



North Delhi	Central Delhi	Jaipur	Bhopal	Patna	Indore	Bengaluru
2521, Hudson Line, Vijay Nagar Near GTB Nagar Metro Stn	B-5/4 Poorvi Marg Old RajenderNgr. Market Near Karol Bagh Metro Stn	403-404 Apex Tower Lal Kothi Tonk Road	43-44 2nd Floor R.R. Arcade Zone - II M.P.Nagar	Above Toyota Showroom Exhibition Road Near Gandhi Maidan	232-233 2nd Floor Veda Building Bhawar Kuan Square	116/C-1 3 rd Floor, 5 th Block KHB Colony Koramangala Bengaluru
Delhi 110009 9717380832	Delhi 110060 9811293743	Jaipur 302015 8290800441	Bhopal 462011 7509975361	Patna 800001 7463950774	Indore 452001 9893772941	Karnataka 560095 7619166663
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GS- I	Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.	Indian history, significant events, personalities, issues and the Freedom Struggle	Post independence issues, National boundary and disputes	Indian society, features, issues, globalization and diversity	Women - issues and developments	Urbanization - problems and remedies	Distribution of industries and resources - India and world	Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc	Culture- Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.		
GS- II	Indian constitution- Amendments, acts and bills.	Legislative, executive and judicial processes.	Constitutional, non-constitutional, judicial, quasi-judicial, administrative and other types of bodies.	Federal structure and local bodies. Their powers and functions.	Government policies and various governance issues like transparency, accountability and - governance	Committees and schemes.	Non-government issues, self-help groups and role of civil society	Vulnerable sections of our society and social sector issues and initiatives.	International Relation-India and other countries, various Indian and international agreements, effects of other countries on India and international institutions.		
GS- III	Various measures to boost Indian economy- planning, policies, management.	Government budgeting and issues related to budget.	Agriculture, animal husbandry and transport	Food security- measures to boost food security and food processing issues related to land- land reforms	Industries and infrastructure their growth and investment model	Space and technology, IT space, robotics and computer	Disease, biotechnology and human welfare	Innovations, intellectual property, Awards, POI and other import and aspects of S&T	Environment and disaster, government initiatives, various judgment, pollution, degradation and conservation efforts	International agreements and works of various international bodies, effort by individuals and misc.	Challenges to internal security, Various Security forces and their mandate, Cyber security, money laundering and its prevention.
GS- IV	Ethical issues related to family, society, education, Corruption etc.	Ethics in public and private administration	Issues	Related laws and rules	Governance/e- Governance	Ethics in international issues	Personalities and their teachings	Other import and topics			
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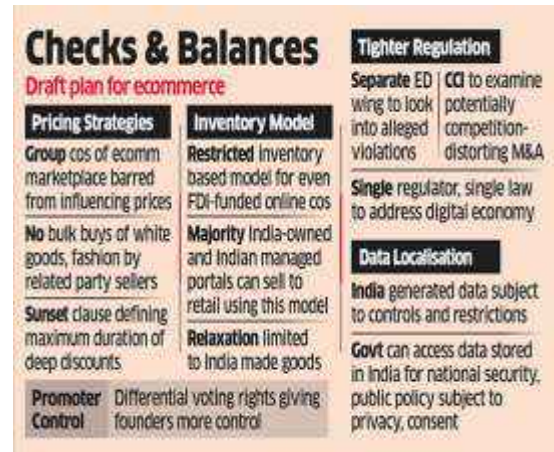
Draft National e-Commerce Policy

In News

The Department of Industry and Internal Trade has released the draft National e-commerce Policy.

Background

- The e-Commerce sector is driven by technology and data. Continuously evolving technologies and volumes of data generated in a consumer-oriented country like India require an enabling regulatory framework for empowering domestic entrepreneurs, leveraging access to data, connecting MSMEs, vendors, traders, etc. to the digital ecosystem as well as empowering consumers to retain control of the data generated and owned by them.
- Data is a valuable resource for any individual, corporation or a Government. Access to data helps in informed decision-making. The unprecedented explosion in the volume of data creates as much a threat to its misuse as it creates opportunities for utilization for policy making.
- AI has developed self-learning capabilities, based on analysis of data, given large enough data sets for processing. An individual user might be unaware of the information created/discovered by the corporations on the basis of data generated by him/her. The National e-Commerce Policy aims to streamline protection of personal data and empower the users/consumers to have control over the data they generate and own.



Key Features of Draft

- The National e-Commerce Policy aims to regulate cross-border data flow, while enabling sharing of anonymised community data (data collected by IoT devices installed in public spaces like traffic signals or automated entry gates). Conditions are required to be adhered to by business entities which have access to sensitive data of Indian users stored abroad.
- The National e-Commerce Policy addresses six broad issues of the e-commerce ecosystem viz. (i) data; (ii) infrastructure development; (iii) e-commerce marketplaces; (iv) regulatory issues; (v) stimulating domestic digital economy; and (vi) export promotion through e-commerce.
- It include **barring group companies of ecommerce players from “directly or indirectly influencing” sale prices**. This may mean restrictions on retail strategies of ecommerce majors with subsidiaries.
- To streamline functioning of the e-Commerce sector under the FDI Policy, e-commerce websites/applications are required to ensure that all product shipments from other countries to India must be channelized through the Customs route. The Policy provides for integrating Customs, RBI and India Post systems to improve tracking of imports through e-Commerce.
- Anti-counterfeiting measures have been prescribed under the Policy. Mechanisms to enable trademark owners (and licensees) to be informed about any possible counterfeit product being sold on a platform have been included in the Policy.
- Anti-piracy measures are also required to be put in place by the platforms. Transparency, consumer-oriented strategies and prevention of sale of prohibited items (as prescribed by DGFT) have been addressed under the Policy.
- On data localisation, the draft recommended that only personal data or community data **collected by “internet of things” devices in “public space” will need to be stored in India**. Other data, which have no personal or community implications, can be stored anywhere.

8. It favours simplified GST procedures for ecommerce by allowing centralized registration instead of local registration and displaying requirement for each place of business.
9. The draft suggests a separate wing be set up in the Enforcement Directorate to handle grievances related to foreign investment in ecommerce with detailed guidelines.

International negotiations on e-commerce

India has thus far not been a party to negotiations on e-Commerce at the multilateral level. These negotiations, under the aegis of the World Trade Organization (WTO), are intended to create binding obligations on all the WTO member countries, including India.

The push for initiating negotiations on substantive obligations related to e-commerce includes elements like permanently accepting the moratorium on imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions. By agreeing to the permanent moratorium, countries which have tariff schedules, which allow putting duties on these kinds of products, will give up these rights and lose revenues.

There is no universally accepted definition of e-commerce. In this Policy, the **terms 'e-commerce', 'electronic-commerce' and the 'digital economy'** are used interchangeably. E-Commerce includes buying, selling, marketing or distribution of (i) goods, including digital products and (ii) services; through electronic network. Delivery of goods, including digital products, and services may be online or through traditional mode of physical delivery.

Significance

- ✓ Creating a facilitative regulatory environment for growth of e-commerce sector
- ✓ Empowering domestic entrepreneurs;
- ✓ Encouraging Make in India
- ✓ Safeguarding interests of the consumers
- ✓ Leveraging access to data
- ✓ Promoting domestic research and development in digital innovation in order to foster home-grown alternate, cheaper and efficient service providers suited for the Indian market like RuPay and BHIM etc
- ✓ Enabling domestic players in the Indian market to be sustainable in the digital economy;
- ✓ Stimulating the participation of micro, small and medium enterprises, start-ups and traders in the digital economy

PEPPER IT WITH
Industrial Revolution 4.0, Sugamya
Bharat Abhiyan, BHIM, COE-IT,
CERT-In, GeM, Electronic
Development Fund

Monkey Declared Vermin in Himachal Pradesh

In News

Monkeys have again been declared vermin for the next one year in 11 districts' 91 tehsils and sub-tehsils of Himachal Pradesh.

Vermin animal criteria

- Vermin are wild mammals and birds that are harmful to crops, farm animals or that carry disease. This allows state forest authorities and people to carry out extermination (hunting/poaching) of monkeys on a large scale.
- Wildlife laws divide species into **'schedules' ranked from I to V**. Schedule I members are the best protected, in theory, with severe punishments meted out to those who hunt them. Wild boars, nilgai and rhesus monkeys are Schedule II and III members — also protected, but can be hunted under specific conditions. Crows and fruit bat fall in Schedule 5, the vermin category.
- Once declared vermin, a particular species can be hunted or culled without restriction. These animals tagged as vermin, **in the words of a wildlife conservationist, are "open season" and could become easy game for hunters as well as traders in meat.**

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- Section 11 of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972

Hunting of wild animals to be permitted in certain cases: the Chief Wild Life Warden or the authorised officer may, if he is satisfied that any wild animal specified in Schedule I, Schedule II, Schedule III, or Schedule IV, has become dangerous to human life or to property (including standing crops on any land) or is so disabled or diseased as to be beyond recovery, by order in writing and stating the reasons therefor, permit any person to hunt such animal.

- Section 62 of Act empowers Centre to declare wild animals other than Schedule I & II to be vermin for specified area and period.

HOPE

- National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Organizations (NABH) has revamped Entry-Level Certification Process of hospitals to make it simpler, digital, faster and user-friendly through new portal called HOPE – **Healthcare Organizations' Platform for Entry-Level-Certification**.
- It is an online platform for smooth and secure registration which provides a self-explanatory questionnaire to be filled by the HCO/SHCOs.
- HOPE enables to comply with quality protocols, improve patient safety and the overall healthcare facility of the organization.

Permanent Residence Certificate

In News

Arunachal Pradesh government has decided to not accept the recommendations of a high-level committee to grant permanent resident certificates (PRC) to six communities.

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What is permanent resident certificate?

Permanent resident certificate is a legal document issued to Indian citizens that serves as evidence of residence and is required to be submitted as residential proof for official purpose.

What has the state government proposed?

The government in the state is considering issuing the certificate to the six non-APSTs communities living in Namsai and Changlang districts and to the Gorkhas living in Vijaynagar. Amongst those communities are Deoris, Sonowal Kacharis, Morans, Adivasis and Mishings. Most of these communities are recognised as Scheduled Tribes in neighbouring Assam.

A Joint High Power Committee (JHPC), after holding discussions with the stakeholders, recommended granting PRC to the six communities, who are not natives of Arunachal Pradesh but have been living in Namsai and Changlang districts for decades.

Why are people in Arunachal protesting against PRC?

There is resentment among several community-based groups and organisations in Arunachal Pradesh, who feel the rights and interests of indigenous people will be compromised if the proposal is implemented.

Eligibility Criteria

1. Any person who has been residing in a village/town of Arunachal Pradesh for at least 10 years is eligible to apply for a domicile certificate.
2. The applicant should produce a copy of Record of Rights of the residential plot owned by either him, his parents or ancestors.
3. Woman who does not belong to Arunachal Pradesh but married to a permanent resident of Arunachal Pradesh is also eligible to apply for the PRC.
4. Any individual who does not belong to Arunachal Pradesh but residing in the state working as a government employee is also eligible to request for this certificate.

Indian State issues PRC

1. Arunachal Pradesh
2. Assam
3. Mizoram
4. Meghalaya
5. Tripura
6. Manipur
7. Jammu & Kashmir

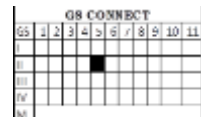
Purpose of the Certificate

1. Permanent Residence Certificate is a legal document that serves as a proof of residence and thus must be submitted wherever a residence proof is required.
2. PRC have to be shown by the residents while taking admission in educational organisations job reservation under specific quotas especially for government jobs, etc. to get local preferences.
3. To obtain ration card of the respective state
4. To cast the vote in the elections
5. To avail the benefits of various schemes of the state or to claim scholarships of the State.

EVM under RTI

In News

Electronic Voting Machine is an 'information' under the Right to Information Act, the Central Information Commission has held.



Issue

EVMs have been in the spotlight recently as several Opposition leaders have raised doubts about the credibility of the machines. They have also demanded that the ECI cross-check 50% of results with voter-verifiable paper audit trails (VVPAT) in the upcoming Lok Sabha poll.

