ABOUT CURRENT CONNECT

It gives us immense pleasure to present an innovative approach to master current affairs. Current is a passing wind and diverse issues happen at the same time. It is to an extent chaotic. Newspapers, magazines and various other sources report the chaos per se. With our experience of current **affairs we have tried to give "the current" a medium to travel. It is the** syllabus of the UPSC with their components that are the medium through **which the "Current is Passed" to the readers.** Ever since the new syllabus of the UPSC came into existence, current has been gaining significance both at prelims as well as mains examination. This book is meant to cover current affairs and related questions arising from those events. We have not only covered the current events for their factual contents but also presented it in such a way that any question asked from that topic gets covered. Moreover, topics are also "peppered" with the relevant facts/key concepts that are related to the theme. We have also given questions for practice both, subjective and objective, so that candidates are oriented to the examination mode. It is a collection covering myriad source yet in a manageable size. To use this book we recommend you to master the components of general studies (GS) syllabus as broken into rows and columns (provided in the beginning after preface). Each cell comprising of the portion of GS becomes the connect for the current and every news subsequently covered guides the reader to the address of the syllabus. It is logical to expect that same issue may be connected to more than one topic of the syllabus. Further, the news also has some additional vistas opened for the readers by adding a box **with a title "**PEPPER IT WITH**" where we expect the students to** build further around the theme.

We are also trying to reach the remotest part of the country with our **spirit and zeal of "Mains Answer Writing", which has** been admired by students, CSE rankholders and other scholars. Continuing in line with the effort, we have started with programs like 7 Question (7Q) Challenge, Shell Points, Stock Points, Content Enrichment Booklet etc.

When it comes to evaluation, we are altogether at a different level. We are also reaching every nook and corner with this expertise for the aspirants of CSE. Now you can write a Mains Answer and get it evaluated from our Expert Team and can get Feedback. Drop a mail at evaluation@ksgindia.com for registering yourself in our race to perfection. **Don't wait, it's your** golden chance to crack this exam and fulfill your passionate dream.

Team KSG

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Polity

Social Issues & Schemes

Economy

International Relation

Environment

Science & Technology

Security

Art & Culture

S. No	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
GS – I	Culture-Art Literature Architecture ancient to modern times.	Forms, Indian and history from significant events, person alities, issues and the Freedom Struggle	Post independence issues, National boundary and disputes	Indian society features, issues, globalization and diversity	Women - and developments	Urbanization – problems and remedies	Distribution of industries andresources – India and world	Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc			
GS – II	Indian constitution- Amendments, acts and bills.	Legislative, executive and judicial processes.	Constitutional, non-constitutional, 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 sections of our society, self-help groups and various social sector issues and initiatives.	Vulnerable sections of society	International Relation- India and other countries. Indian and international institutions.		
GS – III		Various measures to boost Indian economy. Indian 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, space, robotics and computer	Disease, technology, IT biotechnology and human welfare	Innovations, Intellectual property, Awards, POI and other important aspects of S&T	Environment; government initiatives, various judgment, pollution, degradation and conservation efforts	Disaster & Disaster Management; Challenges to internal security, Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate. Cybersecurity; moneylaundering and its prevention.
GS – IV	Ethical issues related Ethics to public and private administration	Issues	Related laws and rules	Governance/e- Governance	Ethics in international issues	Person alities and their teachings	Other important topics				
Mis.	Ethical issues related to family society, education. Corruption private administration etc.										

Seed bill- 2019

News Excerpt

The government brought a new Seed Bill to foster competition by updating the Seed Act 1966 and Seed Rules 1968. It aims to ensure that farmers get the highest quality seeds, while the seed industry also experiences an ease-of-doing-**business'.**

Pre-Connect

- India introduced the Seed Act 1966 to govern matters of seed and seed quality. It was modelled on the US legislation and aided by a later enactment of the Seed Rules 1968, which were also developed with the collaboration of the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture).

- The 1966 legislation was enacted at the time of the Green Revolution when the country hardly had any private seed industry and most varieties were developed by the various ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) institutes and SAUs (State Agricultural Universities).

- The major deficiencies in the 1966 Act are lack of licensing provisions and lack of varietal registration prior to sale.

Key Features of the new Bill

- The major difference compared to the 1966 Act is in the registration and licensing of seed producers and processors separately.

- The new bill provides for compulsory registration of seed varieties based on VCU (value for cultivation and use) evaluation and licensing of seed producers and seed processors. This means that even hybrids/varieties of private companies will need to be registered, and their seeds would have to meet the minimum prescribed standards relating to germination, physical and genetic purity, etc.

- If the seed of such registered kind or variety **"fails to provide the expected performance under such given conditions",** the farmer **"may claim compe**nsation from the producer, dealer, distributor or vendor under **The Consumer Protection Act, 1986".**

- There are also provisions for price control in the event of an emergency, monopolization or profiteering.

Seed Act, 1966

- ❖ It provided for the regulation of the sale of seeds of notified varieties by compulsory truthful labelling.
- ❖ It also provided for punitive measures against seed sellers in case of any deficiency in seed quality parameters mentioned on the label.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research

- ❖ The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is an autonomous organisation under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Government of India.
- ❖ The Council is the apex body for co-ordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country.

Analytica

Merits

- ✓ It does away with the concept of **"notified" variety. By providing for compulsory registration of "any kind or variety of seeds",** private hybrids will automatically be brought under regulatory purview.

- ✓ This should help minimise the risk of farmers being sold seeds of low-quality genetics, especially by fly-by-night operators.

Demerits

- ✓ If there is a seed failure, farmers have to go to a consumer court to obtain compensation. There is no provision for compensation as part of the seed legislation itself.

- ✓ In terms of compensation, the legislation talks about a fixed quantity, a minimal amount,

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Competition Act, Essential Commodities Act 1955, Consumer Protection Act 1986, Inputs costs in Agriculture, PPVFR Act

to the farmer, whereas it should be proportionate to the damage caused.

✓ The next major challenge for the sector would come from the magnitude of crop registration. According to the industry, the workload for nationwide evaluation as compared to the current workload will be more than 30-40 times greater and impossible to handle.

✓ **Currently, India's Rs 16,000 crore annual seed business is dominated by** a handful of companies. This bill might strengthen the existing oligopoly. Big companies sell seeds of only a few crops which will affect the diversity of crops in the country.

✓ Power of fixing sale price of seed has been given both to the Centre and state governments. It is a possibility that state governments may take up populist measures and keep the sale price low.

Way Forward

▪ An empowered committee can be formed to evaluate the infrastructure facilities of the seed companies to accredit them and also to evaluate all the data generated from such nationwide trails to accord fast track registration.

▪ The varietal evaluation systems of seed companies can be subject to regular audit by the technical auditors appointed by the Empowered Committee from time to time to ensure genuineness.

▪ There is a need to recognize the scale and size of the operations of the companies and devise regulation accordingly.

▪ The industry has suggested that the price control should be taken up by only the Central government and DACFW (Department of Agriculture, cooperation and Farmers Welfare.

126th Constitutional Amendment Bill

News Excerpt

126th Constitutional Amendment bill which seeks to extend by ten years the reservation given to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Lok Sabha and State assemblies was passed in the Parliament recently.
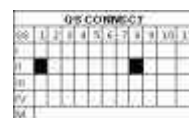
Pre-Connect

• The Constitution provides for reservation of seats for SCs and STs and representation of the Anglo-Indian community by nomination, in Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies of states.

• This has been provided for a period of 70 years since the enactment of the Constitution and will expire on January 25, 2020.

Analytica

➢ The Bill seeks to extend the reservation for SCs and STs by another 10 years till January 25, 2030.

➢ Bill in its objectives stated that although the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes have

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Anglo Indians

❖ As per the article 366 (2) **of the Indian constitution; "a** person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European **descent but who is a native of India."**

❖ The people of European society were called in India due to their technological knowledge for the rail track deployment.

❖ These people later on married to Indian girls and settled here.

❖ Under article 331; the President of India is authorised to nominate 2 members of the Anglo Indian community to the Lok Sabha.

❖ In the same way, the governor of the state is authorised to nominate 1 Anglo Indian in the lower house of the State Legislature.

❖ Article 334 deals with the reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assemblies of the States; and the representation of the Anglo Indian community in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assemblies of the States by nomination.

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made considerable progress in the last 70 years, the reasons which weighed with the Constituent Assembly in making provisions with regard to the aforesaid reservation of seats

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have not yet ceased to exist.

➢ A similar reservation for the Anglo-Indian community in Lok Sabha and state assemblies is not being extended. As of now, there are only 296 members of the Anglo-Indian community as stated by the Law Minister while introducing the bill.

➢ The decision not to renew this provision for the Anglo-Indian community was also based on the view that the community is doing well and does not need these political reservations.

➢ But the government-commissioned Ministry of Minority Affairs report (2013) on the situation of Anglo-Indians tells a different story.

➢ The report documented poor economic and social conditions for too many from the community. The problems faced by people of the community were lack of employment, educational backwardness and lack of proper housing facilities, particularly in the metro centres.

➢ The document also explicitly commended the assistance Anglo-Indians receive from their nominated MPs and MLAs.

Way Forward

✓ The nomination of seats for Anglo-Indians in the Lok Sabha was a testament to the fair-minded and forward-looking vision of the founding fathers of the Republic.

✓ A stronger, less socio-economically marginalised Anglo-Indian community would benefit the nation as a whole. And the community needs all the support it can get.

✓ Retaining the reserved seats would demonstrate its ability to respond to the needs of those among the most vulnerable people. This would also be a recognition of encouragement for the work done on the ground by grassroots groups involved with the community.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Article 368, Article 341, Article 342, Article 331

Land Banks

News Excerpt

The Punjab Cabinet gave nod to amend the Punjab Village Common Land (Regulation) Rules, 1964 to create land banks in rural areas. It will boost industrial development. This will be a part of the Amritsar-Kolkata Industrial corridor.
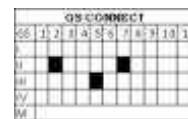
Pre-Connect

- Land Banks: Government acquires land from people who are willing to sell or lease it and then uses it for different purposes such as Industrial development, urban development etc. It reduces the cost of land acquisition, delays and disputes that occur when land is acquired from unwilling farmers.

- In a 2015 paper, NITI Aayog had proposed the idea of a public land bank to lease land to landless cultivators. Landowners can deposit land in the bank and potential cultivators can lease the land they need, paying rent to the agency that will pay the owner.

Land Pooling

❖ Land Pooling is a concept where small chunks of land owned by a group of owners assemble for the development of infrastructure.

❖ After the development of the land, the Land Pooling agency redistributes the land after deducting some portion as compensation towards infrastructure costs.

❖ For example, to build a Commercial complex, land can be taken from farmers and after the development of the project, some land in the form of shops or houses in the same developed place can be given to the farmers.

❖ Pooling is seen as a viable alternative to land acquisition.

Analytica

➢ Building land banks allows states to offer land to private investors right away, rather than having to wait for the lengthy process of land acquisition each time an investor wants the land.

➢ It can help in improving ease of doing business as India fares poorly in land acquisition

which leads to cost and time overruns.

➤ This can be an effective way to lease land to landless farmers who otherwise find it difficult due to poor land records issue.

➤ NITI Aayog has also suggested that land banks could be used for affordable housing in urban areas.

➤ But at the same time, land acquired for industrial use is coming under greater scrutiny in India, with the Supreme Court asking seven states why much of the land bought for special economic zones is lying idle.

➤ Many reports of surveys being conducted without the prior knowledge of local communities. It raises the issue of land being acquired without the proper following of due process of law.

| PEPPER IT WITH |
| --- |
| CAMPA, Swaran Singh vs M/S Sukhm Infrastructure Pvt, RFCTLARR Act, 2013, Social Impact Assessment |

Way Forward

✓ Making land readily available for economic activities sounds like a rational move. It can help in Make in India and Invest India.

✓ But the land must be taken only after following the due process. Compensatory afforestation, whenever the land is taken in forests, should be carried on as per the law.

✓ Land lying idle with the government should be productively used or should be returned to the owners, wherever possible, as directed by the court.

Good Governance Index

News Excerpt

The 'Good Governance Index' was launched by Minister of State for Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensionson the occasion of Good Governance Day i.e. on 25th December 2019.
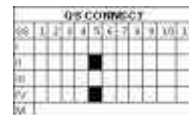
Pre-Connect

• Different agencies including NITI Aayog, various ministries etc, are evaluating the States on different parameters such as ease of living, cleanliness, ease of doing business, health parameters etc.

• This is another index in this direction to promote development through competition among the states.

About

➤ The Good Governance Index is a uniform tool across the States to assess the Status of Governance and impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and UTs.

➤ Main Objectives of GGI are- (i) Provide quantifiable data to compare the State of Governance in the States and UTs, (ii) enable states and UTs to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance and (iii) shift to result-oriented approaches and administration.

➤ Different indicators are given different weightage under each Governance Sector.

➤ The states and UTs are divided into three groups: a) Big States, b) North-East & Hill States and c) UTs.

Analytica

✓ Tamil Nadu has been ranked 1st in the ranking and three other southern states Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are among the top 10.

✓ Another significant aspect of GGI is that the dubiously-**labelled "BIMARU" states** are seeking to catch up with others in development. Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh are ranked fourth and ninth, respectively.

✓ Others such as Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have performed well in some sectors but rank poorly in the overall rankings..

Figure: Ten sectors under GGI

Benefits of GGI

- The quantifiable data for comparison amongst states/UTs will help in evidence-based policymaking as suggested by the Economic Survey.
- This will further promote competitive federalism and states will strive towards providing better governance to their people.
- GGI would seek to determine the status of governance as it exists today and it will provide reference threshold for future also.

- This brings transparency in the governance levels of different states and citizens will be better equipped to demand accountability.

Conclusion

- It is noteworthy that the Centre has made an attempt to address the problem of the absence of a credible and uniform index for an objective evaluation of the States and Union Territories.
- Though the GGI requires further fine-tuning and improvement, the inherent strength of the work that has been accomplished, **keeping in mind India's size and complexity** should be credited.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> PRAGATI, Common Service Centre, e-Kranti

Nagpur Resolution

News Excerpt

During a regional conference organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) **in Nagpur the '**Nagpur Resolution: A Holistic **Approach for Empowering Citizens' was unanimously adopted.**

Pre-Connect

- On earlier occasions also, Shillong Declaration and Jammu Resolution have been adopted for good governance.
- **Government is committed to the mantra of 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance' and 'Reform, Perform and Transform'.**
- Various initiatives are taken by the Government: discontinuation of interviews for junior level posts, launching of portals, self-attestation and en-masse promotions etc.
- Emphasis is given upon the maximum utilisation of technology in governance.
- Prevention of Corruption Act has been enacted not only for zero tolerance towards corruption but also for the protection of honest and sincere officers.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Sevottam, Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat, Prevention of Corruption Act, CPGRAMS, PRAGATI

Key Highlights

The Conference resolved that Government of India, the Government of Maharashtra, the Maharashtra State Commission for Right to Public Services and the participating State Governments shall collaborate:

- To empower the citizens by policy interventions for better service delivery through timely updation of citizens charters, implementation of enactments and benchmarking standards

for continuous improvement;

➢ To empower citizens by adopting a bottom-up approach to bring massive improvements in quality of grievance redressal and reduction in timelines of grievance redressal;

➢ To adopt a holistic approach of systemic public grievance reforms through improved mapping, formulation of monitoring matrix, data collection and evaluation in quality of grievance redressal;

➢ To provide an enabling environment for States and Ministries/ Departments of the Government of India for creating web portals and to adopt a holistic approach for improved service delivery through digital platforms;

➢ To focus on dynamic policy-making and strategic decisions, monitoring of implementation, appointment of key personnel, coordination and evaluation;

➢ To achieve a sense of common identity by the exchange of technical expertise in the areas of Improved Service Delivery between the paired States under the Ek Bharat – Shrestha Bharat Program;

Citizen Charter
❖ **Citizen's Charter is a document which represents** a systematic effort to focus on the commitment of the Organisation towards its Citizens.
❖ It commits w.r.t Standard of Services, Information, Choice and Consultation, Non-discrimination and Accessibility, Grievance Redress, Courtesy and Value for Money.
❖ This also includes expectations of the Organisation from the Citizen for fulfilling the commitment of the Organisation.

Shillong Declaration on e-Governance
❖ In August, DARPG and MeitY in association with State Govt. of Meghalaya organised National conference on e-governance which was themed on "Digital India: Success to Excellence"
❖ Under the declaration, the central government and state government resolved to collaborate for achieving objectives like- improv**ement of citizen's** experience with government services, replication of successful state-level e-gov projects, shift in the role of govt from service provider to service enabler etc.

➢ To work towards long-term engagements in the areas of Improved Service Delivery for Empowering Citizens through greater cooperation between the DARPG and the participating States and,

➢ To ensure timely publication of Good Governance Index to identify the quality of governance in 10 sectors especially those pertaining to welfare and infrastructure at the Union, State and District levels.

CAG report on Ujjwala Scheme

News Excerpt
The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has expressed concerns over Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) in terms of low consumption, diversions and considerable delays in supply of cylinders.
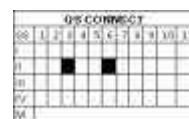
Pre-Connect
- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana is a scheme of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas for providing LPG connections to women from Below Poverty Line (BPL) households.
- PMUY aims to safeguard the health of women & children by providing them with clean cooking fuel.

Analytica
Significance of the Scheme

➢ The scheme met its target of reaching 80 million poor families in September 2019, seven months ahead of schedule.

➢ According to government data, all India LPG coverage increased to 94.3 per cent as on April 1, 2019, from 55.90 per cent as on April 1, 2014.

➢ The government is of the view that Ujjwala is part of the ambitious agenda for behavioural change that will help India transit to a $5 trillion economy by 2024.

➢ While the clean fuel protects the users from the hazards of smoke inhalation, it also helps

the poor from having to go to unsafe areas to collect firewood.

➢ It will also help India in achieving SDG#7 which is Affordable and Clean Energy for All.

Issues

➢ CAG report said that encouraging the sustained usage remains a big challenge as the annual average refill consumption of PMUY consumers on 31 December 2018 was only 3.21 percent.

➢ It has also highlighted deficiencies such as the issuance of connections to unintended beneficiaries. It also recommended the scrutiny of the entire LPG database to identify and restrict anomalies.

➢ CAG report found 19.8 lakh instances of three to nine LPG refills a month among high-consumption households. It is suspected by the auditor that the domestic LPG connections were diverted for commercial use as the price gap between the two is significant

➢ Around 5,600,000 beneficiaries (17.61 per cent), who completed one year or more by December 31, 2018, never came back for a second refilling.

Way Forward

✓ The CAG recommended; entering Aadhaar numbers of all adult family members of existing as well as new beneficiaries to make de-duplication effective.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> SaubhagyaYojna, Socio Economic Caste Census

✓ The Economic Survey 2018-19 had suggested maintaining a centralized list of names of those who had given up their subsidies, independent of the gas company, and displaying their photographs.

National Register of Citizens

News Excerpt

The passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 has sparked a debate on pan-India NRC.
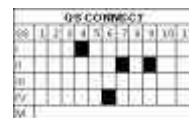
Pre-Connect

• NRC for Indian citizens in Assam was first created in 1951. Manipur and Tripura were also granted permission to create their own NRCs, but it never materialised. The reason behind the move was to identify Indian citizens in Assam amid "unabated" migration from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

• The list comprised of those who lived in India on January 26, 1950, or were born in India or had parents who were born in India or had been living in India for at least five years before the January 26, 1950 cut-off.

The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920

• It empowered the government to make rules requiring that persons entering India shall be in possession of passports.

• This rule also granted the government the power to remove from India any person who entered without a passport.

Foreigners Act 1946

• It defines a Foreigner as a person who is not a citizen of India.

• It empowered the government to make

Citizenship Amendment Act 2019

❖ It seeks to provide Indian citizenship to illegal refugees from 6 communities coming from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan.

❖ These communities are Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities.

❖ The cut-off date for citizenship is December 31, 2014.

❖ It reduces the period of Naturalization from 11 years to 5 years for these communities.

❖ It also empowers the Central Government to cancel the registration of Overseas Citizen of India Cardholders on certain grounds.

provisions for prohibiting, regulating or restricting the entry of foreigners into India.

• Central Government is vested with powers to deport a foreign national under section 3(2)(c) of the Foreigner Act 1946. The powers to identify and deport such foreign nationals have also been delegated to the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations. Detection and deportation of such foreign nationals is a continuous process.

• The burden of proof lies on the individual to prove that he/she is an Indian citizen. This

has been upheld by the Supreme Court as well.

Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964

- The Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 was enacted by the Central government through the use of powers granted under Section 3 of the Foreigners Act, 1946.

- Following the order, tribunals were set up in Assam. The tribunal, which has powers similar to those of a civil court, gives a reasonable opportunity to the person alleged to be a foreigner to produce evidence in support of his case, before passing its order.

- Earlier this power of setting up tribunals was only with the Central Government but with the Amendment in 2019, this power has also been given to the state governments, UT administrations and district magistrates.

- Till now such tribunals exist only in Assam and a person suspected to be a foreigner is taken to a local court under the passport Act and Foreigners Act 1946.

> **Citizenship Act 1955**
> It grants citizenship based on 5 grounds:
> 1. Citizenship by Birth
> 2. Citizenship by Descent
> 3. Citizenship by Registration
> 4. Citizenship by Naturalization
> 5. Citizenship by incorporation of territory

Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983

- It was introduced for the detection and deportation of illegal migrants who had entered India on or after March 25, 1971.

- This Act shifted the burden of proof from the individual to the authorities. This put a very heavy burden upon the authorities to establish whether a person is an illegal migrant.

- Under this Act, Tribunals were set up in Assam.

- Supreme court struck down this Act in 2005 and transferred all cases pending in the tribunals under this Act to the tribunals set up under the Foreigners Act 1946.

Analytica

Why was it held in Assam?

➢ There were protests in the 1970s and 80s in Assam to keep its ethnic uniqueness unaltered. Following this, the Assam Accord was signed in 1985 under which NRC exercise was to be conducted in Assam.

➢ In 2014, the SC ordered the updation of the of NRC, in accordance with Citizenship Act, 1955 and Citizenship Rules, 2003 in all parts of Assam.

➢ In the final published NRC list, around 19 lakh, people were left.

➢ The people who are left can file an application in the Tribunals set up under the Foreigners Act 1946.

Need for nationwide NRC:

➢ In 2016, in a reply in Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Home Affairs informed that there were around two crore Bangladeshi immigrants in India.

➢ NRC is a forward-**looking step in documenting India's citizens and detect and deter infiltrators.**

➢ **Illegal migrants pose a burden on the State's resources meant for the lawful citizens of the** country and can cause permanent disruption in the cultural continuity of a region.

➢ Illegal migrants may pose a challenge to National Security. It was reported that of the 29 Bangladeshis arrested by the ATS for staying illegally in Maharashtra, three were suspected of having connections with a banned Islamic extremist organization.

➢ Many official sources state that the national capital and some cities, including Kolkata, in West Bengal act as a haven for illegal Bangladeshi nationals.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> UN Refugee Convention, NPR, Rohingya Crisis

➢ According to Delhi Police, thousands of illegal Bangladeshi migrants have taken shelter in the city and many of them are involved in crimes.

➢ Delhi Police also mentioned that around 945 Bangladeshis have already been deported from Delhi in recent times, while nearly 18,742 migrants have been deported since 2005.

➢ It is possible that the people whose name did not figure in the Assam NRC may move out of

Assam into other parts of the country and thereby defeating the purpose of NRC in Assam.

Issues with NRC:

➤ The amended Citizenship Act and the proposed nationwide National Register of Citizens may not be signs of minimal government or maximal governance.

➤ Nobel laureates Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo also criticised the NRC-CAA and said it is introducing meddlesome officialdom into a question as fundamental to people's lives as citizenship.

➤ There has been no specific policy in ascertaining the fate of the people who will be left out and this may prove to be a humanitarian disaster.

➤ The possibility of deportation to Bangladesh is very bleak as the people excluded from the list should be proven citizens of Bangladesh, and that will require cooperation from that country.

➤ Heavy-handedness on this issue could also harm warm ties between India and Bangladesh.

➤ Poor and unlettered often don't have the documents required to prove citizenship.

➤ After the enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019, there are fears among the minority community that the NRC process will be biased.

➤ It is estimated that the cost of a pan-India NRC will be huge in terms of money, manpower, and logistics.

➤ There is no comprehensive analysis of the number of illegal migrants into the country. In this scenario doing this exercise at such a high cost seems to be an unwise decision considering the fiscal constraints and its impact on the economy.

➤ It may create a law and order problem due to the communal angle which may lead to loss of lives of Indian citizens. This will be disastrous for investor confidence and would further derail the economy.

Way Forward

✓ Till now no comprehensive plan of NRC has been proposed. The government should hold wider discussions with different stakeholders to correctly assess the need and impact of pan-India NRC on the economy and security of the country, rights of people and our relations with other countries.

✓ The cooperation of the States will be key for the success of NRC and reaching a consensus on the NRC will be a challenge.

✓ A credible pan-India NRC exercise will require honest police and administrative officials on a wide scale so that the infiltrators are identified and bonafide citizens are not harassed unnecessarily.

National Population Register

News Excerpt

• Recently, the Union Home Minister highlighted the need to maintain the National Population Register while announcing about the digital census of 2021.

• The national population Register will be updated along with the house listing phase of Census 2021 during April to September 2020 in all states/union territories except Assam.

• The Union Cabinet also approved over Rs 8,500 crore for updating the National Population Register.
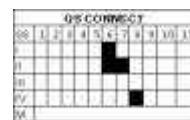
Pre-Connect

➤ The National Population Register (NPR) is a Register of usual residents of the country. It is being prepared at the local (Village/sub-Town), sub-District, District, State and National level.

➤ NPR gets its statutory backing from Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003. Section 14A of Citizenship Act 1955 makes it mandatory for every usual resident of India to register in the NPR.

- A usual resident is defined as a person who has resided in a local area for the past 6 months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next 6 months or more.
- National Population Register will not only include citizens but also foreigners as it would record even a foreigner staying in India for more than six months.
- The NPR database would contain demographic as well as biometric details.
- The database under the NPR will be maintained by the Registrar General of India and Census Commissioner of India, Ministry of Home Affairs.

Analytica

- NPR's objective is to create "a comprehensive identity database in the country with full identification and other details by registering each and every usual resident in the country".
- The concept of NPR is not new. The data for the NPR was first collected in 2010 along with the house listing phase of Census 2011 which was further updated in 2015.
- NPR database is important from a government point of view as it can provide a solution to many problems ranging from effective maintenance of law

The Census
- The decennial census is the largest single source of a variety of statistical information on different characteristics of the people of India conducted based on the Census Act enacted in 1948.
- The census, 2021 will be done in two phases, first being house-listing or housing census and the second one being an enumeration of the population.
- The census is the basis for reviewing the country's progress in the past decade, monitoring the ongoing schemes of the government and plan for the future.
- Census in India is conducted by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- Census is the largest single source of a variety of statistical information on different characteristics of the people of India, NPR is a register of usual residents of the country.

and order to an efficient implementation of welfare schemes like MGNREGS, food security and nutrition campaigns etc.

- Data would be put for use of all stakeholders and users including Ministries, Departments, State Governments, research organizations. This will help in better planning and execution of government policies.
- The data is also important for the government for 'National Security'.
- This exercise can also create a lot of direct as well as indirect employment in the country.

Concerns

- ✓ Duplication of efforts: The objective of the NPR can be fulfilled by Aadhaar. The duplication is a waste of resource. Just amending the Aadhar Act and making enrolment of Aadhar mandatory would have served the purpose and saved the money on NPR.
- ✓ NPR could be the first step towards NRC: There are objections to NPR as it is being considered by many groups as the first step towards NRC. Citizenship Rules 2003 links the Population Register to the creation of a National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) or National Register of Citizens. Simultaneously amending the Citizenship act 1955 which would selectively grant citizenship to refugees based on their religion has made some minorities fearful about being stateless.

PEPPER IT WITH
NRC, 175th Law commission Report, Assam Accord, Citizenship Act 1955, Aadhar Act

- ✓ Privacy Concerns: It is feared that the government is duplicating the Aadhar exercise so that it can find a way of skirting the restrictions around Aadhar data usage.
- ✓ Voter Targeting and delimitation: Personal data could also be used for Voter targeting. With the delimitation exercise just a few years away, the data could also be misused for constituencies' demarcation.

✓ Non-cooperation by few states: Some states like Kerela, West Bengal have put a stay on NPR work

Conclusion

The sovereign state has the right to know who lives in their state. There should not be any mercantilism on national security. Also, non-cooperation by few states is a breach of the federal structure as citizenship falls in List 1 of Schedule 7 hence states are bound to follow. But at the same time, the government should do the needful to address the fear amongst the masses so that the Social Contract **is not broken i.e people don't lose faith in the State.**

Personal Data Protection Bill,2019

News Excerpt

Recently, the Union Cabinet gave its approval to the Personal Data Protection Bill that seeks to lay down a legal framework to preserve the sanctity of **"consent" in data sharing and penalize those breaching privacy norms.** Presently the bill is with the standing committee.
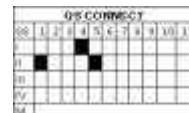
Pre-Connect

- The bill aims to create a framework for organizational and technical measures in the processing of data&protection of the privacy of individuals relating to their personal data which can create a relationship of trust between persons and entities processing the personal data.
- Right to Privacy was declared a fundamental right in the famous K S Puttaswamy case.
- Justice Sri Krishna Committee was constituted to study issues relating to data protection in India and to recommend a suitable data protection law for India.
- Consequently, a draft Data Protection bill was framed in 2018.
- The bill is in line with the **European Union's General Data Protection Regulation** (GDPR).

Highlights of the Bill

- Defines Personal data as data which pertains to characteristics, traits or attributes of identity, which can be used to identify an individual.
- Categorization of certain Personal data into three categories—critical, sensitive and general.
- Sensitive data can be stored only in India. However, data can be processed outside India with explicit consent. These are financial, health, sexual orientation, biometrics, transgender status, religious or political beliefs and affiliation.
- Critical data will be defined by the government from time to time and has to be stored and processed in India.
- Any data that is non-critical and non-sensitive will be categorized as general data with no restriction on where it is stored or processed.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Sri Krishna Committee Report, IT Act 2000, Shreya Singhal case

- The government is entitled to direct a fiduciary—any person or entity that processes data—to get access to non-personal data only for specific, clear and lawful purpose with certain transparency and accountability.
- The Processing of data by fiduciaries requires the consent of the individual (Data Principal) but in some specifies case consent is not needed. These include: (i) if required by the State for providing benefits to the individual, (ii) legal proceedings, (iii) to respond to a medical emergency.
- The Bill defines a Social Media Intermediary and charts down its obligations
- The Bill sets up a Data Protection Authority to protect interests of individuals, prevent misuse of personal data, and ensure compliance with the Bill. It will consist of a **chairperson and six members, with at least 10 years' expertise in the field of data** protection and information technology. Orders of the Authority can be appealed to an Appellate Tribunal. Appeals from the Tribunal will go to the Supreme Court.
- The central government can exempt any of its agencies from the provisions of the bill in the interest of the security of the state, public order, sovereignty and integrity of India and friendly relations with foreign states, and also, for preventing incitement to the commission

of any cognisable offence.

