan Darshak", a banking services infrastructure locator app was recently announced which aims to bring banking within reach of every citizen through over 500,000 "banking touch points" comprising of bank branches, banking correspondents, ATMs, common service centres and post offices.

**Country Partnership Framework for India**

Why in News?

The World Bank Group (WBG) endorsed a new Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for India which aims to support India's transition to a higher middle-income country by addressing some of its key development priorities like resource efficient and inclusive growth, job creation and building its human capital.

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CPF for India (2018-22)

- The India CPF represents the largest country programme of the WBG, which expects to deliver \$25-30 billion during this CPF period, ending in FY22.
- With a fast growing economy, global stature, and its unique experience of lifting the highest number of poor out of poverty in the past decades, India is well-positioned to become a high middle-income country by 2030.

- This CPF charts a path for how the World Bank, IFC and MIGA, will leverage their relative strengths to deliver stronger development outcomes for the dynamic country, half of whose population is under the age of 25.
- CPF is underpinned by the Systematic Country Diagnostics, the World Bank Group’s comprehensive analysis of the opportunities and challenges for India to achieve poverty reduction and shared prosperity in a socially and environmentally sustainable way, and builds on extensive consultations with the government, the private sector, civil society and academic experts from across the country.
- **CPF will deepen engagement with India’s States and invest in the institutions and capabilities of the states and local governments to address their development priorities, because the future of India lies in the states of India.**
- **The CPF highlights the shift from a “lending” to a “leveraging Bank”, emphasizing the growing potential and need to draw in capital markets in the financing of development priorities.**
- WBG will focus on three broad areas under the new CPF: (i) promoting a resource efficient growth path, particularly in the use of land and water, to remain sustainable; (ii) enhancing competitiveness and enabling job creation; and (iii) investing in human capital -in health, education, skills - to improve quality and efficiency of service delivery.
- **The CPF also places emphasis on India’s global leadership role in promoting renewable energy and disaster resilient infrastructure development, which holds significant impact for India as well as the global economy. Through an initiative labelled “Lighthouse India” the WBG will leverage India’s development experience to support the development efforts of other countries especially in Africa and Central Asia.**

According to the UNCTAD’s Investment Trends Monitor (2018), India was the 10th largest recipient of global FDI in 2017 and remained the topmost destination for greenfield capital investment — even ahead of China and the US, if reckoned on an approval basis (FDI market intelligence 2017).

Mauritius remained the top source of FDI into India in 2017-18 followed by Singapore.

Country Partnership Framework

The World Bank Group’s Country Partnership Framework (CPF) aims to make country-driven model more systematic, evidence-based, selective, and focused on the **Bank’s twin** goals of ending extreme poverty and increasing shared prosperity in a sustainable manner. The CPF replaced the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS). CPF lays out the development objectives that WBG interventions expect to help the country achieve and attendant program of indicative WBG interventions.

PEPPER IT WITH Country Assistance Strategy (CAS), IBRD, IFC, MIGA, IMF,

Systematic Country Diagnostics (SCDs)

As part of the Country Engagement approach, SCDs **are prepared by WBG staff in close consultation with a country’s national authorities and other stakeholders.** It is a reference point for client consultations on priorities for WBG country engagement. SCD aims to help the country, the WBG and other development partners establish a dialogue to focus their efforts around goals and activities that have high impact and are aligned with the global goals of ending absolute poverty and boosting shared prosperity in a sustainable manner.

Debts Recovery Tribunals (DRT)

Why in News?

Union government recently doubled the monetary limit to Rs 20 lakh for filing loan recovery applications in the Debt Recovery Tribunals by banks and financial institutions.

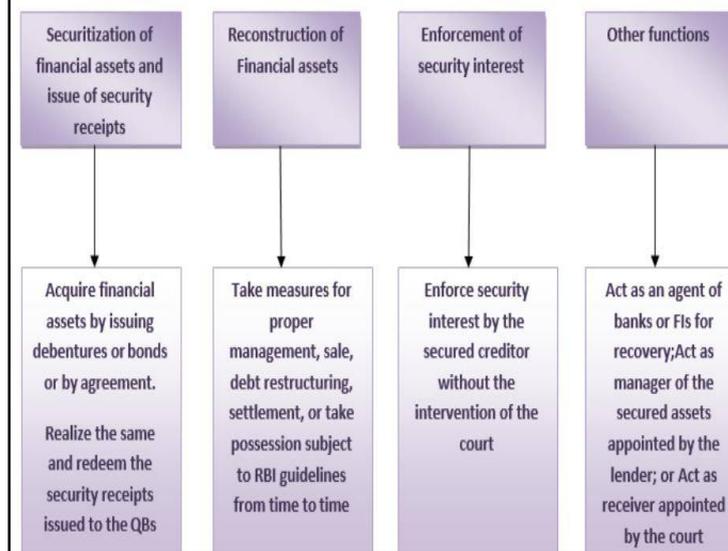
The move is aimed at helping reduce pendency of cases in the 39 DRTs in the country. Digitisation of records of cases being handled across all DRTs and five Debt Recovery Appellate Tribunals (DRATs) has also been commenced.

Reasons behind revising the limits

GS CONNECT											
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- As many as 38,376 cases involving debt amount between Rs 10-20 lakh pending in DRTs which account for 38 per cent of total cases but in value terms these are just 4 per cent as on June 2018 and this number is rising.
- Revising the limit will free up debt recovery tribunals (DRT), leaving them to focus on high-value matters which will lead to quicker recovery of NPAs.
- This is part of the ministry's targeted approach to make debt recovery laws and process more effective so as to increase recovery of public money from defaulting borrowers.
- 80-85 percent of non-performing assets (NPAs) cases in the range of Rs 10-20 lakh are fully secured. For their recovery, lenders can take action under the SARFAESI Act.
- As many as 10,000 cases with outstanding loan of Rs 40,000 crore are pending before district administration.

### Role of SARFAESI Act, 2002



### Background

**Banks and financial institutions'** recovery of dues takes place on an ongoing basis through legal mechanisms, which inter alia includes the SARFAESI Act, Recovery of Debts to Banks and Financial Institution (DRT) Act and Lok Adalats. The borrowers of such loans continue to be liable for repayment even when the loans have been removed from the balance sheet of the bank(s) concerned.

### What are DRTs?

- DRTs and DRATs were established under the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act (RDDBFI Act), 1993 with the specific objective of providing expeditious adjudication and recovery of debts due to Banks and Financial Institution.
- The genesis of DRT and its legal prerogative in crux is inspired by international trends. DRT enforces provisions of RDDBFI Act and also Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Securities Interest (SARFAESI) Act, 2002.
- They have been created for the specified objective of speedy recovery of bad loans or loans granted by the banks and financial institutions to the borrowers who have turned defaulters.
- The DRAT-being the appellate court-looks into the appeals filed by any person aggrieved by the order of DRT.
- Under the RDDBFI Act, 1993 the bank and financial institutions can file case for the recovery of the amount of Rs 10 lakh (now 20 lakh) and above and the action of the bank against the borrowers, guarantors or any other person aggrieved by the action of the bank can be challenged under the SARFAESI Act, 2002.
- The DRT is headed by one presiding officer safeguarding the provisions contemplated in both the Acts, who is selected from the field of law-a judge and/or a practising advocate.