Background

- Deciding a unique RTI application, through which the applicant had sought an EVM from the Election Commission. Chief Information Commissioner recently said the machine was covered under the definition of "information" and can be demanded from the ECI.
- According to applicant, as per Section 2(f) and 2(i) of the RTI Act, the definition of 'information' and 'record' includes model or any sample. Hence, an EVM qualifies as 'information' and should be provided to him under Section 6(1) of the RTI Act.

Section 2(f) in The Right To Information Act, 2005

"information" means any material in any form, including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force.

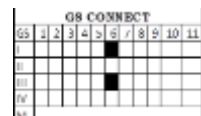
Key Highlight

- Defending the rejection of said application, the Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) contended that the model/samples of the EVM available with the ECI, are only kept for training purpose by the ECI, and not saleable to the general public.
- As regards the contention that the software installed in the EVM is an intellectual property of a third party, the disclosure of which would harm the competitive position of the third party concerned, the commission directed the CPIO to provide an appropriate reply, as per the provisions of the RTI Act, since it could not have been denied under Section 8(1)(d) of the Act.
- Implications of this ruling: This implies the Election Commission has to respond to an RTI application seeking the EVM either by providing it or refusing it under exemption clauses in the Act. But that also can be contested before the CIC, the highest adjudicating authority in RTI matters.

DNS server - India

In News

The government will soon launch a public domain name system (DNS) server that could protect users from any malware or phishing with enhanced security features as well as faster response time as per MeitY.



Key Highlights

- DNS is a system that translates domain names to Internet Protocol or IP addresses that allows browsers to load websites sought.
- If a user inadvertently accesses a malicious or phishing site, the new public system would immediately open up a page or popup to alert the user of such potential threat so that the suspicious resource could be avoided.
- The new DNS will be placed across the country to minimise outage and would be available round the clock.
- The government is eyeing a new and robust platform in the wake of critical digital services being delivered online requiring enhanced security to discourage cyber-attacks and a quicker site loading time.

New email platform

1. The Centre has also launched a new email platform for all government employees including those in states and Union Territories.
2. The new platform is an upgraded version with enhanced in-built security features compared to the earlier created by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) and has a capability to host as many as 5 million users that can be scaled up further if needed.
3. **"It has two-factor authentication, highly secure and user-friendly," ministry's official** added. If a user is permanently located within the country, no foreign IP would be allowed to access the platform.
4. The policy lays down norms for the email services with an aim to ensure secure access and usage of government's email services by users.

Supreme Court on eviction of 1.1 mn forest families

In News

The Supreme Court has asked the governments of 17 states to evict an estimated one million tribal and other households living in forests after their claims of the right to live in forests were rejected under the Forest Rights Act.

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SC on issue

1. The court has asked the evictions to be carried out by July 12 and directed the Dehradun-based Forest Survey of India to submit a satellite-image based report on the encroachments removed.
2. The land ownership claims made by scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers under the Forest Rights Act have been rejected on various grounds, including absence of proof that the land was in their possession for at least three generations.
3. The law provides for giving land rights to those living on forest land for at least three generations before December 31, 2005. The claims are examined by a committee headed by the district collector and having forest department officials as members.
4. The court said in cases where verification/re-verification/review is pending, the state must complete the process within four months and submit a report.
5. **The understanding of "encroachment" is** that those forest dwellers whose claims under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (FRA), 2006, have been rejected are encroachers.

To be eligible for rights under the Act, the person has to be either:

- traditionally residing in forests or forestland
- traditionally dependent on forest produce for livelihood

The FRA 2006 recognizes two classes of persons:

- Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribe - members of scheduled tribe living in forests.
- Other Traditional Forest Dweller (OTFD) - persons residing in forest, or dependent on forest produce for 75 years.

Rights bestowed under FRA 2006

1. Land Rights
2. Use Rights
3. Right to Protect and Conserve

Section 6 of the Act lays down the procedure for establishing claims. Once established, the forest dwellers will get land rights, use rights and rights to conserve and protect forestland.

National Policy on Electronics 2019

In News

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the National Policy on Electronics 2019 (NPE 2019), proposed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

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Vision

To position India as global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) by encouraging and driving capabilities in country for developing core components, including chipsets, and creating an enabling environment for the industry to compete globally.

Salient Features of NPE 2019

1. Create eco-system for globally competitive ESDM sector: Promoting domestic manufacturing and export in the entire value-chain of ESDM.
2. Promote domestic manufacturing in the entire value-chain of ESDM, including core components and materials to increase the domestic value addition and reduce dependence on import of electronic goods by focusing on skill, technology, scale and global market.
3. Provide incentives and support for manufacturing of core electronic components.
4. Provide special package of incentives for mega projects which are extremely high-tech and entail huge investments, such as semiconductor facilities display fabrication, etc.
5. Formulate suitable schemes and incentive mechanisms to encourage new units and expansion of existing units.
6. Promote Industry-led R&D and innovation in all sub-sectors of electronics, including grass root level innovations and early stage Start-ups in emerging technology areas such as 5G, IoT/ Sensors, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Virtual Reality (VR), Drones, Robotics, Additive Manufacturing, Photonics, Nano-based devices, etc.
7. Provide incentives and support for significantly enhancing availability of skilled manpower, including re-skilling.
8. Special thrust on Fabless Chip Design Industry, Medical Electronic Devices Industry, Automotive Electronics Industry and Power Electronics for Mobility and Strategic Electronics Industry.
9. Create Sovereign Patent Fund (SPF) to promote the development and acquisition of IPs in ESDM sector.
10. Promote trusted electronics value chain initiatives to improve national cyber security profile.
11. **Strengthen India's linkages with global trade, integrate with global value chains and build facilitative programmes and incentive framework to boost Indian ESDM exports.**
12. Preferential Market Access: Encourage the state govt to adopt the Public Procurement in procurement of electronic, including cyber security products.

Give it Up scheme encourages well-to-do households to voluntarily give up their liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) subsidy so that it could be targeted to the poor who remain reliant on polluting cooking fuels such as wood, dung, crop residues and coal.

Targets:

Promote domestic manufacturing and export in the entire value-chain of ESDM for economic development to achieve a turnover of USD 400 billion (approximately INR 26,00,000 crore) by 2025. This will include targeted production of 1.0 billion (100 crore) mobile handsets by 2025, valued at USD 190 billion (approximately INR 13,00,000 crore), including 600 million (60 crore) mobile handsets valued at USD 110 billion (approximately INR 7,00,000 crore) for export.

Impact

The NPE 2019 when implemented will lead to formulation of several schemes, initiatives, projects, etc., in consultation with the concerned Ministries/ Departments, for the development of ESDM sector in the country. It will enable flow of investment and technology, leading to higher value addition in the domestically manufactured electronic products, increased electronics hardware manufacturing in the country and their export, while generating substantial employment opportunities.

Women safety

In News

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has conceptualized several initiatives to promote safety of women in their living spaces, working spaces and the public spaces.

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Panic Button

- The project is meant for those in distress, mainly women, so that they can send out distress signals along with their location details to the nearest police control room, by pressing a button in their mobile phones i.e 112- a pan-India emergency number.
- For Women and children, 112 India App provides a special SHOUT feature which alerts registered volunteers in the vicinity of victim for immediate assistance.
- The emergency response system was soft launched in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland recently and is being launched in 14 more states. A total amount of Rs.321.69 crores has been provided for this initiative through the Nirbhaya fund.

SCIM portal under Safe City Project

An online Safe City Implementation Monitoring (SCIM) portal has been developed by MHA which in order to facilitate States to monitor and manage the Safe City projects. SCIM will facilitate online tracking of deployment of assets and infrastructure created under the Safe City projects. SCIM facilitates an evidence based online monitoring system.

Government has identified 8 cities for implementation of Safe City project which are Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai.

Key features of Project:

- Identification of sensitive hot spots in each city,
- Installation of CCTV surveillance covering the entire hot spot.
- Automated number plate reading machines to be deployed in extremely sensitive areas.
- Intensive patrolling in vulnerable areas beyond the identified hot spots.
- Improving street lighting and public toilet facilities for women.
- Others like setting up women help desks in police stations, augmentation of women support centres etc.

SWAYATT

It is an initiative to promote Start-ups, Women and Youth Advantage Through eTransactions on Government e Marketplace (GeM). This will bring together the key stakeholders within the Indian entrepreneurial ecosystem to Government e-Marketplace, the national procurement portal.

DNA Analysis Facilities in States

In view of the complaints of delay in cases of sexual assault investigations, it was proposed that dedicated DNA analysis facilities should be created in the forensic science laboratories on a mission mode. Timely testing of DNA samples from the crime scene is the quickest process of obtaining forensic evidence in cases of sexual assault on women. A sum of Rs.78.86 crores has been sanctioned for this initiative through the Nirbhaya fund.

Other Initiatives

The fast track special courts for cases of sexual assaults are also being established in collaboration with Ministry of Law for which Rs.767 crores has been sanctioned through the Nirbhaya Fund. Projects for Central Victim Compensation Fund for Rs.200 crores and

Cyber Crime Prevention Against Women and Children for Rs.224 crores have also been appraised and approved under the Nirbhaya Fund.

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)

NCST leadership award

The awards will be given for significant and exemplary services towards Scheduled Tribes in the country. in 3 categories i.e. (i) Educational Institutions/ Universities, (ii) Public Sector Undertakings/Banks and (iii) Public Service rendered by an Individual, NGO or Civil Society.

About NCST

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) was established by amending Article 338 and inserting a new Article 338A in the Constitution through the Constitution (89th Amendment) Act, 2003. By this amendment, the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was replaced by two separate Commissions namely- (i) the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), and (ii) the NCST

Composition

The Commission consist of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and three full time-member (including one lady member). The Chairperson has been given the rank of Union Cabinet Minister, and the Vice- Chairperson that of a Minister of State and other Members have the ranks of a Secretary to the Government of India.

Reports

The commission submits its report to the President annually on the working of safeguards and measures required for effective implementation of Schemes relating to welfare and socio-economic development of STs.

Information and Broadcasting Ministry had advised that the media should refrain from using the word “Dalit” for members belonging to Scheduled Castes and had directed that **‘Scheduled Caste’** should alone be used for all official transaction, matters, dealings, certificates for denoting the persons belonging to the community.

National Commission for Scheduled Castes disfavoured the use of ‘Dalit’, which it felt was unconstitutional. This is because belonging to a **‘Scheduled Caste’** is a legal status conferred on members of castes named in a list notified by the President under Article 341 of the Constitution.

Kannadigas reservation

In News

The issue of providing 100% job reservation in C and D category of employment in private sector establishments to Kannadigas to be discussed in the Cabinet.

Issue

For at least over a decade, especially after Bangalore exploded on the national and global map as the most sought-after destination primarily for software development, it witnessed a huge population influx from all corners of India naturally upsetting the local and migrant balance and causing social friction primarily owing to economic reasons.

Key Highlights

1. Karnataka government has decided to amend the Karnataka Industrial Employment (Standing Orders), Rules, 1961 to give priority to Kannadigas in jobs under Group C and D category in the private sector.
2. With the amendment, the cabinet hopes to make companies and establishments that receive sops from the state government in the form of incentives or rebates, obligated to accommodate Kannadigas into their workforce.
3. The govt amendment is driven by the 58 recommendations made by Mahishi Committee for the Kannadigas.

Sarojini Mahishi recommendation:

- 100 per cent reservation for Kannadigas for Group C and D jobs in Central government departments and PSUs.
- A minimum 80 per cent reservation for Kannadigas for Group B jobs in Central government departments and PSUs
- 65 per cent reservation for Kannadigas for Group A jobs in Central government departments and PSUs.

Impact

1. Forcible hiring of candidates irrespective of merit or qualification violating Article 14.
2. It would also violate the landmark Indra Sawhney judgment of the Supreme Court **which caps reservation “of any manner” at 50%.**
3. Violation of Article 16 which says that there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.
4. The private sector could suffer a setback as it would hinder choosing the best candidates.

Minority status issue of AMU

The Supreme Court has referred the petition seeking withdrawal of minority status of AMU to determine the correctness of minority status of AMU and to define the parameters for granting minority status to the institution.

Article 30(1) of the Constitution gives all religious and linguistic minorities the right to set up and run educational institutions, including schools, colleges and universities. The law guarantees that governments will not discriminate in giving aid on the basis of their being ‘minority’ institutions, thus sealing in a commitment by the Government of India to allow minorities to flourish.