➢ Processing or transferring personal data in violation of the Bill is punishable with a fine of Rs 15 crore or 4% of the annual turnover of the fiduciary, whichever is higher.

➢ Failure to conduct a data audit is punishable with a fine of five crore rupees or 2% of the annual turnover of the fiduciary, whichever is higher.

Analytica

✓ Need for a data protection law can be attributed to (i) data leak from bigger companies like Facebook & Google, (ii) Election malpractices like Russia meddling in US elections, (iii) delay in the process due to non-obligation of private companies to law enforcement agencies citing extraterritorial jurisdiction, and (iv) Ambiguity in laws for people & companies.

✓ Merits of the Bill:
  o Data localisation is mandated in the bill for sensitive data, this will help in better law enforcement.
  o Data regulation for privacy and security has got strong teeth due to the provision of 'data localisation' and is supported by domestic companies like PayTm etc.
  o The bill will encourage entities to start processing data in India and with a high level of **data consumption, the country is expected to become one of the world's biggest centres** of data refinery.
  o It will keep a check on the organisation which monetise and thrive on the data collected from the individuals.
  o The Exemption to the state to use data for security purpose is important for fighting crimes and terrorism.

✓ Concerns of the Bill:
  o The recent Data Protection Bill 2019is said to be against the spirit of the recommendations of Justice Sri Krishna Committee as it provides for wide powers to the government to collect user data.
  o The provision of exception to state agencies for public order and security of the state is opposed due to fear of misuse for surveillance by the state.
  o **The Bill has unfolded certain debates like ambiguity in the provision of 'use of data by state for welfare purpose',** Right to privacy vs Collective right to security of society etc.
  o Restricting the flow of data through local storage requirement, will create barriers for trade and affects many business models, hence not a good measure for economic development in the long run.
  o From a data privacy point of view, catego**risation of 'passwords' and financial data as sensitive data is erroneous.**
  o Incorporation of Criminal provisions on top of high fines and compensatory provisions against companies could act as a deterrent for investment.

Way Forward

▪ More discussion & deliberation should be done by the select committee to address the fear amongst the people regarding the misuse of the bill by the state.

▪ Users should be made aware of their data security & identification of open and closed data

▪ Interceptions and surveillance must follow due procedure and effective safeguard should be there in the bill

▪ The bill should have a sunset clause for review. Ex: the bill should be reviewed every 5 years to catch up with changing technology and environment.

▪ Collective Right to life and security of society needs to be balanced with the individual right to privacy.

Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984

News Excerpt

Recently, a Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice of India expressed displeasure over rioting and destruction of public property. Despite there being a law against the destruction of property, incidents of rioting, vandalism, and arson have been common during protests across the country.

The Supreme Court has on various occasions found the law inadequate and has attempted to fill the gaps through guidelines

Pre-Connect

- The Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984 punishes **anyone "who** commits mischief by doing any act in respect of any **public property"** with a jail term of up to five years and a fine or both. Provisions of this law can be coupled with those under the Indian Penal Code.

- Public property, under this Act, **includes "any** building, installation or other property used in connection with the production, distribution or supply of water, light, power or energy; any oil installation; any sewage works; any mine or factory; any means of public transportation or of telecommunications, or any building, installation or other property used in connection **therewith".**

- One of the fundamental duties under Article 51A is to safeguard public property and to abjure violence. The act (Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984) provides statutory backing to this duty.

> ### Committees Related to the Act
>
> In 2007, the Supreme Court set up two committees to look into matters of largescale destruction of public and private properties in the name of agitations and suggest changes to the law.
> Thomas Committee:
> - It was headed by former supreme court judge Justice K T Thomas
> - It recommended reversing the burden of proof against protesters.
> - The court accepting the recommendation said that prosecution should be required to prove that public property had been damaged in direct action called by an organisation and that the accused also participated in such direct action. If done so, the burden can be shifted to the accused to prove his innocence
> - In general, the burden of proof lies on the state, but in some cases like Sexual violence, the burden of proof is reversed.
> Nariman Committee:
> - Headed by senior advocate Fali. S. Nariman, the committee dealt with extracting damages for destruction
> - The Court accepted that the Rioters should be made strictly liable for the damage, and compensation would be collected **to "make good" the damage.**
> - Court also issued guidelines including directing High Courts to order Suo *Motu* action and to set up a machinery to investigate the damage caused and award compensation wherever mass destruction to property takes place due to protests.

Analytica

- The constitution guarantees the citizen a fundamental right to peaceful protest but not at the cost of public property.
- The existing law, as well as the guidelines, have had a limited impact.
- Identification of the protesters remains difficult esp. in cases where no leader gave the call for a protest.
- In its verdict in Koshy Jacob vs Union of India, the court reiterated that the law needed to be updated — but it did not grant the petitioner any compensation since the organisers of the protest were not before the court.

Way Forward

- Efficient implementation of existing laws and Supreme Court guidelines needs to be done.

✓ Laws should be updated by addressing the loopholes properly. Any kind of damage to public property should not be tolerated and it must be made sure that the protesters who cause damage to the property are punished with compensation and jail term.

Conclusion

It is unfortunate that in a country which preaches non-violence to the rest of the world, time to time there are incidents of senseless violence and destruction of public property. Recent incidents of Anti-CAA protests have made the safeguarding of public property all the more important.

Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System (PPRTMS)

News Excerpt

Recently, the Election Commission of India (ECI) reviewed the system and process of registration of political parties. It has issued guidelines for registration of political parties in the exercise of the powers conferred to it under Article 324 of the Constitution of India and Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RPA).
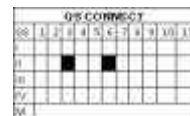
Pre-Connect

- Benefits of registration with ECI: The candidates belonging to a political party registered with the Election Commission of India will get preference in the matter of allotment of free symbols vis-à-vis purely independent candidates.

- Further, registered political parties, in course of time, become recognised parties based on their poll performance. These recognised parties have right to certain privileges like allocation of the party symbols, provision of time for political broadcasts on the state-owned television and radio stations and access to electoral rolls.

> ### Article 324 of Indian Constitution
> It provides that the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to parliament, state legislatures, the office of president of India and the office of vice-president of India shall be vested in the election commission consisting of the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the President may from time to time fix.

- The recognized parties need only one proposer for filing the nomination. Also, these parties **are allowed to have forty 'star campaigners'** during the time of elections and the registered–unrecognized parties are allowed to have twenty 'star campaigners'.

- The travel expenses of these starcampaigners are not included in the election expenditure of the candidates oftheir parties.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> National Parties, State Parties, Criteria for National Parties, Reserved Symbols

Key Features of the Guidelines

➢ The new guidelines will be effective from 1st January 2020.

➢ Accordingly, the **"Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System" (PPRTMS) will be implemented through an** online portal, to facilitate tracking of the status of an application by applicants.

➢ The salient feature in the Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System is that the applicant (who is applying for party registration from 1st January 2020 onwards) will be able to track the progress of his/her application and will get the status update through SMS and email.

Registration of Political Parties

✓ Section 29A of RPA,1951, deals with registration of political parties with the Election Commission.

✓ A party seeking registration under the said section has to submit an application to the Commission within 30 days following the date of its formation as per guidelines prescribed by the Election Commission.

✓ It has to provide basic details of the party with basic particulars about the party such as name, address, membership details of various units, names of office bearers, etc.

PM-AASHA

News Excerpt

Pradhan Mantri AnnadataAaySanrakshan Abhiyan(PM-AASHA), a new umbrella scheme was introduced by the Government to plug the holes in the procurement system and address the gaps in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme.

Under the scheme only 1.08 lakh tonnes have been procured so far.

Highlights

- The scheme is a mix of sub-schemes which involve direct procurement from farmers and paying them for losses incurred when market prices are lower than the announced MSP.

- It appears to be a robust mechanism that would enable farmers across States to realize MSP in fuller measure.

- It promises to provide assured price for farmers and protect them from making distress sale during bumper harvest.

- State governments will be entrusted with the responsibility of deciding the type and quantity of the crop to be procured when wholesale prices fall below MSP.

- The scheme proposes to strengthen physical procurement of pulses, oilseeds and copra. The State governments will also procure 25 per cent of the marketable surplus of farmers for eligible crops.

> ### BhavantarBhugtan Yojana (BBY)
> ❖ This scheme was launched by the Madhya Pradesh government in 2017 in the wake of unrest among farmers over falling prices.
> ❖ The scheme was meant to provide a cushion to farmers when prices of crops fell below the minimum support price (MSP) announced by the central government.
> ❖ Under it, farmers got the difference between the MSP and the modal price (average market price in a mandi over a particular period).
> ❖ For example, if the MSP of soybean was Rs 3,050 per quintal and a farmer sold it for Rs 2,200, he would not get Rs 850 but Rs 550 if the average rate that prevailed in three mandis was Rs 2500 per quintal.

Components of the Scheme

The PM-AASHA scheme has three components.

➢ Price Support Scheme (PSS): Under this scheme, physical procurement of pulses, oilseeds and copra will be done by Central Nodal Agencies. Besides NAFED, Food Cooperation of India (FCI) will also take up procurement of crops under PSS. The expenditure and losses due to procurement will be borne by the Centre.

➢ Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS): Under this, it is proposed to cover all oilseeds for which MSP is notified and pay the farmer directly into his bank account the difference between the MSP and his actual selling/modal price. Farmers who sell their crops in recognised mandis within the notified period can benefit from it.

➢ Private Procurement &Stockist Scheme (PPSS): In the case of oilseeds, States will have the option to roll out PPSS in selected districts where a private player can procure crops at MSP when market prices drop below MSP. The private player will then be compensated through a service charge that will be up to a maximum of 15 per cent of the MSP of the crop.

Analytica

✓ The AASHA scheme tries to address the gaps in the MSP system and give better returns to farmers. If effectively implemented, the scheme will result in savings for the Centre.

✓ In the current physical procurement, government agencies end up stock-piling food grains, incurring storage costs and significant wastage and leakages as well.

✓ Our own food security depends on whether farming remains a remunerative activity for the future. MSP system needs a relook because of its many shortcomings.

✓ The reach of the current MSP procurement system is very poor both in terms of geography and the crops covered.

✓ Despite thousands of crores of public money being spent in MSP operations every year, the

farm crisis continues. If the scheme implemented well, the new system may help revive the rural economy by assuring better income to farmers.

✓ Unlike the current system where farmers repeatedly go for the few crops, such as paddy, wheat and sugarcane, where MSP is effective, the new scheme may ensure crop diversification and reduce the stress on soil and water.

Way forward

▪ India needs massive reforms in its Agri-markets, from reforming APMC markets to abolishing the Essential Commodities Act, and abolishing all export restrictions.

▪ Encouraging contract farming, allowing private Agri-markets in competition with APMC markets, capping commissions and fees to not more than 2% for any commodity at any place in India, opening and expanding futures trading, a negotiable warehouse receipt system, e-NAM, with due systems of assaying, grading, delivery and dispute settlement mechanisms, are some of the necessary steps needed urgently.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> MSP, NAFED, APMC, e-NAM

▪ Once this is done, major investments need to follow in improving the functioning of markets and building efficient value chains, especially of perishables. This can be done through the PPP mode, creating millions of jobs.

▪ A sustained and focused effort is required. Only then, over a 3-5 year period, farmers can hope to get better and stable prices for their produce.

Conclusion

While the pace of procurement increased in recent years, lack of coordination of State governments with procuring agencies has resulted in poor procurement of kharif and rabi pulses and oilseeds in many growing States. Unless State governments work in harmony with the procuring agencies, all concerted efforts that are being taken towards making a robust and **efficient procurement mechanism will fail to bring about a paradigm shift in farmers' income.**

Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana

News Excerpt

The Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), launched by the Ministry of Rural Development as a part of Deendayal Antodaya Yojana-NRLM, aims to empower women in agriculture.
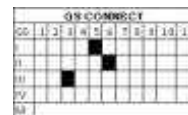
Highlights

• The primary objective of MKSP is to "empower women by enhancing their participation in agriculture and to create sustainable livelihood opportunities for them.

• **MKSP recognizes the identity of "Mahila" as "Kisan" and strives to build the capacity of** women in the domain of agro-ecologically sustainable practices.

• It has a clear vision to reach out to the poorest of poor households and expand the portfolio of activities currently handled by the MahilaKisan.

• The focus of MKSP is on capacitating smallholders to adopt sustainable climate resilient agro-ecology and eventually create a pool of skilled community professionals.

• Its objective is to strengthen smallholder agriculture through promotion of sustainable agriculture practices such as Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture (CMSA), Non Pesticide Management (NPM), Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF), Pashu-Sakhi model for doorstep animal care services, Sustainable regeneration and harvesting of Non-Timber Forest Produce.

• Funding support to the tune of up to 60% (90% for North Eastern States) for such projects is provided by the Government of India.

Feminization of Agriculture

➢ **With a rise seen in migration of men from rural to urban areas, there is 'feminisation' of** agriculture sector, as the number of women in multiple roles such as cultivators, entrepreneurs and labourers is increasing.

➢ As per Agriculture Census, the percentage of female operational holdings in the country have increased from 12.78 percent during 2010-11 to 13.78 percent during 2015-

16.

➢ The Department of Agriculture Cooperation and Farmers Welfare is also promoting mainstreaming of Gender Concerns in agriculture by ensuring flow of funds and benefits to the tune of 30% for women farmers under its beneficiary-oriented Schemes and Programmes.

➢ Besides, Government is providing additional support and assistance to women farmers, over and above the male farmers under a few selected Schemes. Ex- Under the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) implemented in 28 states, 30% of allocation of fund is being earmark for women farmer.

Analytica

✓ In rural India, almost 84% of women depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

✓ Even though rural women form the most productive workforce in the agricultural sector, they are generally not able to access production resources like seeds, water, credit, subsidy, etc.

✓ And this occurs mainly because most of them are not recognized as farmers for want of ownership of land, or as beneficiaries of various government programs/services, denying them of institutional support (banks, insurance, cooperatives, to name a few).

✓ The gender discrimination and wage difference between men and women result in tolower economic returns and lesser access to the resources compare to male counterparts, which is why schemes like MahilaKisanSashaktikaranPariyojana play a crucial role in uplifting the status of women farmers.

> ### Government Initiatives apart from MKSP to help women farmers
> ❖ Earmarking at least 30 per cent of the budget allocation for women beneficiaries in all ongoing schemes or programmes and development activities.
> ❖ Initiating women-centric activities to ensure benefits of various beneficiary-oriented programmes or schemes reach them.
> ❖ Focusing on women self-help group (SHG) to connect them to micro-credit through capacity building activities and to provide information and ensuring their representation in different decision-making bodies.
> ❖ Recognising the critical role of women in agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has declared October 15 every year as Women Farmer's Day

✓ Declaring 15th **October as Women Farmer's day** by the government helps spread a positive message among people about the importance of inclusion of women in farming.

Way Forward

▪ The role of women in the agricultural sector is multidimensional- it goes beyond labor- to farmers, co-farmers, managers and entrepreneurs. They help in ensuring food security and preserving the biodiversity of the nation.

▪ People need to be made aware of the fact that the inclusion of women in the agricultural sector leads to self-sufficiency thereby increasing agricultural productivity of the entire nation.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> NRLM, ZBNF, Pashu-Sakhi model, ATMA, SAME, ICAR-CIWA

▪ It is imperative to seek gender-specific involvement to ensure that women are predominant at all levels of agricultural production, from pre-harvest and post-harvest processing to packaging and marketing of food products.

Conclusion

Implementation of such schemes, that are directed towards women in agriculture, provides the necessary boost to women entrepreneurship, and ensures the promotion of strategies that help enhance biodiversity and the natural resource base.

Going Online as Leaders (GOAL) Initiative

News Excerpt

Facebook has announced the second phase of its 'GOAL' initiative under which it is helping tribal girls from across India to become village-level digital young leaders for their communities.
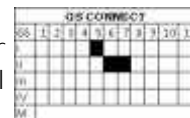
Pre-Connect

- Launched in March 2019, Going Online as Leaders (GOAL) connects underprivileged young women above 18 years of age from tribal areas with senior expert mentors in the areas of business, fashion and arts to learn digital and life skills.
- Through this partnership, the GOAL programme will provide economically and socially marginalized young women with the tools and guidance they need to succeed, using technology they may otherwise have not had access to.

Highlights

- In the second phase of the programme, **5000 young women in India's tribal**-dominated districts of West Bengal, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Maharashtra will be digitally mentored.
- The programme will see 25 eminent personalities from diverse backgrounds like business, education and health to politics, arts and entrepreneurship volunteering and personally mentoring four girls each from tribal communities in these states.
- Facebook aims to boost digital literacy among women and enable them to become experts in various fields. It also expects to bridge the digital gender gap by enabling more women to get online and access digital services.
- This programme actively supports these young women to build leadership qualities and encourages them to be champions and help share their learnings with others

> **What Will GOAL Teach the Women?**
> - The programme includes a one-to-one mentoring session weekly, with a focus on a range of skills including digital literacy, entrepreneurship and online safety.
> - In total, over two lakh hours of guidance will be provided using Facebook family of apps including WhatsApp and Messenger.
> - Following the completion of the programme, participants will graduate to become GOAL alumni and will continue to receive guidance and mentorship.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> PMGDISHA, Digital India, National Digital Literacy Mission, Digi Shala, VittiyaSaksharta Abhiyan

Analytica

- The Internet, especially social media, over the past few years has emerged as one of the most powerful tools for empowering women from across India's diverse social economic backgrounds and varied cultural roots.
- It is hoped that that this network of learners will employ these skills as a means of social and economic elevation for themselves and drive change making in their communities.

Conclusion

Programmes such as GOAL will bring digital literacy and bridge gender imparity in India's digital space.

Jaga Mission

News Excerpt

Odisha's initiative granting land rights to thousands of slum dwellers under the Odisha Livable Habitat Mission (OLHM) or Jaga Mission won the bronze **at this year's World Habitat Awards.**
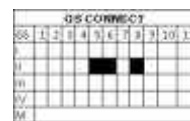
Pre-Connect

- In 2017, the Odisha government enacted the Odisha Land Rights to Slum Dwellers Act, which provides slum dwellers with land rights.
- Along with this the government is ensuring that the slum area is converted into a livable

habitat.

- As per the Act, the beneficiaries will get 30 square meters of land free of cost and for the rest they have to pay as per the benchmark price.
- The Livable Habitat Mission was set up for effective implementation of the Act, community building and use of technology to improve socio economic conditions of slum dwellers.

Highlights

➢ The Odisha Livable Habitat Mission is a unique land titling project to address the human needs of housing, healthcare and education among slum dwellers.

➢ Initiated and implemented by the government of Odisha with active involvement by Tata Trusts, the initiative has potential to be a model for rejuvenation of life in slums which can be emulated elsewhere in India and abroad.

➢ The Mission covers 109 municipalities in the state and ensures identified slum dwellers living in small towns have rights over up to 600 sq. ft of land while in the cities they will get rights over up to 450 sq. ft.

➢ Manual surveys and mapping would have taken nearly a decade and the government wanted to hand over land titles by 2018. Therefore, the government turned to drones for ensuring both speed and accuracy.

> **World Habitat Awards**
> ❖ Initiated in 1987, it is an annual award given by World Habitat in partnership with UN-Habitat.
> ❖ The award is given in recognition of innovative, outstanding and revolutionary ideas, projects, and programmes from across the world.
> ❖ For the first time, awardees will be presented as Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards this year.
> ❖ Altogether, there are nine winning projects and programmes this year.

Analytica

✓ Some 65 million people live in slums in India, according to the 2011 national census, and the number was estimated to have risen to over 100 million by 2017. **That's more than** the population of Egypt.

✓ Most slums in India are run under the patronage of local politicians and strongmen, for whom the overcrowded urban housing is an easy source of rentier profits.

✓ Over long periods, governments are forced to recognize the slum areas as legitimate settlements. But they are faced with considerable revenue leakages while collecting costs of delivery of public services such as water and electricity because data of the end user is not easily available.

✓ The Odisha slum-titling effort is a smart governance project with lessons for the rest of the country.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> UN-Habitat, Geospatial Excellence Award

Conclusion

Jaga Mission will empower communities and make development inclusive. The Mission can be taken up for replication across the country.

Atal Bhujal Yojana

News Excerpt

On the Birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister launched Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL), a Rs 6,000 crore scheme for sustainable management of ground water resources.
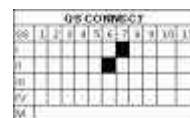
Pre-Connect

- NITI Aayog**'s** CWMI 2.0 report recognise**d the water crisis in Indian states. India's** groundwater resources have been overexploited.

- It was approved by World Bank in 2018 as Atal BhujalYojna- National groundwater Management Improvement Program.

- According to a sample assessment in 2011, Groundwat**er in 19 of India's 71 districts —** about 26% — were critical or exploited, meaning that nearly as much or more water was

being pulled out than their reservoirs' natural recharge ability.

- The **'Jal Shakti Abhiyan'** was launched by the Jal shakti minister to focus on water conservation and rain water harvesting.
- The funding pattern is 50:50 between Government of India and World Bank.
- The identified over-exploited (OE) and water stressed areas for the implementation of the scheme fall in the States of Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Highlights

➤ The central sector scheme will cover 8,350 villages in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

➤ The scheme envisages active participation of communities in various activities such as the formation of water user associations, monitoring and disseminating ground water data, water budgeting, preparation and implementation of gram panchayat-wise water security plans and information, education and communication (IEC) activities related to sustainable ground water management.

➤ The schemes under the yojana would be formulated and executed locally by panchayat level committees.

➤ Women will get 50% representation in these committees. This would help in implementation of the scheme better as women suffer the most from water scarcity.

Analytica

✔ The grave water situation in Cape Town in South Africa is a wake-up call to everybody across the globe. A similar crisis is looming large in other cities in the world as people continue to be reckless in their use of water.

✔ India is among the 17 countries, which are home to a **quarter of the world's population, facing "extremely** high" water stress, close to "Day Zero" conditions when the taps run dry.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Swajal scheme, NRDWP, Ganga Gram Yojna, Day Zero, CWMI report, Jal shakti Abhiyan

✔ The recent water crisis in Chennai gained global attention, but various areas in India are experiencing chronic water stress as well.

✔ In India, a growing population, lack of adequate planning, crumbling infrastructure, indiscriminate drilling of borewells, large-scale consumption of water, and a false sense of entitlement in using water carelessly are causing water shortages.

✔ India can manage its water risk with the help of reliable and robust data pertaining to rainfall, surface, and groundwater to develop strategies that strengthen resilience.

Way Forward

- We can learn from **ancient India's well**-managed wells and canal systems. Our culture always believed in treating nature with reverence and most of our rivers are considered sacred.
- Micro irrigation practices like drip and sprinkler systems have to be promoted in a big way for efficient use of water for agriculture. Better utilization of Micro Irrigation Fund under PM Krishi SinchayeeYojna (PMKSY) will address the issue.
- Both in urban and rural areas, digging of rainwater harvesting pits must be made mandatory for all types of buildings.
- Conscious efforts need to be made at the household level and by communities, institutions and local bodies to supplement the efforts of governments and non-governmental bodies in promoting water conservation.
- Sustained measures should be taken to prevent pollution of water bodies, contamination of groundwater and ensure proper treatment of domestic and industrial waste water.
- Northwestern states should be growing less water-intensive crops; areas in the east of the country that receive much more plentiful rainfall should take their place as the bread baskets of India.

Conclusion

Reduce, reuse, and recycle must be the watchwords if we have to handover a livable planet to the future generations.

Jal Jeevan Mission

News Excerpt

In his Independence Day address, the Prime Minister said that the government will launch a Jal Jeevan Mission to bring piped water to all households. Recently the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) were released by the PM.

Pre-Connect

- In 1951, per-capita water availability in India was just over 5,000 cu m per year. In 2011, it was 1,545 cu m. If it drops below 1,000 cu m per year, India will formally become a water-scarce country for the first time in its 5,000-year history.
- In the last 70-72 years, only 3.5 crore Indian rural households were given functional tap-water.
- We have a total of 18.5 crore households. Which means we have to cover 4 times more households in next 5 years.
- The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) aims to provide tap water to all of these households. It is a central government initiative under the ministry of Jal Shakti.

Highlights

- ➤ The Mission aims to provide piped water supply (Har Ghar Jal) to all rural and urban households by 2024.
- ➤ It also aims to create local infrastructure for rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and management of household waste water for reuse in agriculture.
- ➤ The Mission will converge with other Central and State Government Schemes to achieve its objectives of sustainable water supply management across the country.
- ➤ For the implementation of the Mission, institutional arrangements will be made from national to state, district and Gram Panchayat level which will have the Paani Samiti (It comprises of 50 percent of women members).
- ➤ The Centre will pitch in with Rs.2.08 lakh Crore for the ambitious scheme. The fund sharing pattern to be 90:10 for Himalayan and North-Eastern States; 50:50 for other States and 100% for UTs.
- ➤ The govt. is planning to offer 43-55 litre of water per person per day. This may vary depending on the season.
- ➤ A dedicated fund called Rashtriya Jal Jeevan Kosh will be set up for the mission on the lines of Swachh Bharat Kosh which was set up to take care of the sanitation mission.

Jal Shakti Abhiyan

- ❖ The Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) was a time-bound, mission-mode water conservation campaign.
- ❖ The JSA ran in two Phases: Phase 1 from 1st July to 15th September 2019 for all States and Union Territories; and Phase 2 from 1st October to 30th November 2019 for States and UTs receiving the retreating monsoon (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu).
- ❖ Though water is a state subject, during the campaign, officers, groundwater experts and scientists from the Government of India worked together with state and district **officials in India's most water**-stressed districts.
- ❖ Jal Shakti Abhiyan focused on five aspects - water conservation and rainwater harvesting, renovation of traditional and other water bodies, reuse of water and recharging of structures, watershed development, and intensive afforestation.

Challenges to Jal Jeevan Mission

The Jal Jeevan Mission may face its toughest challenge in States such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Assam, where less than 10 per cent of such homes have access to piped water. This is way lower than the national average of 32.9 per cent.

Analytica

- ✓ Jal Jeevan Mission may be a costly and futile exercise **since over 70% of India's surface** water (rivers and lakes) and groundwater is polluted.

✓ Since surface and groundwater is unfit for domestic use, Indians will soon need reverse osmosis (RO) for home, which will only burden **the country's already** expensive water programme.

✓ It is then of utmost importance that we protect the few unpolluted sources of water that remain. Otherwise, India will be consigned as a nation to drink unhealthy and expensive RO water.

✓ The only unpolluted sources of water that remain are the waters underlying the floodplains of rivers (for bulk water) and the subterranean natural mineral water underlying forest tracts (for drinking). These must be protected and conserved.

Way Forward

We need plans for sustainable use of surface water and groundwater. After supplying the water, we need to plan for the reuse of the grey water, or discharged water. Both these would be taken care through the convergence of different schemes taken up by the State governments and the Central government.

Conclusion

JJM envisages a structural change in the provision of drinking water supply services. It will bring in a utility-**based approach centered on 'service delivery'.**

Breast Milk Bank

News Excerpt

In past three months, Rushina Doctor Marfatia of Ahmedabad has donated 12 litres of her breast milk to a break milk bank and helped save five pre-mature babies battling for life in ICUs. Biological mothers of these babies were either too sick or could not provide their milk to them.
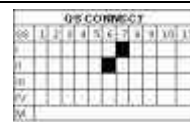
Significance of Breast Milk Bank

• The breast milk bank helps feed many infants who are born prematurely or those who are **unable to consume mother's milk** for various reasons.

• On many occasions, mothers are not able to feed their infants soon after birth due to health complications. The breast milk banks come as a boon under such circumstance.

• Many babies have low weight at birth and 13 per cent of babies born in India are pre-term. In **such cases, mother's milk or donor milk improves survival rates, and reduces -infections and feeding-related problems** compared to babies on formula feed

How does a Breast Milk Bank Work?

➤ Breast milk from lactating mothers is obtained with their permission in amounts ranging from 50 ml to 200 ml.

➤ The milk is then pasteurized and kept in cold storage, where it can be kept for a period of six months.

WHO Recommendation

- ✓ The World Health Organization says that mother's milk is critical for infants and young children as it helps build -immunity through the transfer of antibodies, a process referred to as passive immunity.
- ✓ **In case mother's milk is** unavailable or insufficient owing to health concerns or pre-term delivery, babies can be weaned on milk sourced from a human breast bank. This is also recommended when a mother has an illness which could be passed on to the baby.

MAA

- India has more than 60 human milk banks operational currently. However, these are not enough to meet the huge latent demand for human milk. The release of the **'National Guidelines on** Lactation Management in **Public Health Facilities' in** 2017, reflects the **government's commitment** to close this gap.

- Subsumed under the national breastfeeding programme **'Mothers' Absolute Affection (MAA)'**- Under Ministry of health and Family Welfare, the government proposal is to establish integrated human milk banks also known as comprehensive lactation management centres (CLMCs).

- This multipronged approach envisages setting up CLMCs, lactation management units and lactation support units at the tertiary, secondary and primary levels of healthcare centres, so that every baby in a facility can receive human milk.

Rajasthan Model

- ❖ Rajasthan, which had higher than national average newborn mortality rate, has set up integrated human milk banks in 17 district hospitals and two medical colleges, five of which are located in tribal districts thus bringing lactation and milk donation services closer to the doorstep of rural and tribal populations.

- ❖ In nearly all facilities, lactation counsellors are working round the clock to motivate mothers to breastfeed.

- ❖ Presence of compartmentalized labor rooms and support by Yashodas or birth companions have ensured breastfeeding immediately after delivery. At most facilities, mothers are discharged only after breastfeeding is fully established so that no cow or formula milk is used for feeding the newborn.

Frequently asked questions

Why donate breast milk?
- Mother's milk provides nutrition, helps babies grow and protects them from infection and diseases
- Breast milk is even more important for sick babies and those born prematurely. It gives them a better chance of survival
- A large number of vulnerable babies are not able to access mothers' own milk for short or long term due to unavoidable reasons like mother's sickness, death, and delay in milk production. In such cases, donor human milk from a milk bank can be life-saving

Who can donate?
- Any lactating woman voluntarily willing to donate her surplus expressed breast milk can be a part of the initiative
- To donate, the mother must be in good health

How does donating help mother and baby?
- Donating milk helps prevent breast engorgement
- Since engorgement makes the breasts firm and swollen, it makes it difficult for the baby to breastfeed
- Engorgement happens when a mother produces more milk than her baby drinks
- In such cases, donating excess milk not only gives relief from pain but also helps save lives of many needy babies in the hospital

Way forward: A technician works at the human milk bank at Sion hospital on Saturday. VIVEK BENDRE

THE PROCESS
- Donor mother registration and screening
- Milk expression of the donor mother
- Pasteurisation and testing
- Storage in freezer
- Prescription for babies. Milk fed to the babies in need

(Source: Comprehensive Lactation Management Centre, Sion Hospital)

BRICS Network of Human Milk Banks

At the 11th BRICS summit held recently in Brazil, India along with Russia, China and South Africa agreed to establish a BRICS Network of human milk banks. This is an opportune development as government of India plans to ensure that at least 70 % infants have access to breast milk by 2025.