The e-DRT software has similar to the e-court, which includes e-filing, e-payment of fees, uploading of orders, viewing case status among others. Personal guarantor's details will also be captured if the borrower is a company. This would automate the full cycle of workflow which will bring transparency and increase efficiency by making the legal process easier, time saving and more user friendly.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Insolvency & bankruptcy  
code, 2016, NPA

## Exporting corruption report 2018

### In News

Anti-corruption organisation, Transparency International, has released the 2018 edition of its **'Exporting Corruption' report**, rating countries on their level of enforcement of anti-bribery laws and conventions.

The classification of enforcement is based on the enforcement actions in the period 2014-2017. The report has been prepared by Transparency International.

### About TI report

- **Transparency International's 2018 Progress Report** is an independent assessment of the enforcement of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Anti-Bribery Convention, which requires parties to criminalise bribery of foreign public officials and introduce related measures.
- This twelfth such report also assesses enforcement in China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, India and Singapore, which are not parties to the OECD Convention but are major exporters, accounting for 18 per cent of world exports.
- Hong Kong is covered separately in the report, as it is an autonomous territory, with a different legal system from China and export data compiled separately.
- These 4 countries are however, parties to the UN Convention against Corruption, which also calls for enforcement against foreign bribery. Transparency International urges them to join the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention.
- The report shows the enforcement in categories (Active, Moderate, Limited, Little or No) which shows the level of enforcement efforts against foreign bribery.
- Only about a quarter of world exports come from countries with active law enforcement against companies bribing abroad.

### What TI's progress report says about India

- India is among four countries with "no or little enforcement" mechanism to check foreign bribery.
- Citing cases of alleged bribery by foreign firms including in a deal of 12 helicopters by Italy-based firm AgustaWestland, it asked India to criminalise foreign bribery and introduce effective legislation to protect whistleblowers in the private sector.
- TI report argues for accession to the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, however, India is party to the UN Convention against Corruption.
- As foreign bribery is not yet criminalised in India, the adequacy of the enforcement system in relation to this specific offence cannot be assessed according to report.
- The report cited inadequacies in implementation of Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) Treaty. India has signed MLA treaties with 39 countries. The Ministry of Home Affairs is the central authority for seeking and providing MLA in criminal law matters.

### OECD Anti-Bribery Convention

The OECD Anti-Bribery Convention was adopted in 1997 to address the supply side of international corruption. There are now 44 parties to the convention, 36 of them members of the OECD. The Convention is a key instrument for curbing global corruption because the 44 signatory countries are responsible for approximately 65 per cent of world exports and more than 75 per cent of total foreign direct investment outflows.

### UN Convention against Corruption

The United Nations Convention against Corruption is the only legally binding universal

GS CONNECT											
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III											
IV											
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India passed a bill in July-2018, amending the present Prevention of Corruption Act, which covers bribe payers for the first time. The bill also covers agents, subsidiaries and subcontractors of foreign firms working in India or doing business with Indian entities.

India was ranked 81<sup>st</sup> in the Global corruption perception index for 2017, released by Transparency International, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption.

anti-corruption instrument. It covers five main areas: preventive measures, criminalization and law enforcement, international cooperation, asset recovery, and technical assistance and information exchange. The Convention covers many different forms of corruption, such as bribery, trading in influence, abuse of functions, and various acts of corruption in the private sector. It entered into force in 2005.

PEPPER IT WITH  
The OECD Working Group on Bribery (WGB), Mutual Legal Assistance

Conclusion

About USD 1.5-2 trillion is lost every year to bribery despite increased global commitments to fight corruption. We do not need more or new anti corruption commitments on the part of the government or private sectors. What we need now is AIR (Action Implementation and Reporting) on progress.

We need all actors to participate in the fight against corruption. Not only the government and society, the private sector must join.

Internal Ombudsman Scheme-2018

In News

As a part of its customer-centric approach and to enhance the independence of the Internal Ombudsman (IO) while simultaneously strengthening the monitoring system over functioning of the IO mechanism, RBI has reviewed the arrangement and issued revised directions under Section 35 A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 in the form of **‘Internal Ombudsman Scheme, 2018’**.

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II											
III											
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Internal Ombudsman Scheme-2018 covers appointment/tenure, roles and responsibilities, procedural guidelines and oversight mechanism for the IO, among others.

Background

RBI had, in 2015, advised all public-sector and select private and foreign banks to appoint IO as an independent authority to review complaints that were partially or wholly rejected by the respective banks. The IO mechanism was set up with a view to strengthen the internal grievance redressal system of banks and to ensure that the complaints of the customers are redressed at the level of the bank itself by an authority placed at the highest level of **bank’s grievance redressal mechanism** so as to minimize the need for the customers to approach other fora for redressal.

According to RBI guidelines, if a complaint is not settled by agreement within a period of one month from the date of receipt of the complaint or such further period as the Banking Ombudsman may allow the parties, he may, after affording the parties a reasonable opportunity to present their case, pass an Award or reject the complaint.

Any person aggrieved by an Award or the decision of the Banking Ombudsman rejecting the complaint for the reasons specified in the Banking Ombudsman Scheme 2006 can approach the Appellate Authority. The Appellate Authority is vested with a Deputy Governor of the RBI.

About IO

- The scheme mandates banks to grant a fixed term of three to five years, which cannot be renewed, to the IO.
- The IO can be removed only with prior approval from RBI. The remuneration would have to be decided by the customer sub-committee of the board and not by any individual.
- All scheduled commercial banks with over 10 branches have been asked to appoint an internal ombudsman excluding the regional rural banks (RRBs).

Functions

The IO shall, inter alia, examine customer complaints which are in the nature of deficiency in service on the part of the bank, that are partly or wholly rejected by the bank. As the banks shall internally escalate all complaints, which are not fully redressed to their respective IOs before conveying the final decision to the complainant, the customers of banks need not approach the IO directly. The implementation of IO Scheme, 2018 will be

monitored by the bank's internal audit mechanism apart from regulatory oversight by RBI.  
Banking Ombudsman Scheme

- o The Banking Ombudsman (BO) Scheme is an expeditious and inexpensive forum for bank customers for resolution of complaints relating to certain services rendered by banks. It was introduced by RBI and is in effect from 1995.
- o The BO is a senior official appointed by the RBI to redress customer complaints against deficiency in certain banking services covered under the grounds of complaint specified under the Banking Ombudsman Scheme 2006.
- o All Scheduled Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks and Scheduled Primary Co-operative Banks are covered under the Scheme.
- o One can file a complaint before the Banking Ombudsman if the reply is not received from the bank within a period of one month after the bank concerned has received one's complaint, or the bank rejects the complaint, or if the complainant is not satisfied with the reply given by the bank.
- o The pecuniary jurisdiction of the quasi judicial body to pass an award is Rs 20 lakh and can also direct banks to pay compensation up to Rs 1 lakh to the complainant for the complainant for mental agony and harassment.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Clause 8, 12, 13 of the Banking  
Ombudsman Scheme-2006,

Capacity Development Scheme (CDS)

Why in News?

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved continuation of the Capacity Development Scheme for the period 2017-18 to 2019-20 with an outlay of Rs 2,250 crore. It is an Ongoing Central Sector Scheme of Ministry of statistics and programme implementation (MoSPI).