Rainfed agriculture in India

In News

Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture Network (RRA N) in collaboration with National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India & National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) organised a National Convention on **‘Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture — Restructuring Policy and Public Investments to address Agrarian Crisis at the India International Centre (IIC).**

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Key Highlights

- The objective of the convention is to find pragmatic solutions by kicking around ideas pertaining to rainfed agriculture, build a consensus and emphasize on different policies and programmes at the Centre and States. The focus is to identify rainfed agriculture as an issue of national importance.
- According to National Rainfed Area Authority (2012), out of 593 districts in India, 499 districts are rainfed. Rainfed areas contribute significantly to food production – as high as 89% of millets, 88% of pulses, 73% of cotton, 69% of oil seeds, and 40% of rice are produced by Rainfed farmers in the country.
- Rainfed areas in the country support 64% cattle, 74% sheep and 78% goat population, which are critical for food and nutritional security in India.
- About 61% of **India’s farmers rely on rainfed agriculture and 55% of gross cropped area** is under rainfed agriculture.

Challenges

1. **There has been “negligence” toward rainfed areas which is leading to lower incomes for farmers in these areas.** Farmers in rainfed areas are receiving 40% less of their income from agriculture in comparison to those in irrigated areas.
2. Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture (RRA) Network, which published the atlas, laid out the stark differences in government policy and expenditure.
3. Flagship government schemes, such as seed and fertiliser subsidies and soil health cards, are designed for irrigated areas and simply extended to rainfed farmers without taking their needs into consideration.

- PEPPER IT WITH
Phad, Drip and Sprinkler
Irrigation system, Har Khet ko
Pani,

e-AUSHADHI portal

- ❖ The govt launched the e-AUSHADHI portal, for online licensing of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy drugs and related matters.
- ❖ e-AUSHADHI portal is intended for increased transparency, improved information management facility, improved data usability and increased accountability.

In News

[illegible]

- ❖ The Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial (Amendment) Bill, 2018 was introduced in Lok Sabha to amend the composition of trust the Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Act, 1951.
- ❖ The Act provides for the erection of a National Memorial in memory of those killed or wounded on April 13, 1919, in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar. In addition, it creates a Trust to manage the National Memorial.

1. The Bill amends this provision to remove the President of the Indian National Congress as a Trustee. Further, it clarifies that when there is no Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, then the leader of the single largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha will be the Trustee.

- Prime Minister—Chairperson
- Minister in-charge of Culture
- Leader of Opposition recognised as such in the House of the People or where there is no such Leader of Opposition, then, the Leader of the single largest Opposition Party in that House
- Governor of the State of Punjab
- Chief Minister of the State of Punjab
- three eminent persons to be nominated by the Central Government

2. The Act provides that the three eminent persons nominated by the central government will have a term of five years and will be eligible for re-nomination. The Bill adds a provision to allow the central government to terminate the term of a nominated trustee before the expiry of his term without assigning any reason.

Registration of Marriage of Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Bill, 2019

In News

The Union Cabinet has approved the introduction of Registration of Marriage of Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Bill, 2019.

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Background

- ✓ The objective of the Bill is to create more accountability and offer more protection against exploitation of Indian women by their NRI spouses. It envisages (i) Registration of Marriages by NRIs; (ii) Amendment of the Passports Act 1967 and (iii) Amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973.
- ✓ Once the Bill is passed, marriages performed by NRIs would be registered in India or Indian Missions & Posts abroad.
- ✓ The Bill is an outcome of a joint initiative of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Law and Justice.

LAWASIA Human Rights Conference

Theme: *State Power, Business and Human Rights: Contemporary Challenge.*

The conference aims to provide a unique opportunity for lawyers and associated professional members of Asia Pacific to exchange insights and expertise on topics of significant importance to all.

Key Highlights

1. Registration of marriages: The Bill states that every NRI who marries a citizen of India must get his marriage registered in India within thirty days. Further, every NRI who marries an Indian citizen or another NRI outside India, must get his marriage registered with the Marriage Officer, within thirty days.
2. Impounding of passport: In case an NRI marries an Indian citizen or another NRI, and fails to register the marriage within thirty days, the passport authority may impound or revoke the passport of the NRI.
3. Issue of summons and warrants: The Bill provides that in case a court cannot serve summons, it may issue summons by uploading it on a specific website designated by the MEA. If the person summoned does not appear before the Court, it may issue and upload a warrant for arrest on the designated website.
4. Further, in the case the person fails to appear before the Court as specified in the warrant, the Court may pronounce him as a proclaimed offender and upload a declaration to that effect on the website. This statement will be conclusive evidence that the warrant has been issued.

Impact

- The Amendment to the Passport Act would empower the Passport Authority to impound or revoke the passport of NRI.
- The Amendments to CrPC, 1973 would empower the Courts for issuance of summons, warrants through the specially designated website of the MEA.
- It proposes to offer greater protection to Indian women married to NRIs and serve as a deterrent to NRIs against harassment of their spouses. This would provide much needed relief to all Indian women married to NRIs worldwide.
- It was necessary due to numerous complaints received from Indian nationals mostly women, who were deserted or harassed by their NRI Spouses.

Adjournment sine die

In News

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 and The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2018 lapsed as the Rajya Sabha was adjourned sine die.

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Salient Feature

- Adjournment sine die -Termination of a sitting of the House without any definite date being fixed for the next sitting.
- A Bill pending in Parliament or any of its Committees does not lapse on the prorogation of the Houses. However, pending notices, other than notices of intention to move for leave to introduce a Bill, lapse.
- The Rajya Sabha is a permanent House and is not subject to dissolution. Only the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies are subject to dissolution.
- When the Lok Sabha is dissolved, all business including bills, motions, resolutions, notices, petitions and so on pending before it or its committees lapse. They must be reintroduced in the newly-constituted Lok Sabha to be pursued further.

Motion of Thanks

- > The President makes an address to a joint sitting of Parliament at the start of the Budget session, which is prepared by the government and lists its achievements. It is essentially a statement of the legislative and policy achievements of the government during the preceding year and gives a broad indication of the agenda for the year ahead.
- > The address is followed by a motion of thanks moved in each House by ruling party MPs. During the session, political parties discuss the motion of thanks also suggesting amendments.
- > **President's Address and Motion of Thanks** are governed by Articles 86 (1) and 87 (1) of the Constitution and Rules 16 to 24 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.

When a bill lapses:

1. A bill originated in the Lok Sabha and pending in the Lok Sabha, lapse.
2. A Bill which is passed by Lok Sabha and is pending in Rajya Sabha lapses on the dissolution of Lok Sabha.
3. A Bill originating in Rajya Sabha and passed by Rajya Sabha but pending in the Lok Sabha lapse on the dissolution of the Lok Sabha.
4. A bill originated in the Rajya Sabha and returned to Rajya Sabha by the Lok Sabha with amendments and still pending in the Rajya Sabha lapse on the dissolution of Lok Sabha.

When a bill doesn't lapses:

1. A Bill pending in Rajya Sabha which has not been passed by Lok Sabha does not lapse on the dissolution of Lok Sabha.
2. Bills originating in Rajya Sabha which are still pending in that House do not lapse on the dissolution of Lok Sabha.
3. A Bill upon which the Houses have disagreed and the President has notified his intention to summon a Joint Sitting of the Houses to consider the Bill prior to dissolution does not lapse on dissolution of Lok Sabha.

4. A Bill passed by the two Houses of Parliament and sent to the President for assent does not lapse on the dissolution of Lok Sabha.
5. A Bill returned by the President to Rajya Sabha for reconsideration of the Houses does not lapse if the dissolution of Lok Sabha takes place without the Houses having considered the Bill.

Adjournment, Prorogation and Dissolution of the Lok Sabha

"Adjournment" is a postponement of the sitting or proceedings of the House from one time to another specified for the reassembling of the House. During the course of a Session, the Lok Sabha may be adjourned from day to day or for more than a day. It may also be adjourned sine die which means the termination of a sitting of the House without any definite date being fixed for its next sitting.

"Prorogation" means the termination of a Session of the House by an order made by the President under article 85(2)(a) of the Constitution. The Prorogation of the House may take place any time, even while the House is sitting. However, usually, prorogation follows the adjournment of the sitting of the House sine die.

"Dissolution" of the House means the end of the life of the Lok Sabha either by an order made by the President under article 85 (2) (b) of the Constitution or on the expiration of the period of five years from the date appointed for its first meeting. Dissolution puts an end to the representative character of the individuals who at the time compose the Lok Sabha.

Swachh Shakti 2019

- Swachh Shakti-2019 is a national event which aims to bring in to focus the leadership role played by rural women in Swachh Bharat Mission. Women Sarpanches and Panches from all over the country will be attending the event.
- Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in association with the Govt. of Haryana is organizing the Swachh Shakti-2019.
- Swachh Shakti is an example of how at the grass root level, rural women champions are acting as a change agent to mobilize the community and lead from the front women taking initiatives for a Swachh Bharat. The movement is a part of ongoing activities under the aegis of the Swachh Bharat Mission

Measures to Safeguard Land Rights of Scheduled Tribes

In News

Part X of the Constitution contains special provisions relating to administration of Scheduled Areas and tribal areas. Part B of Schedule-V, under Article 244 (1) of the Constitution provide that the Governor may make regulations for the peace and good government of any area in a State which is for the time being a Scheduled Area.

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PEPPER IT WITH
6th Schedule, 338A

Constitutional and Legislative Measures to Protect and Safeguard Land Rights of Scheduled Tribes

1. "The Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006" **to recognize and vest the forest rights and occupation in forest land to forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes.**
2. "Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013" (RFCTLARR Act, 2013 in short) **safeguards against displacement of Scheduled Tribes. Special provisions have been made for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under Sections 41 and 42 of the RFCTLARR Act, 2013 which**

protect their interests. The RFCTLARR Act, 2013 also lays down procedure and manner of rehabilitation and resettlement.

3. “The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996”, also provides that the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level shall be consulted before making the acquisition of land in the Scheduled Areas or development projects and before resettling or rehabilitating persons affected by such projects in the Scheduled Areas; the actual planning and implementation of the projects in the Scheduled Areas shall be coordinated at the State Level;

4. Constitutional provisions under Schedule – V also provide for safeguards against displacement of tribal population because of land acquisitions etc. The Governor of the State, having scheduled Areas, is empowered to prohibit or restrict transfer of land from tribal and regulate the allotment of land to members of the Scheduled Tribes in such cases. Land being a State subject, various provisions of rehabilitation and resettlement as per the RFCTLARR Act, 2013 are implemented by the concerned State Governments.

5. “The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987” provides for legal services to members of Scheduled Tribes.
6. “The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989” has been introduced to prevent the commission of offences of atrocities against members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, to provide for the trial of such offences and for the relief of rehabilitation of the victims of such offences and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. Wrongfully dispossessing members of Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes from their land or premises or interfering with the enjoyment of their rights, including forest rights, over any land or premises or water or irrigation facilities or destroying the crops or taking away the produce there from amount to atrocities and are subject to punishment under the said Act.
7. Apart from the above, this Ministry being the nodal Ministry for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes, implements several schemes and programmes for upliftment and development of Scheduled Tribes in the country.

The Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill, 2019

In News

The government quietly introduced a Constitution Amendment Bill in Rajya Sabha recently to increase the financial and executive powers of the 10

Maithili scripts

A committee constituted for making a report for the Promotion and Protection of Maithili Language and its scripts, has submitted its report to MHRD in which it has made several recommendations for promotion and protection of Maithili language.

Mithilakshar or Tirhuta is the script of broader cultural Mithila. The scripts of Mithilaksar, Bangla, Assamese, Nebari, Odia and Tibetan are part of the family.

The oldest form of Mithilakshar is found in the Sahodara stone inscriptions of 950 AD.

Safeguards	Measures
Social Safeguards	Article 17, 23, 24 and 25 (2) (b)
Economic Safeguards	Article 23, 24 and 46
Educational & Cultural Safeguards	Article 15 (4), Article 29
Political Safeguards	Article 243D, Article 243T, Article 330, Article 332, Article 334
Service Safeguards	16(4), 16(4A), and 335

Legal Rights of Dalits:

(i) Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955; (ii) Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 Article 17 (iii) The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013

Autonomous Councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of the north-eastern region.