Issues with Donor Milk

- Though donor milk is the best alternative, it does not have the same benefits as **breastfeeding as mother's milk changes every day to meet the changing needs of a baby** based on their age.
- Donor milk is usually a pooled collection from several mothers and the -donors may not have babies the same age as the baby that needs milk.
- Since donor milk is pasteurized, some of the protective elements are also lost.
- There are many risks of unpasteurized milk from unscreened donors. It could have harmful substances like drugs, nicotine and alcohol. Viruses and bacteria are commonly found in unscreened milk.

Way Forward

- All mothers should be screened for common infections like HIV, Hepatitis B etc. before they donate milk.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram, Universal Immunization Programme (UIP), Mission Indradhanush

- In addition to pasteurization which makes the milk germ free, bacteriological testing of the pasteurized milk should be carried out before being administered to the baby.

- As donation of human milk is purely voluntary and there is no financial commitment for the donors or recipients, there is a need to raise public awareness regarding human milk banking and to bring down the usage of infant formula.

- The awareness about donated human milk also needs to target mothers who worry that they are not producing enough breast milk and opt for formula thinking of it as the only recourse.

Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA)

News Excerpt

According to a laboratory analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment, an array of packaged snacks and fast foods breach safe limits of salt and fat content. To calculate how unsafe the foods tested were, the organization relied on the concept of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) — a daily ceiling on the amount of salt, fat, carbohydrates and trans- fats.
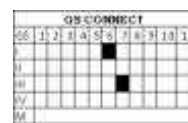
About RDA

- The RDA is based on scientific consensus and has been agreed upon by expert bodies such as the World Health Organization, and the National Institute of Nutrition in India.
- It says that, ideally, no more than 5 gm of salt, 60 gm of fat, 300 gm carbohydrate and 2.2 gm of trans-fat should be consumed by an adult every day.
- Further, the RDA from each breakfast, lunch and dinner should be no more than 25%, and that from snacks no more than 10%.

> ### Red Octagon
> - 'Red Octagon' is a warning symbol employed in packaged foods in Chile and Peru.
> - The Red Octagon, which should be printed on the front of the pack, has a number and the name of the food component within that indicates how widely off the RDA a particular ingredient is.
> - **Thus, a Red "3.1, Salt" on a pack of Lay's India's Magic Masala by PepsiCo indicates** that the salt it contains is 3.1 times the RDA for snacks.

Pre-Connect

- Current Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labelling) Regulations, 2011 only require companies to disclose energy (kilo calories), protein, carbohydrates, total fat, trans-fat and saturated fat contained per 100g or per milliliter or per serve.
- It is not easy to figure out how much is actually contained in our serving. There are also no disclosures on high salt content and added sugar, and no compulsion on companies to disclose nutritional information on the front of the pack.
- In 2013, the FSSAI set up a committee to regulate packaged snacks. This committee

recommended that information on calories, sugar, fat, saturated fat and salt be displayed upfront.

➤ In 2018, the FSSAI came up with a draft law, the Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2018.

➤ The draft recommended that a packet should have clear information on how much each nutrient, such as salt, sugar, contributed to the RDA. The draft said salt must be declared as sodium chloride for instance, and that those ingredients which breached the RDA **should be marked in 'red'**.

➤ The draft regulations never became law. Instead, a third committee was formed, headed by **B. Sesikeran. Based on this committee's recommendations, a new draft (Draft Food Safety** and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2019) was prepared.

➤ Though the draft regulations have been out in the public domain since July, it is yet to become law.

Why is food industry opposed to the proposed laws?

✓ Food companies had reservations about the draft laws mainly be**cause they felt 'red'** signified danger, fearing that this would give consumers the impression that they were consuming toxic food.

✓ Other than the red labels, the industry says the norms are unscientific and that packaged **food is made to cater to the "taste" of people.**

✓ Moreover, the packaged industry argues, immense quantities of junk food — think samosas or fried food sold on unregulated pushcarts — are consumed in the country with no check on their nutritional status and there is an inherent unfairness in regulating one section alone.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Centre for Science and Environment, FSSAI, Trans-fat

✓ Because nutritional information only guides consumers on how to regulate their intake, the industry feels people should be advised on what makes a healthy diet, the role of exercise and consuming appropriate amounts of food.

Way Forward

The test results of the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) have unmasked two anomalies:

▪ First, food manufacturers blatantly sell products that have unhealthy levels of nutrients.

▪ Second, a nexus between the industry and regulating agencies backs this brazen act.

India, therefore, urgently needs a robust law on labelling and disclosure of nutritional information on food packs.

Conclusion

The government and FSSAI must decide on whose side they are: industry or public health. If the stakes are high for industry, they are even higher for public health.

India State-level Disease Burden Initiative Report

News Excerpt

Malnutrition continues to be the leading cause for death among Indian children under the age of five, according India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative report recently released.
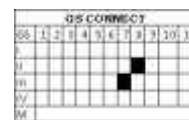
Pre-Connect

• The India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative was launched in October 2015.

• It is a collaboration between the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), and senior experts and stakeholders currently from about 100 institutions across India.

• This Initiative reported an unprecedented comprehensive assessment of the diseases causing the most premature deaths and ill-health in each state of the country, the risk factors responsible for this burden, and their trends from 1990 onwards.

Latest findings of the Report

➤ Two-thirds of the 1.04 million deaths in children under five years in India are still

attributable to malnutrition.

➢ Malnutrition in children is highest in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Nagaland and Tripura.

➢ Overall under-five death rate and the death rate due to malnutrition has decreased substantially from 1990 to 2017, but malnutrition is still the leading risk factor for death in children under five years and is also the leading risk factor for disease burden for all ages considered together in most States.

➢ While it is important to address the gaps in all malnutrition indicators, low birth weight needs particular policy attention in India as it is the biggest contributor to child death among all malnutrition indications and its rate of decline is among the lowest.

➢ Another important revelation is that overweight among a subset of children is becoming a significant public health problem as it is increasing rapidly across all States.

Other findings of the Report

✓ The contribution of most major non-communicable disease categories to the total disease burden has increased in all states since 1990. These include cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, mental health and neurological disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, cancers, and chronic kidney disease.

✓ The contribution of injuries to the total disease burden has also increased in most states since 1990, with the leading ones being road injuries, suicides and falls.

✓ Overall, the state-specific DALY (Disability adjusted life years) rates for many leading individual disease conditions vary five to ten-fold between the states, and major differences are also observed for individual diseases between neighboring states that are at similar levels of development.

✓ The study highlights undernutrition, air pollution, and a group of risks causing cardiovascular disease and diabetes, as the major risk factors contributing to health loss in the country.

✓ Child and maternal undernutrition are still the single largest risk factor in India, responsible for 15% of the total disease burden.

✓ Air pollution levels in India are among the highest in the world, which is responsible for 10% of the total disease burden in the country. The burden of ambient air pollution has increased in every part of India since 1990.

✓ A group of risk factors including unhealthy diet, high blood pressure, high fasting plasma glucose, high cholesterol and overweight, have increased in every state of India, which together now contribute a quarter of the total disease burden in the country.

> **Disability-Adjusted Life Year (DALY)**
>
> One DALY can be thought of as one lost year of "healthy" life. The sum of these DALYs across the population, or the burden of disease, can be thought of as a measurement of the gap between current health status and an ideal health situation where the entire population lives to an advanced age, free of disease and disability.
>
> DALYs for a disease or health condition are calculated as the sum of the Years of Life Lost (YLL) due to premature mortality in the population and the Years Lost due to Disability (YLD) for people living with the health condition or its consequences.

✓ 197.3 million Indians (one in every seven) were suffering from mental disorders in 2017

Efforts Toward Reducing Malnutrition

▪ The government has taken various initiatives over the years such as
   o Integrated Child Development Service Programme (ICDS)
   o Special Nutrition Programme (SNP)
   o Creches for Children of Working and Ailing Women
   o Wheat Based Supplementary Nutrition Programme etc.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission), Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY),National Health Mission (NHM)

▪ The government is now intensifying its efforts to address the issue of malnutrition across the country with the recent initiatives such as POSHAN Abhiyaan(National Nutrition

Mission), Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), Mothers Absolute Affection (MAA), etc.

- State governments are being encouraged to intensify efforts to reduce malnutrition and undertake robust monitoring to track the progress.
- The National Institute of Nutrition is setting in place mechanisms to ensure that there is more data available on malnutrition in the various States which will help monitor progress.

Way Forward

- For substantial improvements across the malnutrition indicators, States will need to implement an integrated nutrition policy to effectively address the broader determinants of under-nutrition across the life cycle.
- Focus will be needed on major determinants like provision of clean drinking water, **reducing rates of open defecation, improving women's educational status, and food and** nutrition security for the most vulnerable families.
- Focus on improving the overall nutritional status of girls and women during the preconception and pregnancy period and providing quality antenatal care will positively influence low birth weight indicators and extend the benefits to next generation.
- For substantial improvements across all malnutrition indicators, states will have to implement an integrated nutrition policy to effectively address broader determinants of under nutrition across the life cycle.

Antibiotic Awareness

News Excerpt

- Antibiotics are commonly used to treat bacterial infections, but public awareness and understanding of antibiotic resistance is low, as per World Health Organization (WHO).
- In 2015, the 68th World Health Assembly endorsed the Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, calling for a dedicated global campaign to raise public awareness and understanding of antibiotic resistance.
- As a result, the World Antibiotic Awareness Week (WAAW) is observed every November to promote global education on antibiotics, how they should be used, and the growing risks of antibiotic resistance.
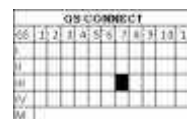
Pre-Connect

- World Antibiotics Awareness Week (WAAW) is global awareness of antibiotic resistance to encourage best practices among the general public, health workers and policy makers to avoid the further emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance.
- WAAW is commemorated by governments, health facilities, schools and communities

Factors Responsible for Antimicrobial Resistance (ABR)

- ❖ Though ABR in certain cases occurs through the natural evolution of resistance in bacterial pathogens, the rising consumption of antibiotics is a major contributor.
- ❖ Topping this, the New Delhi metallo-beta-lactamase (NDM) enzyme, which makes bacteria resistant to beta-lactam antibiotics, is now present globally.
- ❖ Interplay of domestic factors such as a weak public health system, cheap antibiotics available in the market, and their unregulated use, that has created ideal conditions for superbugs.
- ❖ Prescription of antibiotics for a variety of diarrhoeal and respiratory infections despite their limited curative potential has exacerbated the situation.
- ❖ Poor regulation of pharmacies and licensing out several pharmacies to a single pharmacist introduces a large number of unqualified personnel into the supply chain.
- ❖ New virtual marketplaces have made the entire drug distribution process an opportunity for unchecked financial gains by irresponsible actors.
- ❖ The lack of awareness among patients regarding the appropriate use of antibiotics has led to self-medication and non-adherence to the prescribed course of antibiotics, further intensifying the problem.

across the globe.

➢ This year it was observed from November 18 to 24 and aimed to highlight the best practices among the general public, health workers and policymakers to help stop the further emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance.

➢ The Global action plan, endorsed by the World Health Assembly, aims to ensure prevention and treatment of infectious diseases with safe and effective medicines.

➢ Calling for awareness, WHO is coordinating a global campaign **'Handle with care'** to encourage best practices for antibiotic use.

Antimicrobial Resistance

✓ Antimicrobial resistance is a global crisis that threatens the future of our most precious drugs: antibiotics.

✓ Across the world, AMR kills an estimated 7,00,000 people annually, including 2,30,000 from multi-drug resistant tuberculosis.

✓ By 2050, unless urgent action is taken, AMR is expected to kill 10 million annually.
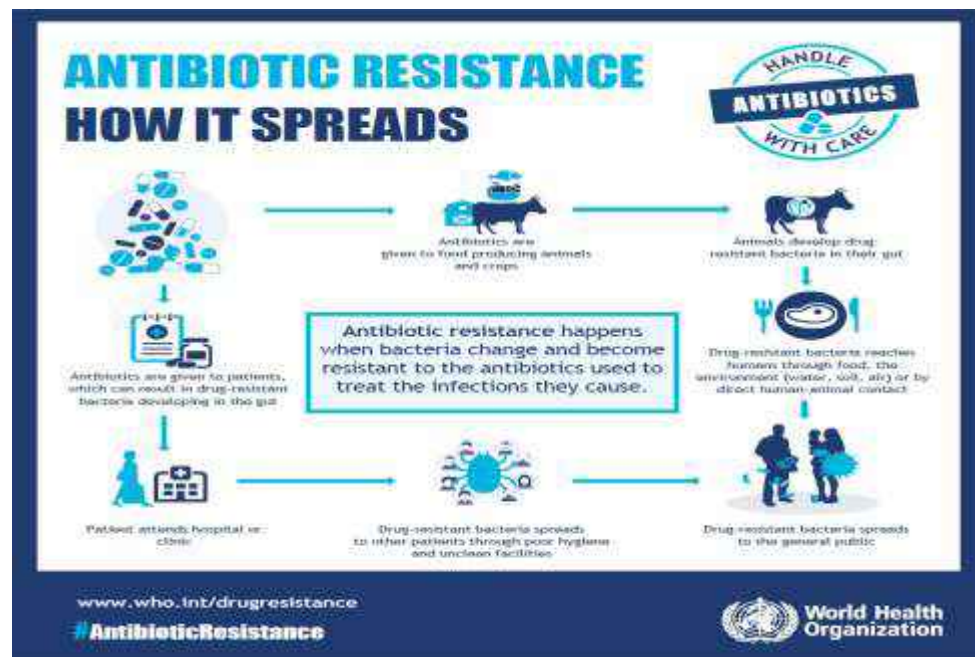
✓ Despite many reports on resistant microbes, there is not much data on their health impact. As an indication, about 56,000 neonates die each year from resistance-attributable neonatal sepsis caused by bacteria resistant to first-line antibiotic

✓ India developed its National Action Plan on AMR in 2017 but only Kerala and Madhya Pradesh have come up with state action plans.

✓ **Even though antimicrobial resistance can be termed as "natural process",** the misuse of antibiotics in humans and animals is accelerating the same.

✓ A large number of infections such as tuberculosis, pneumonia and gonorrhea are becoming very difficult to treat since the antibiotics used for their treatment are becoming less effective. For ex Multi Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB).

✓ **Consuming antibiotics when one doesn't need them speeds up the process of antibiotic** resistance. Infections resistant to antibiotics are more complicated and almost impossible to be treated.

Way forward to combat Antimicrobial Resistance

▪ Some practices can be followed, such as not missing the antibiotic dose. Leaving the course mid-way may lead to the onset of infection again.

▪ Another thing is to stop taking antibiotics without prescription so that doctors can assess the condition and prescribe an optimal dosage. This can also be done through proper implementation of Red Line Campaign.

PEPPER IT WITH
Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, National Action Plan on AMR, Schedule H1

▪ Tackling the superbug problem requires massive data collection and analysis. Well-designed studies and indicator surveys providing general insight into the situation are

critical to begin with.

- Tracking the data is not in itself of great use unless the health departments of the Central and state governments work in coordination with nodal bodies in the technology space to develop an information-sharing grid.
- Molecular biologists should be consulted for their insights on the genetic and molecular mechanisms responsible for such resistance.
- People need to be made aware through various programmes and initiatives such as Red line campaign.

Global Gender Gap Report

News Excerpt

India has slipped four places to rank 112th globally in terms of gender gap **amid widening disparity in terms of women's health and survival and economic** participation — the two areas where the country is now ranked in the bottom-five.
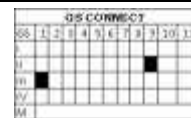
Pre-Connect

- The Global Gender Gap Report was first published in 2006 by the World Economic Forum (WEF).
- The Index measures the extent of gender-based gaps on four key parameters — economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.
- It measures gender-based gaps in access to resources and opportunities in countries, rather than the actual levels of the available resources and opportunities.

Global Gender Gap Index for 2020: Key findings

- ❖ Globally, the average (population-weighted) distance completed to gender parity is at 68.6%, which is an improvement since last edition.
- ❖ The largest gender disparity is in political empowerment. Only 25% of the 35,127 seats in parliaments around the world are occupied by women, and only 21% of the 3,343 ministers are women.
- ❖ Projecting current trends into the future, the overall global gender gap will close in 99.5 years, on average, across the 107 countries covered continuously since the first edition of the Report.

Highlights

- ➢ India has moved down the ladder from its 108th position last year **on the World Economic Forum's** Gender Gap Report.
- ➢ India ranks below countries like China (106th), Sri Lanka (102nd), Nepal (101st), Brazil (92nd), Indonesia (85th) and Bangladesh (50th).
- ➢ **Iceland remains the world's most gender**-neutral country, Yemen is ranked the worst (153rd).
- ➢ **This year's improvement** can largely be ascribed to a significant increase in the number of women in politics. The political gender gap will take 95 years to close, compared to 107 years last year.
- ➢ However, the economic opportunity gap has worsened, widening to 257 years, compared to 202 years last year.

Global snapshot
Gender gap score by area
Top 10 performers

Country	Rank	Score (0–1)
Iceland	1	0.858
Norway	2	0.835
Sweden	3	0.822
Finland	4	0.821
Nicaragua	5	0.804
Rwanda	6	0.804
New Zealand	7	0.801
Philippines	8	0.799
Ireland	9	0.798
Namibia	10	0.789

- ➢ India is the only country among the 153 countries studied where the economic gender gap is larger than the political one.

Analytica

- ✓ Assessing women's access to equal opportunity and resources against the access that men have would be a scientific way of evaluating a nation's commitment to the advancement of its citizens.
- ✓ But going by the **World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2020 questions can easily be raised about whether the government is doing the right thing to the country's** women.
- ✓ The direct link between empowering women and alleviating poverty, increasing productivity, and combating climate change is well-recognised.
- ✓ However, the lack of targeted resources is often stated to be the biggest reason behind the sluggish progress in furthering the gender agenda.
- ✓ **Therefore, it is important that India's budget priorities reflect its commitment to invest in** women and girl.
- ✓ Gender budgeting alone is not sufficient to tackle deep-rooted gender disparities. However, policies can be more effective if budgeting takes a broader, gendered approach which includes planning targeted interventions, getting the right policy push with the right budget allocation, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure implementation

Way Forward

- Doing what the government is currently doing is clearly not going to be sufficient; it needs to engage intimately with all aspects indicated by the Index to improve the score, and set targets to reduce the gender gap in the foreseeable future.
- It will have to drastically scale up efforts, it has **introduced to encourage women's** participation, and increase opportunities for them. To do so it also needs to make sure there is actual implementation at the ground level.
- States successful schemes like- **conditional cash transfer scheme 'KanyashreePrakalpa' in West Bengal, Bihar's bicycle distribution scheme etc. can be replicated.**
- The Post Graduate Indira Gandhi Scholarship for Single Girl Child scheme could also be extended to families with two girl children.
- Investments in safe transport options and school infrastructure, especially provision of separate toilets and sanitary napkins, need to be stepped up considerably.
- Defining time-bound targets for reversing the decline in the female labour force participation is a must for economic empowerment.
- Skill training programmes also need to be reoriented to focus on training women in non-traditional areas like construction and taxi-driving.
- Further, the progressive integration of women who work in the informal sector with the formal economy needs to be achieved through effective implementation of legal and social protection measures.
- The 33.3 per cent reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (now 50 per cent in some States) has enabled over one million women to participate in local governance every five years. This needs to be replicated at all levels of the governance system.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> KanyashreePrakalpa, Mahila E-haat, Sakhi scheme, STEP scheme, Nai Roshni scheme

- Behaviour and mindset of the patriarchal society need to be changed with the help of various role models and women achievers in the society.
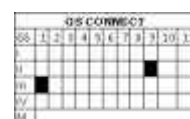
Conclusion

While there is no magic bullet for bridging the gender gap, concerted policy actions along with the efforts of the private sector and citizens can make the achievement of SDG-5 by 2030 a reality.

Human Development Index

News Excerpt

India ranks 129 out of 189 countries on the 2019 Human Development Index (HDI) — up one slot from the 130th position last year — according to the Human Development Report (HDR) released by the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP).

Pre-Connect

- The Human Development Index (HDI) is a statistical tool used to measure a country's overall achievement in its social and economic dimensions.
- The HDI measures average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development — life expectancy, education and per capita income.
- Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq created HDI in 1990 which was further used to measure the country's development by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).
- Every year UNDP ranks countries based on the HDI report released in their annual report. HDI is one of the best tools to keep track of the level of development of a country, as it combines all major social and economic indicators that are responsible for economic development.

Highlights

> Norway, Switzerland, Ireland occupied the top three positions in that order. Germany is placed fourth along with Hong Kong, and Australia secured the fifth rank on the global ranking.

> Among India's neighbours, Sri Lanka (71) and China (85) are higher up the rank scale while Bhutan (134), Bangladesh (135), Myanmar (145), Nepal (147), Pakistan (152) and Afghanistan (170) were ranked lower on the list.

> South Asia was the fastest growing region in human development progress witnessing a 46% growth over 1990-2018, followed by East Asia and the Pacific at 43%.

Social Progress Index (SPI)

- ❖ The Social Progress Index is a tool to capture the social progress of regions based on social performance.
- ❖ The index measures the extent to which social needs of citizens are being fulfilled.
- ❖ The index as a starting point of a strategy that seeks to improve the quality of lives of millions of people in India.
- ❖ It measures social progress through the three dimensions: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing and Opportunity, by aggregating 35 social indicators. The dimensions of the SPI

> **India's HDI value increased by 50% (from 0.431 to 0.647), which places it above the** average for other South Asian countries (0.642).

> However, for inequality-**adjusted HDI (IHDI), India's position drops by one position to 130,** losing nearly half the progress (.647 to .477) made in the past 30 years. The IHDI indicates percentage loss in HDI due to inequalities.

Analytica

✓ **While the poor have indeed benefitted from India's economic success, the rich have** garnered a greater share of the spoils. Top 10 per cent of the Indian population holds 77 per cent of the total national wealth.

✓ Inequality is not just about disparities in wealth distribution. A large number of Indians not only have very low income, but their opportunities for healthcare, education and social security are dreadfully inadequate.

INDIA'S PROGRESS IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

India's human development grows slower than before

	India HDI	World HDI	India HDI Rank
2010	0.581	0.698	136
2012	0.600	0.709	131
2014	0.618	0.718	130
2015	0.627	0.722	131
2016	0.636	0.726	129
2017	0.640	0.728	130

Loss in human development due to inequality

■ Overall loss due to inequality in all primary indicators
■ Loss due to income inequality *(Figures in as % of HDI)*

	Overall loss	Income loss
India	-26.8	-18.8
Pakistan	-24.1	-15.7
Bangladesh	-31.0	-11.6
South Asia	-26.1	-17.6
Medium HDI countries	-25.1	-21.2

✓ **UNDP's** 2019 Human Development Report (HDR) explores precisely these inequalities in human development, by
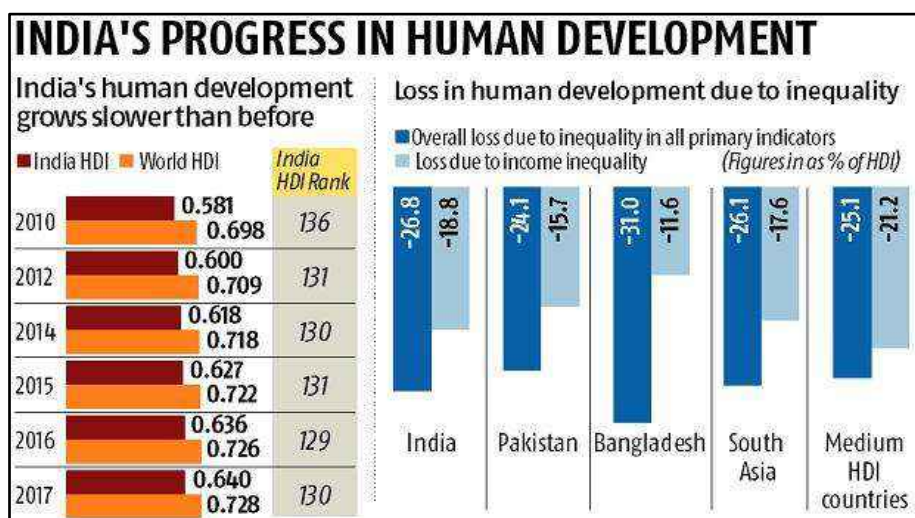
going beyond income and identifying the deep-rooted systemic drivers of inequality.

✓ In doing so, the report reminds decision-makers of the importance of providing basic services to their people, and of equipping them to live with dignity.

✓ As the HDR argues, climate change will only exacerbate this inequality. The climate crisis is already hitting the poorest communities hardest and earliest.

✓ Millions of Indians in low-lying coastal areas are exposed to a rise in sea levels. Around two-fifths of the population subsist on agriculture that relies on increasingly erratic rainfall and fluctuating temperatures.

✓ The report underlines that poor people should be protected from the fallout of climate change and benefit from modern breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and robotics.

Way forward

India needs to address the three parameters of human development separately—and simultaneously.
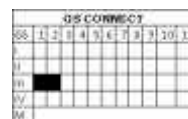
▪ First, it cannot possibly envisage a long and healthy life without addressing the issue of malnutrition which is plaguing it. The recent improvements in nutrition have been noteworthy but not enough.

▪ Second, in terms of knowledge, India needs to ensure access and quality through effective implementation of schemes such as Digital India and Skill India.

▪ Third, for a higher standard of living, it should ensure that work is quantitatively and qualitatively enhanced in the country.

▪ **The country's efforts in terms of employment** guarantee schemes have been lauded but it is by no means a long-term remedy. India needs to reform its rigid labour market governed by obsolete laws, address problems of child labour and forced labour, and bring about wage equality.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> UNDP, MGNREGA, Ayushman Bharat, Education policy, Health

Operation Twist

News Excerpt

RBI recently conducted two rounds of simultaneous purchase and sale of government securities of different maturities.

Pre-Connect

- An open market operation (OMO) is where the RBI buys and sells securities to infuse or absorb liquidity in the system.
- But when the RBI does the same on both sides, it is different when the amounts are the same which means that overall liquidity does not get influenced.
- Operation Twist is a move in which a central bank decides to simultaneously buy long-dated securities while selling short-term securities.
- Operation Twist first appeared in 1961 as a way to strengthen the U.S. dollar and stimulate cash flow into the economy.

Analytica

Aim

➢ This is the first time RBI has undertaken such an unconventional policy measure

Open Market Operations

❖ Open Market Operations (OMOs) are the outright sale and purchase of government securities (G-secs) in the open market (open market essentially means banks and other financial institutions) by the RBI in order to influence the quantum of money and credit in the economy.

❖ This purchase and sale isentrusted to the Central bank on behalf of the Government.

❖ OMOs are RBIs most flexible monetary policy tool.

❖ RBI carries out the OMO through commercial banks and does not directly deal with the public.

❖ There are two types of open market operations: outright and repo.

❖ In India, the RBI has recently put through its version of Operation Twist by buying ₹10,000 crore worth of 10-year government bonds while selling four shorter-term governmentbonds adding up to the same value.

with the aim of flattening the yield curve by lowering longer rates to boost lending and growth.

➢ The yield of a bond is directly proportional to its supply in the system. So, when RBI buys long term securities the supply of these securities decreases and thus the yields are expected to decrease.

➢ The same happens when it sells short-term paper which banks buy that, in turn, increases the yield as supply increases.

Benefits

➢ The 10-year yield was 6.75 percent and after the two rounds of Operation Twist, it has come down to 6.51 percent. Due to this now, the Government can borrow funds at a cheaper rate.

➢ The transmission of monetary policy has been poor. It can be addressed through such an initiative.

➢ Similar such steps can help in attracting foreign investments in bond market as yield of bonds is still much higher in India as compared to Western economies.

➢ By doing this RBI has become a decisive player in the market and moves rates without changing the overall liquidity in the system but altering the liquidity in specific securities.

➢ Due to SLR conditions, banks are required to hold short term bonds. Now since the yield of short-term bonds is expected to increase their position will also improve.

➢ Interest rates on vehicle, housing and other long-term loans will go down. This will boost demand for these products and hence spur growth.

Issues

Due to more borrowings by government private investment may get crowded out.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Mission Indradhanush, Market Stabilisation Scheme

Way Forward

✓ Lower interest rates will not be sufficient to boost growth. We need to boost demand in order to spur growth.

✓ To achieve this objective monetary policy should work in coordination with fiscal policy.

✓ Changes in tax and regulatory mechanism are needed to improve ease of doing business and increase private investment.

Independent Directors Data Bank

News Excerpt

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs recently launched the **Independent Director's** Databank in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013.
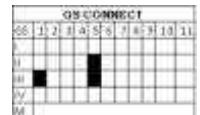
Pre-Connect

- As per The Companies Act, 2013, every listed public company shall have at least one-third of the total number of directors as independent directors.

- It also prescribes that an independent director may be selected from a data bank of persons who are eligible and willing to act as independent directors, maintained by anybody, institute or association, as may by notified by the Central Government.

> **Independent Directors**
> ❖ The Companies Act, 2013 defines and make provisions regarding independent directors.
> ❖ This position is prescribed to make sure that the interests of the shareholders especially that of the minority shareholders and public in general are protected.
> ❖ Some conditions that an independent director must satisfy are:
>   ➕ He must not be a promoter of the company or its holding.
>   ➕ He must haveno pecuniary relationship with the company.
>   ➕ He should possess such other qualifications as may be prescribed.

Highlights

➢ It is a platform on which the existing independent directors and individuals aspiring to become independent directors can register themselves.

➢ It is expected to become a comprehensive repository consisting of people of both of the

above category.

➢ Companies also may register themselves with the databank to search, select and connect with individuals who possess the right skills and attitude for being considered for appointment as Independent Directors.

➢ The platform uses Integrated Learning Management System. Various e-learning capsules and videos available in the system. These will enable Individual users to easily acquire knowledge from diverse resources, develop distinct skills and assess their understanding on company operations, regulations and compliances.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Corporate governance structure, e- governance

➢ The platform provides for a wide array of e-learning courses on various topics including the Companies Act, Securities laws, basic accountancy, board practices, board ethics and board effectiveness.

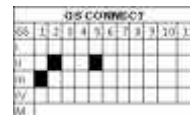➢ The Databank portal has been developed and will be maintained by the Indian Institute for Corporate Affairs (IICA).

NCLAT-Chennai Bench

News Excerpt

The Union government has recently decided to set up a bench of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) in Chennai. Currently, the NCLAT functions out of the national capital.

Highlights

• The NCLAT was constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 for hearing appeals against the orders of National Company Law Tribunal(s) (NCLT), with effect from June 1, 2016.

• It is the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by NCLT(s) under Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC), with effect from December 1, 2016.

• The NCLAT is also the appellate tribunal that hears appeals against any direction or decision of the Competition Commission of India (CCI), as per the amendment brought to Section 410 of the

> ### The e-Courts Project
> It was conceptualized on the basis of the **"National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary – 2005". The eCourts Mission Mode Project, is a Pan**-India Project, monitored and funded by Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India for the District Courts across the country.
>
> ### Objectives of the project
> ❖ To provide efficient & time-bound citizen centric services delivery as detailed in e-Court Project Litigant's Charter.
> ❖ To develop, install & implement decision support systems in courts.
> ❖ To automate the processes to provide transparency in accessibility of information to its stakeholders.
> ❖ To enhance judicial productivity, both qualitatively & quantitatively, to make the justice delivery system affordable, accessible, cost effective, predictable, reliable and transparent.