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III											
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About the scheme

- The overall objective of the scheme is to augment infrastructural, technical as well as manpower resources for making available credible and timely Official Statistics for policy makers and public at large.
- It has two Sub-schemes, Economic Census and Support for Statistical Strengthening (SSS).
- Under Economic Census, listing of all non-agricultural establishments is undertaken periodically, which forms the basis for conducting detailed socio-economic surveys. The last Economic Census was conducted during January, 2013-14 and the Government now aims to conduct the Census once every three years in future.
- The SSS Sub-scheme is to strengthen State/ Sub-State level statistical systems/ infrastructure to facilitate development of a robust national system. Funds are released to States/ UTs for this purpose after detailed examination of their proposals.
- The major ongoing activities under CDS include:
  - Augmenting resources for bringing out important statistical products, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Consumer Price Index (CPI), Index of Industrial Production (IIP), Statistical classifications, etc.;
  - Conducting various Socio-Economic surveys, capacity building and strengthening

- ✓ The Collection of Statistics Act, 2008 was basically enacted to overcome the limitations of the 1953 Act and strengthening the administration of statistical activities. The Act came into force in entire country except Jammu & Kashmir.
- ✓ India has been observing 29th June every year since 2007 as Statistics Day to mark the birth anniversary of late Professor P.C. Mahalanobis, in recognition of the contribution made by him in the field of Economic Planning and Statistics.
- ✓ Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is the nodal agency for capacity development of statistical personnel for the SAARC member States.

statistical coordination, and improving IT infrastructure.

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), a continuous survey to assess quarterly labour data in urban areas and annual labour data for the whole country (urban and rural areas), was launched in 2017 under the scheme.

- In addition to the regular ongoing activities, the Ministry proposes to also take up three new surveys under the Capacity Development Scheme, namely, Time Use Survey (TUS), Annual Survey of Service Sector Enterprises (ASSSE), and Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE).

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Statistical Institute of Asia and Pacific, India Statistical Strengthening Project, CSO, NSSO

### Measuring human capital: A systematic analysis of 195 countries and territories (1990-2016)

#### Why in News?

India is ranked at 158 out of 195 countries in 2016 in the world for its investments in education and health care, according to the first-ever scientific study ranking countries for their levels of human capital.

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#### Statistics

- India is placed behind Sudan (157) and ahead of Namibia (159) in the list. The U.S. is ranked 27<sup>th</sup>, while China is ranked 44<sup>th</sup>.
- South Asian countries ranking below India in the report include Pakistan (164), Bangladesh (161) and Afghanistan (188). Countries in the region that have fared better than India in terms of human capital include Sri Lanka (102), Nepal (156), Bhutan (133) and Maldives (116).
- The study places Finland at the top. Turkey showed the most dramatic increase in **human capital “between” 1990-2016.**

- ✓ India ranked 145 in the Healthcare access and quality (HAQ) Index created by Global Burden of Diseases study-2016.
- ✓ The index is based on 32 causes of death considered preventable with effective medical care.
- ✓ It assigns a 0-100 score to each of the 195 countries and territories assessed.
- ✓ Generally, countries that spent more on health per capita and had better health systems scored higher on the HAQ index.

#### Interpretation

- o It showed that India is falling behind in terms of health and education of its workforce, which could potentially have long-term negative effects on the Indian economy. The study is based on analysis of data from sources, including government agencies, schools, and health care systems.
- o The findings show the association between investments in education and health and improved human capital and GDP. As the world economy grows increasingly dependent on digital technology, from agriculture to manufacturing to the service industry, human capital grows increasingly important for stimulating local and national economies.
- o Countries vary widely in the rate of human capital formation. Monitoring the production of human capital can facilitate a mechanism to hold governments and donors accountable for investments in health and education.
- o Under investing in people may be driven by lack of policy attention to the levels of human capital. No regular, comparable reporting across all countries on human capital currently exists. Such reporting over the next generation as a way to measure investments in health and education will enable leaders to be held accountable to their constituents.
- o The study, conducted by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the request of the World Bank, is the first of its kind to measure and compare the **strength of countries’ “human capital”**. **The study underscores that when a country’s human capital score increases, its economy grows.**

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Global Human Capital Index, World Bank, Amenable Mortality

### What is Human Capital?

- ❖ Human capital is characterised as the aggregate levels of education, training, skills, and health in a population, affecting the rate at which technologies can be developed, adopted, and employed to increase productivity.
- ❖ It's a concept that recognises all labours are not equal and the quality of workers can be improved by investing in them.
- ❖ The World Bank has brought new attention to this topic through its recently introduced Human Capital Project, which **aims to “understand the link between investing in people and economic growth, and to accelerate financing for human capital investments.**

### Malnourishment in India

#### Why in News?

6 states (Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Meghalaya, Kerala and Maharashtra) have launched National surveillance system (NSS) project on pilot basis in collaboration with department of women and child development as the nodal partner.

NSS, launched by National Institute of Nutrition (NIM) aims to enable digital reporting system of grassroots level health and nutrition data from Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres. It is **a significant contribution to India’s push towards improving nutritional status.**

#### Why is it Important

This timely, reliable and real time data are crucial to enable routine monitoring of the ICDS functioning as well as the well-being and nutritional status of various beneficiaries. This will also help in taking immediate corrective measures by various stakeholders. The NSS emphasises the application of **‘triple A cycle’** approach - Assessment of the nutritional problems; Analysis of determinants (causes, consequences), and Action to mitigate observed nutritional problems.

#### Stats of Important Indicators in India for malnourishment

- More than half (53.9%) of our girls within 15-19 years have low body mass index (BMI); more than one-fourth (26.8%) of the women within the age group of 20-24 are married before they reach 18; only one in every five mothers (21%) has full ante-natal care; one in every two pregnant women (50.3%) within the age-group of 15-49 is anaemic; and only one-third (30%) of the mothers consume iron and folic supplement during pregnancy.
- According to data revealed by the National Family Health Survey (NFHS- IV), 38% of children under the age of 5 are stunted (not attaining age-appropriate height), 21% suffer from wasting (not attaining age-appropriate weight), 36% are underweight and the total immunization coverage in the country is at a poor 62%.
- Further analysis shows a grim picture: only one in four children receives a proper health check from a doctor or other health personnel within two days of birth; only two in five children under the age of 3 are breastfed within an hour of birth; a little more than half of the children (54.9%) under the age of 6 months are exclusively breastfed;

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- ✓ There is always a debate on whether to serve children hot-cooked nutritious meals or packaged/processed fortified mixes? Why does there have to be a **choice between the two? Why can't India incorporate both?**
- ✓ Malnourishment should be addressed through locally produced, diverse food options that the country offers. For ex. 8 years ago, when malnutrition deaths occurred in some districts in Maharashtra, a simple solution involving a protein-rich diet called Lapsi-a green millet mixture combined with water and milk-was given to malnourished babies. In Jharkhand, dry rations such as oil, dal, wheat or rice were given to mothers.
- ✓ Government should keep a close watch on the quality of food served to children between the ages of three and six as well as on take-home ration for pregnant and lactating women.

and most alarmingly, only one among every 10 children (9.6%) within the age-group of 6-23 months receives an adequate diet.

- According to UNICEF, India was at the 10th spot among countries with the highest number of underweight children, and at the 17th spot for the highest number of stunted children in the world.

### Steps taken by Government

Various government initiatives have been launched over the years which seek to improve the nutrition status in the country. These include an extensive public health system network under the ICDS, the National Health Mission, the Janani Suraksha Yojana, the Matritva Sahyog Yojana, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, and the National Food Security Mission, among others.

PEPPER IT WITH  
National Health Stack, Eat  
Right Movement, Anganwadi  
worker, Auxillary Nurse  
Midwives

National Nutrition Strategy aims to reduce all forms of malnutrition by 2030, with a focus on the most vulnerable and critical age groups. The Strategy also aims to assist in achieving the targets identified as part of the Sustainable Development Goals related to nutrition and health.

### Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM)

- Severe acute malnutrition is defined by a very low weight for height (below -3z scores of the median WHO growth standards), by visible severe wasting, or by the presence of nutritional oedema.
- Decreasing child mortality and improving maternal health depend heavily on reducing malnutrition, which is responsible, directly or indirectly, for 35% of deaths among children under five. It can be reduced substantially when physiological and metabolic changes are taken into account.
- The National Technical Board on Nutrition of India has recommended that severely malnourished children must be fed freshly cooked food prepared from locally available cereals, pulses and vegetables, and distributed by anganwadi centres, as part **of the country's first-ever** guidelines for nutritional management of children suffering from SAM.
- The measures are part of the community-based health management of children suffering from SAM. The government had, till now, only put in place guidelines for the hospitalisation of severely wasted children who develop medical complications. Those norms were made public in 2011.
- According to the recommendations, anganwadi workers have to provide modified morning snacks, hot cooked meals and take home ration for SAM children.
- The morning snacks and hot-cooked meals, which are served at anganwadis to children **between the age of three to six years, should be “prepared freshly and served at the centralised kitchen/ anganwadi centres. Locally available cereals, pulses, green leafy vegetables and tubers, vitamin C rich fruits, as well as fresh milk and 3-4 eggs every week” have also been prescribed.**

### Issues Involved

- The largest number of malnourished children in the world calls India their home. There are 19.8 million children in India, under the age of 6, who are undernourished. It is a well-known fact that the foundation of a healthy life is laid in the first six years.
- A healthy start from the moment of conception is needed, for both mother and child, comprising access to proper healthcare, nutrition and early childhood care. This results, subsequently, in sound physical, emotional and cognitive growth of a child.
- For millions of children in this country, starting healthy is but a distant dream. Irreversible damage can be caused by this, be it loss of thinking abilities; underdeveloped motor skills, speech and physical growth; lack of concentration and inability to interact with other children—not to mention reduced growth, lower immunity levels, higher morbidity rates and overall poor development.
- The inter-generational cycle of health starts with a healthy mother. It therefore follows that an undernourished mother will give birth to an undernourished child. The right start to life is fuelled by a system ensuring wholesome nutritive care for the

pregnant and lactating mother, which then gets extended to the child.

### What needs to be done?

On one hand, we need to start building proper awareness around the health and nutrition of the mother and the child. On the other, we have to have the infrastructure ready and working with adequate functional anganwadis and the supplementary nutrition centres properly staffed and equipped with provisions at every corner of the country, with adequate resources earmarked for the entire system to function seamlessly.

What is needed is a holistic drive to overcome the socio-cultural barriers and systemic hurdles to improve the health and nutrition outcomes of our children and women.

## 2018 Global Multi-dimensional Poverty Index

### Why in News?

The 2018 global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) was released recently by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI).

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### **India's Performance**

- The Index noted that in India, 271 million people moved out of poverty between 2005/06 and 2015/16 **which brings to mind the speedy pace of China's poverty reduction** which occurred more than 2 decades ago.
- The poverty rate in the country has nearly halved, falling from 55 per cent to 28 per cent over the ten-year period. The period also happens to be the best phase of economic growth that the country experienced since Independence.
- But India still accounts for the largest number of people living in multi dimensional povert in the world (364 million). India is the first country for which progress over time has been estimated.
- Recognising the limitations of income-based poverty lines, a number of targeted schemes in India are in the nature of BPL-plus programmes. An income-plus approach to identifying the deprived is also built into the Socio Economic and Caste Census.
- Among states, Jharkhand had the greatest improvement, with Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Nagaland only slightly behind. However, Bihar is still the poorest state in 2015/16, with more than half of its population in poverty.
- In 2015/16, the four poorest states – Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh – were still home to 196 million MPI poor people – over half of all the MPI poor people in India. Delhi, Kerala and Goa have the lowest incidence of multidimensional poverty.

- ✓ In the first half of 2018, Andhra Pradesh launched the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Report 2017 for the state, the first of its kind in India.
- ✓ **According to the report, AP's MPI identifies 21% of its population as living in multidimensional poverty.**
- ✓ The State-level MPI in Andhra Pradesh uses the same structure as the Global MPI which was co-designed by OPHI and the UNDP.
- ✓ By conducting this study, it has become the first state in the country to perform a household survey exclusively to estimate MPI at state and district levels, disaggregated by social categories and urban-rural areas.

### About Global MPI

- First developed in 2010 for UNDP's flagship publication "Human Development Report", it is updated at least once per year to include new released data.
- The global MPI is composed of three dimensions (Health, Education and Living Standards) and 10 indicators. Each dimension is equally weighted and each indicator with a dimension is also equally weighted.
- A person is identified as multi-dimensionally poor if they are deprived in at least one-third of the weighted indicators.
- The changes from original MPI are in the indicators for nutrition, child mortality, years

of schooling, housing and assets.

- o The global MPI uses the Alkire Foster method. MPI is the product of incidence (the percentage of people who are poor or headcount ratio) and intensity (the average share of individuals in which poor people are deprived).

### MPI and SDG

MPI shows how deprivations related to SDGs 1,2,3,4,6,7, and 11 are concretely interlinked **in poor people's lives. Rather than providing only national headlines, the global MPI is disaggregated by subnational region, area, ethnicity, or age cohort. Global MPI 2018 supports the SDG agenda in the following manner.**

- SDG GOAL 1 OF 17. End Poverty in All Its Forms Everywhere.
- SDG TARGET 1.2. Poverty in all its dimensions.
- LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledges that **“no one will be left behind”**
- INTERLINKAGES ACROSS SDGS. The global MPI reflects deprivations each person faces in multiple SDG areas – education, water and sanitation, health, housing, etc.

### Global Finding at a glance

- It measures acute poverty for 105 countries covering 5.7 billion people (approx 75% of the global population) of which 1.34 billion (23.3%) live in multi-dimensional poverty.
- 46% out of 1.34 billion are thought to be living in severe poverty i.e, they are deprived in at least half of the dimensions covered in the MPI. Multi-dimensional poverty is more intense in rural areas.
- Multi-dimensional poverty is found in all developing regions of the world but it is particularly acute in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia which account for 1.1 billion (83%) of the total.
- 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of all multi dimensionally poor people live in middle income countries. The level global child poverty is staggering: Children account for virtually half (49.9%) of the **world's poor.**

PEPPER IT WITH Monthly Per-capita Consumption Expenditure, Suresh Tendulkar Committee
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### Limitations of MPI

1. Indicators include both outputs (such as years of schooling) and inputs (such as cooking fuel) as well as one stock indicator (child mortality, which could reflect a death that was five years ago), because flow data are not available for all dimensions.
2. **Health data are relatively weak and overlook some groups' deprivations especially for nutrition**, though the patterns that emerge are plausible and familiar.
3. In some cases careful judgments are needed to address missing data. But to be considered multidimensionally poor, households must be deprived in at least six standard of living indicators or in three standard of living indicators and one health or education indicator. This requirement makes the MPI less sensitive to minor inaccuracies.
4. Intra-household inequalities may be severe, but these could not be reflected.
5. MPI goes well beyond a headcount to include the intensity of poverty experienced, it does not measure inequality among the poor.
6. Estimates presented in MPI are based on publicly available data and cover various years between 2005 and 2015, which limits direct cross-country comparability.