Background

The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Rajya Sabha to amend provisions related to the Finance Commission and the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The Sixth Schedule relates to the administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Key Highlights

1. Village and Municipal Councils: The Sixth Schedule states that tribal areas in certain regions of these four **states will be 'autonomous districts'**, each consisting of a District Council.

The Bill amends this to provide for Village and Municipal Councils in addition to the District and Regional Councils. Village Councils will be established for villages or groups of villages in rural areas, and Municipal Councils will be established in urban areas of each district. Further, the District Councils may make laws on various issues, including: (i) number of Village and Municipal Councils to be formed, and their composition, (ii) delimitation of constituencies for election to the Village and Municipal Councils, (iii) powers and functions of Village and Municipal Councils.

2. Governor: The Bill states that the Governor may make rules for devolution of powers and responsibilities to the Village and Municipal Councils. Such rules may be framed in relation to: (i) preparation of plans for economic development, (ii) implementation of land reforms, (iii) urban and town planning, and (iv) regulation of land-use, among other functions.
3. State Finance Commission: The Bill provides the appointment of a Finance Commission for these states, to review the financial position of District, Village, and Municipal Councils. The Commission will make recommendations regarding: (i) distribution of taxes between states and District Councils, (ii) grants-in-aid to District, Village, and Municipal Councils from the Consolidated Fund of the state, (iii) and measures to improve the financial position of District, Village, and Municipal Councils.
4. Finance Commission: Under the Constitution, the functions of the Finance Commission include making recommendations to the President on: (i) distribution of taxes between the Union and states, and the (ii) provision of grants-in-aid to states. The Bill states that in addition to these functions, the Commission will make recommendations on measures to augment the Consolidated Fund of a state to provide resources to District Councils, Village Councils, and Municipal Councils in tribal areas in the four Sixth Schedule states.
5. Elections to councils: The Bill states that all elections to the District Councils, Regional Councils, Village Councils, and Municipal Councils will be conducted by the State Election Commission appointed by the Governor, for these four states.
6. Disqualification of members of councils: The Bill adds that the Governor may make rules for the disqualification of such members on the grounds of defection.

International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs)

- ❖ The Union Cabinet has approved establishment of a unified authority for regulating all financial services in IFSCs in India through International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill, 2019.
- ❖ The first IFSC in India has been set up at GIFT City, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- ❖ An IFSC enables bringing back the financial services and transactions that are currently carried out in offshore financial centers by Indian corporate entities and overseas branches / subsidiaries of financial institutions (FIs) to India by offering business and regulatory environment that is comparable to other leading international financial centers in the world.
- ❖ It would provide Indian corporates easier access to global financial markets. IFSC would also compliment and promote further development of financial markets in India.

Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance, 2019

In News

President recently promulgated the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Scheme Ordinance which seek to curb the menace of Ponzi schemes and make such unregulated deposit scheme punishable.

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Background

The Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance was introduced in Lok Sabha to provide for a mechanism to ban unregulated deposit schemes and protect the interests of depositors. It also seeks to amend three laws, including the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 and the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992.

PEPPER IT WITH
Chit Funds (Amendment)
Bill, 2018, Fraternity Fund

1. **Deposit:** The Ordinance defines a deposit as an amount of money received through an advance, a loan, or in any other form, with a promise to be returned with or without interest. Currently, nine regulators oversee and regulate various deposit-taking schemes. These include: (i) RBI (ii) SEBI (iii) Ministry of Corporate Affairs (iv) state & union territory governments.
2. **Unregulated deposit scheme:** A deposit-taking scheme is defined as unregulated if it is not registered with the regulators listed in the Ordinance.
3. **Deposit taker:** The Ordinance defines deposit takers as an individual, a group of individuals, or a company who asks for (solicits), or receives deposits. Banks and entities incorporated under any other law are not included as deposit takers.
4. **Competent Authority:** The Ordinance provides for the appointment of one or more government officers, not below the rank of Secretary to the state or central government, as the Competent Authority. The Competent Authority will have powers similar to those vested in a civil court.
5. **Designated Courts:** The Ordinance provides for the constitution of one or more Designated Courts in specified areas. This Court will be headed by a judge not below **the rank of a district and session's judge**, or additional district and **session's judge**. The Court will seek to complete the process within 180 days of being approached.
6. **Central database:** The Ordinance provides for the central government to designate an authority to create an online central database for information on deposit takers. All deposit takers will be required to inform the database authority about their business. The Competent Authority will be required to share all information on unregulated deposits with the authority.
7. **Offences and penalties:** The Ordinance defines three types of offences: (i) running (advertising, promoting, operating or accepting money for) unregulated deposit schemes, (ii) fraudulently defaulting on regulated deposit schemes, and (iii) wrongfully inducing depositors to invest in unregulated deposit schemes by willingly falsifying facts. Defaulting in repayment will be punishable with imprisonment between 3-10 years, and a fine ranging from Rs 5 lakh to twice the amount collected from depositors. Repeated offenders will be punishable with imprisonment between 5-10 years, along with a fine ranging from 10 lakh to 5 crore rupees.

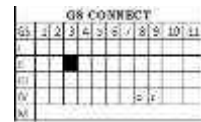
Way Ahead

It is a comprehensive legislation to deal with the menace of illicit deposit schemes in the country through, complete prohibition of unregulated deposit-taking activity; deterrent punishment for promoting or operating an unregulated deposit-taking scheme; stringent punishment for fraudulent default in repayment in wake of 978 cases of unauthorised schemes across India.

NGOs and FCRA

In News

Cracking the whip, the government has barred 156 NGOs from receiving foreign funds for six months for defying an order to open accounts in any of the 32 designated banks.



Issue

1. As per the latest order it has been observed that the associations have not yet opened their bank accounts in central government's Public Financial Management System (PFMS)-integrated banks and contravened the provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act 2010 (FCRA) by not complying with the December 2017 direction.
2. Therefore, in exercise of the power conferred by section 13 of the FCRA, 2010, pending consideration of cancellation of their certificates, the central government hereby, suspends the registration under FCRA 2010 of the said associations (including their branches and units) for a period of one hundred and eighty days.
3. Suspension of the FCRA registration means the NGOs and entities cannot accept funding from abroad

Benefits of PFMS

- o Introduction of the PFMS resulted in effectiveness and economy in public finance management through better cash management for government transparency in public expenditure and real-time information on resource availability and utilisation across schemes.
- o It also resulted in improved programme administration and management, reduction of float in the system, direct payment to beneficiaries and greater transparency and accountability in the use of public funds.
- o It also provides information across all plan schemes or implementation agencies in the country on fund utilisation leading to better monitoring, review and decision support system to enhance public accountability in the implementation of plan schemes.

Background

The FCRA, 2010 and rules framed under it regulate the receipt and usage of foreign contribution by non-governmental organisations ("NGOs") in India.

The PFMS, which functions under the Controller General of Accounts in the Ministry of Finance, provides a financial management platform for all plan schemes, a database of all recipient agencies, integration with core banking solution of banks handling plan funds, integration with state treasuries and efficient and effective tracking of fund flow to the lowest level of implementation for plan scheme of the government.

Scope and objective of the FCRA:

The intent of the Act is to prevent use of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality for any activity detrimental to the national interest. It has a very wide scope and is applicable to a natural person, body corporate, all other types of Indian entities (whether incorporated or not) as well as NRIs and overseas branches/subsidiaries of Indian companies and other entities formed or registered in India. It is implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

In order to achieve the above objective, the FCRA:

1. Prohibits acceptance and use of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality by a certain specified category of persons such as a candidate for election, judge, journalist, columnist, newspaper publication, cartoonist, etc.
2. Regulates the inflow to and usage of foreign contribution by NGOs by prescribing a mechanism to accept, use and report usage of the same.

PEPPER IT WITH
DARPAN, e-Visa, Know
My India Programme

Eligibility for grant of registration:

1. The NGO must be registered under an existing law like the Companies Act, the Indian Trusts Act or the Societies Registration Act etc.
2. The NGO must have been in operation for three years.
3. The NGO must not have an already registered parent society under FCRA.
4. The NGO must not have a foreigner on the board.

Foreign contribution

It defines the term 'foreign contribution' to include currency, article other than gift for personal use (not exceeding the value of INR 25,000) and securities received from foreign source. While foreign hospitality refers to any offer from a foreign source to provide foreign travel, boarding, lodging, transportation or medical treatment cost. The term 'foreign source' also has an extensive ambit and includes:

- ❖ Foreign citizens
- ❖ Foreign companies, corporations and MNCs
- ❖ Foreign government and their agencies
- ❖ International agencies other than specified and government notified agencies
- ❖ Foreign trusts, foundations, trade unions, societies, clubs or any other associations of individuals formed outside India

“Association” means an association of individuals, whether incorporated or not, having an office in India and includes a society, whether registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, or not, and any other organisation

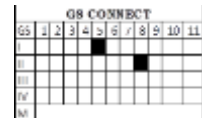
Significance of NGO

1. NGOs play an important role in the upliftment of the weaker sections of the society and their overall development. This is especially true in the case of India, where a vast majority of its population continues to remain under the poverty line and have little or no access to even basic facilities provided by the government.
2. Being non-profit organisations, operations of NGOs are entirely reliant on donations, both domestic and foreign.

Rules to employ Women in Mines

In News

The government in a notification said it had decided to exempt the women employed in any mine above and mine below ground from the provisions of section 46 of the Mines Act, 1952, which restricts the women from working in mines.



In the case of women employed in any mine above ground

1. Deployment of women between the hours of 7 pm and 6 am in the mine above ground including opencast workings as per the SOP on the basis of the guidelines
2. The deployment of women need written consent of the concerned woman employee
3. Ought to be provided with adequate facilities and safeguards regarding occupational safety, security and health
4. Deployment of women shall be in a group of not less than three

In the case of women employed in any mine below ground

1. Deploy women between the hours of 6 am and 7 pm in technical, supervisory and managerial work where continuous presence may not be required.
2. Deployment of women need written consent of the concerned woman employee;
3. the women so deployed shall be provided with adequate facilities and safeguards regarding occupational safety, security and health;
4. Deployment of women shall be subject to the framing and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures on the basis of the guidelines issued in this regard by the Chief Inspector of Mines from time to time;
5. Deployment of women shall be in a group of not less than three.

Way Ahead

1. Present rules do not allow women to work in underground mines. This provision of allowing them to work in underground coal mines is expected to bring more employment opportunities for them.
2. At present the strength of Coal India is around 3 lakh, of which women strength ranges from 15-20%.
3. It is government's efforts to create equal employment opportunities for women in mines.
4. It would also **amount to "equal exploitation opportunity"** of women exposing them to most hazardous and exploitative sectors in the world.
5. There is a huge threat of sexual harassment and assault that women are more likely to face at night.
6. A study conducted by the International Labour Organisation on the rise of small-scale mining in developing countries had ranked India (along with Pakistan and China) as one of the three most dangerous countries for miners.
7. The lifting of the time bar for women workers in mines amounts to pushing poor women into the mouths of danger literally in the dead of the night.
8. The concern is obviously the health and occupational safety factor. According to the ILO, any kind of work at night is detrimental to health. And especially for women, studies have shown that women working night shifts suffer more health problems.

The Mines Act, 1952, restricted the employment of women in underground mines and also in opencast or aboveground workings of the mine during night hours between 7PM and 6AM.

Vision Zero

- ❖ **'International Vision Zero Conference'** to Promote Occupational Safety and Health was held recently.
- ❖ The concept of Vision Zero is based on four fundamental principles viz. life is non-negotiable, humans are fallible, tolerable limits are defined by human physical resistance, and people are entitled to safe transport and safe workplaces.
- ❖ The Vision is based on principles of Controlling Risks, Ensuring Safety and Health in Machines, Equipment and Workplaces and Skill Upgradation of Workforce.

National Commission for Safai Karmacharis

In News

The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for Extension of tenure of the National Commission for Safai Karmacharis(NCSK) beyond 31.3.2019 for three years.

GS CONNECT										
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Background

The major beneficiaries of the proposal would be the Safai Karmacharis and persons engaged in manual scavenging in the country since the NCSK will work for their welfare and upliftment.