Companies Act, 2013 by Section 172 of the Finance Act, 2017, with effect from May 26, 2017.

• **Setting up of the bench of NCLAT at Chennai comes as part of government's efforts to** reduce the pending cases.

• GoI has also set up five new benches of NCLT during 2018-2019 at Jaipur, Cuttack, Kochi, Indore and Amaravati with this aim. For capacity building of members of the tribunal, regular colloquiums are being held.

• The e-Court project has also been implemented in a few benches with heavy case load.

India Skills Report

News Excerpt

Recently, 7th editionof India Skills report was released. It provides the latest view of the talent landscape of India.
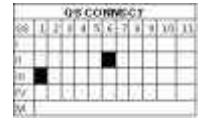
Pre-Connect

Skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development in a country. As opposed to developed countries, where the percentage of skilled workforce is between 60% and 90% of the total workforce, India records a low 5% of workforce (20-24 years) with formal vocational skills.

About India Skills Report

- The report is a joint initiative of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Association of Indian Universities (AIU)and few private firms.

- The report assessed 300,000 candidates from 35 educational institutes across 28 states and 9 Union Territories.

> **Confederation of Indian Industry**
> CII is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organization. Founded in 1895, India's premier business association has more than 9100 members, from the private as well as public sectors, including SMEs and MNCs.

Highlights of the Report

➢ 46% of students were found to be employable or ready to take up jobs as against 33% in 2014.

➢ The most employable candidates as per the courses were MBA students with 54% as against 40% in the last two years.

➢ B. Pharma, Polytechnic, B.com and BA courses saw an improvement in employability which is increased by more than 15%.

➢ Female employability increased to 47% from 46% (2018) and male employability decreased to 46% from 48% (2018).

➢ Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh are the top three states with highest employability. Mumbai followed by Hyderabad and Pune showed the highest employable cities.

➢ This year, India skills report also analysed on candidate preferences. 65% of the students require direction on skills training & internship opportunities.

Analytica

✓ India becoming $5T economy requires increasing the per-capita income of Indians which can happen only when people get the employment which consequently demands the skills and useful talent.

✓ With changing work environment and technologies there is a need to rapidly scale up skill development efforts in India, by creating an end-to-end, outcome-focused implementation framework, which aligns demands of the employers for a well-trained skilled workforce with aspirations of Indian citizens for sustainable livelihoods.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Skill Indian Mission. Stand-up India, Start-up India, PMKVY, National Skill Development Mission, Atal Innovation Yojana, NEEM Mission.

✓ **While today's software jobs need people trained to** work on newer technologies, the demand for skills in sectors like automotive and retail is also evolving in response to impact of digital transformation.

Conclusion

India's rich and skilful demographic dividend is our biggest resource. The challenge of tapping this productive and influential population into the drive and utilisation of the talent of this generation to create the largest army of change makers, leaders, problem solvers is needed the most in present age of uncertainties.

Skills Build Platform

News Excerpt

Recently, Directorate General of Training (DGT), under the aegis of Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), launched Skills Build platform in collaboration with IBM.
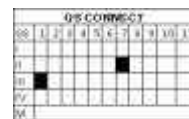
Pre-Connect

Skill India, an initiative of the Government of India, has been launched earlier to empower the youth of the country with skill sets which make them more employable and more productive in their work environment.

Highlights of the Programme

- India is the 4th country where this Skills Build platform has been launched on after being launched in UK, Germany and France.

- It will be accessible online through bharat skills (a Learning Management System for ITI/NSTI Students and Teachers) and free to use.

- As part of the programme, a two-year advanced diploma in Information Technology (IT), Networking and Cloud computing will be offered at the Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) and the National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs). The platform will also be extended to train ITI and NSTI faculty in basic Artificial Intelligence (AI) Skills.

> **New Collar**
>
> New Collar jobs are roles in some of the **technology industry's faster growing** fields- from cyber security and cloud computing to cognitive business and digital design- that do not always require a traditional degree. It requires a right mix of in-demand skill set.

- This Skill Build platform will also provide personal assessment for cognitive capabilities and personality via MyInnerGenius to youths/students.

Analytica

- It will help develop the skills required to join the workforce in **these "New Collar" roles.** Also bring untapped talent to the fore; opening roles to individuals often excluded from the labour market due to disadvantaged backgrounds, or because of lack of knowledge, skill or experience that has seen them become under-employed or unemployed.

- Youth/Students will learn basics about digital technologies as well as professional skills like resume writing, problem solving and communication.

- *For further information follow November Current Connect/Social/Skills Build Platform*

Silver Line Project

News Excerpt

Ministry of Railways has recently granted in-**principle approval for the 'Silver Line' project, a proposal of the Kerala government.**
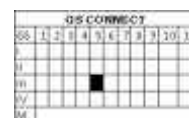
Pre-Connect

- The Silver Line project was conceived at least a decade ago.
- It aims to connect major districts and towns with semi high-speed trains that will run on their own tracks.
- The current railway network is congested with a large number of trains, level crossings and sharp curves.
- The fastest train, plying between Thiruvananthapuram and Kasaragod, takes nearly 12 hours to cover 532 km.

Highlights of the Project

- **Kerala's semi**-high-speed rail (SHSR) project, named Silver Line is a joint venture of Railway Ministry and Kerala government.
- The project involves laying the third and fourth railway lines from Kasaragod in the north to Kochuveli (Thiruvananthapuram) in the south for the movement of semi high-speed trains.

➤ The 532-km corridor is projected to be built at a cost of Rs 56,443 crore.

➤ Trains would complete the journey at four hours instead of 12, with a maximum speed of 200 km/h.

➤ The Kerala Rail Development Corporation (K-Rail), a joint venture between the Ministry of Railways and the Kerala government to execute projects on a cost-sharing basis, will be the nodal agency.

Analytica

✓ **Kerala's road networks are clogged and experience dense traffic. This also gives rise to** accidents and casualties; in 2018, Kerala recorded 4,259 deaths and 31,687 grievous injuries.

✓ There has been demand for faster transportation options including railways and waterways. However, the current railway network is congested with a large number of trains, level crossings and sharp curves.

✓ The project is being envisaged as the most affordable solution for **the state's transport problems. It** will connect major districts and towns with semi high-speed trains and will reduce the travelling time.

✓ It will result in direct and indirect employment opportunities for 50,000 people, and the project once completed would create direct employment for at least 11,000 people.

✓ Additionally, the project would boast many eco-friendly features including the use of clean energy by tapping solar power, low emission construction equipment, re-use of concrete and steel as well as urban forestry programme promotion.

Conclusion

The proposed semi-high-speed rail corridor i.e., the Silver **Line Project has capacity to redefinestate's transport** sector as it will be the best sustainable and green option

PEPPER IT WITH
Bharatmala Project, Sagarmala Project, UDAAN Scheme

for long distance transport. Transport, the second largest contributor to global greenhousegas (GHG) emissions, is responsible for 23% of all energy-related carbon dioxide emissions globally and 14% of total GHG emissions. To address the problem in a substantial manner the focus needs to shift from personal transport to publictransport. This requires a paradigm shift in the way we think which is evident through such projects.

Bharat Bond ETF

New Excerpt

The Union Cabinet has recently approved launching a bond ETF (Exchange Traded Fund) called the Bharat Bond ETF. This fund will track the index comprising debt securities of Public Sector Undertakings with the highest credit rating.

Pre-Connect

What is Exchange Traded Fund (ETF)?

• An ETF is a fund that comprises a group of stocks that are listed on an exchange and can be simply traded like any other listed security.

• Typically, an ETF mirrors a particular index, which means the group of stocks in the ETF would be similar to those in the index that it is benchmarked to.

- The biggest benefit of investing in the ETFs is liquidity because an ETF is publicly listed and traded on a stock exchange.
- An ETF can be created for any kind of asset or security that has an index or a liquid market for the underlying securities of the ETF.
- Globally, there are many ETFs on bonds, currencies and commodities as well. In India, gold ETFs are quite popular and have physical gold as the underlying security.

Highlights

➢ Bharat Bond is India's first corporate bond issued by state-run companies to be traded on bourses.

➢ It is aimed at strengthening the corporate bond market and reducing the cost of borrowing.

➢ The ETF will invest in constituents of the Nifty Bharat Bond Indices, consisting of public sector companies. It will be tradable on the stock exchange

➢ The exchange-traded fund will invest only in AAA-rated bonds of public sector companies and will have target maturity structures.

➢ The ETF will be launched every six months and the index will be constructed by the National Stock Exchange (NSE) as an independent index provider.

➢ Bharat Bond Funds of Funds (FOF) is also being launched for investors who do not have demat accounts.

➢ Investments made in Bharat bond ETF will be taxed similar to debt funds.

Analytica

Significance of Bharat Bond ETF

✓ Globally, fixed-income exchange-traded funds (ETFs) are a trillion-dollar asset class and an **essential part of retail investors' portfolios.**

✓ Corporate bonds help issuers raise funds more efficiently while providing investors another avenue.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Masala Bonds, Municipal Bonds, SEBI

✓ Bond ETFs are under-penetrated in India. Currently, the **corporate bond outstanding to the country's GDP ratio is** 17%, which is one of the lowest in the world. In advanced economies, the ratio is much **higher. For instance, it's 123% in the US, 34% in Singapore and 74% in South Korea.** Further, retail investors account for only 3% of the total corporate bond outstanding issuance in India.

✓ Bond ETFs can help overcome the challenges facing **retail participation in India's bond** markets and leverage a huge opportunity in the process. The introduction of corporate **bond ETFs through the launch of Bharat Bond ETF could be a game changer in India's** fixed-income investment milieu.

✓ It offers higher safety by investing in higher-rated bonds, transparency, liquidity (no lock-in), reasonable predictability of returns and tax efficiency.

For further information follow November Current Connect/Economy/Exchange Traded Fund

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24/7 NEFT

News Excerpt

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently announced that the National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) facility is available by member banks participating in the payment system on all days for the year, including holidays.
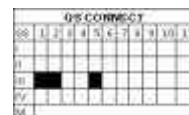
Pre-Connect

In June 2019, the RBI had waived NEFT/RTGS processing charges and asked banks to pass on the benefits to customers in order to promote digital payments among small businesses. The RBI has also increased RTGS timings by 1 hour to facilitate online payments.

What is NEFT?

- NEFT is a nation-wide payment system facilitating one-to-one funds transfer.
- Under this scheme, individuals, firms and corporates can electronically transfer funds from any bank branch to any individual, firm or corporate having an account with any other

bank branch in the country participating in the scheme.

- NEFT is used for fund transfers of minimum of Rs.
- Zero transaction fees and can be carried out over a secure online platform.
- The recent move will strengthen the fund management system of banks and will be convenient for businesses that work round the clock. The process will also help in smoothening the cash flow.
- However, one of the major drawbacks of the process is that it is a highly technical method of funds transfer which is not easy to operate for everybody. Also, the risks associated with the online payment transfers can not be denied given the background of increasing cyber security threats.

> **What is RTGs and How is it different from NEFT?**
> The Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system is primarily meant for large value transactions, with the minimum cap set at Rs 2 lakh. In this option, there is continuous and real-time settlement of fund-transfers, individually on a transaction by transaction basis, unlike NEFT which clears transactions in batches. However, it is a 24x7 system.

Is there no 24/7 option currently?

Immediate Payment Services, or IMPS, which is managed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), is currently the only payment option that is available 24x7, throughout the year including Sundays and any bank holidays. However, the maximum amount that can be transferred is much lower than NEFT and RTGS - Rs 2 lakh per day for most banks.

Digital Payments in India

➢ Driven by progressive regulatory policies and increased use of mobile internet, Indian payment industry is going through a transformational phase.

➢ According to a report by Google and Boston Consulting Group (BCG), the Indian digital payments industry is estimated to touch $500 billion by 2020, contributing 15 per cent to the **country's GDP.** The most appealing factor is that it is going to be dominated by micro transactions.

➢ Even though cash transactions continue to dominate, demonetization, coupled with steps taken by the government and the banking regulator i.e. RBI has nurtured the habit of people spending through various digital platforms.

➢ RBI has also proposed setting up of Acceptance Development Fundto move towards setting up of payment infrastructure with effect from 1 January, 2020.

➢ It also proposed to permit all authorised payment systems and instruments to link FASTags-- an electronic toll connection device fixed on the windshield of a vehicle to enable drivers to zip through toll plazas without having to stop. The move will facilitate the use of FASTags to pay for parking and fuel, making the system interoperable.

➢ RBI has also proposed to constitute a committee to assess the need for plurality of QR (quick response) codes and merits of their co-existence or convergence from both systemic and consumer viewpoints.

The Success Story of UPI

✓ Unified Payments Interface (UPI), a simple, real-time and secure mode of transferring money, overtook mobile wallets in terms of volume of transactions and value in March 2019.

✓ The growing popularity of UPI can be attributed to its simple, safe, cost-effective and mobile-based payment system.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> NPCI, Digital Payment dash board, Digidhan Mission

✓ Biggest advantage of UPI is that it lets a user transfer money across multiple bank accounts in real time, without revealing details of a beneficiary's bank account. UPI is in a true sense has been a driver of digital payments.

✓ However, UPI's use has mostly been restricted to urban India and smartphone users, as it depends on an internet connection.

✓ The RBI recently announced its vision for payments in India for the period 2019-2021, which will enable the setting up of safe, secure, accessible and affordable payment systems.

The idea is to move towards a less-cash society by providing more payment options to people, who have been untouched by such systems.

Conclusion

The digital payment space is being transformed and the sector has witnessed tremendous growth, innovations and regulatory support over the last two years. It will not be an exaggeration to say that India has become the most evolved country when it comes to the digital payment ecosystem. However, the focus should be to keep the momentum going with more support from the government and innovations, safety and convenience from the players.

Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme for NBFCs

News Excerpt

Recently, the Union Cabinet approved a Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme for non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies (HFCs).
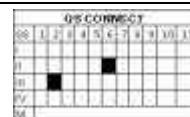
Pre-Connect

- The non-banking financial companies are facing the liquidity crunch. It is likely to result in increasing bad loans risks for banks both from these shadow banks as well as from companies relying on such lenders for funding.
- Owing to liquidity crisis, NBFCs are forced to reduce lending, leading to funding constraints for borrowers relying on non-bank lenders.
- This increases the risk of loan losses for NBFCs, and as a result, they will continue to have difficulty in obtaining funding.
- Keeping this in mind, the government has allowed public sector banks to purchase high-rated pooled assets.
- The scheme was first announced in the budget 2019-20.

> **What is Special Mention Accounts (SMA) ?**
> - SMAs are those assets/accounts that shows symptoms of bad asset quality in the first 90 days itself.
> - Special Mention Accounts (SMA) was introduced by the RBI in 2014, to identify those accounts that has the potential to become an NPA/Stressed Asset.

Highlights

- The Objective is to address the liquidity or cash flow mismatch issue of otherwise solvent NBFCs or HFCs.
- The amount of overall guarantee is limited to first loss of up to 10% of fair value of assets being purchased by the banks under the Scheme, or Rs. 10,000 crores, whichever is lower, as agreed by Department of Economic Affairs (DEA).
- The scheme would cover NBFCs / HFCs that may have slipped into SMA-0 category during the one- year period prior to 1.8.2018, and asset pools rated "BBB+" or higher.
- The Finance Minister has a power to extend the validity of the Scheme by up to three months taking into account its progress.

> **First Loss Policy**
> A first-loss policy is a type of property insurance policy that provides only partial insurance. In the event of a claim, the policyholder agrees to accept an amount less than the full value of damaged, destroyed, or stolen property. In return, the insurer agrees to not penalize the policyholder for under-insuring their goods or property—for example, by not raising rates on renewal premiums.

> **Fair Value of Assets**
> Fair value is a market-based measurement, not an entity-specific measurement. Indian Accounting Standards defines fair value as the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date.

Impact

The proposed Government Guarantee support and resultant pool buyouts will help address NBFCs/HFCs resolve their temporary liquidity or cash flow mismatch issues,and enable them to continue contributing to credit creation and providing last mile lending to borrowers, thereby spurring economic growth.

GST on Lotteries

News Excerpt

GST Council in its 38th meeting decided to impose a single rate of 28% on state-run and authorised lottery. Also, GST Council departed from its practice of consensus-based decision-making, opting to vote for the first time to settle differences among states over the taxation of lotteries.

Impact of the Move

- As of now, there is no blanket ban on lotteries in India. According to 2017 data, out of 29 states, 16 states have banned lotteries.

- According to tax experts, pre-GST, a service tax was levied **only on the agent's** commission, which was around 10-12% and varied across states.

- There is fear that the move may lead to a sharp surge in illegal lottery trade. This will cause leakage of government revenue from the lottery industry.

Tweaks, But No Twist in Plot

SOME KEY DECISIONS
Council exempts upfront payment for long-term lease of industrial/infra plots
Levies uniform 18% tax on woven & non-woven bags
To set up grievance redressal committees at zonal/state levels
Extends due date for filing GSTR-9
Waives late fee for filing GSTR-1

REVENUE AUGMENTATION
Discusses steps to expand tax base, tax collection, rate rationalisation
Backs further analysis of rate cut impact, tax base and compliance

CURBING EVASION
Decides to slash input tax credit to 10% from 20% now
E-way bill to be blocked for non-filers of GSTR-1
Approves 'suitable' action for blocking fraudulently claimed credits

- For ex. before GST, the lottery industry used to be at the level of around Rs60 crore a day in Maharashtra, post-GST it has reduced to only Rs5 crore a day. Around 70% of the legal sales have shifted to illegal trade (2017 data).

- For some, the closure of the lottery industry can be seen as a positive, but since the **business has been thriving for decades now, it doesn't augur well for employment.**

- According to some tax experts, more than 10 lakh people are estimated to be dependent on this business for livelihood across the country.

The Status of Lottery in India

- The legislative field with respect to lotteries organized by the Government of India or the Government of a State falls in Entry 40 of the Union List and that of betting and gambling in Entry 34 of the State List.

- Under clause (1) of Article 246 of the Constitution, Parliament is competent to make law qua lotteries organized by the Government of India or the Government of a State; and under clause (3) thereof a State Legislature is competent to make law qua betting and gambling within the State.

- A State Legislature is also competent to make law qua taxes on betting and gambling under Entry 62 of the State List.

- Article 19(1)(*g*) of the Constitution declares that all citizens shall have the right to practise any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business, subject to reasonable restrictions under clause (6), which the State may impose in the public interest.

- Part XIII of the Constitution, comprising Article 301 to Article 307, provides for trade, commerce and intercourse within the territory of India.

- Article 301 provides that subject to the other provisions of this Part, trade, commerce and intercourse throughout the territory of India shall be free.

- The Colonial Government declared public gambling unlawful as back as 1867 by enacting the Bengal Gaming Act. Lotteries not authorized by the State have been made an offence since 1870 under Section

> PEPPER IT WITH
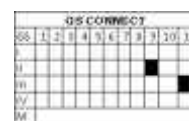> Lodha Committee Recommendations, GST Council

294-A of the Indian Penal Code. Section 30 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872 declares wagering agreements to be void.

➤ In *R.M.D. Chamarbaugwalla* v. *Union of India* case, a five-Judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court observed that lotteries encourage a spirit of reckless propensity for making easy gain by lot or chance, which leads to the loss of the hard-earned money of the undiscerning and improvident common man and thereby lower his standard of living and drive him into a chronic state of indebtedness and eventually disrupt the peace and happiness of his humble home. Therefore, such activities could not possibly have been intended by our Constitution-makers to be raised to the status of trade, commerce and intercourse and to be made the subject-matter of a fundamental right guaranteed by Article 19(1)(*g*).

➤ Parliament enacted the Lotteries (Regulation) Act, 1998 with the object of regulating the lotteries and to provide for matters connected therewith and incidental thereto.

The 2+2 Season

News Excerpt

Government of India had recently conducted 2+2 dialogue with three countries viz. Australia, Japan and the US. While, earlier India used to hold this dialogue at ministerial level with the US only, but this time it also included Japan. These countries along with India forms the part of a strategic group known as Quadrilateral or Quad.

Pre-Connect

- 2+2 mechanism is used for the installation of a dialogue between two country's defence and external affairs ministries.
- The idea was initiated by Japan which leans on this mechanism for its interactions with the US, France, Russia and Australia.
- India uses 2+2 dialogue at both ministerial and at secretaries' level.
- A lack of clarity from either side can disrupt the aim of this dialogue.

Key Highlights

➤ Indo-Pacific: Quad has time and again emphasised on free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.In this regard,**"ASEAN Outlook on the Indo**-Pacific **(AOIP)"** and **"Indo**-**Pacific Oceans Initiative"** are two important initiatives. Importance of freedom of navigation in South China Sea and development of rule-based order or a Code of Conduct (COC)based on internationalconventions including those reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) are also highlighted.

➤ Logistics Agreement: India is looking to sign Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) and Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) with Japan and Australia respectively.

➤ Security Cooperation: India and the USA signed Industrial Security Annex (ISA) which will facilitate the exchange of classified military information between Indian and the U.S. defence industries. India is also acquiring MK 45 5 inch/62 calibre (MOD 4) naval guns from the US. India and Japan have aJoint Working Group on Defence Equipment and Technology Cooperation (JWG-DETC) and Cooperative research in the area of Unmanned Ground Vehicle (UGV)/ Robotics.

➤ Support for India: **All the quad countries support India's bid to Permanent membership of** UNSC and membership of Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG). Australia also supports the inclusion of India inAsia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, a forum of 21 Pacific Rim countries.

➤ Unitedagainst Terrorism: Quad countries take resolute action in rooting out terrorist safe havens and infrastructure, disrupting terrorist networks and eliminating financing channels and halting cross-border movement of terrorists.

Analytica

Significance

✓ The ISA is an important precursor for the complete actualization of the DTTI(Defence

Technology and Trade Initiative) **which includes "build to print" joint** projects and innovations in the field of intelligence, surveillance, targeting and reconnaissance (ISTAR).

✓ It would enable US arms manufacturers to transfer sensitive technologies to entities beyond the Indian public sector, to even corresponding partners in the private sector. This would **give a fillip to the 'Make in India' projects** in the defence sector with worth over 3.5 Lakh Crore.

✓ **India's domestic defen**ce electronics manufacturing segment is still at a nascent stage and it has to partner with its strategic partners in building a domestic capability base but also direct procurement of those capabilities in the interim.

✓ Rise of China as a hegemon in the region had called for close cooperation on part of Quad countries. There are several opportunities for India to participate with Quad countries and invest in strategic infrastructure projects in third countries such as Sri Lanka as well as in **India's northeast.**

✓ Since the abrogation of Article 370, India needs the support of global powers to counter the propaganda forwarded by Pakistan and its allies. **Though the US Congress has questioned India's** commitment towards religious freedom, by and large, it has supported the cause of India.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Malabar Exercise, LEMOA, CISMOA, BECA, Civil Nuclear Cooperation-India-US and India-Australia, JICA, India Australia Coal diplomacy, Sister City Agreement between India and Japan

WayForward

▪ 2+2 is an important initiative to further strengthen the security and strategic engagements.

▪ There is a need to upgrade India-Australia 2+2 to the Ministerial level to push forward the common interest and further strengthen the Quad.

▪ India also needs to be cautious in its approach towards Quad and follow the policy espoused by it in the Shangri la dialogue. Among the Quad, it is the only country with land borders with China and hence it should avoid any provocation with China.

India-Oman

News Excerpt

Recently, Indian external Affairs Minister visited Oman. The Sultanate of Oman is a strategic partner of India and the two countries are linked closely by geography, history and culture.
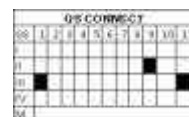
Pre-Connect

• Indians first came into contact with Omanis during the Sumerian and Harappan civilisations.

• Oman's centrality to **India's energy and maritime security** dates back to the 19th and 20th century.

• Under the British rule, the Government appointed a Political Agent in Muscat to manage **British India's relations and prot**ect ships in the Arabian Sea.

• India signed a Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation (1953) with Oman, which segregated Indo-Oman relations from the British Political Agent in Muscat.

• In 1955, India established full diplomatic ties with Oman. India and Oman share strong political ties which have survived the test of time. India supported Oman on most issues at a time when many Arab states voted against Oman.

• The relationship was upgraded to Strategic partnership in 2008.

Facets of India-Oman Ties

➢ Economic Relations

   o During 2018-19, bilateral trade was US$ 5 billion.

   o India is the second largest (after China) importer of Oil from Oman. Indian Oil Corporation has acquired 17% stake of Royal Dutch Shell in Mukhaizna oilfield in Oman. India has also **invited Oman to participate in augmenting India's Strategic** Oil Reserves.

o Oman India Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO) allows India to import entire production of urea and ammonia at cheaper prices.

o Oman-India Joint Investment Fund (OIJIF) is a 50-50 Joint Venture between State Bank of India and State General Reserve Fund (SGRF) of Oman, the main sovereign wealth fund of Oman.

o India had also planned an underwater natural gas pipeline via Oman, the Middle East to India Deepwater Pipeline (MEIDP) — also known as the Iran-Oman-India pipeline. The project sought to bring Iranian natural gas to India via Oman.

➢ Diaspora

o Oman has a strong India diaspora which enjoys the right to different forms of worship under Omani law.

o Indian community in Oman is organized under Indian Social clubs in Muscat, Salalah and Sohar.

➢ Maritime Security Cooperation

o Both nations' Navy participate in an anti-piracy mission. For this Oman provides berthing facilities for Indian warships.

o Oman grants Indian warships access to the strategically located Duqm port. It is important for several reasons

▪ It will allow India to enhance its naval activity in the Indian Ocean.

▪ India, in order to secure its Sea Lanes of Communication (SLCs), has invested in several locations such as Assumption Island in Seychelles and Agalega in Mauritius. (For More See image in October Current Connect [page 62]).

▪ It has proximity to

India West Asia Policy

❖ India's Look West policy has evolved in recent times.

❖ India has good relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Iraq, and the Gulf States.

❖ India's 65% of oil and more than 80% of gas supplies come from this region.

❖ With China spreading its footprints in Indian Ocean, India must strengthen its ties with littoral states.

❖ Main tenets of India's West Asia policy are:

o Secular and Non-Alignment Nature: India doesn't align with regions' religious and sectarian conflicts.

o Engagement at every level: Focus will be on Government-to-Government (G2G), Business-to-Business (B2B) and People-to-People (P2P) relationships.

o Move towards Pragmatism: Earlier India's policy is been anchored on Arab socialism, secularism and Soviet friendship. India not only had to co-habit with US domination but also engage rising conservatism in the region. In practical terms this meant devising a policy that was driven more by economic calculation than political rhetoric.

o Maritime Diplomacy: The West Asia seas are important due to energy and economic security they offer now for India.

the Chabahar port and hence will act as a strategic asset for the Indian Navy.

- It will allow India to counter the growing Chinese naval activity in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

➢ Defence Cooperation
- o Oman is the first Gulf State to buy Indian Small Arms System (INSAS), developed by the state-run Ordnance Factory Board.
- o Oman is also the only country in the Gulf with which all three services of the Indian military — the army (Al-Najah), air force (Eastern Bridge) and navy (Naseem Al Bahr) — conduct joint exercises.

➢ Strategic Influence
- o Oman is an important regional player though it lacks the financial heft of Saudi Arabia, UAE or Qatar, and the demographic and military advantages of Iran.
- o Oman has long maintained independent foreign policy despite being part of GCC and has successfully projected itself as a mediator in regional disputes. For instance, its role in the conflict between US and Iran led to the signing up of JCPOA.

➢ Cultural Ties
- o Both countries have preserved their Islamic heritage and contributed to the development of the Arabic language and literature. The liberal Ibadi traditions of Oman strike a chord with religious and social tolerance, a value that is cherished by India.

Reasons for India worries

➢ Power transition in Oman is the cause of worry for India, after Sultan Qaboos. The inevitable power transition will seriously **test Oman's ability to maintain its** independent foreign policy and play a mediating role in regional affairs.

PEPPER IT WITH
CPEC, Sovereign Wealth Fund, Gulf Cooperation Council, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Extended neighbourhood policy of India

➢ With the region in turmoil, serious ruptures within the GCC and rising tensions **between Iran and Saudi Arabia, India's strategic interests will come under serious** threat if the situation escalates further.

Conclusion

- India has vital stakes in the security and stability of the Gulf region. The safety and security of over 8 million Indian expatriates become a top priority, all the more, given the roughly US$30 billion, they remit annually.
- Furthermore, India is heavily dependent on oil and gas imports from the Gulf. India must also contend with a number of threats and challenges that emanate from the region, ranging from Islamic extremism and growing sectarian tensions to interstate regional rivalries and hostilities.
- Current Indo-Omani ties are dominated by defence relations. India needs to broaden areas of cooperation with this crucial Gulf state, which has enormous business opportunities in shipping, transport, infrastructure building, mining, logistics and tourism.

NATO Fissure

News Excerpt

Recently during the 70th summit of NATO, the w**orld's most powerful defence** alliance turned out to be a display of disagreements on the global stage. The bloc can no longer be an economic giant and a political dwarf.

Pre-Connect

- NATO was instituted in the wake of World War II by the U.S. and the major European powers as a means of collective defense against Soviet Russia. Primarily the strategic objective was to keep Russia out.
- The decisions of NATO are based on mutual Consensus.

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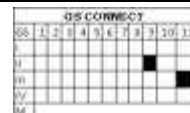
- The Nuclear Planning Group of NATOlooks into the matter of nuclear policy issues of NATO allies.
- The North Atlantic Council (NAC) is the principal political decision-making body at NATO.
- Military operations of NATO are based on collective defence clause of NATO's founding treaty - Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.
- It consist of total 29 member states where Montenegro is the latest country to join NATO.

Analytica

Issues faced by NATO

➢ Withdrawal of USA:The U.S., which guaranteed security to West European countries during the Cold War, can no longer be relied upon to play the same role because its priorities are changing. The US has withdrawn from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF)and decided to**cut its contribution to NATO's** operating budget. NATO was never a grouping of equals. The U.S. always contributed the larger share and underwrote European security.

➢ Russia Factor- Russia has succeeded in creating fissures in NATO. It marred both political and military ties within the NATO allies. Russia has done it through Turkey.For instance, Turkey is a part of the Russian camp in Syria and also despite US sanction it had gone forward with the acquisition of S-400.

➢ US vs EU-
  o There is rise of divergence between US and EU partners especially on the issue of trade wherein, on one hand, EU is looking to conserve global trade order while US is determined to stall the progress of globalization.
  o For instance, US had stalled the **appointment of adjudicators of WTO's appellate** dispute resolutions body, while major EU powers are in favour of early appointments of the adjudicators. Similarly, differences can be seen on the issue of Iran Nuclear deal where EU bypassed trade in US dollar by establishing INSTEX system of payment for Iran.
  o The problem is that NATO provided security on the cheap and now when Mr Trump questions the utility of NATO, it only exposes differences between Europeans who want to develop greater military and diplomatic heft and the others (the Baltic nations and East Europeans) who fear this will loosen ties with the U.S.