### Conclusion

The Multidimensional Poverty Index gives insights that are vital for understanding the many ways in which people experience poverty, and it provides a new perspective on the scale and nature of global poverty. Although similar comparisons over time have not yet **been calculated for other countries, the latest information from UNDP's Human Development Index shows significant development progress in all regions, including many Sub-Saharan African countries.**

While there is much that needs to be done to tackle poverty globally, **there are “promising signs that such poverty can be — and is being — tackled.”**

## Two-layer Ballistic Missile Defence system

### Why in News?

India successfully conducted an interceptor missile test off the Odisha coast, achieving a major milestone in developing a two-layer Ballistic Missile Defence system. The interceptor was launched from Abdul Kalam Island, earlier known as Wheeler Island of the Integrated Test Range (ITR).

In an automated operation, radar-based detection and tracking system detected and tracked the enemy's ballistic missile. The interceptor guided by high-accuracy Inertial Navigation System (INS) supported by a Redundant Micro Navigation System moved towards the estimated point of the interception.

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### Details

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is developing a two-tier Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system that provides a multi-layered shield against ballistic missile attacks.
- An advanced version of the BMD system was test fired in 2011. The first phase became operational in 2012.
- The two-tier system is intended to destroy an incoming missile, at a higher altitude, in the exo-atmosphere and if that miscarries, an endo-atmospheric interception will take place. It can intercept incoming missiles at exo-atmospheric altitudes of 150km and endo-atmospheric altitudes of 80km.
- The BMD system consists of a Prithvi Air Defence (PAD) missile and an Advanced Air Defence (AAD) Missile for high and low altitude interception. The PAD intercepts missiles at altitudes between 50km-80km and the AAD missile destroys them at altitudes of 15 km-30km.
- The deployed system (PAD) and (AAD) consist of many launch vehicles, radars, Launch Control Centres (LCC) and the Mission Control Centre (MCC). All these are geographically distributed and connected by a secure communication network.
- The MCC is the software intensive system of the ballistic missile defence system. It receives information from various sources such as radars and satellites which is then processed by computers which run simultaneously. The MCC is connected to all other elements of the defence through a WAN. MCC performs target classification, target assignment and kill assessment.

**'Smart fence'** pilot project, which entails deploying laser fences and technology-enabled barriers to **plug venerable gaps along India's** borders was launched recently. The project is developed under the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS).

### PEPPER IT WITH

Man-portable anti-tank guided missile (MPATGM), Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM) Astra,

## India's first indigenous anti-nuclear medical kit

### Why in News?

India's first indigenous medical kit that may ensure protection from serious injuries and faster healing of wounds resulting from nuclear warfare or radioactive leakage was developed recently by Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), the medical face of DRDO.

The kit has over 25 items, including radio-protectors that provide 80-90 per cent protection against radiation and nerve gas agents, bandages that absorb radiation as well as tablets and ointments.

### Details

- The contents include an advanced form of Prussian blue tablets, highly effective in incorporating Radio Cesium (Cs-137) and Radio Thallium, among the most feared radioisotopes in nuclear bombs that destroy human body cells. The tablet provides 100

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per cent absorption from the gut and other portals of entry to the human body.

- The kit has been developed for the armed, paramilitary and police forces only as they are the first ones likely to get exposed to radiation, be it during nuclear, chemical and biomedical (NCB) warfare or a rescue operation after a nuclear accident.
- The kit also has an Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA) injection that traps uranium in the guts and blood of victims during a nuclear accident or warfare. It also has Ca-EDTA Respiratory Fluid, which is the inhalation formula for chelation or grabbing, of heavy metals and radioactive elements deposited in lungs through inhalation at nuclear accident sites.
- When EDTA is injected into the veins, it **“grabs” heavy metals and minerals and** removes them from the body. The medicine reduces the body burden of radioactivity by 30-40 per cent in controlled conditions.
- **The drugs in the medical kit are ‘Made in India’**, without any foreign counterpart and come with the tag of cost-effective and industrial networking. The the kit has Radioactive Blood Mopping Dressing, a special kind of bandage that absorbs radiation. The kit has anti-gamma ray skin ointment that protects and heals the radiation damage on the skin.
- Also part of the kit is the amifostine injection, a US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved conventional radiopharmaceutical that limits damage from gamma radiation.

- ✓ **It’s a potent alternative** to similar kits that were till now being procured from strategically advanced nations such as the US and Russia at much higher prices.
- ✓ Pharmaceutical industry is a mere spectator due to the limited commercial scope in such products. Government sponsored research is the only way forward in this area with practically no import potential.
- ✓ In some ways, medical and health issues faced by the military and the paramilitary are quite different to that of the general public. The three areas of particular concern to the defence sector are high altitudes, war injuries and NBC warfare.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Indranil 150mg, CaEDTA,  
Radioactive elements, USFDA

Missile Prahar

Why in News?

India successfully test-fired its indigenously developed surface-to-surface short-**range tactical ballistic missile ‘Prahaar’**.

- Prahar, developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation, is capable of filling the gap between the multi-barrel rocket system **‘Pinaka’ and medium-range ballistic missile ‘Prithvi’**.
- It can also engage multiple targets in different directions and will further strengthen **India’s** defence capabilities.
- It is a solid-fuelled short-range missile fitted with inertial navigation system.
- The missile is equipped with state-of-the-art navigation, guidance and electromechanical actuation systems with advanced on board computer.
- It is a quick-reaction, all-weather, all-terrain, highly accurate battlefield support tactical weapon system, the sources said.

PEPPER IT WITH  
VC11184, Aakash missile

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Umbrella scheme of Border Infrastructure and Management (BIM)

In News

Union Government recently approved Rs 8,606 crore for various projects being implemented under the umbrella scheme of Border Infrastructure and Management (BIM) to meet special development needs of people living in those areas.

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### About the Scheme

- The projects are being implemented in 17 states having the international borders with Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- It is being implemented in 111 border districts to meet special development needs of border population with focus on people living within 50 kms of the international border.
- The schemes include construction of roads, schools, primary health centres, promotion of rural tourism, border tourism, promotion of sports activities, cleanliness mission, protection of heritage sites, supply of drinking water, community centres, connectivity, drainage, to enable sustainable living in border areas.
- Construction of helipads in remote and inaccessible hilly areas which do not have road connectivity, skill development training to farmers for the use of modern and scientific technique in farming, organic farming are some of the other areas where the projects are being implemented.

India shares borders with:
Bangladesh: 4,096 km
China: 3,488 km
Pakistan: 3,323 km
Nepal: 1,751 km
Myanmar: 1,643 km
Bhutan: 699 km
Afghanistan: 106Km

### Border Management

- o India shares 15,106.7 km of its boundary with seven nations. These land borders run through different terrains. Managing a diverse land border is a complex task, which is very significant from the view of national security.
- o In addition, India has a coastal boundary of 7,517 km apprx. It includes 5,422.6 km of coastline in the mainland and 2,094 km of coastline bordering islands. The coastline touches 9 states and 2 union territories.
- o Border management has emerged as a crucial area in need of smart solutions for various border guarding forces such as BSF, ITBP, Assam Rifles, SSB and Indian Coast Guard. These Forces have to facilitate legitimate travel and trade while maintaining strong security at the border.
- o India being an increasingly globalised and service-oriented economy relies heavily on the movement of goods and people. However, if these movements are uncontrolled, less regulated or unsupervised then smuggling, trafficking, crime, terrorism and illegal migration can increase, which can foment trouble of various kinds in the country.
- o Border management is an integral part of security and demands proactive intelligence, inclusion of technological advancements and coordinated action by bureaucrats, economic agencies, security personnel and other related stakeholders of the nation to safeguard our borders from any threat.