With the enactment of **"The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013"**, the mandate and scope of the Commission has also been enlarged. As per Section 31(1) of the said Act, the Commission shall perform the following functions, namely:-

1. To monitor the implementation of the Act.
2. To enquire into complaints regarding contravention of the provisions of the Act, and to convey its findings to the concerned authorities with recommendations requiring further action.
3. To advise the Central and the State Governments for effective implementation of the provisions of the Act.
4. To take *suo motu* notice of matter relating to non-implementation of the Act.

About NCSK

The National Commission for Safai Karmacharis (NCSK) was constituted as a statutory body by an Act of Parliament viz. **'National Commission for Safai Karmacharis Act, 1993'**.

With the lapsing of the “The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993”, the Commission is acting as a Non-Statutory body of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment whose tenure is extended from time to time through Government Resolutions.

Composition

It consist of a Chairperson and 4 members.

The mandate of the NCSK:

1. Recommend to the Central Government specific programmes of action towards elimination of inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities for Safai Karamcharis.
2. Study and evaluate the implementation of the programmes and schemes relating to the social and economic rehabilitation of Safai Karamcharis; and scavengers, in particular.
3. Investigate specific grievances and take *suo-motu* notice of matters relating to non-implementation of above two point mentioned.

PEPPER IT WITH
Protection of Human Rights
(Amendments) Bill, 2018,
Sanitary Marts Scheme,
Shisht Bharat Campaign

Operation Digital Board

In News

The Ministry of Human Resource Development launched Operation Digital Board to leverage technology in order to boost quality education in the country.

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Key features

1. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) recently passed a resolution to take steps towards Operation Digital Board on the lines of Operation Blackboard of 1987, which was started with the purpose of providing minimum basic facilities to all primary schools.
2. Operation Digital Board (ODB) is a revolutionary step which will make the learning as well as the teaching process interactive and popularize flipped learning as a pedagogical approach.
3. ODB aims at converting a class room into a digital class room and in addition to availability of e-resources at any time and at any place to students.
4. It will also help in provisioning of personalised adaptive learning as well as Intelligent Tutoring by exploiting emerging technologies like Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence & Data Analytics.
5. UGC will be the implementing agency for ODB in HEIs. The digital board will be introduced all over the country in government and government aided schools from class 9th onwards as well as in higher education institutions.
6. Digital / SMART board will be provided in all Government and Government – aided schools having Secondary and Sr. Secondary classes.
7. e-Pathshala, DIKSHA, NROER, NPTEL, e-pathshala SWAYAM and SWAYAM-Prabha DTH Channels etc. by MHRD have provided adequate content of high quality which can be taken to every classroom, and thereby facilitating blended learning and flip class learning.

Central Wakf Council

- Central Waqf Council is a statutory body under the administrative control of the Ministry of Minority Affairs. As per the provision given in the Waqf Act, 1954 as Advisory Body to the Central Government on matters concerning the working of the Waqf Boards and the due administration of Auqaf (habous or mortmain property).
- The Council has been empowered to advise the Central Government, State Governments and State Waqf Boards. It can issue directives to the boards/ State Government to furnish information to the Council on the performance of the board particularly on their financial performance, survey, revenue records, encroachment of Waqf properties, Annual and Audit report etc.
- Wakf is a permanent dedication of movable or immovable properties for religious, pious or charitable purposes as recognized by Muslim Law, given by philanthropists.

Way Forward

Although we have a good number of premier institutions, which compete with the best in the world, a large number of higher education institutions and schools needs improvements in quality teaching-learning, as the students coming out of these institutions find themselves unsuitable for the requirements of society and market. The spread of educational technology and connectivity has given an opportunity to resolve this issue and aim at equity in educational standards.

Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan

In News

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved launch of Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan with the objective of providing financial and water security to farmers.

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The proposed scheme consists of three components:

1. Component-A: 10,000 MW of Decentralized Ground Mounted Grid Connected Renewable Power Plants.
2. Component-B: Installation of 17.50 lakh standalone Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps.
3. Component-C: Solarisation of 10 Lakh Grid-connected Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps.

Salient features

1. All three components combined, the scheme aims to add a solar capacity of 25,750 MW by 2022. The total central financial support provided under the scheme would be Rs. 34,422 crore.
2. Under Component A, Renewable power plants of capacity 500 KW to 2 MW will be setup by individual farmers/ cooperatives/panchayats /farmer producer organisations (FPO) on their barren or cultivable lands. The power generated will be purchased by the DISCOMs at Feed in tariffs determined by respective SERC. Performance Based Incentives @ Rs. 0.40 per unit for five years to be provided to DISCOMs.
3. Under Component B, individual farmers will be supported to install standalone solar pumps of capacity up to 7.5 HP. Solar PV capacity in kW equal to the pump capacity in HP is allowed under the scheme.
4. Under Component C of the scheme, individual farmers will be supported to solarise pumps of capacity up to 7.5 HP. Solar PV capacity up to two times of pump capacity in kW is allowed under the scheme. The farmer will be able to use the generated energy to meet the irrigation needs and the excess available energy will be sold to DISCOM. This will help to create an avenue for extra income to the farmers, and for the States to meet their RPO targets.

Rozgar Yukt Gaon

- To continue the existing schemes of MPDA, Khadi Grant, ISEC and Village Industry Grant, all subsumed under 'Khadi and Gramodyog Vikas Yojana' at the total cost of Rs. 2800 crore for the period 2017-18 to 2019-20.
- To bring in a new component of 'Rozgar Yukt Gaon' to introduce enterprise-based operation in the Khadi sector and to create employment opportunities for thousands of new artisans.
- Rozgar Yukta Gaon (RYG) aims at introducing an 'Enterprise-led Business Model' in place of 'Subsidy-led model' through partnership among 3 stakeholders- KRDP-assisted Khadi Institution, Artisans and Business Partner.
- It will be rolled out in 50 Villages by providing 10,000 Charkhas, 2000 looms & 100 warping units to Khadi artisans, and would create direct employment for 250 Artisans per village.
- The total Capital Investment per village shall be Rs.72 Lakh as subsidy, and Rs.1.64 Crore in terms of Working Capital from the Business Partner.

PEPPER IT WITH
Sujalam Sufalam Jal Sanchay
Abhiyan, Sikaria Mega Food Park

Impact

- The Scheme will have substantial environmental impact in terms of savings of CO2 emissions. All three components of the Scheme combined together are likely to result in saving of about 27 million tonnes of CO2 emission per annum. Further, Component-B of the Scheme on standalone solar pumps may result in saving of 1.2 billion litres of diesel per annum and associated savings in the foreign exchange due to reduction of import of crude oil.
- The scheme has direct employment potential. Besides increasing self-employment the proposal is likely to generate employment opportunity equivalent to 6.31 lakh job years for skilled and unskilled workers.

SHREYAS

In News

The Ministry for Human Resources Development has launched the Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills (SHREYAS) for providing industry apprenticeship opportunities to the general graduates exiting in April 2019 through the National Apprenticeship Promotional Scheme (NAPS).

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About Scheme

- **Aim: To enhance the employability of Indian youth by providing 'on the job work exposure' and earning of stipend.**
- SHREYAS is a programme conceived for students in degree courses, primarily non-technical, with a view to introduce employable skills into their learning, promote apprenticeship as integral to education and also amalgamate employment facilitating efforts of the Government into the education system so that clear pathways towards employment opportunities are available to students during and after their graduation.
- It is a programme basket comprising the initiatives of three Central Ministries, namely the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship and the Ministry of Labour & Employment viz the NAPS, the National Career Service (NCS) and introduction of BA/BSc/BCom (Professional) courses in the higher educational institutions.
- The primary scheme will be operated in conjunction with NAPS which provides for placing of apprentices upto 10% of the total work force in every business/industry.
- The scheme will be implemented by the Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), initially the Banking Finance Insurance Services (BFSI), Retail, Health care, Telecom, Logistics, Media, Management services, ITeS and Apparel.
- Target: In all the tracks together, it is proposed to cover 50 lakh students by 2022.
- Three Tracks in Implementation in SHREYAS.
 - 1st Track: Add-on apprenticeship (Degree apprenticeship)
 - 2nd track: Embedded Apprenticeship
 - 3rd Track: Linking National Career Service with Colleges

Objectives

1. To improve employability of students by introducing employment relevance into the learning process of the higher education system
2. To forge a close functional link between education and industry/service sectors on a sustainable basis
3. To provide skills which are in demand, to the students in a dynamic manner
4. To establish an 'earn while you learn' system into higher education
5. To help business/industry in securing good quality manpower
6. To link student community with employment facilitating efforts of the Government

Yuva Sahakar-Cooperative Enterprise Support and Innovation Scheme

In News

While addressing the 84th General Council meeting of National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) said that NCDC has played an important role in promoting **'Yuva Sahakar'** which is Giving Wings to Young Entrepreneurs in Cooperatives.

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About

- To cater to the needs and aspirations of the youth, the NCDC has launched a youth-friendly scheme **'Yuva Sahakar-Cooperative Enterprise Support and Innovation Scheme'** for attracting them to cooperative business ventures.
- This initiative aims to encourage newly formed cooperatives to take advantage of innovative ventures, especially by societies having new/innovative ideas. The Scheme will be linked to Cooperative Start-up and Innovation Fund (CSIF) created by NCDC with on annual outlay Rs100 crore.
- The Scheme would be liberal to Cooperatives in North Eastern Region, Cooperatives registers and operating in Aspirational Districts identified by Niti Aayog, cooperatives with 100 % women/SC/ ST / PwD members.
- This initiative aims to encourage newly formed cooperatives to take advantage of innovative ventures, especially by societies having new/innovative ideas.
- Eligibility:
 - All type of cooperatives with new, innovative and value chain enhancement intended projects.
 - In operation at least one year.
 - Have not incurred cash losses in previous year of operation and no cash in past 3 year if society is functional for more than 3 years.

- Funding:

The projects would be supported with funding pattern having Debt: Equity Ratio as below:

Category-A: 80%:20%

All types of cooperative societies in North Eastern region. All types of cooperatives registered and operating in Aspirational Districts identified by Niti Aayog.

All types of cooperatives with 100 % women members.

All types of cooperatives with 100 % SC/ST/PwD members

PEPPER IT WITH
APEDA, Arundhati
scheme, IRRI, HiRise

Category-B: 70%:30%

In normal areas and in case of all Cooperatives not covered under Category- A for all types of activities.

- The scheme will be linked to Rs 1000 crore CSIF created by the NCDC.
- The scheme envisages 2 percent less than the applicable rate of interest on term loan for the project cost up to Rs 3 crore including 2 years moratorium on payment of principal.

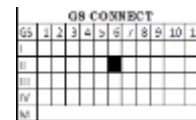
NCDC

- NCDC is a statutory Corporation set up under an Act of Parliament on 13th March 1963.
- The objectives of NCDC are planning and promoting programmes for production, processing, marketing, storage, export and import of agricultural produce, foodstuffs, industrial goods, livestock and certain other notified commodities and services on cooperative principles.
- NCDC has been implementing a Central Sector/Corporation Sponsored Scheme for providing financial assistance towards setting-up of agro-based processing units.
- The Management of NCDC vests in the General Council of 51 members and Board of Management of 12 members.
- The Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare is the President of the General Council and the Secretary (Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare) Government of India is the Chairman of the Board of Management.

Skill Saathi Youth Conclave

In News

Ministry for Petroleum & Natural Gas and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Government of India recently inaugurated and addressed Nua Odisha - Dharmapada Samvaad-Skill Saathi Youth Conclave in Bhubaneswar. The first-ever Skill Saathi Youth Conclave was aired live in Odisha.



Objectives of the Skill Saathi Scheme:

1. Create Awareness about the Skill India Mission and inform the youth of India about vocational education and its opportunities.
2. Sensitize prospective candidates about available Market Opportunities under the Skill India Mission, including horizontal and vertical pathways.
3. Facilitate Psychometric Testing and Face-To-Face Counselling Interventions to create an individual-level impact to guide aspirants to make the right choice of training and subsequent employment/entrepreneurship.
4. Facilitate Understanding of the concepts of New India, the prospects of India becoming the Skill Capital of the World and how the new generation of youth can become drivers of change.