China Factor

Disagreements and conflict among NATO allies will create a vacuum especially in the wake of the US reclusive policies. China is keen to fill this vacuum and for this, it is actively pushing its belt and road initiative which is now showing visible impact. For instance
  o China has emerged as the largest trading partner of Germany.
  o Huge Investment is made in both public and private sector of Spain and Poland by China. Similar Investments are made in UK and France.
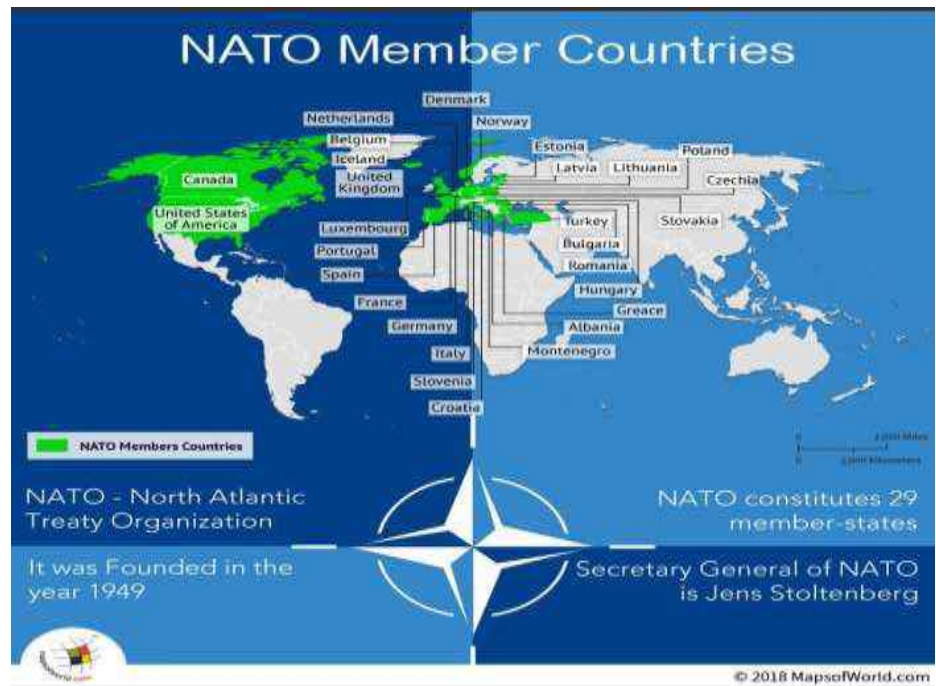
This cheque book diplomacy of China has the potential to create conflict among the European nationswhich prefer rule-based order but are now forced to come to terms with Chinese unilateralism.

Impact on India

✓ India always considered NATO as an instrument of Western dominance, hence weakening of NATO is always seen as the rise of Multipolar World.

✓ However, **India doesn't want China to take over the vacuum** created by the USA in European politics as this could lead to creation of a unipolar world order with "Chinese character".

✓ This could have serious strategic as well as economic implications for India. For instance, if western European countries such as Germany, France and Spain fall into the Chinese camp then it can create troubled water for India in international organizations especially in United nation Security Council and Nuclear supplier group.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Warsaw Pact, Eurozone, Schengen common visa area,European Economic Area, The Council of Europe,Organization for Security and Cooperation

✓ India is also negotiating free trade agreement with China and as China is a known defaulter of international trade rules such as- the clause of rules of origin of WTO, it can turn Europe into a dumper country of its goods which will eventually find their way to India.

Conclusion

In contemporary times when there is rise of China and the decline of US, there is a lack of stability in the global order. Further the inter European divide over issues such as economy, migrations etc. has weakened the European Union's Unity. In such times NATO members should look for a common ground which can give a semblance of stability and peace to the region.

India, on the other hand, should increase its engagement with European countries. In this regard, Chennai-Vladivostok link purposed in Eastern economic forum and melting of arctic ice provides opportunities for establishing an alternate maritime connectivity route between India and Europe. In the aftermath of Brexit, India becomes a lucrative trading partner for Britain and India should cash on this opportunity to get better access to the European market.

Social security agreement between India and Brazil

News Excerpt

Recently, Cabinet has given its approval to the Social security agreement (SSA) with Brazil. This initiative will not only facilitate Indians working in Brazil but will also have a significant impact on bilateral trade and cross border workers.
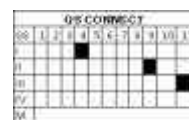
Pre-Connect

- This SSA is the realization of **'Goa Declaration'** of the 8th BRICS Leaders' Summit.
- BRICS nations have individually signed SSAs with other nations
- India has signed and operationalized SSA with 18 countries like- Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Luxembourg, France, South Korea, Netherlands, Hungary, Finland, Sweden, Czech Republic, Norway, Canada, Japan, Austria, Portugal and Australia
- Benefits such as detachment, exportability of pension, totalisation of benefits and withdrawal of social security benefits are available under these SSAs.
- Under the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) Scheme 1952 and the Employees' Pension Scheme 1955 a new category of 'International Worker' has been defined in consonance with

> SSA
> ❖ It is a bilateral agreement between India and a foreign country designed to protect the interests of cross border workers.
> ❖ The agreement provides for avoidance of 'double coverage' and ensures equality of treatment to workers of both countries from a social security perspective.

the international SSAs by India.

Analytica

➤ **An SSA generally provides for "detachment", "totalisation" and "portability" like-**

Detachment	Totalization	Portability
About: International Workers are exempted from making contributions in the host country.	About: The service rendered abroad to be counted for benefits.	About: Benefits can be availed in either country.
Advantages- It would lead to increasing of net Income Indian working Cross border	Advantages- It provides tri-benefits to internationally mobile employees.	Advantages- It would help in meeting with contingencies in either country. Ex- medical emergency etc.

➤ "Dual burden of contribution payments" has been addressed under various SSAs. Hence it will increase both net income and remittances flight-in the country. For instance, Trade relations between BRICS nations have been increasing over the years.

➤ In the absence of SSAs, the contributions made by overseas employees were generally lost due to limited overseas tenure or in failing to fulfil the minimum qualifying period of contribution or residence. Such incident demoralizes cross border movement.

➤ Such agreements will have proven momentous for increasing of bilateral trade and bilateral cross border movement. SSAs would promote a sense of security among migrant employees.

Conclusion

India is heading towards its peak of demographic dividend **while major global powers' dividend** is receding. **This creates an opportunity for India's ever**-growing service sector to spread its reach in major developed economies. In order to employ our workforce with better social security, the SSAs becomes necessary. Further, it would strengthen the rule-based movement which is likely to facilitate the cross-border movement. India should widen the scope of SSAs with countries where Indian diaspora is residing in a significant number or have a scope of migration.

World Trade Organisation

News Excerpt

Recently USA vetoed against the appointment in the WTO appellate body. The Appellate Body needs a minimum of three judges to function but the terms of two of the three remaining members of the appeals panel expired in December 2019 and thus it became dysfunctional.
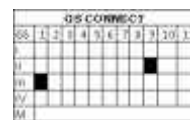
Pre-Connect

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade among nations.

- The WTO Appellate body has seven members and it is the appellate body to decide disputes between the member countries.

- In the disputes, findings by members of the seven-strong Appellate Body are final and binding on economies involved in disputes.

- The USA has been blocking appointments to the WTO Appellate Body for more than two years.

- Much of the U.S. displeasure stems from how the WTO has tied its hands in dealing with China.
- In binding rulings, WTO judges have given Beijing the benefit of the doubt on subsidies and **rejected Washington's treatment of dumping.**

Analytica

Issues

➢ In the absence of a binding trade dispute settlement mechanism, powerful countries, such as USA, can take unilateral measures to the disadvantage of poor countries.
➢ The rules of trade among the countries achieved after extensive discussions may become
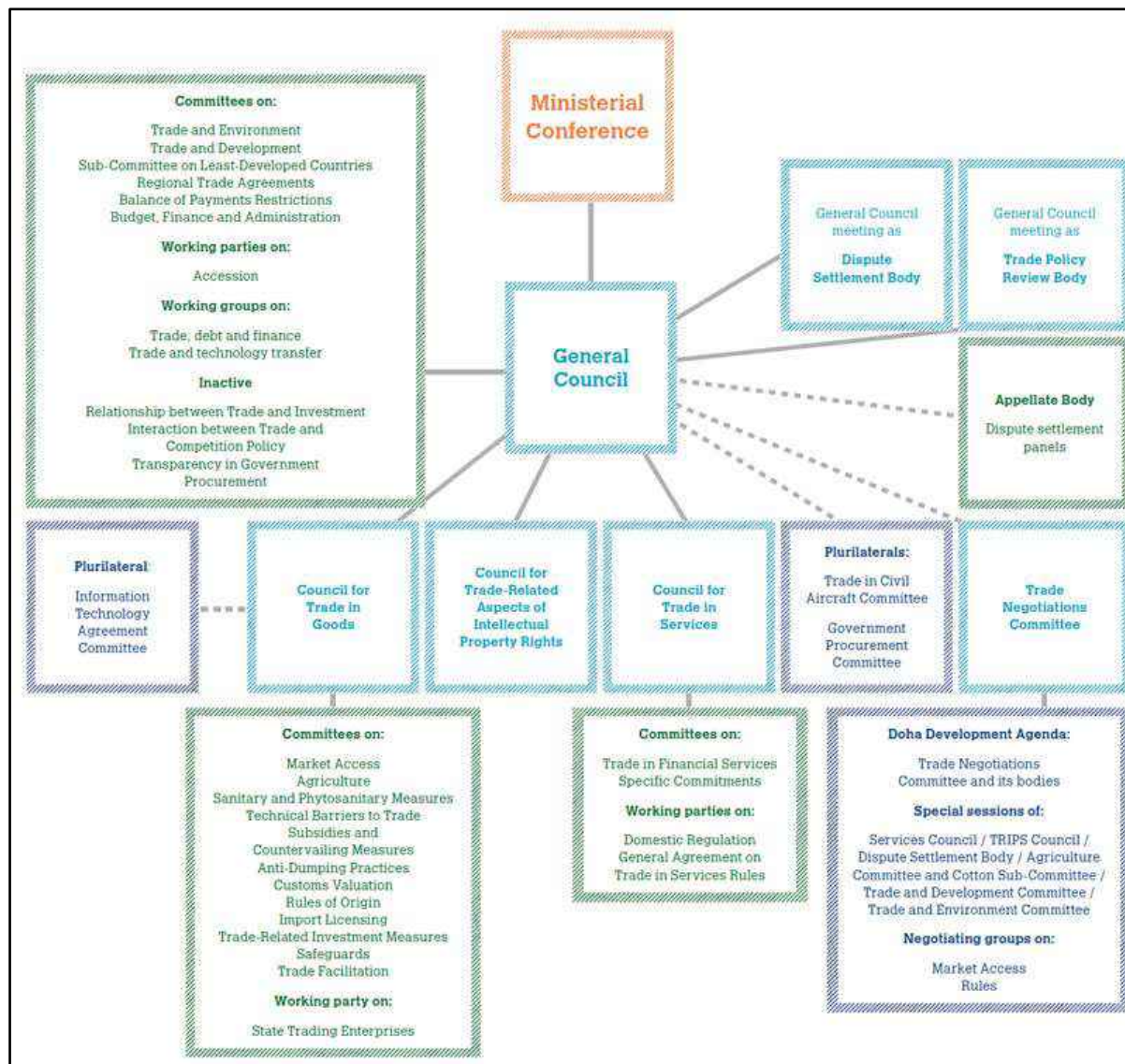
practically inoperational.
➢ Compliance of the decisions of the appellate body has been very high – about 90 per cent. Thus a credible institution has been practically lost.
➢ This is a blow to multilateralism and can prove to be a push towards De-Globalisation.
➢ Members of the WTO will be deprived of their right to a binding and two-step dispute settlement system, even though this right is specifically envisaged in the WTO contract.
➢ Ten pending appeals would be left in limbo, along with a 100 or so more further back in the

system.

➢ We may see the adoption of more unilateral sanctions by states, possibly leading to increased trade wars.

➢ This effectively marks a return to the dispute settlement system under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

➢ **The Appellate Body was set up in 1995 as a "safety valve" against erroneous panel reports** under which members would adopt a report based on reverse consensus. Earlier under the GATT, when the panel constituted to decide disputes used to present a report it needed to be passed by positive consensus. This means that unless each member favoured the adoption of the report it could not be adopted, effectively giving a veto power to the losing party.

Limited Impact and opportunities

✓ **Most of the disputes at the WTO concern rules that are actually "**self-enforcing**", with the** Appellate Body only policing its enforcement by domestic authorities.

✓ Many St**ates have conceived "alternative" strategies** to overcome difficulties arising out of the absence of a functioning Appellate Body.

  o Indonesia and Vietnam have agreed not to appeal the ruling of the panel in the dispute between them, effectively waiving their right of appeal.

  o The European Union (EU), Norway and Canada have agreed on an interim appeal system for resolving any disputes through arbitration using Article 25 of the dispute settlement mechanism.

✓ Despite having the positive consensus mechanism under the GATT regime, a remarkable 71% of panel reports were adopted using the positive consensus rule.

✓ Even where panel reports were not adopted by states they served as a **basis for the parties to "bilaterally"** resolve their disputes in a mutually satisfactory manner.

PEPPER IT WITH
Trade wars, Doha Agreement at WTO, Agricultural Agreement at WTO, TRIPS

✓ The majority of the disputes at the WTO concern trade remedy matters,in such caseaffected countries can themselves adopt counter measures.

✓ Many scholars argu**e that this will address "over-enforcement" rather than "under-enforcement" of WTO rules.**

✓ The fall of appellate body does not render the WTO rules unenforceable and the threat of reciprocal sanctions may in fact serve to encourage states to remain compliant with the rules.

✓ The EU has even threatened to launch countermeasures under general international law **for countries that lose at the panel stage and appeal the report "in limbo". Instead it argues** that countries should take recourse to the interim appeal system under Article 25.

Way Forward

▪ Although the fall of the WTO Appellate Body represents a turbulent period in the history of trade disputes adjudication, it by no means spells the end of the WTO.

▪ **Based on the philosophy of "Never waste a crisis" this** presents an opportunity to the members to rethink and **"iron out some of the creases" with the present system.**

NAFTA 2.0

Signed by three countries namely the United States, Canada and Mexico, NAFTA deals with a trilateral trade agreement in North America. Established in 1st January 1994 by the then President of US, Ronald Regaon, the agreement objectified towards

1. Elimination of trade barriers thereby facilitating the cross-border intercourse.
2. Promotion of conditions for competitions competed through fair means.
3. Expansion of substantial investment possibilities.
4. Provision of adequate protection of interest vis-à-vis enforcement of intellectual property rights.
5. Creation of procedures effective enough for implementation of this agreement.
6. Incorporation of a framework so as to facilitate future trilateral, regional and multilateral collaboration. North America Free Trade Agreement mega trade deal among three North American Nations. It is now being replaced by The United States Mexico Canada Agreement (USMCA). It includes major changes on cars and new policies on labor and environmental standards, intellectual property protections, and some digital trade provisions.

New Changes

US farmers get more access to the Canadian dairy market

Sunset clause: The agreement adds a 16 year sunset clause along with 6 year review clause.

Intellectual property and digital trade: The deal extends the terms of copyright to 70 years beyond the life of the author. It also prohibits duties on things like music and ebooks, and protections for internet companies so they're not liable for content their users produce.

Labor provisions: Greater protections to workers, including migrants and women.

Automobiles must have 75 percent of their components manufactured in Mexico, the US, or Canada to qualify for zero tariffs.

Impact on India

For cars, the free trade rules will apply only if the local content is 75% (up from the old 62%) will come as a shock for India Automobile Manufactures. India is much poorer than Mexico and can plead against the imposition of a minimum wage of $16 an hour on Indian factories exporting to the US. But India must prepare for a day when the US demands for some minimum wage stipulations. That can only make Indian exports even less competitive than they are today. The fight was essentially over dairy products in NAFTA and same can happen with India, the US will continue to pressurize India over dairy sector. WTO rules give members like India the right to make their own rules on price control and compulsory licensing of drugs. The US has strengthened rules for intellectual property rights (IPR) in USMCA, to improve the profitability of his drug and entertainment industries. Hence the price of stent will be affected.

India State of Forest Report, 2019

News Excerpt

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has recently **released the biennial "India State of Forest Report (ISFR)". The report** provides a detailed insight into the progress achieved in the past two years in various criteria such as total forest cover, carbon stock, mangrove cover, bamboo cover etc. At the same time, it highlights certain concerns such as decrease of forest cover in India's northeast region, among others.

Pre-Connect

- India State of Forest Report (ISFR) is published by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) which has been mandated to assess the forest and tree resources of the country including wall-to-wall forest cover mapping in a biennial cycle.
- Starting in 1987, 16 assessments have been completed so far. ISFR 2019 is the 16th report in the series.
- The information presented in the ISFR 2019 is the primary information on different parameters of the forest resources of the country.

- It should be noted that the ISFR 2019 report takes the **country's forest cover as, all patches of land with a** tree canopy density of more than 10% and more than 1 ha in area, irrespective of land use, ownership and species of trees.

Highlights of the Report

➢ Increase in forest cover
- o The total forest cover of the country is 7,12,249 sq. km which is 21.67% of the geographical area of the country.
- o There is an increase of 3,976 sq. km (0.56%) of forest cover, as compared to the previous assessment i.e. ISFR 2017.
- o The top five states in terms of an increase in forest cover are,

   Karnataka > Andhra Pradesh > Kerala > Jammu & Kashmir > Himachal Pradesh
➢ Increase in forest cover in hill districts
- o Forest cover in the hill districts of the country is 2,84,006 sq. km, which is 40.30% of the total geographical area of these districts. This has also shown an increase of 544 sq. km (0.19%).
➢ Forest cover in the tribal districts

Forest Survey of India (FSI)
Founded in June 1981, it's an organization under the Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change. It conducts forest surveys, studies and research to periodically monitor the changing situation of land and forest resources.

Soil Organic Carbon (SOC)
It is a measureable component of soil organic matter. Soil organic carbon (SOC) refers only to the carbon component of organic compounds. Sequestering carbon in SOC is seen as one way to mitigate climate change by reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide.

(fig: Classification of Forest Covers)

- o The total forest cover in the tribal districts is 4,22,351 sq. km, which is 37.54% of the geographical area of these districts.
- o **There's** a decrease of 741 sq. km of forest cover within the RFA/GW (Recorded Forest Area/ Green Wash) in the tribal districts and an increase of 1,922 sq. km outside.
➢ Decrease in forest cover in North Eastern region
- o Total forest cover in the North-Eastern region is 1,70,541 sq. km, which is 65.05% of its geographical area.
- o **There's** a decrease in forest cover to the extent of 765 sq. km (0.45%) in the region.
- o Except for Assam and Tripura, all the States in the region show decrease in forest cover.
- o Decline in forest cover is attributed to traditional farming practice of shifting cultivation (Jhum), certain developmental activities, clearing trees for poppy cultivation etc.
➢ Increase in tree cover
- o The tree cover of the country is estimated as 95,027 sq. km which is 2.89%of the total geographical area.
- o There is an increase of (1.29%) in tree cover from the previous year.
➢ Increase in Mangrove cover by 1.10% as compared to the previous year.
➢ Increase in Bamboo bearing area by 3,229 sq. km as compared to the previous year.
➢ Increase in total carbon stock in forest

- o Increase by 42.6 million tonnes in the carbon stock of the country as compared to the last assessment of 2017.
- o Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) contributes 56% to the total forest carbon stock of the country.
- ➢ Wetland area
  - o There are 62,466 wetlands covering 3.83% of the area within the RFA/GW of the country.
  - o States with the largest area of wetlands: Gujarat > West Bengal
- ➢ Dependence for fuelwood on forests is highest in the State of Maharashtra.
- ➢ Dependence for fodder, small timber and bamboo, is highest in Madhya Pradesh.
- ➢ Analysis offire proneness of various States
  - o The analysis of fire-prone forest areas of different severity classes reveals that 21.40% of the forest cover of the country is high to extremelyfire-prone.
  - o This information would enable the State Fire Departments to better manage and control forest fires in the respective States.
- ➢ The 2019 report has for the first time included a new chapter, listing forest types, its biodiversity and the type of plants and trees found i.e., for the first time it has looked into the qualitative nature of the forest cover.
- ➢ For the first time, a National Forest Inventory is created on output from the forest.
- ➢ National Forest Inventory assesses growing stock of trees, number of trees, bamboo, soil carbon, occurrence of invasive species and several other parameters depicting growth & health of the forest.

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Worrying Findings

- ✓ India has continued to lose its Moderately Dense Forests (MDFs) since 2011, except for a marginal increase of 0.04 per cent between 2017 and 2019. This is primarily because MDFs are close to human habitations,and become prey to rampant expansion of human settlements.

- ✓ Very Dense Forests (VDFs) account for a meagre 3% of India's geographical area with an increase of only 1.14 per cent between 2017 and 2019. VDFs forests absorb maximum carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and therefore are of utmost importance. This abysmal performance can be gauged by the fact that VDFs increased by about 14% between 2015 and 2017.
- ✓ The report presents a gloomy picture of the forests in the North Eastern States which is clear from observations of some reports that loss of forests was one of the causes behind rainfall deficit in the North East this monsoon.

Measures taken by government to increase forest cover

- ▪ National policies like Green India Mission, REDD-plus policy, Joint Forest Management (JFM), National Afforestation Programme, National Agro-Forestry Policy (NAP) and funds under Compensatory Afforestation to states.
- ▪ Successful agroforestry practices, better conservation of forests, improvement of scrub areas to forest areas, increase in mangrove cover, conservation and protection activities, among other things, have all led to an increase in forest and tree cover.
- ▪ Practices like Aerial seeding (by spraying seeds through an aircraft or a drone)& Dart

seeding (throwing darts containing seeds onto open ground)helped in plantation in inaccessible areas.

- This can be further enhanced by steps like the Green Highways (Plantations & Maintenance) Policy to develop a 1,40,000 km-long treeline with plantation along both sides of national highways.

Way forward

➤ Forests are without a doubt one of the most essential variables in the equation of human survival.

➤ It is of utmost importance that the report is shared, and understood more widely and that we understand the impact, value and relevance of our forest resources better.

➤ India must review its initiatives to revive forests and move away from such practices which are detrimental to our forests.This will help India fulfil one of itsIntended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC)of enhancing its forest cover which will absorb 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide.

➤ Although the studies, surveys and research are very thorough across various reports, it is important to realize their objectives in letter and spirit.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Van Dhan Yojana, Amazon Forest Fires, community forest

Blue Flag Programme

News Excerpt

The Government of India has identified **13 beaches for 'Blue Flag'** certification in the country.

Pre-Connect

- The Blue Flag Programme for beaches and marinas is run by the international, non-governmental, non-profit **organisation** 'Foundation for Environmental Education' **(FEE).**
- The certification is based on 33 stringent criteria in four major heads-
  o Environmental Education and Information,
  o Bathing Water Quality,
  o Environment management and conservation
  o Safety and Services in beaches.
- Spain tops the list with 566 such beaches; Greece and France follow with 515 and 395, respectively.

Features

➤ **The 'Blue Flag' beach is an Eco**-tourism model endeavouring to provide to the tourists/beachgoers clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, safe and healthy environment and sustainable development of the area.

➤ These beaches will have proper waste disposal systems and access to clean drinking water for the tourists. Knowledge about the coastal ecosystem and sensitive natural areas will also be given to the tourists.

➤ A choice of environment-friendly activities will be offered to all the visitors and fully functional toilets will be available to all.

➤ The rules and regulations will be very strict and no unauthorized camping or dumping will be allowed.

➢ A list of all the rules and information about Blue Flag beaches will be displayed on the beaches.

Highlights

✓ The pilot beaches that have been identified for the certification are from Diu, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Odisha, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep.

✓ Once approved, beaches are given the certification for a year. They must have to apply for renewal annually to keep flying the flag at their locations.

✓ Chandrabhaga beach of Odisha's Konark coast was the first to complete the tag certification process.

FIGHTING FOR THE FLAG

➢ Beaches have to comply with 33 environment and tourism related norms to get the Blue Flag certificate

➢ The environment ministry embarked on the Blue Flag project in 2017

THE 'BLUE FLAG' CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED BY DENMARK-BASED FOUNDATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION (FEE)

➢ Pune-based BVG Constructions is the contractor for development of Rushikonda beach

➢ Blue Flag certification will help woo more foreign tourists

Vizianagaram attracted around **53 lakh** domestic and 3,512 foreign visitors in 2018

➢ The criteria for getting the certification include, the beach being plastic and pollution free, equipped with waste management system, ensured safety of visitors, bathing showers with clean water, cafeteria, parking space and environmental education for beach users

➢ Visakhapatnam attracted over 2.01 crore domestic tourists and 89,680 foreign tourists in 2018

✓ The Indian beaches are being developed by the Society for Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM), an environment ministry's body working for the management of coastal areas, according to the Blue Flag certification standards.

✓ The aim of this project will be improving the aquatic life by proper management and disposal of pollutants and to develop ecological tourism with constant progress and development of tourist facilities.

Advantages

▪ Blue Flag contributes infighting poverty by supporting local economies through increasing tourism and promoting free access to beaches, business activities and services.

▪ Blue Flag environmental quality standards help to create clean and healthy environments in order to minimize illnesses, infections or contagious diseases.

▪ Blue Flag actively supports the employment and empowerment of women and local minorities in all positions, aiming at strengthening their involvement in the society and workplace.

▪ It helps in achieving SDG targets.

▪ Blue Flag encourages the development and use of sustainable transportation.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Swachha Bharat Mission, SDGs

Conclusion

India should try to develop capabilities so that more and more beaches could meet the criteria **under 'The Blue Flag programme'. It would help us achieving SDG goals** and give a boost to the tourism sector in India.
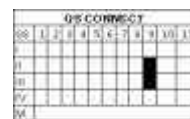
Global Climate Risk Index

News Excerpt

In the Climate Risk Index 2020, India's rank has worsened from the14th spot in 2017 to 5th in 2018 in the global vulnerability ladder.

Pre-Connect

• Germanwatch is an independent development and environmental organisation in Germany which publishes Global Climate Risk Index annually.

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- The annually published Global Climate Risk Index analyses to what extent countries have been affected by the impacts of weather-related loss events (storms, floods, heat waves etc.).

Highlights

➢ Japan was the worst-hit country in 2018, while Germany and Canada were also in the **'bottom 10', that is, '**most affected'.

➢ Altogether, in the last 20 years, about 4,95,000 people died as a direct result of more than 12000 extreme weather events globally and the losses between 1999 and 2018 amounted to around US$ 3.54 trillion (in purchasing power parities).

➢ Heatwaves were one of the major causes of damage in 2018. Of the ten most affected countries in 2018, Germany, Japan and India were suffering from extended periods of heat.

➢ So far, the industrialised countries have refused to even negotiate UN climate finance facility to reimburse the loss of land, culture and human lives.

Climate Risk Index 2020, world map ranking 2018

➢ **This year's** climate summit in Madrid needs to address the lack of additional climate finance to help the poorest people and countries, which are hardest hit, to address Loss and Damage.
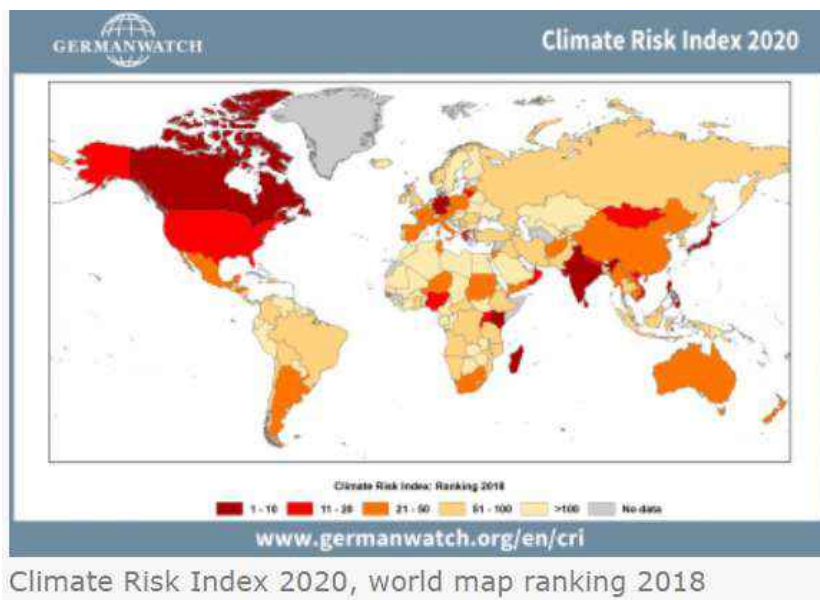
India Specific Findings

✓ According to the index, India was the 5th most vulnerable country to climate change in 2018.

✓ India has also recorded the highest number of fatalities due to climate change and the second-highest monetary losses from its impact in 2018.

✓ **India's high rank i**s due to severe rainfalls, followed by heavy flooding and landslide that killed over 1000 people.

✓ India also suffered from extreme heat. While the human death toll was kept considerably low due to public measures, the economic damages were quite severe.

✓ Extreme Events: Case of India

▪ According to the ministry of home affairs, 2,405 lives have been reported to be lost during the financial year 2018-19 in the country due to cyclonic storms/flash floods/landslides/cloudbursts etc.

> Germanwatch
> It is an independent development and environmental NGO, which is based in Bonn, Germany and was founded in 1991.It releases CCPI as its annual publication.
> NewClimate Institute
> **It's a research, policy design and** knowledge sharing platform based in Germany.
> Climate Action Network Europe
> CAN is an umbrella group of environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active on the issue of climate change. It is a worldwide network of over 1100 non-governmental organizations in 120 countries.

▪ India experienced 431 major natural disasters during the period 1980-2010, resulting in loss of human lives, property and resources.

▪ In 2019, while portions of southern and northern India were fighting with drought-like situations in the summertime, the Northeast and western coastal regions were battered

with torrential downpour.

- National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), which comprises missions in specific areas of solar energy, energyefficiency, water, agriculture, Himalayan ecosystem,sustainable habitat, green India and strategic knowledge onclimate change, is being implemented to mitigate the impacts of such extreme events.
- Thirty-three states/Union Territories have prepared their State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) in line with NAPCC taking into accountthe state's specific issues relating to climate change.
- The National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project is under implementationin eight coastal states to mitigate the sufferings of the coastal community.National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) under the aegis of Ministry of Home Affairs(MHA) will implement the Project in coordination with participating State Governments and the National Institute for Disaster Management (NIDM).

Way Forward
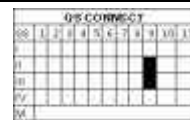
↔ While scientific knowledge and studies have improved our comprehension of extreme weather events / hydro-meteorological disasters and climate change, the communities have also endured local knowledge and wisdom developed through shared experiences of centuries.

↔ Hence a reservoir of local power that is currently available in abundance, needs to be acknowledged, understood, examined, used and incorporated with modem scientific understanding.

↔ **Skills shouldn't be 'assembled' from scratch, but they need to be 'developed' on the present base of** traditional knowledge, through a vital evaluation of the present capacities, gaps in the abilities and specific strategies to be taken in the creation of the abilities to tackle the requirements of climate change adaptations.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> NDMA, NDRF, Sendai Framework, Hugo Framework, NAPCC

Climate Change Performance Index

News Excerpt

India for the first time joins the top ten countries in Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2020 which was released at the 'COP 25' climate change conference held in Madrid, Spain.