International Border Line is the demarcation that has been agreed upon and ratified by both the neighbouring countries and has been accepted by the rest of the world.

Line of Control (LoC) is the de facto border and separates Pakistan occupied Kashmir from India's state of Jammu & Kashmir. Originally known as the Cease-fire Line, it was re-designated as the "LoC" following the Simla Agreement, which was signed on in 1972.

Line of Actual Control (LoAC) is the boundary line that separates Indian-held lands from Chinese controlled territory.

Prime Minister inaugurated Parakram Parv exhibition at the military station, Jodhpur, to mark the second anniversary of the surgical strikes carried out by the Indian Army.

PEPPER IT WITH  
EEZ, Ministry of shipping,  
Ministry of Fisheries,  
Coastal Security Scheme,  
Vessel Traffic Management  
system

Guarding of the Indian borders is undertaken by the various border guarding forces which are deployed along different borders as below:

- a) Border Security Force: The security of Bangladesh and Pakistan border is looked after by BSF

- b) Indo-Tibetan Border Police: The security of the China border is entrusted to ITBP.
- c) Sashastra Seema Bal: The Nepal and Bhutan border are looked after by SSB.
- d) Assam Rifles (AR): Assam Rifles have been deployed on the Indo-Myanmar Border.
- e) Indian Coast Guard (ICG): The responsibility for security of the coastal borders lies with the ICG with the coastal State (Marine) Police acting as the second line for coastal patrol.
- f) The LoC and the LoAC is protected by the Indian Army.
- g) The Indian Navy performs a constabulary role which includes ensuring security of EEZ, conducting low intensity maritime operations and maintaining good order at sea.

### Multilateral Exercises

#### Exercise Kakadu

- India participated in exercise KAKADU 2018 which is a joint exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Navy and supported by the Royal Australian Air Force.
- Conducted both onshore and at sea off the coast of Darwin, this **year's event involved the participation of 27 countries.**
- It is designed to be carried out into three phases, which include a harbour phase, a force integration training phase, and a free-play phase.
- KAKADU is a premier multilateral regional maritime engagement exercise that is conducted twice a year in Darwin and the Northern Australian Exercise Areas (NAXA).

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#### Rim of the Pacific 2018 international maritime exercise

- **The world's largest international maritime exercise, Rim** of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2018, was concluded in the waters surrounding the Hawaiian Islands.
- The 25-nation exercise (including India) lasted for more than a month and involved a series of training events that were conducted in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California, US.
- Forces focused on training a wide range of capabilities during the event, ranging from disaster relief and maritime security operations to sea control and complex warfighting.

#### Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT) exercise

- The 17th annual SEACAT exercise comprising Bangladesh, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, the US, Thailand, and Vietnam was held recently in Singapore.
- SEACAT has been designed to offer a better understanding of the maritime domain through collaborative and coordinated sharing of data.
- It enables the participating nations to have a common understanding of the maritime environment and to operate as an effective unified maritime force.

PEPPER IT WITH cooperation afloat readiness and training (CARAT) exercise, SCO peace mission

#### Exercise Sea Breeze

- The multinational maritime exercise Sea Breeze, which was co-hosted by US and Ukraine, concluded in Odessa, Ukraine recently. 29 ships from 18 nations participated and many tactical skills were practiced and perfected.
- The 18th iteration of Exercise Sea Breeze was carried out in the Black Sea in order to improve the interoperability of the participating countries and bolster maritime security within the region.

#### Exercise rapid trident

Rapid Trident is a culmination of multinational training exercises conducted annually that serves as the validation for Ukraine's Ministry of Defense under the advisement of allied and partner nations.

## Bilateral Exercises

### Nomadic elephant

- The 12 day long Indo-Mongolia joint exercise Nomadic Elephant-2018, commenced recently at Mongolian Armed Forces (MAF) Five Hills Training Area, Ullanbaatar, Mongolia.
- Exercise Nomadic Elephant is an annual, bilateral exercise since 2006 which is designed to strengthen the partnership between Indian Army and Mongolian Armed Forces.

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### Yudh Abhyas 2018

- As part of the ongoing Indo-US defence cooperation, a joint military training Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2018 was conducted in the foothills of Himalayas at Chaubattia in Uttarakhand.
- The joint exercise Yudh Abhyas 2018 simulates a scenario where both nations work together in counter insurgency and counter terrorism environment in mountainous terrain under United Nation charter.
- The two week exercise was the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of the joint military exercise hosted alternately by both countries. Over the years the two countries have decided to progressively increase the scope and content of this joint exercise.
- Both armies have vast experience in active counter insurgency & counter terrorism operations and sharing each other's tactics & drills in such diverse environment is of immense value.

PEPPER IT WITH  
VINBAX, Vajra Prahar, Lamitye,  
Khanjar, Harimau Shakti, Surya  
Kiran, Maitree, Prabal Dostyk

### Exercise Aviaindra

- The second edition of Exercise Aviaindra, a Biennial Air Force level exercise between Indian and the Russian Federation, was conducted recently.
- The aim of the exercise was to formulate and validate use of airpower in anti-terrorist operation in a bilateral scenario. The exercise was conducted at Lipetsk, Russia.
- First Aviaindra was conducted in 2014 and has been planned as a bi-annual exercise.

### KAZIND 2018

- The third edition of Indo-Kazakhstan Joint Army Exercise 'KAZIND' was conducted in Otar region, Kazakhstan. The second edition of the exercise was held in India last year between the two countries which have a history of extensive cooperation in the defence arena.
- The exercise was aimed at building and promoting bilateral Army to Army relations and exchanging skills and experiences between Kazakhstan Army and the Indian Army.
- The vast experience and expertise of Indian troops in counter insurgency operations holds special importance to the Kazakhstan Army.
- The conduct of such joint exercise will set the stage for greater defence cooperation and consequently will manifest in stronger ties between the two great nations.

### SLINEX-18

- Indian Naval Ships participated in the sixth edition of SLINEX 2018, a bi-lateral Naval Exercise between India and Sri Lanka, which was held recently.
- The exercise was conducted in two phases, harbour phase during which, the participants engaged in professional, sporting and social interactions and was followed by the Sea Phase which included gun firings, communication procedures, seamanship as well as navigation evolutions and helicopter operations.
- SLINEX series of bilateral maritime exercises were initiated in 2005 and since then five successful engagements have been conducted.
- SLINEX over the years has helped both the Navies in understanding each other's procedures and enhanced interoperability.

### Khirki mosque

#### Why in News?

The Archaeological Survey of India (Ministry of Culture) recently discovered a hoard of more than 250 Copper Coins in the premises of Khirki Mosque during the course of conservation of the monument.

- The mosque is located in Delhi and was commissioned by Khan-i Jahan Junan Shah, vizier (Prime Minister) to the Tughluq Sultan Firoz Shah (reg. 1351-1388).
- The Khirki, named for the perforated windows, or khirkis, that decorate the upper floors, has four open courtyards that provide light and ventilation to the internal prayer spaces.
- It was built by rubble stone and is thickly plastered.

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### Battle of Haifa

#### Why in News?

The Embassy of India held a ceremony in Haifa to mark the Centenary of the Battle of Haifa when on 23 Sep 1918, Indian soldiers from the Jodhpur, Mysore and Hyderabad Lancers liberated the city of Haifa, known for its deep water bay in the Mediterranean.