PEPPER IT WITH
Khelo India programme,
Deendayal Disabled
Rehabilitation Scheme,
Rythu Bandhu scheme

Key Features of Skill Saathi

- The initiative provides information on vocational training programs under Skill India mission, conduct psychometric test and provide face-to-face counselling interventions to guide aspirants to make the right choice of based on their interest and aptitude.
- To counsel 1 crore candidates pan-India from August 2018. Counselling will be conducted on a standardized module/content as defined by NSDC/MSDE.
- Target Beneficiaries include students/candidates, School & College Drop-outs, young adults from the community, college students, polytechnic students, ITI students, Diploma students, Graduates, Post-Graduates, NEET category (Not in Employment education or Training) and the youth of India at large, preferably in the age group of 15 – 35 years.
- Facilitate Awareness and Guidance among the Candidates about the available courses as per their aptitude and Psychometric Test results and availability of skill training prospects.
- Capacity Building of Counsellors to fulfil the objective of the scheme.
- Skills on Wheels – Skills on Wheels will be a part of the Skill Saathi in order to create awareness about skill development among youth at their doorsteps. Specially branded vehicles shall tour the villages/towns for propagating the skill India mission and counsel the students.
- The Skill Saathi initiative has so far mobilised and counselled over 1 lakh candidate in Odisha and over 10 lakh youth across the country in the past three months.

Skill India Mission

- Skill India is an initiative of the Government of India aims to train over 40 crore people in India in different skills by 2022. The initiatives include National Skill Development Mission, National Policy for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship 2015, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) scheme and the Skill Loan scheme.
- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is responsible for co-ordination of all skill development efforts across the country.
- It is aided in these initiatives by– National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), National Skill Development Fund (NSDF) and 39 Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) as well as several training partners registered with NSDC.

PM-SYM

In News

Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM) was rolled out by the Ministry of Labour and Employment recently.

Salient Features:

- Government of India has introduced a pension scheme for unorganised sector namely PM-SYM to ensure old age protection for Unorganised Workers.
- Minimum Assured Pension:** Each subscriber under the PM-SYM, shall receive minimum assured pension of Rs 3000/- per month after attaining the age of 60 years.
- Family Pension:** During the receipt of pension, if the subscriber dies, the spouse of the beneficiary shall be entitled to receive 50% of the pension received by the beneficiary as family pension. Family pension is applicable only to spouse.
- If a beneficiary has given regular contribution and died due to any cause (before age of 60 years), his/her spouse will be entitled to join and continue the scheme subsequently by payment of regular contribution or exit the scheme as per provisions of exit and withdrawal.
- PM-SYM is a voluntary and contributory pension scheme on a 50:50 basis where prescribed age-specific contribution shall be made by the beneficiary and the matching contribution by the Central Government.
- PM-SYM will be a Central Sector Scheme administered by the Ministry of Labour and Employment and implemented through Life Insurance Corporation of India and CSC eGovernance Services India Limited (CSC SPV). The enrolment will be carried out by all the Common Services Centres.

The unorganised workers who are working or engaged as home based workers, street vendors, mid-day meal workers, head loaders, brick kiln workers, cobblers, ragpickers, domestic workers, washer men, rickshaw pullers, landless labourers, agricultural workers, construction workers, beedi workers, handloom workers, leather workers, audio-visual workers and similar other occupations.

Darwaza Band - Part 2' campaign

- ❖ The Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) launched the 'Darwaza Band -Part 2' campaign for sustainability of the Open Defecation Free (ODF) status of villages across the country.
- ❖ The campaign talks about how a toilet must be used by all, always and under all circumstances (har koi, har roz, hamesha).
- ❖ The 'Darwaza Band- Part 2' campaign is supported by the World Bank.

PEPPER IT WITH
Sarathi Sandesh Vahini,
Sikaria Mega Food Park

PMSYM Eligibility

- This Scheme shall be open only to the unorganised worker whose monthly income is not exceeding Rs 15,000 having a savings bank account and Aadhaar number.
- Those workers should not be covered under New Pension Scheme (NPS), Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) scheme or Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).
- He or she should not be an income tax payer.

Sela Tunnel

In News

The foundation stone for the Sela Tunnel Project in Arunachal Pradesh was laid recently.

Key Facts

- The Project costing Rs. 687 crore being constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) would be completed in the next three years.

- It covers a total distance of 12.04 kms which consist of two tunnels of 1790 and 475 meters.

Once completed this would result in:-

- All weather connectivity to Tawang and forward areas.
- Reduction in more than one hour of travelling time from Tezpur to Tawang.
- Travellers would be able to avoid the dangerous snow covered Sela top at a height of 13,700 feet.



Significance

- It is a key move aimed at improving all weather connectivity and enabling the swift movement of Indian troops to Arunachal Pradesh bordering China.
- It would result in all-weather connectivity to Tawang and forward areas and reduction in more than one hour of travelling time from Tezpur to Tawang.
- It will boost tourism and related economic activities in the region.

The govt recently dedicated the 220 kV Srinagar- Alusteng – Drass- Kargil – Leh Transmission Line to the Nation. With this, Ladakh is now connected to the National Grid. The project has been completed by the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (Navratna Company).

PEPPER IT WITH
Zozila Pass tunnel

Nuclear Suppliers Group

Issue

- China refused to dilute its stand on India's entry into the elite Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), asserting that India must sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty to gain entry as there is no precedent for the inclusion of non-NPT countries.**
- India could sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and gain access to all this knowhow but that would mean giving up its entire nuclear arsenal. Given that it is situated in an unstable and unpredictable neighbourhood India is unlikely to sign the NPT or accede to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) that puts curbs on any further nuclear tests.

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Background

- China has been opposing India's entry into the 48-member NSG on the ground that India is not a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), though the other P5 members, including the US and Russia backed its case based on New Delhi's non-proliferation record.**
- China has sought to club India and Pakistan together, on the basis of both being non-signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and has asked the NSG **countries to adopt a "criteria-based approach"** which essentially means that either both can get into the group or none. But most of the NSG countries, including the US, France and UK, **make a clear distinction between India and Pakistan's nuclear non-proliferation track record.**

- While New Delhi points to its clean track record on non-proliferation, many — including the American and French interlocutors — **have pointed out how Pakistan's nuclear programme, violated all norms of nuclear non-proliferation and had links with the North Korean nuclear programme.**

NSG

- The Nuclear Suppliers Group is a group of 48 nuclear supplier countries that seeks to contribute to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons through the implementation of two sets of Guidelines for nuclear exports and nuclear-related exports. The NSG first met in 1975 in London, and is thus popularly referred to as the **“London Club” (“Club de Londres”)**.
- It aims to ensure that nuclear exports are carried out with appropriate safeguards, physical protection, and non-proliferation conditions, and other appropriate restraints. The NSG also seeks to restrict the export of sensitive items that can contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Importance of NSG Membership for India

- Access to technology for a range of uses from medicine to building nuclear power plants for **India from the NSG which is essentially a traders' cartel. India has its own** indigenously developed technology but to get its hands on state of the art technology that countries within the NSG possess, it has to become part of the group.
- With India committed to reducing dependence on fossil fuels and ensuring that 40% of its energy is sourced from renewable and clean sources, there is a pressing need to scale up nuclear power production. This can only happen if India gains access to the NSG.
- With access to latest technology, India can commercialize the production of nuclear power equipment. This, in turn will boost innovation and high tech manufacturing in India and can be leveraged for economic and strategic benefits.
- Having the ability to offer its own nuclear power plants to the world means spawning of an entire nuclear industry and related technology development. This could give the Make in India programme a big boost.

PEPPER IT WITH
Wassenaar Agreement, Australia
Group, Missile Technology Control
Regime, Pelindaba Treaty,
Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

Way Ahead

Should India get membership to the NSG, it can block Pakistan from its membership as entry into the grouping is by consensus only. This is one of the reasons why China is pushing to include Pakistan as well as pointing out that India as a non-signatory to the NPT cannot be a member. It comes down to a power game—keep India out and deny it access to various technologies.

India's contention is that its nuclear technologies are indigenously developed and it has a clean non-proliferation record unlike Pakistan whose non-proliferation record was tainted with the revelations that its nuclear scientist A.Q Khan sold nuclear technologies to countries such as North Korea. China's non-proliferation record too is tainted with allegations that it has helped Pakistan on the sly, but given its economic clout the country is unlikely to attract sanctions.

INF missile treaty

Why in News?

The United States announced that, it was withdrawing from the landmark Cold War INF missile treaty with Russia, saying Moscow was in violation.

- Ahead of a deadline set by Washington, the United States said that Russia had not addressed concerns over a new medium-range missile system that Western states believe goes against the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.
- United States will suspend its obligations under the INF Treaty and begin the process of withdrawing from the INF Treaty, which will be completed in six months unless

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Russia comes back into compliance by destroying all of its violating missiles, launchers and associated equipment.

INF Treaty

1. Signed in 1987 by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, it barred both countries from deploying land-launched cruise missiles in the 500- to 5,500-km range.
2. The treaty resolved a crisis of the 1980s when the Soviet Union deployed a missile in Europe called the SS-20, capable of carrying three nuclear warheads. The United States responded with cruise and Pershing II missiles based in Europe.
3. The treaty prohibited land-based cruise or ballistic missiles with ranges between 311 miles and 3,420 miles. It did not cover air- or sea-launched weapons, such as the American Tomahawk and Russian Kalibr cruise missiles fired from ships, submarines or airplanes, although those missiles fly similar distances.

Europe

European leaders have been among the most vocal protesters of the treaty withdrawal. While they agree

with the United States that Russia's new intermediate range missiles threaten Europe, they say the answer is to renegotiate the accord, not scrap it.

PEPPER IT WITH
START treaty, JCPOA, Chabahar
port, US Afghan Policy, USAID

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

In News

The Ministry of Home Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs and National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) organised a meeting of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Cluster Group on Disaster Risk Management (DRM).

The meeting focused on development of a draft Work Plan for DRM in IORA. It also deliberated on the need for establishing a DRM Core Group to take forward the agreed objectives under the Work Plan. DRM is one of its priority areas and its Action Plan (2017-2021) has specific goals to improve resilience in IORA countries.

IORA

1. Indian Ocean Rim Association is an inter-governmental organisation which was established in 1997, and has many disaster-prone countries among its 22 members and nine dialogue partners.
2. Promoting sustained growth and balanced development within the Indian Ocean region, IORA strengthens cooperation and dialogue with Member States.
3. All sovereign States of the Indian Ocean Rim are eligible for membership of the Association. To become members, States must adhere to the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter of the Association.

PEPPER IT WITH
Priority areas of IORA, Chair of
IORA, RE-Invest, ISA, Delhi
Declaration on Renewable Energy

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Global framework for Refugees

Background

- Refugee law is a part of international human rights law. In order to address the problem of mass inter-state influx of refugees, a Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the UN adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951. This was followed by the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1967.
- One of the most significant features of the Convention is the principle of non-refoulement.
- **The norm requires that “no contracting State shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social**

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group or political opinion.” This idea of prohibition of expulsion lies at the heart of refugee protection in international law.

India on Refugees

1. It is often argued that the principle does not bind India since it is a party to neither the 1951 Convention nor the Protocol. However, the prohibition of non-refoulement of refugees constitutes a norm of customary international law, which binds even non-parties to the Convention.
2. According to the Advisory Opinion on the Extraterritorial Application of Non-Refoulement Obligations, UNHCR, 2007, **the principle “is binding on all States, including those which have not yet become party to the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol.”**
3. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. Moreover, Article 51 of the Constitution imposes an obligation on the state to endeavour to promote international peace and security.
4. Article 51(c) talks about promotion of respect for international law and treaty obligations. Therefore, the Constitution conceives of incorporation of international law into the domestic realm.
5. The chapter on fundamental rights in the Constitution differentiates citizens from persons. While all rights are available to citizens, persons including foreign citizens are entitled to the right to equality and the right to life, among others.
6. In National Human Rights Commission v. State of Arunachal Pradesh (1996), the Supreme Court **held: “Our Constitution confers** rights on every human being and certain other rights on citizens. Every person is entitled to equality before the law and equal protection of the laws. So also, no person can be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. Thus the State is bound to protect the life and liberty of every human-being, be he a citizen or otherwise.”
7. India lacks a specific legislation to address the problem of refugees, in spite of their increasing inflow. The Foreigners Act, 1946, fails to address the peculiar problems faced by refugees as a class. It also gives unbridled power to the Central government to deport any foreign citizen.