Pre-Connect

- The CCPI is **an independent monitoring tool of a country's climate protection performance.** It aims to enhance transparency in international climate politics and enables the comparability of climate protection efforts and progress made by individual countries.

- The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) is an annual publication by Germanwatch, NewClimate Institute and Climate Action Network Europe.

- The CCPI 2020 results illustrate the main regional differences in climate protection and performance within the 57 evaluated countries and the EU.

- **The rankings are based on a country's** aggregate performance in four **categories "GHG Emissions", "Renewable Energy" and "Energy Use", as well as on "**Climate Policy**".**

> ### Conference of the Parties (COP)
> ❖ COP is **the "supreme body" of the**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) [UNFCCC, signed in 1992 at Rio Summit], as it is its highest decision-making authority. The climate change process revolves around the annual sessions of the COP.
> ❖ COP25isthe 25th edition of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, where the primary aim wastocomplete the rule-book to the 2015 Paris Agreement that will become effective in 2020 to replace the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

Highlights of the Index

➢ India ranked 9th in the index, joins the top 10.

➢ China, the largest global emitter ranked 30th in the list.
➢ The top position was bagged by Sweden. However, no country could meet 100% of all standards, so the first three places in this list are vacant. The list starts from the fourth position with Sweden on it.
➢ For the first time, the United States of America is ranked at the very bottom of the CCPI.

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Steps taken by India to improve its CCPI performance

✓ Government aims to increase the share of non-fossil fuels to 175 GW by 2022 and further take it to 450 GW.
✓ National Clean Air Programme to tackle the increasing air pollution problem in a comprehensive manner.
✓ Improvement in the total forest and tree cover as mentioned by ISFR 2019.

National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)
❖ A time bound national level strategy for pan India implementation to tackle the increasing air pollution problem across the country
❖ Five-year action plan with 2019 as the first year.
❖ The tentative national level target of 20%–30% reduction of PM2.5 and PM10 concentration by 2024 is proposed under the NCAP taking 2017 as the base year for the comparison of concentration.
❖ It also includes increasing number of monitoring stations in the country including rural monitoring stations, technology support, emphasis on awareness and capacity building initiatives, setting up of certification agencies for monitoring equipment, source apportionment studies, emphasis on

Observations made by the report about India

✓ India has ranked among the top ten in this year's CCPI with ambitious 2030 targets.
✓ However, despite high ratings for the performance of its climate policy, experts say the Indian government is yet to draw up a roadmap to reduce subsidies on fossil fuels in a phased manner. India needs to consequently reduce the country's high dependence on coal.

Way Forward

▪ The government, NGOs, civil society and all other stakeholders must realize that the ranking primarily rests on the ambitious 2030 targets of India, which

PEPPER IT WITH
IPCC Assessment reports, AQI, Graded Response Action Plan

must be achieved in order to celebrate the success of the country's effort towards climate protection.
▪ Lessons should be drawn from countries performing better than India and must be replicated in the country along with more stringent laws and amendments to achieve climate change targets.

Operation Clean Art

News Excerpt

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) has initiated the 'Operation Clean Art' across India to crackdown illegal trade in the Mongoose hair.
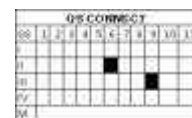
Pre-Connect

• Mongooses are killed for their hair on a large scale.

WCCB
❖ It is a statutory multi-disciplinary body established under 'The wildlife Protection Act, 1972'
❖ It comes under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
❖ It was constituted to combat organized wildlife crime in the country.
❖ It became operational in 2008.
❖ The Bureau has itsheadquarter in New Delhi and five regional offices at Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Jabalpur.

- Illegal wildlife trade harms wild populations of animals and plants and pushes endangered species toward extinction.
- India has a strong legal and policy framework to regulate and restrict wildlife trade.
- The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 was enacted for the protection of plants and animal species. It has six schedules. Schedule I and part II of Schedule II provide absolute protection to the listed animals.

Not a pretty picture

A look at the seizure of paint brushes made of mongoose hair in recent years

	Cases	No. of brushes seized	Arrests
2017	15	62,924	23
2018	16	79,021	19
2019	27	54,352	49

- For about 150 kg of mongoose hair, at least 6,000 animals would have been killed, according to an estimate
- Mongoose is listed in Schedule II Part 2 of the Wildlife Protection Act
- Any smuggling or possession of its body part is a non-bailable offence

- India is also a member of the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora) since 1976. CITES(also known as the Washington Convention) is an international agreement between governments that aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.
- In order to curb the illegal trade of wildlife and that of endangered species, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has been established.
- Indian Government has taken a number of initiatives to conserve wildlife in the country like- Project Tiger, Project Elephant, Project Hangul etc.

> **About Mongoose**
> ❖ Brushes made of mongoose hair are in great demand in several countries.
> ❖ IUCN status- most mongoose species are listed as Least Concerned.
> ❖ Protected under Schedule II of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
> ❖ Also covered under CITES

Highlights

➢ Operation Clean Art is the first pan India operation to crackdown on the smuggling of mongoose hair in the country.

➢ An estimate by the Wildlife Trust of India in 2002 said that around 50,000 mongooses are killed by poachers every year.

➢ It is estimated that for a kg of mongoose hair at least 50 animals have to be killed.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, CITES, Project Tiger, Project Lion, Project Hangul

Way Forward

✓ Painters should shun brushes made of mongoose hair.

✓ Since the Mongoose hair holds the colour better and the alternatives available in the market are not of good quality,more research should be done to make brushes that fit the requirements of an artist.

✓ India has strong laws to restrict illegal wildlife trade, but the key is the proper implementation of these laws.

✓ Involvement of the people in the effort of conserving wildlife should be focussed upon.

Asian Elephant Specialist Group

News Excerpt

The International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) 10th Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG) Meeting was recently held in Malaysia.

Pre-Connect

- The Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG) is a global network of voluntary specialists concerned with the study, monitoring, management, and conservation of Asian elephants

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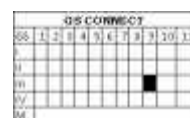
(Elephas maximus) that exist in 13 range states.

- Gajah is the bi-annual journal of the IUCN/SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG).
- The Indian Government launched the Project Elephant in 1992 to protect elephants and their corridors, to address the issue of their conflict with men and welfare of captive elephants.
- The Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) programme, under CITES, was started in 2003 to measures levels and trends in illegal hunting of elephants.
- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has submitted a proposal to include the mainland Asian elephant or Indian elephant in Appendix 1 of the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS).

Highlights

➢ The meeting is aimed to discuss issues like national action plans for elephant conservation by Asian elephant range states, best practices in managing human-elephant conflict, mechanisms to involve group members in monitoring the illegal killing of elephants, issues related to captive elephant welfare and sharing and learning from the African experience.

➢ India has the largest population of Asiatic elephants. Among states, Karnataka and then Assam has the highest number of elephants.

➢ Asian Elephants once ranged over nine million km^2 in Asia, today, the species has disappeared from 95% of its historical range and are extinct in West Asia, Java, and most of China.

➢ Loss and fragmentation of habitat, Poaching and Human elephant conflict are the most important factor impacting elephant populations in most range countries in Asia. A **large number of elephant's death is reported due to** train hit, electrocution, poisoning etc.

➢ All populations of Asian elephants are included in CITES (Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora) Appendix I.

➢ The global status of the species in the IUCN Red List is listed as Endangered.TheSumatran Elephants are listed as Critically Endangered.

➢ The Indian government has accorded the highest degree of legal protection to elephants and listed it under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972.

Way Forward

✓ Unlike India, the Asian elephant is not provided with a high degree of protection during their migration to Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Burma.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> MIKE, CITES, Project Elephant

✓ The Asian Elephants should be included in Appendix-1 of CMS.

✓ The conflict between human and elephants should be minimised through acceptable zonation of land occupation and we should strive to create a society absent of greed-driven poaching.

✓ All 13 states should genuinely utilize the platform of AsESG to coordinate and cooperate to stop the killing of elephants and smuggling of products related to elephants.

✓ **Increase awareness of elephant's plight among masses through various programs.**

Loktak inland waterways project

News Excerpt

The Union Ministry of Shipping approved the development of Loktak Inland Waterways project in Manipur.

Pre-Connect

- Inland waterways are networks in the form of rivers, canals, backwaters and creeks that can be used for transportation in place of or in addition to roads and rails.
- There is an extensive waterway network existing in India. However, these are the least

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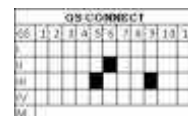
explored means of transportation.

- India has 5 existing and 106 notified national waterways. Out of nearly 14,500 km of navigable waterways, inland waterways transport accounts for around 1% of total freight.
- Inland waterways in India include - the backwaters of Kerala, the Brahmaputra River, Gangetic-Bhagirathi-Hooghly Rivers, and Barak River, rivers located in Goa, the inland waters in Mumbai and the Godavari-Krishna Rivers.
- Inland waterways are recognized as fuel-efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly transportation. It will also reduce congestion on road and rail transport.

Loktak Lake

- ❖ It is the largest freshwater lake in Northeast and is famous for the phumdis floating over it.
- ❖ KeibulLamjao National Park, only floating national park, is also located in this lake.
- ❖ The Sangai deer which is an endemic and endangered subspecies of brown-antlered deer is found only in the KeibulLamjao National Park.
- ❖ Apart from Keoladeo National Park, Loktak Lake, is also on the Montreux Record.
- ❖ It is a Ramsar wetland site and is covered under the Wetlands (Conservation and Management)

Analytica

Advantages

- ➢ The approval of this project by the Government of India will give a boost to tourism in the state.
- ➢ This will give a boost to inland water transport connectivity in the North-Eastern states and also give a big boost to the local economy.
- ➢ It will be the cheapest means of transport in the area.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Ramsar Convention, Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010

- ➢ There is less chance of accident so it is safer than road and rail. The scheme has been approved on the basis that, it will not harm the environment and its flow will not affect the natural resources.

Concerns

- ✓ However, the fishing community, residing in and around the Loktak Lake area, and some environmental activist are opposing the Inland waterway project claiming it will destroy the biodiversity and the livelihood of fisherfolks.
- ✓ Uses of motorboats will greatly disturb the eco-system of the Lake. It will not only affect the breeding of fish but also disturb the annual migratory birds that visit the lake every year.
- ✓ Some of these birds come to Loktak from Central Asia, Tibet, Siberia, and Yunnan province- flying 3,2000-4,800 kilometres over the Himalayan ranges.
- ✓ The project is also against the order passed by the Manipur High Court, banning new project or development programme in the Lake.
- ✓ The approval to the project was given without conducting a proper environmental impact assessment of an eco-system which is very sensitive.

Way Forward

- ▪ In case of conflict between development and environment, the focus should be given to sustainable development.
- ▪ Proper Environmental Impact Assessment of the project should be done before its implementation.

Houbara Bustard

News Excerpt

Recently, the Government of Pakistan has issued special permits to the Emir of Qatar and nine other members of the royal family to hunt the Houbara Bustard, an internationally protected bird species.
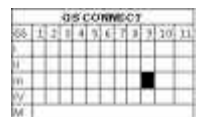
Pre-Connect

- The Houbara Bustard is a large bustard native to North Africa, Canary Islands and Southwestern Asia, where it lives in arid habitats.

- Originally an inhabitant of the colder central Asian region, the Houbara bustard, in order to avoid harsh weather conditions, migrates southwards every year to spend the winter in a relatively warmer environment in Pakistan.

- IUCN Status- Vulnerable

- According to the International Fund for Houbara Conservation (IFHC), the main reasons for the Houbara's decline are poaching, unregulated hunting, along with the degradation of its natural habitat.

> **The Great Indian Bustard**
> ❖ It is Critically Endangered, having been extirpated from 90% of its former range in India.
> ❖ The largest remaining population is found in the Thar Desert in Rajasthan, a vast landscape of sand dunes, scrublands and grasslands.
> ❖ Seeking to protect the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard (GIB), the Ministry of Environment has recently decided to declare their habitats as conservation reserves and asked power companies to consider placing high voltage lines under the ground as the birds have died after coming in contact with them.
> ❖ In 2018, Rajasthan Government announced Rs 12 crore-Project Great Indian Bustard. The project has charted out a plan to recover the population of the critically endangered bird.

Analytica

The Pakistan Problem

➤ Reports suggest that the population of Houbara bustard has declined in Punjab province of Pakistan over the three-year period from 2017 to 2019, suggesting that hunting of the bird in the province is not sustainable.

➤ The shockingly low results of a recent survey could have been even more severe if the feeding points of the bird were not added and captive birds were not released before the December 2019 surveys.

➤ While Pakistanis are not allowed to hunt the bird, the Pakistan government invites Arab royals to hunt it every year and in return tries to gain certain favours which is evident from the fact that Arab

> **Environment EducationAwareness and Training (EEAT)**
> ❖ EEAT was launched by (MoEF&CC) as the central sector scheme in 1983-84.
> ❖ It aims to **mobilize people's** participation for conservation of environment.
> ❖ Implementation of National Green Corps (NGC) is one of its objectives.

dignitaries have supported significant development activities in the areas, particularly in the fields of human development, housing and infrastructure development (roads and airports).

Way forward
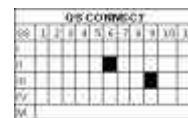
✓ Lessons should be drawn from countries like India which have succeeded in breeding the 'Critically Endangered' Great Indian Bustard and has created a world record.

✓ Actions of The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) government should be appreciated and replicated, who have refused to grant permission to foreign dignitaries for hunting houbara bustard that is at risk of extinction.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> UNEP, National Action Plan for Conservation of Migratory Species, IUCN Red List

✓ In the wake of its dwindling population, the migratory bird is not only protected under various international nature conservation treaties, but its hunting is also banned under local wildlife protection laws. Hence, the Pakistani citizens and the international community should put pressure on the government bilaterally and on global forums to refuse the hunting of the vulnerable species by powerful foreign nationals.

Programme of Ecoclubs

News Excerpt

The annual meet of state nodal agencies for implementing the National Green **Corpsprogrammepopularly known as "**a programme of Ecoclubs**"**, launched under the Environment Education Awareness and Training (EEAT) of Ministry of Environment,Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) was organized for the first time.

Pre-Connect

- Under the National Green Corps (NGC), the Ecoclub programme was initiated in 2001-2002.
- The first annual meet in 2019 was organized by the **Environment Ministry's Education** Division in collaboration with the GEER Foundation (Gujarat).

Analytica

Objectives of the programme

➢ To impart knowledge to school children through hands-on experience, about their immediate environment, interactions within it and the problems therein.

➢ To develop requisite skills of observation, experimentation, survey, recording, analysis and reasoning for conserving the environment through various activities.

➢ To inculcate the proper attitude towards the environment and its conservation through community interactions.

➢ To sensitize children to issues related to environment and development through field visits and demonstrations.

➢ To promote logical and independent thinking among children so that they are able to make the right choices in a spirit of scientific inquiry.

➢ To motivate and stimulate young minds by involving them in action projects related to environmental conservation.

National Green Corps (NGC)
❖ National Green Corps is a Programme started in 2001-02 by the Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change.
❖ The Programme aims to provide opportunities for children to understand the environment and environmental problems through school eco-clubs.

Implementation procedure

➢ The scheme is being operated through Eco-clubs of 50-60 students having an interest in environment-related issues, formed in member schools.

➢ Eco clubs are supervised by a Teacher In-charge who is selected from among the teachers of the member schools on the basis of his/her interest in environment-related issues.

➢ There is District Implementation and Monitoring Committee to supervise, organise training for In-charge teachers and monitor periodically the implementation of the scheme at the District level.

➢ There is a State Steering Committee for guidance, direction and to oversee the implementation of the scheme.

➢ The State Nodal Agency coordinates the implementation of the scheme in the State and organize related activities like training to Master Trainers.

➢ The National Steering Committee will give overall direction to the programme and ensure linkages at all levels.

Way Forward

PEPPER IT WITH
Fridays for Future, Environment Act, 1986
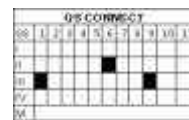
✓ The scheme is continuing to build young cadres of students and trigger their sensitivity towards environment protection and conservation. It is envisaged that the number of Ecoclubs shall be enhanced from about 1.5 lakh at present to 2 lakh in the ensuing year 2020-21.

✓ No country in the world has more young people than in India and the time is ripe to sensitize and capitalize on this young force to right the wrongs done to the environment previously.

SDG India Index

News Excerpt

NITI Aayog recently released the second edition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index. It comprehensively documents the progress made by **India's States and Union Territories towards achieving the 2030 SDG targets.**

Pre-Connect

The first edition of the SDG India Index was launched in December 2018. It was the first tool developed by any large country to monitor the progress towards achieving SDGs at the sub-national level.

Highlights of the Report

- The SDG India Index and Dashboard 2019 tracks the progress of and ranks all States and UTs on 100 indicators drawn from Ministry of Statistics and Programme **Implementation (MoSPI's) National** Indicator Framework.

- A composite score was computed in the range of 0–100 for each State/UT based on its aggregate performance across 16 SDGs.

- The Index spans 16 out of 17 SDGs with a qualitative assessment on Goal 17.

- **India's composite score has improved** from 57 in 2018 to 60 in 2019, thereby showing noticeable progress.

- Ending hunger and achieving equality are the areas where most states fall short, with all India scores for these goals at 35 and 42 points respectively.

- The second SDG-Zero Hunger-shows sharp divergence in the performance of states. Kerala, Goa and many parts of North East have scored above 65.

- However, 22 of the states and UTs have scored below 50. Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Chhattisgarh have scored below 30, showing abysmal levels of hunger and malnutrition.

- The maximum gains hasbeen made in Goals 6 (clean water and sanitation), 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure) and 7 (affordable and clean energy).

- **All three states that were in the 'Aspirant' category (with score/s in the range of 0–49)—** Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam—have graduated **to the 'Performer' category (50–64).**

- Kerala achieved the first rank in the composite SDG Index with a score of 70, followed by Himachal Pradesh at 69. Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu ranked at the third position with the score of 67.

- The biggest improvers since 2018 are UP (which has moved from the 29th position to the 23rd), Orissa (23rd to 15th), and Sikkim (15th to 7th).

GOAL-WISE TOP STATE/UTs

Goal 1: No Poverty
Tamil Nadu, Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh

Goal 2: Zero Hunger
Goa and Chandigarh

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being
Kerala and Puducherry

Goal 4: Quality Education
Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh

Goal 5: Gender Equality
Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh

Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
Andhra Pradesh and Chandigarh

Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
Sikkim and Puducherry

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
Telangana and Chandigarh

Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
Kerala, Gujarat, Daman and Diu, Delhi and Dadra and Nagar Haveli

Goal 10: Reduced Inequality
Telangana and Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
Himachal Pradesh, Goa and Chandigarh

Goal 12: Sustainable Consumption and Production
Nagaland and Chandigarh

Goal 13: Climate Action
Karnataka and Lakshadweep

Goal 14: Life Below Water
Karnataka

Goal 15: Life on Land
Sikkim, Manipur, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry

Analytica

➢ The SDG India Index and Dashboard have been developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), the United Nations in India, and the Global Green Growth Institute(The Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), headquartered in Seoul, South Korea, is a treaty-based international, inter-governmental organization dedicated to supporting and promoting strong, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in developing countries and emerging economies).

➢ It indicates where the country and its States and UTs currently are on SDG implementation, and charts the distance to be travelled to reach the SDG targets.

➢ Government initiatives through many programmes have helped to achieve many targets of SDG.

Sustainable Development Report 2019

❖ The Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) released the fourth annual review of countries performance on SDGs.

❖ **The report finds that "no country is on track for achieving all 17 Goals"**

❖ The report identifies additional challenges related to poverty eradication (SDG 1) – with more than half of **the world's countries not on track to achieve this** Goal – as well as income and wealth inequalities (SDG 10) and gaps in health (SDG 3) and education (SDG 4) outcomes in both developed and developing countries.

❖ The report further cautions that land use and food **production "are not meeting people's needs," and** agriculture is destroying biodiversity and forests, squandering water and releasing 25% of global GHG emissions.

❖ India has been ranked 115 out of 162 countries with a score of 61.1.

➢ The Swachh Bharat Mission has contributed largely to the high scores on the sixth SDG-clean water and sanitation.

➢ Government schemes to provide electricity and cooking gas connections to rural India contributed to the progress in seventh SDG (affordable and clean energy).

➢ Nutrition and gender equality continue to be problem areas for the country requiring a more focussed approach.

➢ The Sustainable Development Goals is a fitting framework which calls attention to the challengesto a sustainable future and organises individual and collective response.

PEPPER IT WITH
Aspirational District Programme, Zonal Councils, Atal Innovation Mission

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➢ In 2020, the world enters the final decade for achieving the SDGs—**the 'Decade for Action'.** The *SDG India Index* 2.0 and the dashboard enables India to both track and encourage accelerated progress to meet the SDGs across all its States and Union Territories.

➢ **The world is now in the fifth year of the SDG era. India's National Development Agenda i**s **mirrored in the SDGs. India's progress in the global Goals is crucial for the world as the** country is home to about one-**sixth of the world's population.**

➢ The SDG India Indexwill also help highlight crucial gaps related to monitoring SDGs and the need for improving statistical systems at the National/State/UT levels.

Way Forward

India, with the world's 17 per cent of the population, holds the key to global SDG achievement.Today, the country faces multiple challenges in several sectors of development, be it health,nutrition, education, sanitation and infrastructure. However, these challenges also make India conducive for developing innovative solutions to address them and also provide a useful lensfor solving similar problems in other parts of the world.

SDGs are an opportunity for all of us to improve our world collectively with the involvement of civil society organisations, private sector and citizens, making the goals a result of a genuinely inclusive process.

Elephant Colony in MP

News Excerpt

For the first time, Bandhavgarh reserve forest in Madhya Pradesh has a colony of elephants.

Pre-Connect

- Elephant is a Schedule-1 species under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- In 2019, the Union Ministry for Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted a technical committee to develop a National Elephant Action Plan (NEAP).

Analytica

➢ In November 2018, herd of 38 elephants wandered into the forests of Bandhavgarh looking for food and water like every year and preferred to stay back in Madhya Pradesh while choosing not to return to the withering forests of north Chhattisgarh.

➢ Some experts have expressed fear of conflict between this newly settled elephant herd and **tigers in the "Tiger State"** Madhya Pradesh while others believe that while one is herbivore, the other is carnivore, thus competition is ruled out.

ELEPHANT CORRIDORS IN INDIA
Approximately 30,000 elephants left in India

Elephants are widely distributed in the central and south Western Ghats, northeast India, east India, north India and some parts of southern peninsular India.

About **50** elephants lose their lives every year.

India loses nearly **400** people due to man-animal conflict.

India has 138 Elephant corridors. 26 Elephant Reserves extending over about 60,000 sqkm have been formally notified by different state govts.

While most of the tiger habitats fall within the protected area, only 22% of elephant habitat has some kind of protection.

5 NGOs
Elephant Family, International Fund for Animal Welfare, IUCN Netherlands, World Land Trust and Wildlife Trust of India - have collected £20 million to save Indian elephants.

➢ This episode suggests that the focus should be more on instilling a sense of co-existence with the animals among villagers to avoid possible human-elephant conflict in future. In fact, the main focus of the NEAP will be to mitigate human-elephant conflict, along with improvement of habitat.

➢ A detailed research of elephant movement should be done to analyse factors behind it and reasons for their staying back and to establish cause-effect relationship.
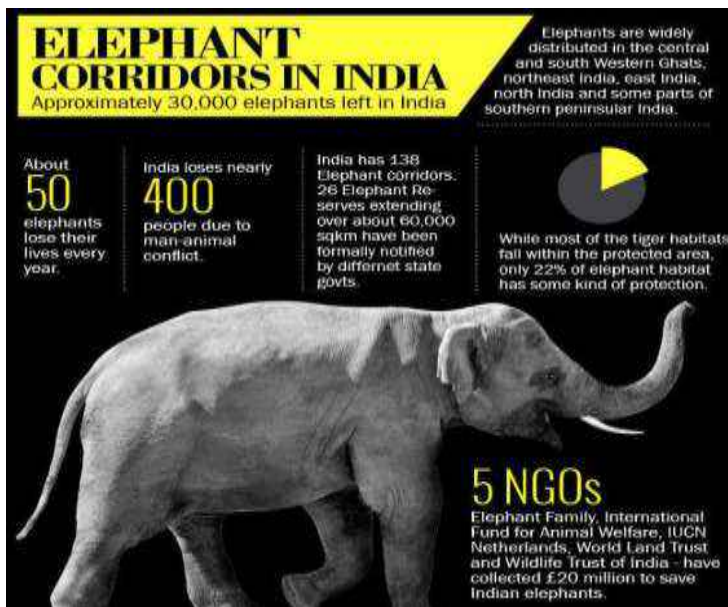
European Green Deal

News Excerpt

The European Union has come up with a climate action plan when the global climate talksin the recently concluded COP 25 failed to reach key objectives.

Pre-Connect

- COP25 is the 25th edition of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, where the primary aim was to complete the rule-book to the 2015 Paris Agreement that will become effective in 2020 to replace the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

- The annual climate talks ended in Madrid (host of COP25) with a disappointing outcome. The talks were unable to define the rules of a new carbon market to be set up under the Paris Agreement.

- While the meeting was still on, the European Union, whose 28 member countries are together the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world after China and the United States, came up with an announcement on

Climate warnings: On unmet emission goals

Two important reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), on the impact of higher global temperatures on land, oceans and the cryosphere, lend further urgency to the task before countries meeting in Madrid for the UN conference.

additional measures it would on climate change, now popularly referred to as the European

Green Deal.

Key decisions under European Green Deal

➤ Achieving Climate Neutrality
  o EU has promised to bring a law, binding on all member countries (of EU), to ensure it becomes **"climate neutral"** by 2050.
➤ Increase in its 2030 emission reduction target
  o In its climate action plan declared under the Paris Agreement, the EU was committed to making a 40 per cent reduction in its emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.
  o EU has gone beyond this to commit to increase this reduction to at least 50 per cent and work towards 55 per cent.

Analytica

Significance of the deal

✓ Although relatively small emitters had already scaled up their climate actions, EU is now the first major emitter to agree to the 2050 climate neutrality target.
✓ The EU also happens to be only one among major emitters to retain the 1990 baseline for emission cuts, originally mandated under the Kyoto Protocol for all developed countries. Most other countries have shifted their baselines to 2005 or even later under the 2015 Paris Agreement.

> ### Climate Neutrality
> ❖ Expressed as a state of net-zero emissions.
> ❖ **Achieved when a country's** emissions are balanced by absorptions and removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.
> ❖ Absorption can be increased by creating more carbon sinks like forests, while removal involves technologies like carbon capture and storage.

Concerns and Challenges

✓ EU has not been fulfilling all its climate obligations. The Kyoto Protocol required the rich and developed countries to provide finance and technology to the developing countries to help them fight climate change. In those respects, there has been little climate money flowing out of the EU, especially for adaptation needs of developing countries, and transfer of new climate-friendly technologies has been mired in patent and ownership complications.
✓ The Green Deal is inadequate for achieving the emission reductions because big emitters and large developing countries like China and India are not immediately scaling up their climate actions.
✓ USA pulling out of the climate deal has also negatively impacted the step towards climate change mitigation.

Way Forward

> ### PEPPER IT WITH
> Kyoto Protocol, INDCs, Paris Climate Deal, SDGs

▪ As long as many international partners do not share the same ambition as the EU, there is a risk of carbon leakage. If this risk materializes, there will be no reduction in global emissions, and this will frustrate the efforts of EU and its industries to meet the global climate objectives of the Paris Agreement.
▪ EU should be more helpful towards developing nations so that its efforts do not get wasted and every nation is equally contributing towards conservation of the planet.
▪ Need of the hour is for other countries to raise their ambitions and the reduction targets and their policies should be in line with the global environmental agreements.

National Broadband Mission

News Excerpt

Ministry of Communication and Information technology had recently launched National Broadband Mission, which envisages an investment of $100 billion (₹7 lakh crore), including ₹70,000 crore from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)
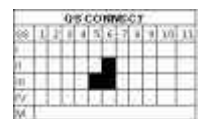
Pre-Connect

• To improve Broadband connectivity in India, the government had launched Bharat Net which aims to provide broadband for all by 2022 including remotely-located hospitals,

schools and post offices.

- It is the part of National Digital Communication Policy, 2018.

Vision of the National Broadband Mission

To enable fast track growth of digital communications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide, facilitate digital empowerment and inclusion and provide affordable and universal access of broadband for all.

Objectives of the National Broadband Mission

➢ Broadband access to all villages by 2022.

➢ Facilitate universal and equitable access to broadband services across the country and especially in rural and remote areas.

➢ Significantly improve the quality of services for mobile and internet.

➢ Develop innovative implementation models for Right of Way (RoW) and to work with States/UTs for having consistent policies pertaining to the expansion of digital infrastructure.

➢ Develop a Broadband Readiness Index (BRI) to measure the availability of digital communications infrastructure and conducive policy ecosystem within a State/UT.

➢ Creation of a digital fiber map of the Digital Communications network and infrastructure, including Optical Fiber Cables and Towers, across the country.

➢ Laying of incremental 30 lakhs route km of Optical Fiber Cable and increase in tower density from 0.42 to 1.0 tower per thousand of population by 2024.

➢ Address policy and regulatory changes required to accelerate the expansion and creation of digital infrastructure and services.
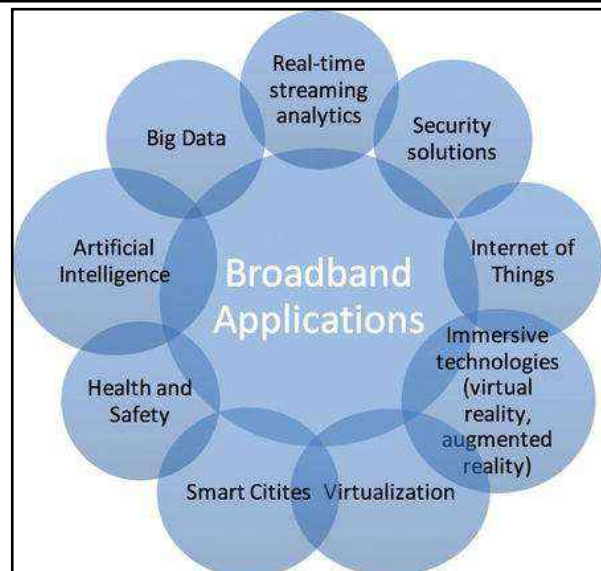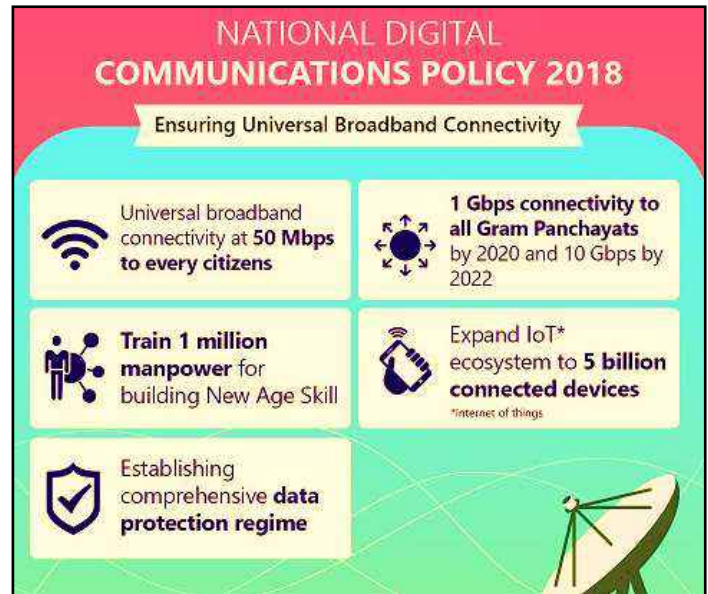
PEPPER IT WITH
BharatNet, Digital Village scheme, Digital India Progamme, 5G Technology, (NDCP-18), Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016 and Right-of-Way (RoW) policies.