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#### Details

- The battle of Haifa was pre-empted by the threat of life by the Ottoman Governor in Palestine to the life of Abdul Baha, the son **of the prophet of the Baha'i Faith** – a pacifist religion that seeks universality of humanity and reconciliation amongst various faiths.
- **Abdu'l-Bahá** was released from prison just before the outbreak of the Great War where he was held for nearly 50 years with his father by the Ottomans. He spent the war years tending to the needs of the people in Haifa and Akka organising extensive agricultural operations.
- Since he gained a significant following and preached a religion which went against the tenets of the Ottoman State religion he was again persecuted and held captive by Jamal Pasha, the local governor.
- A British Intelligence officer gave input about the impending crucifixion of Abdul Baha that required General Allenby to alter his plans for the war in the Palestinian theatre. Since he had no British troops freely available, he ordered the 15<sup>th</sup> Imperial Cavalry Brigade to carry out the assault on Mount Carmel and Haifa.
- The daredevil cavalry charge led solely by Indian officers against well entrenched troops in broad daylight led to the combined opposing Troops abandoning their positions. The Mysore Lancers proceeded to rescue Abdul Baha.

Every year on September 23, Indian Army celebrates **'Haifa Day'** to commemorate the war dead during the Battle of Haifa, considered as one of the last cavalry charges that resulted in a victory in a modern war. By the end of WWI, horses had become redundant in wars.

The Teen Murti memorial was constructed in 1922 in the memory of the Indian soldiers from the three princely states who served present day Gaza strip, Israel and Palestine during the World War I under British India Army.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Battle of Megiddo, Battle of Nablus, Battle of Sharon, World War-I

#### Outcomes of the Battle

- The subsequent upshot of this astonishing victory was the end of the Ottoman Empire that led to the creation of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Israel.
- The most significant off shoot of the battle led solely by Indian officers was the debunking of the myth that Indian soldiers performed well only when led by British

Officers.

Conclusion

The battle of Haifa and its significance a hundred years later emphasizes that why great battles should be commemorated and celebrated for the right reasons. The greater message and impact of this gallant cavalry charge fought a hundred years ago should be remembered for the impact on human history and progress. Two million Baha'is call India home and remain indebted for saving Abdul Baha from certain death. They too have thrived in India just as Parsis while they continue to be persecuted in many countries.

**Police forces in 6 UTs merged**

- The Ministry of Home Affairs has notified new rules amalgamating police forces in six Union Territories.
- The rules effectively mean that officers, who are not direct IPS recruits, could be posted in any of the six UTs (NCT of Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Chandigarh) and will be at the disposal of the MHA.
- The initiative which, according to the MHA, has been in the works for over a year and a half, is being viewed as the first step towards the creation of a central police cadre allowing for the posting of police personnel across the country irrespective of the force they are initially inducted into.
- A central pool allowing inter-transferability would also ensure that local police personnel do not fall prey to serving vested interests in their home services and ensure **that they don't become complacent.**

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Concept Clearing Assignment

1. Mergers are one way of managing the problem and therefore cannot be discounted totally. However, what steps should be taken by government to ensure that merger of banks do not end up creating an entity that is weaker than the original pre-merger strong banks.
2. M Narasimham, the 13th governor of the Reserve Bank of India, had envisaged a three-tier banking structure with three large banks with international presence at the top, eight to 10 national banks at tier two, and a large number of regional and local banks at the bottom. Do you think such banking structure is required in India considering the current economic situations?
3. India fares poorly on many nutrition indicators of children. Suggest measures for malnourishment among children who cannot be quantified as vote banks.
4. **“The future of India lies in the States of India. The country’s transition to high middle-income status will be determined in large part by the effectiveness of India’s federal compact”.** In the light of the above statement, critically examine the country partnership framework for India.
5. Briefly discuss IWT and highlight the bone of contention for disagreement. Suggest steps to tackle the issue in light of IWT and international treaties.
6. What is Cyclone-30? How it will bring respite for cancer patients in India? Discuss.
7. The Indian government along with United Nations body FAO has launched an agriculture project with \$33.5 million grant from Global Environment Facility (GEF). How this initiative will transform Indian agricultural production to generate global environmental benefits? Analyze.
8. The number of polluted stretches of the country’s rivers has increased to 351 from 302 in period of two years, according to an assessment by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Identify the factor for the rise in pollution along river stretches and dropping water quality of drinking water. Elucidate
9. India recently attended the 6th East Asia Summit- **Economic Ministers’ Meeting.** Briefly discuss Act East Policy of India. Enumerate the outcome East Asia Summit- Economic

**Ministers' Meeting and these outcome will help India economy in firming it ground as relevant competitor in Eastern- Asia Market. Analyse.**

10. Bring out the salient features of Internal Ombudsman Scheme 2018. How this initiative strengthens internal grievance redressal system of banks and to ensure that the complaints of the customers are redressed at the level of the bank? Critically Analyse.
11. The entry of criminals in election politics must be restricted at any cost. If it is not checked, it will erode the system totally. Discuss the constitutional tools to put check on criminalisation in politics and suggest the solution.
12. Briefly discuss about PM-AASHA and bring out its salient features. Elucidate the importance of this initiative in boosting the vision of doubling the income of farmers.
13. Discuss the Clemency power of Governor in light of recent event of Tamil Nadu demanding release of seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case by invoking **the Governor's clemency power** under Article 161 of the Constitution. Analyse critically the implication of this move on fabric of Indian Constitution.
14. In a historic judgment SC recently ruled that consensual adult gay sex is not a crime saying sexual orientation is natural and people have no control over it. Elucidate on the constitutional morality and Section 377 in light of constitutional validity recently bestowed on LGBTIQ community.
15. Throw light on the appointment procedure of Lokpal under Lokpal Act 2013. Also discuss the reasons why no lokpal/lokayukta have been selected and posted even 15 years have lapsed since the inception of Lokpal Act 2013.