PEPPER IT WITH
UN comprehensive refugee response framework, NEW YORK Declaration, UN Global Compact on Migration

Macedonia signs NATO accession accord

About

- Macedonia signed accession papers with NATO, a key step on the way to joining the alliance after resolving a long-running name row with Greece. It will lead to Macedonia becoming the 30th alliance member once the deal has been ratified by all the other capitals.
- The agreement recently with Greece to change the name of the former Yugoslav republic to the Republic of North Macedonia ended one of the world's longest diplomatic disputes and paved the way for Skopje to join NATO and the European Union.
- Macedonia will now take part in NATO ministerial meetings as an invitee. For Skopje to progress to full membership, all 29 current members must ratify the accession protocol. How long this will take depends on national procedures.

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Blow to Russia

North Macedonia's participation in NATO would be a blow to Russia, which has struggled to cling to its power in the Balkans, the site of Europe's bloodiest conflicts since the end of World War II. The land-locked country is following its regional peers Montenegro, Albania and Croatia, which have already proclaimed their pro-Western allegiance by joining the military club. Slovenia and Croatia are already in the EU, while Serbia, Albania and Montenegro have applied to join.

PEPPER IT WITH
Balkan Nations, International Criminal Court, ICJ, European Union, Lisbon treaty, Macedonia-Greece

NATO

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was created in 1949 by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union.
- It is political and military alliance of 29 member countries.
- **NATO membership is open to “any other European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area.**

African Union

Why in News?

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi took over as chair of the African Union (AU) following a meeting by heads of state from the continent in Ethiopia's capital. The post rotates annually between the five regions of the continent.

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Sisi takes the helm from Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who focused on creating an Africa wide free-trade zone during his tenure. Under Egypt's leadership the bloc will prioritise mediation and "preventive diplomacy" as one of the key mechanisms for promoting peace and security on the continent.

Criticism

1. Egypt was kicked out of the 55-member state pan-African body in 2013 following a Sisi-led military coup. The coup resulted in overthrow of the country's democratically elected leader, Mohamed Morsi, and brought Sisi to power. The bloc later lifted Egypt's suspension.
2. Meanwhile, Amnesty International expressed concern that Sisi's leadership of the bloc could harm the continent's human rights record. During his time in power, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has demonstrated a shocking contempt for human rights. Under his leadership the country has undergone a catastrophic decline in rights and freedoms.

PEPPER IT WITH
African Commission on Human and
Peoples' Rights, Agenda 2063,
Pelindaba Treaty, Horn of Africa

AU

- The African Union is an intergovernmental organization that was established in 2002 and succeeded the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The Assembly of the African Union is the semi-annual meeting of the heads of state and government of its member states.
- The AU's secretariat is called the African Union Commission (it will be renamed as African Union Authority). It is based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and acts as the executive and administrative branch of the AU.
- The main objectives of the AU are to accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent; to promote and defend African common positions; to achieve peace and security in Africa; and to promote democratic institutions, good governance and human rights.

Azov Sea stand off

Background

- The EU has decided to sanction eight Russian nationals for their responsibility in incidents in the Azov Sea last November.
- The Ukraine-Russia conflict flared up when Russian forces seized three Ukrainian vessels and captured two dozen sailors as they tried to pass from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov.
- The November confrontation was the first open military incident between Kiev and Moscow since 2014, when Russia annexed the Crimea peninsula and a conflict erupted in eastern Ukraine.

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- Currently 164 Russians and Ukrainians, have been placed on the EU sanctions list since Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula.
- But EU member states remain divided on whether to strengthen measures by specifically targeting trade ties with Russia.
- In particular, Europeans refrain from involving key figures of the energy sector because of the heavy dependence of several EU countries -- including powerful Germany -- on gas purchased from Russia.

GAFA Tax

France will introduce its own tax on large internet and technology companies.

"GAFA tax" -- named after Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon -- to ensure the global giants pay a fair share of taxes on their massive business operations in Europe.

Azov Sea Standoff

1. Russia prevented three Ukrainian ships from entering the Kerch Strait, a narrow strip of water linking the Azov and Black seas. According to the Ukrainian navy, vessels **belonging to Russia's border service opened fire on the Ukrainian fleet, injuring six sailors**, before seizing two of the ships.
2. The Azov Sea standoff was seen as an open violation of the EU-brokered Minsk peace agreement, which was endorsed by both Moscow and Kiev in late 2014, but is violated regularly.
3. Sea of Azov is an inland sea situated off the southern shores of Ukraine and Russia. It forms a northern extension of the Black Sea, to which it is linked on the south by the Kerch Strait.
4. Into the Sea of Azov flow the great Don and Kuban rivers and many lesser ones such as the Mius, the Berda, the Obitochnaya, and the Yeya. With a maximum depth of only about 46 feet, **the Azov is the world's shallowest sea.**

PEPPER IT WITH

Russia Ukraine conflict, Crimea annexation, SCO, FIFA world cup, OPCW, Rooppur atomic plant, Moscow declaration on health

US Space Force

Background

1. US President signed the Space Policy Directive 4, which puts in place the foundation for a legislative initiative that could establish a Space Force, a new branch of the military dedicated to handling threats in space.
2. Space Policy Directive 4, puts in place the foundation for a legislative initiative that could establish a Space Force as a new military service comparable to the US Marines. Establishing the Space Force will require Congressional approval.
3. The memo directs the Department of Defence **"to marshal its space resources to deter and counter threats in space," through the establishment of Space Force that would be part of the Air Force.**
4. It will act as the sixth branch of the military by 2020. Space Force would be an armed **branch of the military and "include both combat and combat support functions to enable prompt and sustained offensive and defensive space operations.** The Air Force is the US military branch that currently has responsibility for space.

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Implications

The imperative by America to build space weapons, which is nothing new, goes back to the Cold War, an example being the Strategic Defence Initiative of the Reagan Administration. The creation of the new force represents an important shift at least at an institutional level. What advantages it will bring to American war-fighting capabilities are still unclear.

Domestic impact

1. A Republican-controlled Congress explains the push for the creation of a space corps, the purpose being to deny the Russians and the Chinese advantages in space. The intention is to see that the U.S. establishes and maintains dominance in space.
2. Ironically, the U.S. Air Force — historically a major constituency and votary for space weapons — is not entirely enthusiastic about this new service, which could take resources

away from it and the prestige that comes with being the driver of space military operations. Objections have also emerged from within the Administration.

3. Another military arm would only compound the organisational challenges facing the U.S. armed services. First, it could undercut ongoing missions. Second, it could very well increase budgetary allocations in the future. Third, objections were clear in that a space corps could undermine American efforts in the domain of joint warfare.
4. The fundamental difficulty of a space corps is that the physical environment of space is not conducive to the conduct of military operations without incurring serious losses in the form of spacecraft and debris. And despite efforts to make spacecraft more fuel efficient, the energy requirements are enormous.
5. Further, the technical demands of defending assets in space make the possibility of dominance and space as a domain for war-fighting a sort of chimera.

The Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative

- ❖ President of USA signed a presidential memorandum launching a landmark effort on behalf of women worldwide, closely crafted and conceived by Senior Adviser Ivanka Trump.
- ❖ The new initiative will change the lives of **women across the globe, bolster America's** national security, and serve as the first-ever government-wide partnership with the private sector aimed at helping 50 million women in developing countries by 2025.
- ❖ The project will be funded by USAID. The United States Agency for International Development is an independent agency of the United States federal government that is primarily responsible for administering civilian foreign aid and development assistance.

China and Russia's responses

- **China has reiterated its response to the Trump Administration's announcement with its** oft-repeated statement that it opposes the weaponisation of space, it knows that it is the prime target of this incipient force.
- With a range of terrestrial interests in direct conflict with the Americans, China seems in **no mood to allow U.S. space dominance. China's** space military programme has been dedicated to **building "Assassin Mace" technologies** (an array of kinetic and non-kinetic means of attack) — capabilities that are geared to help win wars rapidly.
- Russia for its part has been shriller in its response, making it clear that it will vigorously take on the U.S. However, given its lack of the resources for competition, it will in all probability, for tactical reasons, align itself with China.

PEPPER IT WITH
PAROS, US-China trade war,
Generalised system of preference,
India-US dialogue on Intellectual
Property, JCPOA

Implications for India

- While India is officially committed to PAROS, or the prevention of an arms race in outer space, it is yet to formulate a credible official response to the Trump plan. India has yet to establish a credible space command of its own. And, its inter-services rivalries will have to be resolved about the command and control.
- **Beijing's reaction could be much stronger than its seemingly muted official response and** it does possess a formidable space military programme that far exceeds current Indian capabilities. For its part, New Delhi would do well to come out with an official white paper on space weapons.
- The government needs to engage with multiple stakeholders directly about the role **space weapons will play in India's grand strategy**. More than their war-fighting attributes, space weapons have one principal function — deterrence.
- A new space force is not merely a brand new service; it potentially increases greater organisational uncertainty within the U.S. military. Notwithstanding these concerns, **Washington's headlong rush is the by-product** of a strong commitment to preserving American advantages in space.

U.S National Emergency

In News

US president declared a national emergency on the border with Mexico in order to access billions of dollars that Congress refused to give him to build a wall there, transforming a highly charged policy dispute into a confrontation over the separation of powers outlined in the Constitution.

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What happens once it's declared?

- US federal law gives a number of powers to the president to use in response to a "crisis, exigency, or emergency circumstances threatening the nation.
- Declaring a national emergency allows the president to meet the problems of "governing effectively" in times of crisis.
- They also allow the president to "seize property, organise and control the means of production, seize commodities, assign military forces abroad, institute martial law, seize and control all transportation and communication, regulate the operation of private enterprise, restrict travel, and, in a variety of ways, control the lives of United States citizens.
- Declaring a national emergency is a rare step. In this case, it would allow President to redirect federal funds from elsewhere to pay for his border wall.
- Under the Constitution, Congress (US Parliament) holds the national purse strings and makes major decisions on spending taxpayer money. Disputes over the constitutionality or legality of the exercise of emergency powers are judicially reviewable.

PEPPER IT WITH
USAID, COPE-India, LEMOA,
BECA, COMCASA, GSOMIA,
NATO, Border mall, NAFTA

Indus water

Issue

- India will block the flow of its share of water from the Indus Rivers to Pakistan. The decision comes days after the Pulwama terror attack.
- The water flowing to Pakistan from the Eastern Rivers will be diverted to Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab.
- India and Pakistan share the waters of six rivers—Ravi, Beas, Sutlej, Indus, Chenab and Jhelum. Under the Indus Waters Treaty signed in 1960, India has more rights on the Eastern rivers—Ravi, Beas and Sutlej; while Pakistan has more rights on the Western rivers—Indus, Chenab and Jhelum.
- After the Uri attack in 2016, India decided to review the Indus Waters Treaty. Eventually, the Centre had decided to quicken the water projects to arrest the unutilised water and the projects include Shahpur Kandi dam, Sutlej-Beas link in Punjab and Ujh Dam in Jammu and Kashmir.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Teesta water dispute, Sir Creek, Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD) Project, Tulbul project

IWT

Indus Water Treaty is a water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan signed by the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and **Pakistan's President Ayub Khan in 1960**. It was brokered by the World Bank.

Afghanistan Launches New Export Route to India

Background

- Afghanistan began exports to India through an Iranian port, as the landlocked, war-torn nation turns to overseas markets to improve its economy.
- 23 trucks carrying 57 tonnes of dried fruits, textiles, carpets and

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mineral products were dispatched from western **Afghan city of Zaranj** to Iran's Chabahar port. The consignment will be shipped to the Indian city of Mumbai.

- The Iranian port provides easy access to the sea to Afghanistan and India has helped developed this route to allow both countries to engage in trade bypassing Pakistan.
- Last year the US government granted an exception to certain US sanctions that allowed development of Chabahar port as part of a new transportation corridor **designed to boost Afghanistan's** economy and meet their needs of non-sanctionable goods such as food and medicines.
- Both countries established an air corridor in 2017. Afghan exports to India stood at \$740 million in 2018, making it the largest export destination.

Chabahar port

Chabahar port is the only oceanic port of Iran located in Gulf of Oman. India started interacting with Iran on Chabahar Port around 2003 but a major push was received in the second half of 2014, resulting in the signing of an MOU between the two countries for the development of Chabahar Port in 2015. Finally Indian firm India Ports Global Limited took over operations at the Shaheed Behesti port in Chabahar.