Sun Surface Temperature

News Excerpt

Team of international researchers including scientist from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics have decoded the age-old puzzle which have unraveled why the **Sun's atmosphere is hotter than its surface.**

Pre-Connect

- The temperature at the core of the Sun is nearly 15 million degrees Celsius, while that at its surface layer, known as the photosphere, is merely 5,700 degrees C.

- It is expected that the temperature of the corona**, sun's atmosphere,would be** comparable to that at the surface (photosphere). However, the temperature of the corona is much

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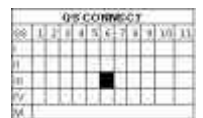
higher, reaching a value of about one million degrees or more.

- This implies there should be a source heating the corona. The puzzle of coronal heating has been tackled by many theories.

Spicules in the Sun

> Solar Spicules are the geyser-like jets which emanate from the interface of the corona and the photosphere. They are 200-500 km wide and shoot up to heights of about 5000 km above the solar surface.

> These spicules act as conduits through which mass and energy from the lower atmosphere bypass the photosphere and reach the corona.

> These spicules heat up while propagating upward, reaching the coronal temperature. The coronal plasma emits light in extreme ultraviolet.

> The key findings are that bursts of spicules originate from the boundaries of web like networks of magnetic structures in the surface.

> Near their foot points, there emerge magnetic elements that have opposite polarity to the existing magnetic network.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Ionosphere, Magnetosphere, Aurora Borealis, Van Allen Radiation Belt
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> When the structures with opposing polarity run into each other, they cancel out.

> This was seen at the footpoints of some spicules which are also responsible for heating the upper atmosphere.

EChO Network Launched by India

News Excerpt

EChO Network was recently launched in New Delhi, to catalyse cross-disciplinary leadership in Indiaby training educators and students in an interdisciplinary manner.

Highlights

- It is a national program to provide a template for cross-disciplinary leadership, with a specific focus on increasing research, knowledge, and awareness of Indian ecology and the environment.

- It aims to catalyse a new generation of Indians who can synthesize interdisciplinary concepts and tackle real-world problems in medicine, agriculture, ecology, and technology.

- There is no precedent for such a network anywhere in the world.

- The initiative has drawn in partners from Government, industry and academia, with the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Govt. of India steering the program.
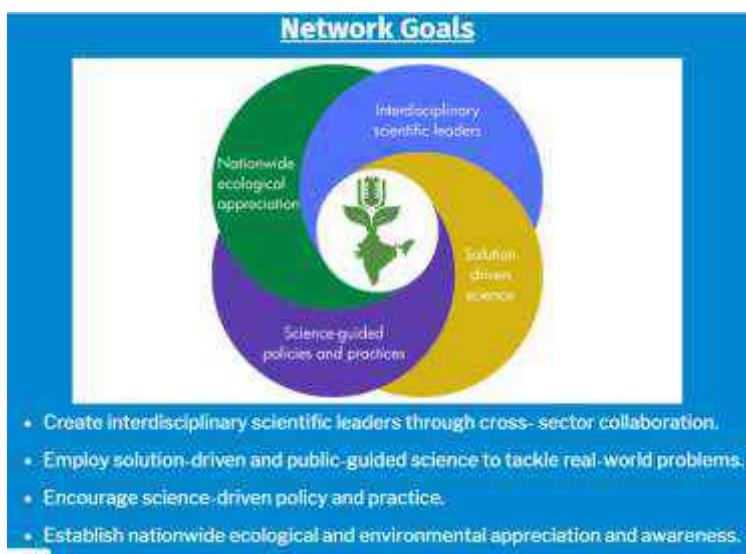
Concerns

➢ India faces unprecedented threats to its human environmental and ecosystems, solving which requires technical expertise.

➢ But there remains a lacuna of trained scientists with interdisciplinary skills and collaborative mindset.

Conclusion

Hence, the purpose of this Network is to bring all those individuals together who are working hard to make a positive difference for Indian ecosystems. In order to do this, we need leaders who are trained to communicate across different sectors of society.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> UchhatarAvishkar Yojana, **(IMPRINT), Prime Minister's** Research Fellows (PMRF) Scheme

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Planetary Defence System

News Excerpt

The European Space Agency (ESA) has approved the budget of Hera, the European component of the mission to slam a spacecraft into an asteroid. The project aims to study the effectiveness of an impact to ward off an impending asteroid threat.
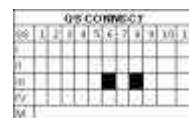
Pre-Connect

• Amidst the growing concern of need for a planetary defence mechanism, scientists are studying asteroids and trying to find ways to deflect them from a collision with Earth.

• One such project is the Asteroid Impact and Deflection Assessment (AIDA), which includes **NASA's Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART)** mission and the European Space Agency's (ESA) Hera.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Carbonaceous Asteroids, Siliceous Asteroids, Metallic Asteroids,
> Planetoid, meteoroid,DART, and comets

What is an asteroid, exactly?

An asteroid is a small, rocky or metallic object orbiting the sun. They are usually defined as being larger than 1 meter in diameter, objects smaller than that are called meteoroids. The largest asteroid is Ceres. Most asteroids lie in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter.

What if an asteroid were to hit Earth today?

➢ If the asteroid is as big as a 20-story building (200 feet on a side), then it has an energy equal to the largest nuclear bombs made today, in the order of 25 to 50 megatons.

➢ An asteroid like this would flatten reinforced concrete buildings five miles from ground zero.

➢ In other words, if an asteroid strikes the Earth, it will be a really bad day, no matter how big it is. If the asteroid is a mile in diameter, it's likely to wipe out life on the planet.

How planetary defence system deflect asteroid?

▪ Asteroid impacts are the only potentially preventable natural disaster — provided we spot the threatening asteroid with enough lead time to launch a mission into space to deflect it.

▪ NASA and its partners are studying several different approaches to deflect a hazardous asteroid.

▪ The most advanced of these techniques is called a kinetic impactor, and a mission to demonstrate this technology is called the Double-Asteroid Redirection Test (DART), slated for launch in 2021.

DEFENDING EARTH

With advanced planning and preparation, we could prevent a disastrous impact from an asteroid or comet. The Planetary Society breaks it down into these five steps for saving the world.

1. Find

Astronomers use ground- and space-based telescopes to spot NEOs and have found 90% of the largest ones. Infrared imaging also helps find objects that are too dark to see from their reflected light.

2. Track

If we find a near-Earth object, how do we know if it will hit Earth? We need to map its orbit by taking repeated observations. A number of missions, observatories, and systems track the orbits of NEOs, and more are in development.

3. Characterize

By characterizing the spin rate, composition, and physical properties of potentially hazardous NEOs, we can better know how to deflect them. Awardees of The Planetary Society's Shoemaker NEO Grant Program are making tremendous contributions in this area.

4. Deflect

There is a variety of possible techniques for deflecting a potential impact, but all need more development and testing:

Slow gravity tractor: A massive spacecraft follows next to the near-Earth object and uses the spacecraft's gravity to pull the object off its collision course.

Kinetic impactor: A swarm of spacecraft slam into the object to knock it off course.

Laser ablation: A spacecraft uses lasers to vaporize rock on the object, creating jets that push it off course. The Planetary Society is researching this technique with the University of Strathclyde through their Laser Bees project.

5. Coordinate and Educate

An asteroid impact is a worldwide issue that requires immense advance coordination and education. The Planetary Society is taking an active role by working with governments around the world, hosting conferences, doing public outreach, and supporting volunteer efforts.

What about the nuclear option?

Detonating nuclear devices on or beside an asteroid may be the only viable technique we have today for deflecting an asteroid. But this comes with challenges, including political opposition and the danger of fragment impacts.

Find out more at planetary.org/defense

Winter and Summer Solstice

News Excerpt

Earth celebrated a special occasion on Dec. 21 as the 'December solstice' which officially heralds celestial winter in the Northern Hemisphere. Meanwhile, the Southern Hemisphere will mark the beginning of summer. Google celebrated the seasonal milestone with an adorable Google doodle.

The Solstices (Summer & Winter)

Summer Solstice

The summer solstice occurs at the moment **when the earth's tilt toward the sun is at a** maximum. Therefore, on the day of the summer solstice, the sun appears at its highest elevation with a noontime position that changes very little for several days before and after the summer solstice. The summer solstice occurs when the sun is directly over the Tropic of Cancer, which is located at

23.5° latitude North and runs through Mexico, the Bahamas, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, India, and

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southern China. For every place north of the Tropic of Cancer, the sun is at its highest point in the sky and this is the longest day of the year.

Winter solstice

The winter solstice marks the shortest day and longest night of the year. In the Northern Hemisphere, it occurs when the sun is directly over the Tropic of Capricorn, which is located at 23.5° south of the equator and runs through Australia, Chile, southern Brazil, and northern South Africa.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Equinox, Apogee, Perihelion, Lunar Eclipse, Solar Eclipse

Biosimilar Medicine

News Excerpt

Recently the World Health Organization (WHO) prequalified its first biosimilar medicine – trastuzumab. This move can make this expensive, life-saving treatment more affordable and available to women globally.
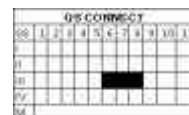
Pre-Connect

- A biologic drug(also called biologics) is produced from living organisms or contains components of living organisms. Biologic drugs include a wide variety of products derived from human, animal, or microorganisms by using biotechnology.

- Biosimilars to biologic drugs are what generics are to chemical drugs. These generic versions of biologics medicines are made from animal or plant proteins as opposed to chemicals. Biosimilars are also called similar biologics.

- **India's phar**maceutical Companies
  - o These emerged as world market leaders in the generic drug sector and were a major business success story in the 2000s.

> **Complex Generics**
> ❖ These are hybrid medicines that often contain complex active pharmaceutical ingredients or formulations, or routes of delivery.
> ❖ Things are still at an early stage in this segment, but the Indian firms have succeeded in capturing 19% of the global market in complex generics so far.

  - o But now consolidation among pharma retailers in developed countries, stiffer competition from Chinese pharma manufacturers and an uptick in generic drug applications have combined to put downward pressure on drug prices.
  - o **India's stock market has reacted quite negatively to these developments, wiping** nearly 20% off the value of Indian pharma stocks between August 2016 and August 2018.

- In this scenario, Biosimilars and complex generics two emerging forms of medicines present opportunities for Indian pharmaceutical companies to retain their market position.

Analytica

Opportunities for India

➤ Non-Communicable diseases are increasingly becoming common in India. Biologics have benefitted the patients suffering from these diseases, but the major drawback of this drug has been its exorbitant cost. The biosimilars have huge potential to reduce the overall cost of treatment.

➤ The global average cost of trastuzumab from originator companies is $20 000. The biosimilar version of trastuzumab is generally 65% cheaper than the originator which makes this drug accessible to many more women.

➤ India approved its first biosimilar much before the United States and Europefor hepatitis B in 2000. And because of that Indian pharmaceutical companies have risen as the global market leaders in biosimilars.

➤ India has firmly established itself as a global player as a maker of similar biologics. It is also a huge market for similar biologics because of its burgeoning population.

➤ According to a recent report by Morgan Stanley, as many as nine drugs in thebiologics category have either gone off-patent or will do so by 2025.

➢ Biosimilars currently account for just $5 billion of the $240 billion global markets in biologics. But according to a report by Associated Chambers of Commerce of India (Assocham), the global market for biosimilars will be $240 billion and the Indian market will be over $35 billion by 2030.

Challenges

✓ Biosimilar drugs are highly complex as compared to generic medicines.Thismeans that pharmaceutical companies have to invest much more in research.

✓ The approval process of biosimilars is more cumbersome and requires more data than other generic drugs.

✓ Indian biopharmaceutical companies need to upgrade their technology and have to improve the manpower skill.

✓ India is likely to face stiff competition from other countries. For example, China is a recent example, where the government has identified biopharma, including biosimilars, as a priority area for the country.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Reference Medicine, Generic Medicine, National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority, JanaushadhiPariyojana

Way Forward

▪ Governments can support growth in this segment by clarifying the regulatory framework. To address the issues and challenges associated with the development of **biosimilars, India has developed "Guidelines on Similar Biologics; Regulatory Requirements** for Marketing Author**ization in India" in 2012 and has revised it in 2016.**

▪ For the private sector, new partnerships need to be forged to make this expansion commercially viable. Partnerships with research organisations, contract manufacturing organisations and specialised marketing companies are needed to make biosimilars accessible to a larger populace.

▪ To achieve the true potential and continue as a global leader we need an enabling environment from the government and regulatory agencies.

Future Skills Platform

News Excerpt

Recently, Wipro partnered with the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) and together they launched the FutureSkills platform.
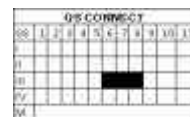
Pre-Connect

• The NASSCOM-McKinsey report "Perspective 2020: Transform Business, Transform India" (2009) said that only 26 percent of India's engineering graduates were employable.

• Considering the fast pace at which artificial intelligence is growing, Indian graduates must be equipped with the skills needed for the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Highlights of the Platform

➢ FutureSkills platform will train 10,000 students from over 20 engineering colleges in India in Artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics and Internet of things (IoT) among other emerging technologies.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Skill India Mission, PMKVY, Atal Innovation Mission, Stand Up India, DDUGKY

➢ FutureSkills is a collaborative platform that is built on the core ideology of a dedicated technology-powered learning resource. It also paves the way for more Industry-Academia linkages to provide better skills and hence employability to the students.

➢ President of NASSCOM said that they aim to add 90 million working professionals to the industry by 2030, and the partnership with Wipro will ensure they possess the right skills to be employed.

➢ This initiative will create a talent pool of students who will be certified by Wipro and NASSCOM and thus it will help in widening the talent pool for the industry.

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WHO World Malaria Report

News Excerpt

Globally 228 million malaria cases were reported in 2018, which is marginally lower than the number of cases in 2017 (231 million), as per the World Malaria Report 2019 released by the World Health Organization.
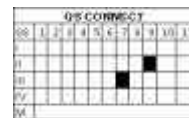
Pre-Connect

- Malaria is caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected **female anopheles'** mosquitoes.
- The majority of malaria cases in India are reported from the eastern and central part of the country and from states which have forest, hilly and tribal areas.
- These states include Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and some north-eastern states like Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram.
- Directorate of National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP) is the central nodal agency for the prevention and control of vector-borne diseases.
- The National Strategic Plan (NSP) has been developed by NVBDCP with the support of WHO to provide a road map for making India malaria-free by 2027.

Analytica

- While Africa and India saw the maximum dip in malaria cases between 2017 and 2018, they still account for 85 per cent deaths.
- India registered a fall of 2.6 million malaria cases in 2018 as compared to the previous year.

> ### Global Technical Strategy for Malaria
> - ❖ It provides a technical framework for all malaria-endemic countries.
> - ❖ The Strategy sets ambitious but achievable goals for 2030, including Reducing malaria case incidence by at least 90%, Reducing malaria mortality rates by at least 90%, Eliminating malaria in at least 35 countries.
> - ❖ Near-term milestones for 2020 include reductions in malaria case incidence and death rates of at least 40% and the elimination of malaria in at least 10 countries.
> - ❖ The GTS targets will contribute to the broader health-related goals of SDG 3.

- India has one of the lowest funding per person at risk of being inflicted with malaria at just US$0.2.
- In India, only seven out of 29 States and seven UTs accounted for 90 per cent of the estimated cases in 2018.
- Although cases continue to decrease in the public sector, estimates indicate that there are still gaps in reporting from the private sector.
- In the South-East Asia region, WHO says, the major challenges remain decreased funding, treatment failures and vector resistance.

> ### PEPEPR IT WITH
> Vector Borne Disease, National Framework For Malaria Elimination, Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance, NVBDCP,

- In 2018, there were an estimated 405,000 deaths from malaria globally as compared to 416,000 estimated deaths in 2017.
- **The report said, "On the current trajectory, globally, the 2020 GTS (Global technical strategy for malaria 2016–2030) milestones for morbidity will not be achieved, and unless there is accelerated change, the 2025 and 2030 milestones will not be achieved."**

Way Forward

- ✓ The report added that India was the only country mentioned among 11 High Burden High Impact countries to increase its domestic funding between 2017-2018 to fight malaria.
- ✓ India should continue to work on its four-pronged malaria control strategy of Early case detection and prompt treatment, Vector control, Personal protective measures against mosquito bites, and Environment management and community awareness.

RailWireWifi

News Excerpt

Indian Railways has successfully completed the work of providing free public WiFi at 5500 stations across the country.
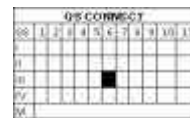
Pre-Connect

- The Railways began the service of providing free WiFi at its stations from January 2016 from Mumbai Central station.
- Railways aimed to transform the Railway stations into the hub of Digital inclusion.
- For this Indian Railways mandated RailTel, a Miniratna public sector undertaking under Ministry of Railways, to provide free high-speed Wi-Fi at the Railway stations.
- A total of 1.5 crores user logins in RailWire Wi-Fi services have been registered across all stations.

Significance

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Project Loon, Digital India Mission

- This will be the world's largest free public WiFi project.
- The free WiFi at stations is a big boon for railway passengers and staff as it allows quick and easy access to the internet.
- The Internet can be used to stream videos, watch movies, listen to music, net banking and a host of other important tasks.
- Free access to high-speed Wi-Fi will help in bridging the digital divide between rural and urban India.
- This will provide affordable and reliable broadband on demand and will further promote the Digital India initiative.

Rotavac 5D

News Excerpt

Bharat Biotech International recently launched a new variant of its rotavirus vaccine, Rotavac 5D.
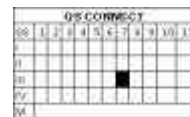
Pre-Connect

- The original Rotavac was made part of the Indian immunization program in 2016 after it received regulatory approval in 2014.
- Rotavirus
  - Rotaviruses are the most common cause of severe diarrhoeal disease in young children throughout the world.
  - These are highly contagious and the predominant mode of transmission is the faecal-oral route.
  - According to WHO estimates in 2013, about 215 000 children aged under 5 years die each year from vaccine-preventable rotavirus infections and majority of these children live in low-income countries.
  - Four oral, live, attenuated rotavirus vaccines, Rotarix, RotaTeq, RotavacandRotaSiiIare WHO prequalified and are available internationally.
- In India diarrhoeal death is a major health challenge. Out of all the causes of diarrhoea, rotavirus is a leading cause of diarrhoea in children less than 5 years of age.
- It is estimated that rotavirus cause 8,72,000 hospitalizations; 32,70,000 outpatient visits and estimated 78,000 deaths annually in India.

Analytica

- Available in a 0.5 ml dosage, Rotavac 5D can be stored at 2-8 degree Celsius for up to 24 months and can be administered in five drops.
- Rotavac 5D is also stable at 37 degree Celsius for seven days.
- In contrast, the earlier version, Rotavac is available in 2.5 ml vial per dose and has to be stored at -20 degree Celsius.

➢ The vaccine stability, combined with its small cold chain footprint, enables its use in low resource countries.
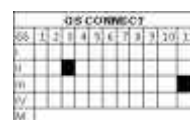
Way Forward

✓ In India, the government aims to end morbidity and mortality in children due to diarrhoea by 2022.

✓ WHO recommends that the first dose of rotavirus vaccine be administered as soon as possible after 6 weeks of age.

✓ As recommended by WHO the use of rotavirus vaccines should be part of a comprehensive strategy to control diarrhoeal diseases.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Mission Indradhanush, Swachh Bharat Mission

Chief of Defence Staff

News Excerpt

Government of India had recently appointed India's First Chief of Defence Staff. CDS will be a four-star General and will function as the Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister and also as the Permanent Chairman of the Chief of Staff Committee (COSC).

Pre-Connect

• The first proposal for a CDS came from Kargil-Review Committee (KRC) in 2000.

• In 2002, the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) was created to serve as a CDS' Secretariat.

• The major opposition to CDS was the idea of concentration of too much military power in one single post.

• Earlie the fear of appointing a CDS wasshown by IAF and Indian Navy as they had apprehensions of being under the toe of Indian Army which is the largest force among the three services and it was assumed that the CDS would be from the army in maximum cases.

• It was also argued that unlike western militaries, India military is not an expeditionary force. Earlier politicians were fearful of a coup if all the three forces - Army, Navy and Air Force - were brought under one umbrella and that was the only reason that a post of CDS was not created

• In 2011, Naresh Chandra Committee on defence and security also suggested setting up of a CDS with a fixed tenure of two years with more authority and powers than the Chairman COSC.

New Structure of Defence

Department of Military Affairs (DMA)

> **MINISTRY OF DEFENCE: WHO, WHAT**
>
> **Department of Defence**
> Headed by Defence Secretary
>
> **Department of Military Affairs**
> Headed by the CDS
>
> **Department of Defence Production**
> Headed by Secretary Defence Production
>
> **Department of Defence Research and Development**
> Headed by DRDO chief
>
> **Department of Ex-servicemen Welfare**
> Headed by Secretary ESW
>
> **DUAL-HATTED ROLE OF CDS**
> ■ Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee
> ■ Head of Department of Military Affairs in Defence Ministry

o DMA is created as a separate department under the Ministry of Defence which will be looked after by CDS.

o Service headquarters will fall under the ambit of DMA with a mix of civilian and military officers at every level.

o These headquarters will implement the policies laid down by the DMA. They also serve as a repository of technical information and advise the department on technical aspects of questions they deal with.

Dual Hatted Role of CDS

o As Permanent Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee Military role.

o As Secretary of DMA role in government.

o Further, there are other Powers and responsibilities such as

▪ Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister only on tri-services matters.

▪ CDS will not exercise any military command, including over the three service chiefs.

- ▪ But there are two caveats
    - ➢ He will head COSC in which all service chiefsare members.
    - ➢ Promotions, postings and disciplinary matters of three services fall under the DMA.
- ▪ He has to bring jointness in operations, logistics, transport, training, support services, communications, and repairs and maintenance of the three services, in a time-bound manner within 3 years which will eventually lead to the shedding of responsibilities by the service headquarters.
- ▪ CDS will also facilitate the restructuring of military commands for optimal utilization of resources by bringing about jointness in operations,through the establishment of joint/ theatre commands.
- ▪ CDS will not be responsible for the defence of the country& it will still lieunder the Defence Secretary.
- ▪ CDS will look after procurement exclusive to the Services except for capital acquisitions.
- ▪ CDS will promote the use of indigenous equipment by the Services.

> **Who Advice PM on Military Affairs?**
> In effect it is the National Security Adviser. This has been especially so after the Defence Planning Committee was created in 2018, with NSA as its chairman, and the foreign, defence, and expenditure secretaries, and the three Service Chiefs as members.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Theatre Command, Land Warfare Doctrine, Cold Start Doctrine, Offensive Defence strategy

Analytica

Structural Advantage Of CDS

- ➢ Provide an opportunity to re-evaluate the existing defence architecture in an objective manner
- ➢ Help cut back infructuous spendings like duplication of assets in infrastructure and human resources.
- ➢ Helpful in generating more funds for capital acquisition.
- ➢ Help in adjusting to the changing character of war.

Threat of Hybrid-War

- ➢ Hybridization of conflicts is no longer a hypothetical concept. Future warfare will have cyber-attack, space warfare etc. Unless relevant doctrines and structures are integrated, it cannot be tackled successfully.
- ➢ The CDS is also seen as being vital to the **creation of "theatre commands", integrating** tri-service assets and personnel like in the US military.
- ➢ For instance, though the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) is an integrated theatre command, it lacks teeth due to differing perceptions and priorities of the contributing services. The Commander-in-Chief of the ANC (CINCAN) is constrained in requisitioning critical assets from the services to perform its assigned task. Addressing such deficiencies would be vital in making the CDS effective.

Lessons from Adversary

- ➢ China implemented integration in 2016 when the seven military regions were recast into five integrated operational theatre commands. Two of which are India specific.In **contrast, India's border with China is split between the Eastern, Western, and** Northern Commands.
- ➢ China also restructured a Strategic Support Force integrating the space, cyber and electronic warfare structures.

Defence Diplomacy

- ➢ **With the rise of India's economic and military profile, defence diplomacy has assumed a** great deal of importance.
- ➢ CDS will be responsible for all aspects of defence diplomacy which was earlier conducted in an ad-hoc manner.

Challenges

- ➢ It **might end up making the CDS just another case of "jobs for the boys".**

➢ The reporting structure of the three services to the Defence Minister would now be through the CDS.

➢ CDS, as Permanent Chairperson of Joint Chief of Staff Committee, would outrank the three service chiefs even though theoretically all are 4 star.
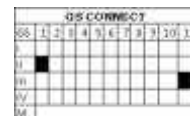
Conclusion

By assigning the CDS a key role in planning, procurement, tri-service institutions, defence diplomacy and quality assurance, the government would simultaneously unleash a host of critical reforms that have been unheard of until now.

The Arms (Amendment) Act, 2019

News Excerpt

Recently the Government of India passed The Arms (Amendment) Act, 2019. It seeks to amend the Arms Act, 1959. It seeks to decrease the number of licensed firearms allowed per person and increase penalties for certain offences under the Act. It also introduces new categories of offences.
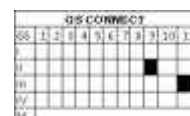
Key Features

- Earlier a person could obtain a license for up to three firearms (with certain exceptions, such as for licensed firearms dealers) but now the Act reduces the number of permitted firearms from three to one.This includes licenses given on inheritance or heirloom basis.

- Excess arms to be deposited to the nearest police station or with a licensed firearm dealer as specified.

- The Act also increases the duration of the validity of a firearm license from three years to five years.

- It allows members of rifleclubs or associations to use any firearm for target practice instead of the only point 22 bore rifles or air rifles.

- New offences: The Act adds news offences. These include
  - Forcibly taking a firearm from police or armed forces.
  - Using firearms in celebratory gunfire which endangers human life or personal safety of others.

Budapest Convention

News Excerpt

The United Nations recently approved a Russian-led bid that aims to create a new convention on cybercrime, alarming rights groups and Western powers that fear a bid to restrict online freedom.

Pre-Connect

- The General Assembly approved the resolution sponsored by Russia and backed by China, which would set up a committee of international experts in 2020.

- A new UN treaty on cybercrime could render the Budapest Convention obsolete, further alarming rights groups.

- The Budapest Convention was drafted by the Council of Europe, but other countries have joined, including the United States and Japan.

- Russia has opposed the Budapest Convention, arguing that giving investigators access to

Quest for International Treaties

❖ International efforts to address cybercrime and e-evidence as a matter of criminal justice have been pursued since the 1980s, initially by the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), and from the mid-1990s also by G8.

❖ At the Council of Europe, this led to the adoption of soft-law recommendations providing guidance on the criminalisation of computer-related offences (1989) and on law enforcement powers regarding cybercrime and electronic evidence six years later (1995). These were precursors to the Budapest Convention which was opened for signature in 2001.

computer data across borders violates national sovereignty.

Analytica

➢ The Budapest Convention provides for-

✓ The criminalisation of conduct, ranging from illegal access, data and systems interference to computer-related fraud and child pornography;

✓ Procedural law tools to make the investigation of cybercrime and the securing of e-evidence in relation to any crime more effective and

✓ International police and judicial cooperation on cybercrime and e-evidence.

➢ India and the Budapest Convention-

✓ In 2007 and 2008, India and the Council of Europe cooperated in the reform of **India's Information Technology Act.** These reforms brought the legislation of India broadly in line with the Budapest Convention.

✓ While membership in the Budapest Convention more than doubled since then, India is yet to join this treaty.

➢ **India's Concerns voiced by different stakeholders over joining of this convention** includes:

✓ As India did not participate in the negotiation of the Convention and thus should not sign it.

✓ That the Budapest Convention — through its Article 32b — allows for transborder access to data and thus infringes on national sovereignty. After thorough scrutiny, the Cybercrime Convention Committee confirmed the limited scope of Article 32b in a Guidance Note in 2014. This then led some quarters in the government of India to criticise that Article 32 was too limited and that additional options would be needed.

✓ That themutual legal assistance(MLA) regime of the Convention is not effective, "the promise of cooperation is not firm enough," or that there are grounds for refusal to cooperate. It is true that the Cybercrime Convention Committee has come to the conclusion that while the level of MLA keeps increasing among parties, the process needs to be made more efficient overall. This matter is being addressed through follow-up to a set of recommendations adopted in 2014 and the proposals made by the Cloud Evidence Group.

Way Forward

✓ Overall, it would seem that India joining the Budapest Convention has so far been primarily hostage to diplomatic and foreign policy considerations and less to concerns of actual criminal justice cooperation on cybercrime and e-evidence. From the latter perspective, the challenges currently being addressed by the parties to the Convention through the Cybercrime Convention Committee are highly relevant also for India.

✓ The Convention offers a legal basis and practical framework for police-to-police and judicial cooperation on cybercrime and e-evidence with an increasing number of other parties.

> PEPPER IT WITH OECD, I4C, CERT-In

This framework is constantly under review to make it more effective. As the Convention evolves, India would be able to contribute to shaping future solutions if it were

a party. Moreover, India would become a priority country for capacity-building.

✓ Thus, given Prime Minister**'s** Vision of a Digital India and considering the surge in cybercrime, it would be beneficial for India to join the Budapest Convention. Also, India must look forward to the United Nations approved, Russian-led bid that aims to create a new convention on cybercrime.

Central Equipment Identity Register

News Excerpt

Mobile phone users in Delhi-NCR will now find it easier to trace or block their lost or stolen devices.
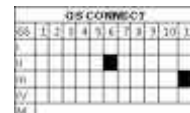
Pre-Connect

It was earlier launched in Mumbai in September 2019.

Highlights

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has launched the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) portal that will enable blocking as well as tracing of stolen or lost mobile phones.The portal — www.ceir.gov.in — will help users facilitate the blocking of stolen or lost mobile phones across mobile networks.

> **CEIR**
> ❖ CEIR acts as a central system for all network Operators to share black listed mobile devices so that devices blacklisted in one network will not work on other networks even if the Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) card in the device is changed.
> ❖ It was launched by Department of Telecommunications (DoT).

- The launch of the portal for Delhi-NCR mobile subscribers will facilitate-

  o requests for blocking of stolen or lost mobile phones by customers

  o blocking of such mobile phones across various mobile networks

  o allowing services to other existing customers having mobile phones with the same International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) number

  o sharing of traceability data with police authorities

  o unblocking of recovered phones.

- An aggrieved person should visit CEIR web portal at www.ceir.gov.in and submit details in a prescribed format.

Analytica

➤ The project is backed by the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) system, which was undertaken by the telecom department for addressing security, theft and other concerns including reprogramming of mobile handsets.