### P.T Oriented Questions

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Moplah Rebellion took place at which among the following               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Kerala</li> <li>(b) Karnataka</li> <li>(c) Uttar Pradesh</li> <li>(d) Maharashtra</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Consider the following statements about Eka Movement and choose the correct one/s               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It was a peasant movement which surfaced in Hardo</li> <li>2. It took place at the time of Khilafat Movement</li> </ol>               Code:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) 1 only</li> <li>(b) 2 only</li> <li>(c) Both 1 and 2</li> <li>(d) None</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Consider the following statements about Khilafat Movement and choose the correct statements               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Khilafat Committee was formed under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi</li> <li>2. Women fully participated in the movement</li> <li>3. It was withdrawn due to Chauri Chaura incident</li> </ol>               Code:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) 1 only</li> <li>(b) Both 1 and 2</li> </ol> </li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(c) 2 only</li> <li>(d) All the above</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Consider the following statements about All India Kisan Sabha and choose the correct one/s               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It was a peasant movement formed at Lucknow session of INC in 1936</li> <li>2. Sardar Vallabh Patel was founder of AIKS</li> </ol>               Code:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) 1 only</li> <li>(b) 2 only</li> <li>(c) Both 1 and 2</li> <li>(d) None</li> </ol> </li> <li>5. Identify the lake from the information given below               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is a Ramsar site</li> <li>2. Located in Nagaur district of Rajasthan</li> <li>3. Wintering area for Flamingo and other birds from north Asia</li> </ol>               Code               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Pushkar Lake</li> <li>(b) Sambhar Lake</li> <li>(c) Lake Pichola</li> <li>(d) Ana Sagar Lake</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. MILEX-18 is military exercise of               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) India and Mauritius</li> <li>(b) India and Russia</li> </ol> </li> </ol> |
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- (c) SCO members  
(d) BIMSTEC members
7. Consider the following about BARAK-8 missile defence system and choose the correct one/s
1. It is short range surface to air missile
  2. It has been jointly developed by India and Russia
- Code:  
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None
8. Which of the following countries touches Caspian Sea?
1. Russia
  2. Iraq
  3. Azerbaijan
  4. Kazakhstan
  5. Kyrgyzstan
- Code:  
(a) 1,2,3 and 4 (b) 1,3,4 and 5  
(c) 1,3 and 4 (d) 2,3,4 and 5
9. Consider the following about REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) and choose the correct one/s
1. It aims to create an incentive for developing countries to protect, better manage and save their forest resources
  2. It provides incentives for conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks
- Code:  
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None
10. REPLACE Campaign by WHO was to eliminate
- (a) Diabetes
  - (b) Artificial Trans Fat from food
  - (c) Adulteration in food
  - (d) Fixed Dose Combination
11. In India, other than ensuring that public funds are used efficiently and for intended purpose, what is the importance of the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)? (CSE 2012)
1. CAG exercises exchequer control on behalf of the Parliament when the President of India declares national emergency/financial emergency
  2. CAG reports on the execution of projects or programmes by the ministries are discussed by the Public Accounts Committee
  3. Information from CAG reports can be used by investigating agencies to press charges against those who have violated the law while managing public finances
  4. While dealing with the audit and accounting of government companies, CAG has certain judicial powers for prosecuting those who violate the law
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
(a) 1, 3 and 4 only (b) 2 only  
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
12. Which of the following is/are among the Fundamental Duties of citizens laid down in the Indian Constitution? (CSE 2012)
1. To preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture
  2. To protect the weaker sections from social injustice
  3. To develop the scientific temper and spirit of inquiry
  4. To strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity
- Select the correct answer using the codes given below:  
(a) 1 and 2 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only  
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
13. With reference to Dhrupad, one of the major traditions of India that has been kept alive for centuries, which of the following statements are correct? (CSE 2012)
1. Dhrupad originated and developed in the Rajput kingdoms during the Mughal period
  2. Dhrupad is primarily a devotional and spiritual music
  3. Dhrupad Alap uses Sanskrit syllables from Mantras
- Select the correct answer using the codes given below:  
(a) 1 and 2 only  
(b) 2 and 3 only

- (c) 1, 2 and 3  
(d) None of the above is correct
14. Under which of the following circumstances may 'capital gains' arise? (CSE 2012)
1. When there is an increase in the sales of a product
  2. When there is a natural increase in the value of the property owned
  3. When you purchase a painting and there is a growth in its value due to increase in its popularity
- Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
- (a) 1 only  
(b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 2 only  
(d) 1, 2 and 3
15. Consider the following areas: (CSE 2012)
1. Bandipur
  2. Bhitarkanika
  3. Manas
  4. Sunderbans
- Which of the above are Tiger Reserves?
- (a) 1 and 2 only  
(b) 1, 3 and 4 only  
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only  
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
16. Consider the following about Indus Dolphins and choose the correct one/s
1. Classified critically endangered by IUCN
  2. It is found in Ravi river in India in a small stretch
  3. It has been declared as National Aquatic Animal of India
- Code:
- (a) 1 and 2  
(b) 2 only  
(c) 1, 2 and 3  
(d) None
17. Consider the following about Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and choose the correct one/s
1. The deal was reached between P5(US, China, Russia, UK and France) and Iran
  2. Under the agreement Iran agreed to completely eliminate its stock of medium enriched and low enriched uranium
- Code:
- (a) 1 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2  
(d) None
18. Consider the following statements about clean air-India initiative and choose the correct one/s
1. It is a collaborative project of India and France
- It aims to build a network of entrepreneurs working on business solutions for cleaner air
- Code:
- (a) 1 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2  
(d) None
19. Consider the following about South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) and choose the correct one/s
1. It is a regional network of eight countries in South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka
  2. It aims at working as a strong regional intergovernmental body for combating trafficking and illegal trade
- Code:
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None
20. Consider the following about PRADHAN MANTRI VAYA VANDAN YOJANA (PMVVY) and choose the correct one/s
1. Launched by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment it is a pension scheme exclusively for senior citizens
  2. The scheme is implemented by LIC
- Code:
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None
21. Consider the following statements about Mobilise Your City (MYC) initiative and choose the correct one/ones
1. It was launched at the 21st conference of parties (CoP21)

- meeting in 2015
2. MYC aims at supporting three pilot cities viz Nagpur, Kochi, and Ahmadabad in India
3. It is an initiative combining urban mobility objectives and climate considerations
- Code:
- (a) 1 and 2 only  
(b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 1 and 3 only  
(d) All of the above
22. Consider the following statements and choose the INCORRECT one/ones
1. Majority of coffee cultivating farmers in India are large farmers
2. Coffee is mainly produced in the southern states of Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh
- Code:
- (a) 1 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2  
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
23. Consider the following statements about Bishkek declaration
1. It declaration is aimed for the conservation of tiger
2. The declaration has been adopted by 12 countries, all from Asia
- Which among the following is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2  
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
24. India post payment bank was launched recently. Consider the following statements about payment banks (PB) and choose the correct one/ones
1. They cannot offer third party fund transfers
2. PB can only accept deposits of up to Rs 1 lakh per customer in a savings/current account
3. It was recommended by a committee headed by Dr Nachiket Mor to study 'Comprehensive financial services for small businesses and low income households'
- Code:
- (a) 1 and 2 only  
(b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 1 and 3 only  
(d) All of the above
25. Which among the following is correct?
- (a) Public credit repository will help banks distinguish between a bad and a good borrower
- (b) Public credit registry is an information repository that collates all loan information of individuals and corporate borrowers both
- (c) It will strengthen the credit culture among consumers
- (d) All of the above
26. The term 'LIBOR' which was recently in news is related to which among the following
- (a) Telecommunication  
(b) Banking  
(c) Space Technology  
(d) None of the above
27. Which of the following countries are member of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)
1. India  
2. Pakistan  
3. Thailand  
4. Myanmar  
5. Afghanistan
- Code:
- (a) 1,2 and 5  
(b) 1,3 and 4  
(c) 1,2,3 and 4  
(d) All the above
28. Energy transition index is published by
- (a) International Energy Agency  
(b) World Economic Forum  
(c) WWF  
(d) ILO
29. Which of the following is/are part of Selection Committee for Lokpal
1. Prime Minister  
2. Speaker of Lok Sabha  
3. Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha  
4. Chief Justice of India or a sitting Supreme Court Judge nominated by CJI  
5. An eminent jurist to be nominated by the President of India
- Code:

- (a) 1,3 and 4  
(b) 1,2,3 and 4  
(c) 1 and 3  
(d) All the above
30. Consider the following about Hangul (Kashmiri Stag) and choose the correct one/s
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1. It is endemic to Dachigam National Park</p> | <p>2. It is the state animal of Jammu &amp; Kashmir</p> <p>3. It has been classified as critically endangered by IUCN</p> <p>Code:</p> <p>(a) 1 and 2<br/>(b) 1 and 3<br/>(c) 2 and 3<br/>(d) All the above</p> |
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