➢ The safety and security of phones are crucial given the country's technological strides and digital prowess.

➢ It will help to curtail the counterfeit mobile phone market and discourage mobile phone theft, protect consumer interest and facilitate law enforcement authorities for lawful interception.

QRSAM

What? India successfully test-fired its Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile (QRSAM) system, likely to be inducted into the armed forces by 2021

Developed by?- Defence Research and Development organization

What is QRSAM? It is weapon system is capable of search on move, track on move and fire on short halts while engaging multiple targets at ranges of about 30 km with two vehicle configuration for area Air Defence. It comprises of fully automated command and control, active array battery surveillance radar, active array battery multifunction radar and launcher.

Other Options? The Corps of Army Air Defence is taking major strides in upgrading its guns, missiles and radar systems. Procurement of Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM), Short Range Surface to Air Missile (SRSAM), Self Propelled Air Defence (SPAD) Gun Missile System and Very Short Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) is being carried out to replace the existing vintage equipment.

Significance? State of air defence of India was a cause of worry reflected in the CAG report also. It will Increase the capacity of forces to counter the threat of Air Attacks. It will enhance India's capability in the network centric warfare. It can travel at a speed of 1.8 Mach. Time has come to move towards the use of AI in missile system and increase efficacy of our missile system.

DESI & VIDESHI MISSILE SHIELDS

1. Akash
Indigenous area defence missile system
RANGE: 25 KM
► IAF inducting 15 squadrons of Akash-1 & two systems for Rs 10,900 crore
► Army has inducted 2 regiments for Rs 14,180cr (Two more Akash-2 regiments from Dec 2018 onwards)

2. S-400 Triumf
Rs 39,000-crore deal with Russia to be inked this year
RANGE: 400 KM
► 1st missile unit in 24 months after contract. All 5 in 54 months
► China inducting S-400 batteries under $3 billion inked in 2014

3. Spyder
Israeli low-level quick-reaction missile system
RANGE: 15 KM
► IAF inducting 4 Spyder systems
► DRDO developing 30-km range QR-SAM system

4. Barak-8
Joint DRDO-Israeli Aerospace Industries project
RANGE: 70-KM
► IAF to get initial nine medium-range SAM squadrons for Rs 10,076 crore
► Navy to get it for its frontline warships for Rs 2,606 crore (initial cost)
► 14 warships fitted with older Barak-1 systems (range 9 km)

5. Ballistic Missile Defence
► Indigenous project to develop 2-tier BMD shield
► Phase-I (interceptor missiles with 4.5 Mach speed) for 2,000-km range enemy missiles
► Phase-2 (interceptor missiles with 6-7 Mach speed) for 5,000-km range missiles
► Will take 2 years for Phase-I to be deployed

Exercises December-2019

Surya Kiran

- The 14th edition of bilateral annual military exercise between Indian and Nepal Army .
- It enhance interoperability at military level in jungle warfare, counter-terrorist operations in mountainous terrain, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief operations, medical and environmental conservation including aviation aspects.
- It will help in enhancement of trust mutual cooperation between the two nations

Hand in Hand

- The 8th India-China joint training exercise between India and China.
- It enhance joint planning and conduct of counter terrorist operations in semi urban terrain.
- Significance
- Exercise resumed after being suspended in 2017 over Doklam crisis.
- It involve tactical level operations in an International Counter Insurgency/Counter Terrorist environment under UN mandate

Apharan

- The Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard has conducted a large scale Anti Hijacking Exercise named Exercise Apharan .
- It aimed at streamlining the response mechanism to thwart any attempt by anti-national elements to hijack a merchant vessel or attempt forced entry of a rogue/commandeered merchant vessel into Kochi harbour.
- In recent times, pirates have been found to be very active in the waters between the Red Sea (particularly in Gulf of Aden) and Indian Ocean off the Somali coast and in the Strait of Malacca.

Hornbill Festival

News Excerpt

20th edition of theHornbill Festival recently took place in Nagaland with a colourful blend of culture and tradition.

Highlights

- As many as **30 cultural troops performed at this year's** addition of the festival, the state government plans to increase the number to 100 next year.
- Korean troupes have been regular at the festival, this year Myanmar and Thailand made their debut with their cultural presentations; Japan opened its account with a performance by Japanese electronic band.
- More than 2.5 lakh people came to visit the festival in December 2019.

> ### 16 major tribes of Nagaland
> Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Dimasa, Khiamniungan, Konyak, Kuki, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sumi, Yimchunger and Zeliang.

About Hornbill Festival

➢ To encourage inter-tribal interaction and to promote cultural heritage of Nagaland, the Government of Nagaland from 2000 CE started to organise the Hornbill Festival every year in the first week of December. The festival coincides with the celebration of Nagaland Statehood Day on 1st December.

➢ It is also called the **'Festivals of Festival'** and is a showcase of Naga life, its past and present.

➢ The festival is named after the Hornbill, the globally respected bird and which is displayed

in folklore in most of the state's tribes.

➢ All the 16 major tribes and various other sub-tribes of Nagaland take part in the festival. The aim of the festival is to revive and protect the rich culture of Nagaland and display its extravaganza and traditions.

➢ With tourism and preservation of Naga culture as the top-most agenda of this annual fair, the Morung's (dormitory) exhibition is central to the festival. The morungs of 16 different Naga tribes were replicated in the same way as per the inhabited areas of Nagaland.

PEPEPR IT WITH
IUCN-Hornbill Specialist group, Bihu

➢ The festival is held at Naga Heritage Village, Kisama which is about 12 Km from Kohima.

Paika Rebellion

News Excerpt

President Ram Nath Kovind recently laid the foundation stone for a memorial to mark 200 years of the Paika Rebellion. The Paika Memorial will come up in a 10-acre plot at the **bottom of Barunei Hill in Odisha's Khurda district.**
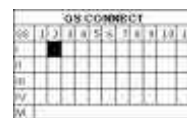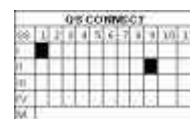
About Paika Rebellion

- **The Paikas (literally 'foot soldiers'), were a class of military retainers had been** recruited since the 16th century by kings in Odisha from a variety of social groups to render martial services in return for hereditary rent-free land (nish-kar jagirs) and titles.

- Paikas were essentially the peasant militias of the Gajapati rulers of Odisha who rendered military service to the king during times of war while taking up cultivation during times of peace.

- The advent of the British and establishment of colonial rule brought new land revenue settlements, which led to the Paikas losing their estates. Changes in the currency and revenue systems meant the Odias had to pay taxes in silver, which was more expensive for them, and resulted in their further marginalisation and oppression.

- In 1817, some 400 Kondhs descended from the Ghumusar area rise in revolt against the British. BaxiJagabandhuBidyadhara, the highest-ranking military general of Mukund Dev II, and erstwhile holder of the lucrative Rodanga estate, led an army of Paikas to join the uprising of the Kondhs.

- The Paikas set fire to government buildings in Banapur, killed policemen and looted the treasury **and the British salt agent's ship docked on the Chilika.** Over the next few months, the Paikas fought bloody battles at several places, but the colonial army gradually crushed the revolt.

PEPPER IT WITH
Santhal Revolt, Kol Tribe Revolt, Sanyasi Rebellion, Munda Revolt

- The Paikas were supported by the rajas of Kanika, Kujang, Nayagarh and Ghumusar and zamindars, village heads and ordinary peasants.

- BaxiJagabandhu was finally arrested in 1825 and died in captivity in 1829.

- Odisha government has demanded for the 1817 revolt to be recognised **as India's first** mutiny against the British. Till now, sepoys mutiny of 1857 is considered as the first war of independence against the British.

UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage

News Excerpt

UNESCO has recognised **the "Nuad" Thai massage** as part of its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The Indian entry for the list mentions the Sowa-Rigpa, which is an ancient Indian medical system popular in the Himalayan societies, especially Ladakh and some parts of Himachal Pradesh.

Highlights

- Nuad is regarded as part of the art and science of traditional Thai healthcare.

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- The Nuad massage teachings focus on directing blood circulation around problem areas that help in solving muscle aches.

- It is non-medicinal, manual therapy that involves bodily manipulations through which **practitioners help "rebalance" the patient's body, energy and structure to treat illnesses that** are believed to have been caused due to the obstruction of energy flow.

- In order to open up blocked routes, Nuad Thai therapists perform a combination of manipulations using their hands, elbows, knees and feet along with hot compresses to reduce inflammation.

> **India and ICH**
> Till date, this list includes 13 intangible cultural heritage items from India; the most recent addition was made in 2017 when Kumbh Mela was added to the list. Others are- Tradition of Vedic chanting, Ramlila, Kutiyattam, Ramman, Mudiyettu, Kalbelia, Chhau Dance, Buddhist chanting of Ladakh, Sankirtana, Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making of Punjab, Yoga and Nowrouz.

About UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

➢ **The term 'cultural heritage' has changed** content considerably in recent decades, partially owing to the instruments developed by UNESCO.

➢ Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.

➢ UNESCO maintains **three lists under its "Intangible Cultural Heritage"** banner: the list of intangible cultural heritage in need of urgent safeguarding, the list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity and the register of good safeguarding practices.

➢ **For inclusion of an element in the UNESCO's** Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the state parties are required to submit nomination dossier on the relevant element for evaluation and examination of the UNESCO Committee.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> UNESCO, Indian List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO

➢ The Ministry of Culture has appointed the Sangeet NatakAkademi, an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Culture, as nodal office for matters relating to the intangible cultural heritage including for preparation of the nomination dossiers for the Representative List of UNESCO.

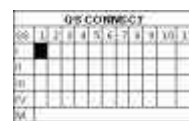## South India's Earliest Sanskrit Inscription

News Excerpt

Archaeological Survey of India recently has discovered the earliest epigraphic evidence so far for the Saptamatrika cult. It is also the earliest Sanskrit inscription to have been discovered in South India (Andhra Pradesh) as on date.

Pre-Connect

Saptamatrikas are a group of seven female deities worshipped in Hinduism as personifying the energy of their respective consorts.

Key Highlights

- The inscription is in Sanskrit and in Brahmi characters and was issued by Satavahana king Vijaya in 207 A.D.

- The inscription was first copied and studied and it transpired that it records the construction of a prasada (temple), a mandapa and consecration of images on the southern side of the temple by a person named Kartika for the merit of the king at the temple of Bhagavathi (Goddess) Saktimatruka (Saptamatrika) at Tambrape; Tambrape being the ancient name of Chebrolou.

- There are references of Saptamatrika worship in the early Kadamba copper plates and the early Chalukyas and Eastern Chalukya copper plates. But the new discovery predates them

by almost 200 years.

- The verification of all the available records proved that the Chebrolu inscription of Satavahana king Vijaya issued in his 5th regnal year – 207 A.D. — is also the earliest datable Sanskrit inscription from South India so far.

- So far, the Nagarjunakonda inscription of Ikshavaku king EhavalaChantamula issued in his 11th regnal year corresponding to the 4th century A.D. was considered the earliest Sanskrit inscription in South India.

- The place also yielded another inscription which is in Prakrit language and of Brahmi characters and belongs to the 1st century A.D. This is the earliest epigraphic reference to Mutts and records the gift of a cloister mandapa and chaitya to the bhavatho (Lord) of the Gadasa Mutt by a person hailing from Tabaava.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> CHalukyas, Satavahanas, angam Literature, Chaityas, Viharas

Swami Shraddhanand

News Excerpt

On December 23, 1926, Arya Samaj missionary Swami Shraddhanand was assassinated by a man called Abdul Rashid.

Who was Swami Shraddhanand?

- Shraddhanand was born on February 22, 1856 at village Talwan in Jalandhar district in Punjab province. Sometime in the early 1880s, he came into contact with Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj.

- **Shraddhanand wrote a book called "Hindu Sangathan".** Furthermore, he called **untouchability a "curse" and a "blot" on the reputations of the Hindus.**

What is Arya Samaj?

> Arya Samaj is a Hindu reform movement that was founded by Dayanand Saraswati in 1875 in Bombay. The movement believes in the infallible authority of the Vedas.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Swami Dayananda, Vivekananda, Rajaram Mohan Roy, Brahmo Samaj

> The central **objectives of Arya Samaj are to, "eradicate Ignorance (Agyan), Indigence or** Poverty (Abhav) and Injustice (Anayay) from this earth. This mission is enshrined in the ten Niyams or Principles."

Miscellaneous

International Financial Services Centre

- ♣ Recently, The Lok Sabha passed the International Financial Services Centres (IFSC) Authority Bill, 2019 which provides for the establishment of an authority to develop and regulate the financial services market.

- ♣ The unified authority will act as a single window of regulation and the law of land, including the Prevention of Monet Laundering Act, would apply and would be audited by CVC and the CAG.

- ♣ Currently, the banking, capital markets and insurance sectors in IFSC are regulated by multiple regulators — the RBI, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

- ♣ The Bill seeks to amend 14 Acts, including the SEBI Act, the IRDA Act and the PFRDA Act.

Power of Siberia

- ♣ Recently, Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin remotely inaugu**rated the "Power of Siberia" gas pipeline — a massive cross-border undertaking not only central to China's energy security but also for bolstering special ties** between Beijing and Moscow.

- ♣ The Power of Siberia is one of three major pipeline projects (along with Nordstream-2 to Northern Europe and TurkStream to Turkey) Russian state-owned energy company

Gazprom has undertaken in the past few years.

♣ It took Moscow over a decade of frantic negotiations to persuade Beijing to agree to the deal; Gazprom and the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) finally signed it in 2014.

♣ Analysts say that the brand new pipeline is an emblem of closer energy integration in Eurasia, with Russia and China as the key partners.

Maritime Museum in Gujarat

♣ Underwater or marine archaeology in India is all set to get a boost with the government deciding to establish a National Maritime Heritage Museum at Lothal, a Harappan site on the Saurashtra coast in Gujarat.

♣ It is also an independent research centre of underwater archaeology for reconstruction of maritime history, archaeology of boat building and materials traded.

♣ The museum is being set up with technical help from the Portuguese Maritime Heritage Museum.

♣ Lothal is the site of one of the oldest ports in India dating to the Bronze Age.
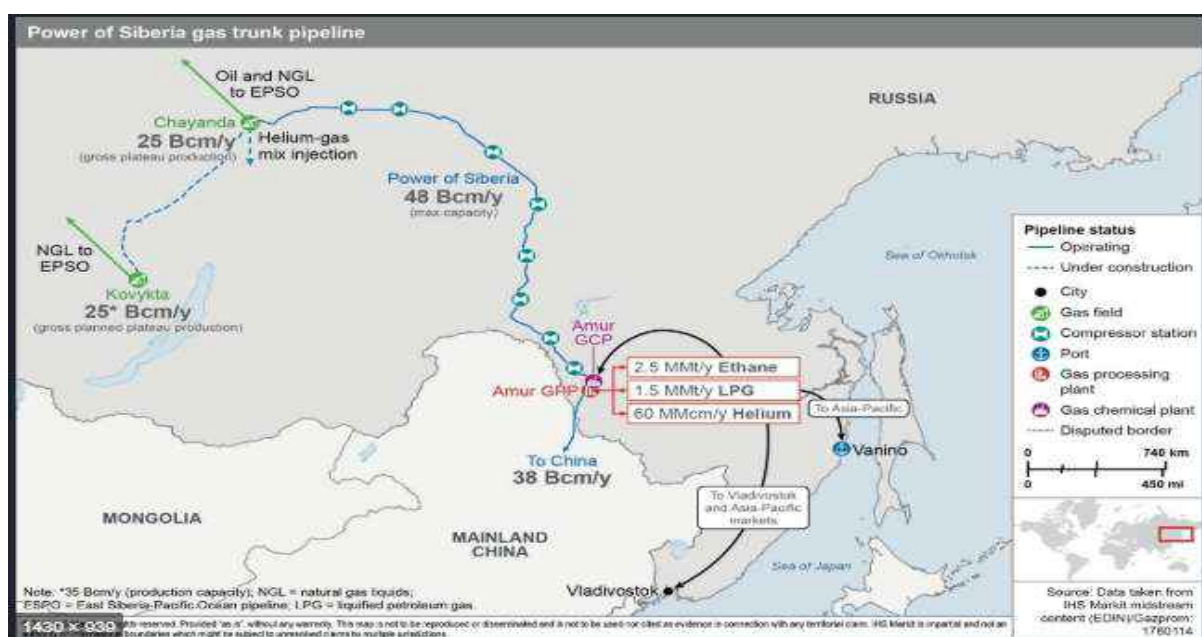
♣ Underwater archaeology is a specialized branch of archaeology that involves recovering submerged remains such as ports, shipwrecks and studying proxy records of maritime activity from archaeological excavations as well as archival and historical records.

UN Medal for Indian Peacekeepers in South Sudan

♣ Recently, about 850 Indian peacekeepers serving in South Sudan have been awarded the prestigious UN medal for their service and contribution to building peace in the strife-torn nation and supporting the local communities.

♣ India is among the largest troop contributing countries to UN peacekeeping operations. Currently, 2,342 Indian troops and 25 police personnel are deployed with the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

♣ The Indian troops were particularly praised for their efforts to support peace talk between the government and the opposition force in the Upper Nile region.

♣ Outside of their duties, the peacekeepers have also supported local communities by building veterinary hospitals at Kodok and Malakal, training cattle-keepers to better care for their livestock and provided life-saving medical assistance to people in need.

GIMS (Government Instant Messaging System)

♣ Recently, the government is testing a prototype of an Indian equivalent of popular messaging platforms, such as WhatsApp and Telegram, for secure internal use.

♣ Codenamed GIMS or Government Instant Messaging System, the platform is in the pilot

testing stage across some states, including Odisha — and is learnt to have been released to the Indian Navy to be tried out on trial basis.

♣ It is designed and developed by the Kerala unit of National Information Centre (NIC)& is being packaged for employees of Central and State government department and organization for intra and inter organization communication.

♣ It is being developed as a secure Indian alternative without the security concerns attached with apps hosted abroad or those owned by foreign entities. Like WhatsApp, GIMS employs end-to-end encryption for one-to-one messaging.

♣ The server hosting it is installed within the country and the information stored would be in government-based cloud — NIC-operated data centres that are only meant for captive use by the government and its departments.

♣ Whatsapp has been the default instant massaging platform among a majority of government departments and organisations. But tax department officers and those with enforcement agencies are reported to be more inclined to use Telegram and increasingly Signal (the Mountain View, California-headquartered cross-platform encrypted messaging service).

♣ Besides one-to-one massaging and group massaging, there are specific provision in GIMS for document and media sharing in keeping with the hierarchies in the government system.

♣ GIMS definitely help to tackle spyware called Pegasus which recently attacked India.

Zero FIR

♣ The provision of zero FIR came up as a recommendation in Justice Verma Committee Report in the new Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013 after the heinous Nirbhaya case.

♣ A FIR can be filed at any police station irrespective of place of crime and area of jurisdiction. This provision is for everyone. When in trouble men and women will be benefited equally.

♣ In Zero FIR, any police station can register FIR irrespective of jurisdictional area but the investigation will be taken up by the police in the place of occurrence reported in the FIR.

Why it is needed?

o In India, 93 cases of rape are reported every day, provision like Zero FIR are essential to bring out the process of justice in a very efficient fashion.

o Many cases go unsolved because of lack of evidence, which is also lost because of wastage of time.

o Crimes like murder, rape and accidents require immediate action from the concerned police authorities so that they take appropriate samples, eyewitnesses, and other circumstantial details.

Concept Clearing Assignment

1. PM AASHA scheme ensures that the increase in MSP gets translated to farmer's income by way of robust procurement mechanism. Elaborate on various components of the scheme and analyse how much the scheme is beneficial in making the procurement robust.

2. **Oman forms a critical part of India's strategic interest in Persian Gulf and beyond. Comment. Also, highlight the basic tenets of India's Look West Policy.**

3. The significance of the post of Chief of Defence Staff lies in its potential for re-imagining national security and designing an integrated defence strategy. Discuss this in the light of increasing complexity of security challenges.

4. What is 'Operation Twist'? Explain its importance in addressing monetary transmission and liquidity in the economy.

5. HIV/AIDS poses to be a serious health challenge to a large population living in India. Discuss various steps taken by the government to reduce the number of HIV cases to zero in light of the National AIDS Control Programme.

6. Implementation of NRC is a complicated issue, but if properly implemented it would make the India-Bangladesh relationship more sustainable. Critically analyse.

7. If India has to shape the global digital landscape in the 21st century, it must formulate a legal framework relating to personal data that can work as a template for the developing world. Critically analyse in the light of Personal Data Protection Bill 2019.

8. The fall of the World Trade Organization Appellate Body may see the adoption of more unilateral sanctions by states, possibly leading to increased trade wars. Comment.

9. Jal Jeevan Mission aims to give tap-water to all households by 2024. Discuss various steps taken by the government and major challenges associated with achieving this target.

10. Though the government has taken serious measures to the counter the NBFC crisis, but these measures are touted as a band-aid to a problem which requires surgery. Comment. Suggest some measures to deal with credit related issues in the present economic scenario.

11. **Recently the government has adopted the 'Nagpur Resolution' to empower citizens.** Discuss how citizen empowerment is central to good governance.

12. For the first time, India is listed among the top 10 countries with higher climate **performance ranks in this year's Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI). Discuss the various steps taken to improve India's CCPI performance.**

13. **Increase in the area under forest cover in India is a good omen towards India's counter against Climate Change, however there are serious challenges in India's forest** management. Discuss.

14. **The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the world's most po**werful defence alliance that was formed as a counterweight to the Soviet Union recently turned out to be a display of disagreements on the global stage. Discuss the various issues faced by NATO and its impact on India.

15. India is the only country where the economic gender gap is larger than the political gender gap. Discuss it in the light of recent Global Gender Gap report.

P.T Oriented Questions

1. With reference to Hornbill Festival, which of the following statements is/are correct?
   1. Hornbill festival is celebrated every year in the state of Arunachal Pradesh.
   2. Japan made its debut at Hornbill festival with a performance of electronic band.

   Select the correct answer using the code given below:
   (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
   (c) 1 and 2 only (d) Neither 1 nor 2

2. Consider the following/ events:
   1. Paika Rebellion
   2. Santhal Rebellion
   3. Diwan Veluthampi revolt
   4. Ahom revolt

   Which of the following is the correct chronological sequence of the above events?
   (a) 1-2-3-4   (b) 3-1-4-2
   (c) 4-2-3-1   (d) 2-3-4-1

3. Which of the following is not the part of UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage?
   (a) Kutiyattam
   (b) Kalbelia
   (c) Ramlila
   (d) Thirayattam

4. With reference to Arya Samaj, consider the following statements:
   1. The Samaj was set up by Dayanand Saraswati at Calcutta in 1875.
   2. The Samaj fixed the minimum marriageable age at 25 years for boys and 16 years for girls.
   3. **The Samaj slogan 'Back to the Vedas' was a call for a revival of** Vedic learning and not a revival of Vedic times.

   Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?
   (a) 1 only   (b) 1 and 3 only
   (c) 3 only   (d) 2 and 3 only

5. Consider the following statements regarding PM-AASHA scheme:
   1. It is an umbrella scheme aimed to ensure remunerative prices to farmers for their produce.
   2. The major crops covered under the scheme are wheat, rice and pulses.

   Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 only
   (c) 1 and 2 only
   (d) None of the above

6. Consider the following statements regarding Atal BhujalYojna:
   1. The schemes under the yojana would be formulated and executed locally at panchayat level.
   2. The funding pattern of the scheme is 50:50 between Government of India and World Bank.
   3. The scheme is being implemented in all the villages of India.

   Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
   (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
   (b) 2 and 3 only
   (c) 3 only
   (d) 1 and 2 only

7. **"A public statement that defines the** entitlements of citizens to a specific service, the standards of the service, the conditions to be met by users, and the remedies available to the latter in case of non-**compliance of standards"**

   Which of the following instruments of the Indian governance is being talked about in the above sentence?
   (a) Fundamental Rights
   (b) **A Citizens' Charter**
   (c) Directive Principles of state policy
   (d) Judicial review

8. Consider the following statements about members of the Indian Parliament:
   1. As per provisions of the Indian **Constitution "Anglo Indian" member is a person who's either of** the parent or ancestor is or was of European descent but who is a native of India.
   2. The governor of the state is authorized to nominate one Anglo Indian in the lower house of the State Legislature.
   3. 126th Constitutional Amendment bill seeks to extend the reservation given to the Anglo Indians by 10 years.

   Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?
   (a) 1 and 2 only
   (b) 1 and 3 only
   (c) 2 only
   (d) 2 and 3 only

9 **"Budapest Convention", recently seen** in news, is the context of which of the following issues?
   (a) Black money hoarding
   (b) Cybercrime
   (c) Illegal refugees
   (d) Conventional weapons

10. Consider following statements about **"Chief of Defence Staff"**
    1. It was one of the recommendations of the Kargil-Review Committee (KRC).
    2. He will head department of Defence.
    3. He will be permanent chairman of Chiefs of staff committee.

    Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?
    (a) 1 and 2 only
    (b) 1, 2 and 3
    (c) 1 and 3 only
    (d) 2 and 3 only

11. Which of the following statements is incorrect about Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)?
    1. It aims to safeguard the health of pregnant women, lactating mothers & children
    2. It is a scheme of Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)

    Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) Both 1 and 2   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

12. Which of the following statements is/are correct about The Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG)?
    1. It is a group of scientists under The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
    2. It acts as the Red List Authority for the Asian Elephant, carrying out Red List assessments for inclusion in the IUCN Red List.

    Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) Both 1 and 2   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

13. Consider the following statements about Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
    1. Act includes some plants that are prohibited from cultivation and planting without permission.
    2. While some of the animals have been provided absolute protection, some can be killed without any penalty.

    Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) Both 1 and 2   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

14. Consider the following statements about India State of Forest Report (ISFR):
    1. It is an annual report published by the Forest Survey of India (FSI).
    2. According to ISFR-2019 all the States in the north-eastern region show decrease in forest cover.

    Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?
    (a) 1 only   (b) 2 only
    (c) Both 1 and 2   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

15. Consider the following statements regarding "Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana":
    1. It is launched by the Ministry of Rural Development.
    2. It is a part of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM.
    (a) 1 only
    (b) 2 only
    (c) Both 1 and 2
    (d) Neither 1 nor 2

16. "GOAL Initiative" recently seen in news, is in the context of which of the following?
    (a) Initiative by FICCI to garner support for Swachha Bharat Abhiyan from private sector.
    (b) Digital skilling initiative for tribal women.
    (c) Mission to achieve freedom and dignity for LGBT communities.
    (d) MoEFCC initiative aimed at planting 1 lakh trees in 2020.

17. "Jaga Mission" of Odisha is recently seen in news. What is the purpose of the mission?
    (a) Programme to impart entrepreneurship skills among tribal youth above the age of 18 years.
    (b) A scheme to allocate fair price to minor forest produce.
    (c) Mission aimed attransformation of the slums into liveable habitat
    (d) Mission to establish democratically elected governments in Naxal affected districts of Odisha

18. With reference the surface temperature of the Sun, which of the following statements is/are correct?
    1. Surface temperature of the sun is more than its atmospheric temperature.
    2. Solar Spicules are found at the interface of corona and the chromosphere.

    Select the correct answer using code given below:
    (a) 1 only
    (b) 2 only
    (c) Both 1 and 2
    (d) Neither 1 nor 2

19. Consider the following statements with reference to "Future Skill Platform":
    1. It is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Human Resources and Development to train the students of higher secondary school in the field of robotics and artificial intelligence.
    2. This scheme will pave the way for the linkage between industry and academia and provide better skills

to the students and enhance more employment opportunity.

Which of the statement given above is/are incorrect?

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

20. Consider the following statements regarding Rotavirus:

1. It is the most common cause of severe diarrhoeal disease in young children.
2. The predominant mode of transmission of Rotavirus is the faecal-oral route.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

21. Consider the following pairs Craft vs Heritage of:

1. Puthukkuli shawls: Tamil Nadu
2. Sujni embroidery: Maharashtra
3. Uppada Jamdani saris: Karnataka

Which of the pairs given above is/are correct? (CSE-2018)

(a) 1 only   (b) 1 and 2
(c) 3 only   (d) 2 and 3

22. Consider the following statements:

1. Under Ramsar Convention, it is mandatory on the part of the Government of India to protect and conserve all the wetlands in the territory of India.
2. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010 were framed by the Government of India based on the recommendations of Ramsar Convention.
3. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010 also encompass the drainage area or catchment regions of the wetlands as determined by the authority.

Which of the statements given above is/ are correct? (CSE-2019)

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

23. With which among the following, Oman Shares its both land and maritime borders?

1. Gulf of Aden
2. United Arab Emirates
3. Strait of Homruz
4. Qatar

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only
(d) 2 and 4 only

24. Special mention accounts forms the part of which among the following?

(a) A recuuring deposit account with special interest rate
(b) A demat account that only deals with G-Secs
(c) A non-performing assest with paymentdue over for more than 30 days.
(d) A fixed deposit account with varaiableintrest rate.

25. Which of the following pair is/are correctly matched?

Exercise	Country
1. Al-Nagah	UAE
2. Surya Kiran	Nepal
3. Eastern Bridge	Oman

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 2 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

26. **With reference to the 'Gram Nyayalaya Act', which of the following statements** is/are correct?

1. As per the Act, Gram Nyayalayas can hear only civil cases and not criminal cases.
2. The Act allows local social activists as mediators/reconciliators.

Select the correct answer using the code given below. (CSE-2016)

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

27. India is an important member of the **'International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor'. If this** experiment succeeds, what is the immediate advantage for India? (CSE-2016)
    (a) It can use thorium in place of uranium for power generation
    (b) It can attain a global role in satellite navigation
    (c) It can drastically improve the efficiency of its fission reactors in power generation
    (d) It can build fusion reactors for power generation

28. Which of the following statements best **describes the term 'Scheme for** Sustainable Structuring of Stressed As**sets (S4A)', recently seen in the** news? (CSE-2017)
    (a) It is a procedure for considering ecological costs of developmental schemes formulated by the Government.
    (b) It is a scheme of RBI for reworking the financial structure of big corporate entities facing genuine difficulties.
    (c) It is a disinvestment plan of the Government regarding Central Public Sector Undertakings.

    (d) **It is an important provision in 'The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code'** recently implemented by the Government.

29. Which among the following nations are part of both APEC and RCEP?
    1. Republic of Korea
    2. Hong Kong
    3. Combodia
    4. Laos
    Select the correct answer using the code given below:
    (a) 2 and 3 only
    (b) 1 and 4 only
    (c) 1, 3 and 4 only
    (d) 1,2 3 and 4 only

30. Which among the following Asian Countries India has signed Social Security Agreement (SSA)?
    1. South Korea
    2. Japan
    3. China
    4. Singapore
    Select the correct answer using the code given below:
    (a) 1 and 2 only
    (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
    (c) 2 and 4 only
    (d) 1,2, 3 and 4

Answer Key

1.	B	11.	B	21.	A
2.	B	12.	B	22.	B
3.	D	13.	C	23.	B
4.	A	14.	D	24.	C
5.	C	15.	C	25.	B
6.	D	16.	B	26.	B
7.	B	17.	C	27.	D
8.	C	18.	D	28.	B
9.	B	19.	A	29.	B
10.	C	20.	C	30.	A