Importance

1. Chabahar provides the only viable route for trade between India and Afghanistan. Pakistan denies the use of its territory by Indian trucks bound to Afghanistan. Option of air corridors is too expensive compared to the maritime route.
2. The availability of Chabahar also provides Afghanistan with an alternative to Karachi for its trade with other countries. This will translate to reduced Afghan dependence on Pakistan and, hence, less Pakistani leverage over the domestic politics in Afghanistan.
3. Indian takeover of the operations in Chabahar follows re-imposition of sanctions on Iran by the US after the latter decided to pull out from the multilateral Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (also known as the Iran nuclear deal).
4. The US recognised the importance of Chabahar and exempted Indian firms involved in the port from sanctions. Moreover, India was also one of the eight countries to receive temporary relief on oil imports from Iran. **Tehran should acknowledge that it was India's participation that has earned Chabahar this relief.**
5. Chabahar also provides a link to the planned International North-South Transport Corridor. This way it also loops in Russia and countries in Central Asia and Europe as beneficiaries.
6. By generating economic returns, it might help in reducing the political divergence on Afghanistan that has, of late, emerged between India on the one hand and Iran and Russia on the other. Chabahar is a rare example of a project in the region which is a win-win for all stakeholders.

PEPPER IT WITH
INSTC, Gulf of Oman, Qatar
isolation, Stor building,
Gwadar port, CPEC, Salma
dam

India invited as 'Guest of Honour' to OIC

In News

External Affairs Minister will attend the inaugural meeting of the foreign **ministers' conclave of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**, a powerful grouping of Muslim majority nations, as India has been invited to attend the plenary in Abu Dhabi. This is the first time that India has been invited to an OIC meeting as a guest of honour.

India's presence at OIC is crucial, especially at a time when it has been pitching diplomatic efforts against Pakistan to isolate it internationally following the Pulwama terror attack in which 40 CRPF personnel were killed. The OIC has usually been supportive of Pakistan and, often sided with Islamabad on the Kashmir issue.

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Background

- **India's relations with the OIC has been evident since its inception.** India was invited to attend the first summit of the OIC 50 years ago in 1969 in Morocco. But the Indian delegation had to return midway due to a withdrawal of the invitation after **Pakistan's objection**. It was a setback for Indian diplomacy, as it could not further become a part of the second largest inter-governmental organization in the world (after the United Nations).
- **Pakistan's adamant stance toward India's non-entry** in the grouping has ensured even today that India is neither a member nor an observer of the OIC, despite having one of the largest Muslim populations in the world.
- **In addition to this, the OIC's stand on the Kashmir issue** questions the state of Jammu and Kashmir as a legitimate part of India. The organization has **been generally supportive of Pakistan's** concerns over Jammu and Kashmir.

OIC

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states spread over four continents. The Organization is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It endeavours to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.

Hindi included as third official court language in Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi has decided to include Hindi as the third official language used in its courts, alongside Arabic and English, as part of a move designed to improve access to justice.

An estimated 3.3 million Indian expats live in UAE, and a large number of them are blue collared workers. The move will help the Hindi speakers to learn about litigation procedures, their rights and duties without a language barrier.

Significance

1. The winds of change have been blowing for India. UAE formal invitation to his counterpart in New Delhi is viewed as part of the larger diplomatic rapprochement between the UAE and its friendly neighbour, Saudi Arabia.
2. India is the third largest economy in the world, one of the biggest importers of hydrocarbons like gas and oil, and one of the largest exporters of labor, with more than 8 million Indians living in West Asia, especially in the Gulf region. West Asia and India's growing economic and energy interdependence makes it difficult for the former to ignore the latter.
3. During the plenary session, India was able to voice its concerns with respect to the menace of terrorism, which affects the entire world. With mushrooming concerns like the rise of Islamophobia, cross-border terrorism, extremism, and instability in the world order, the OIC has become more relevant than ever before.
4. Active engagement in the grouping by India, home to around 10 percent of the Muslims in the world, can add more substance to the existence and working of the OIC.

PEPPER IT WITH

OIC-2025, Gulf Cooperation Council, OPEC, Nuclear Suppliers Group, Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia joins CPEC

Way forward

India's presence at the 46th OIC meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers is historic, but it still remains a stepping stone toward larger engagement with the OIC and the Muslim world. Article 4 (1) of the OIC Charter states the need for consensus among the OIC Council of Ministers for deciding on granting observer status to a state. **Thus, it remains in India's** interest to engage positively with Pakistan on this issue and collectively work for the ideals to which the OIC is committed.

Chagos Islands

In News

Britain has an obligation to end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago — home to the US military base of Diego Garcia — and complete the process of decolonisation of Mauritius, said the International Court of Justice in the Hague in an advisory opinion, in a significant legal victory for Mauritius and other nations – including India – that supported its case.

Background

- Britain split the archipelago off from its colonial island territory of Mauritius in 1965, three years before granting independence to Mauritius - minus the islands.
- In the early 1970s, it evicted almost 2,000 residents to Mauritius and the Seychelles to make way for the base on the largest island, Diego Garcia, which it had leased to the United States.

ICJ decision

1. The court having found that the decolonisation of Mauritius was not conducted in a manner consistent with the right of peoples to self-determination, it follows that the UK's **continued administration** of the Chagos Archipelago constitutes a wrongful act entailing the international responsibility of that State.
2. Mauritius argued that it had been forced to give up the archipelago to gain independence from Britain. Britain maintained that Mauritius had given up the islands willingly. By 13 votes to one, the judges backed the decision, which is not binding but carries weight under international law.
3. Diego Garcia has played an important role in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan since 1991, acting as a launch pad for U.S. long-range bombers. The United States and Britain both **voted against the U.N. resolution seeking the court's opinion.**



Chagos Archipelago

- It is an island group in the central Indian Ocean, located south of the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent. It is coterminous with the British Indian Ocean Territory.
- The archipelago constitutes a semicircular group, open to the east, comprising the Salomon Islands, Peros Banhos atoll, Nelsons Island, the Three Brothers Islands, the Eagle Islands, Danger Island, the Egmont Islands, and Diego Garcia atoll, the largest and southernmost landmass in the group and the location of a significant U.S. military base.
- The territory is administered by a commissioner of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London.

PEPPER IT WITH
ICJ, ICC, Solomon islands,
Marshall islands, Commonwealth
of Nations, Horn of Africa,
Madagascar

Geneva Convention

In News

Pakistan announced that the Indian Air Force pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, will be released. While Pakistan called it a peace gesture, it is likely that the Geneva Conventions are likely to have been applied.

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Geneva Convention

- The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols are international treaties that are at the core of international humanitarian law.
- They contain the most important rules regulating the conduct of armed conflicts and seeks to specifically protect civilians, health and aid workers, as well as soldiers no longer participating in the hostilities, such as prisoners of war (PoW) and wounded personnel.
- Wing Commander has not been called a PoW by the Ministry of External Affairs and Pakistan. Because as per the Third Geneva Convention, in addition to the provisions which shall be implemented in peace time, the present Convention shall apply to all cases of declared war or of any other armed conflict which may arise between two or more of the High Contracting Parties, even if the state of war is not recognized by one of them.
- Although they were adopted in 1949, to take account of the experiences of the Second World War, the four Geneva Conventions - with three protocols added on since 1977 - continue to apply to armed conflicts today. In total, 196 countries have signed and ratified them over the years.
- Convention I requires that all wounded and infirm soldiers as well as medical personnel and chaplains in the field are treated humanely without discrimination on the basis of race, colour, gender, religion or faith, and the like. It prohibits acts such as torture, mutilation, outrages upon personal dignity, and execution without judgment. It also grants them the right to proper medical treatment and care.
- Convention II extends the protections described above to shipwrecked soldiers and other naval forces, including special protections afforded to hospital ships.
- Geneva Convention III, as already mentioned, is relative to the treatment of Prisoners of War (PoWs) while the last Convention focuses on the protection of civilians in times of war.

PEPPER IT WITH

Pulwama terror attack, Uri, UNMOGIP, MFN status, Operation Meghdoot, Shimla agreement, Gilgit-Balochistan

Rights of a PoW

- ❖ According to Article 13 in the Third Geneva Convention, PoWs must be "humanely treated" at all times. Any unlawful act or omission by the Detaining Power causing death or seriously endangering the health of a prisoner of war in its custody is prohibited, and will be regarded as a serious breach of the present Convention.
- ❖ Every prisoner of war, when questioned on the subject, is bound to give only his surname, first names and rank, date of birth, and army, regimental, personal or serial number, or failing this, equivalent information.
- ❖ Apart from mandating adequate medical attention for PoWs and allowing them correspondence with their families, the Conventions also list out conditions for their internment - like hygienic surroundings where they are not exposed to the fire of the combat zone.
- ❖ "Prisoners' representatives shall be permitted to visit premises where prisoners of war are detained, and every prisoner of war shall have the right to consult freely his prisoners' representative.

How did the Geneva Conventions help in ensuring that the pilot returns home?

As per Article 118 of Convention III, PoWs "shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities". Furthermore, even if the countries at conflict are not able to reach an agreement toward cessation of hostilities, "each of the Detaining Powers shall itself establish and execute without delay a plan of repatriation in conformity with the principle laid down".

UN Women

In News

The United Nations has complimented Odisha government for its proposal of 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and the state Assemblies. The compliment came from United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

While the country awaits the passage of the Constitution Amendment Bill for the purpose before Parliament, such commitment from the states is likely to renew dialogue on the issue at the national level.

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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

- UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.
- UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide.
- It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls **and stands behind women's** equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities:
 - Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems
 - Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy
 - All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence
 - Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action
- UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality**, and in all deliberations and agreements linked to the 2030 Agenda. The entity works to position gender equality as fundamental to the Sustainable Development Goals, and a more inclusive world.

PEPPER IT WITH
Gender gap index, ILO, Safe motherhood campaign, International women Entrepreneur summit, Nirbhaya fund, #MeeToo

Global assessment of environmental laws

Why in News?

The world fares poorly on implementation of environmental laws and regulations despite the fact that 38 times more green laws have been framed and approved in the last four decades, says the United Nations (UN) in its first ever global assessment of environmental laws. India serves as a perfect example to this issue.

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Highlights

- As many as 88 countries have adopted the constitutional right to a healthy environment and more than 350 environmental courts and tribunals exist in around 50 countries says the UN report. But, failure to fully implement and enforce the environmental laws is one of the greatest challenges towards mitigating climate change, reducing pollution and preventing widespread species and habitat loss.
- Poor coordination across government agencies, weak institutional capacity and lack of access to information, corruption and stifled civic engagement are the key factors behind the poor

India ranked 177th out of 180 countries in the 2018 Global Environment Performance Index (EPI) rankings of the Yale University for being unable to improve its air quality, protect its biodiversity, and cut its greenhouse gas emissions. It also slipped by 36 points in 2018 from 141 in 2016.

effectiveness and implementation of environmental regulations.

- Underlining the growing resistance to environmental laws, the report also advocated on behalf of the environmental activists and whistle blowers.

India

- Indians and the environment have been paying the price for its lethargic and poor state of environmental governance. This is reiterated by a high-level committee set up the environment ministry in 2014. Like the Water Act, a number of laws and regulations have been existing for more than four decades now, but are proving to be ineffective.
- India has several rules and guidelines to control air pollution, **but they aren't put to good use**. Coal-based power plants continue to be the major source of air pollution in the country as more than 300 coal thermal power plants still violate emission standards.
- The judiciary's order failed to even curb illegal rat hole mining and miners in Meghalaya** paid the price for that. Acting on the orders of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), the Meghalaya government suspended rat hole mining and transportation of coal in the entire state. But four years later, illegal practices continue unabated in the state.
- In a scenario where the judiciary is already struggling to clear the existing backlog of over 21,000 environment-related cases, lack of respect and poor implementation of the **judiciary's orders** only provides an explanation for degraded environment we live in.

PEPPER IT WITH
National Green Tribunal, Global
Environment Performance Index
rankings, Methanol Economy,
SAFAR, Air quality index

Way forward

This compelling new report solves the mystery of why problems such as pollution, declining biodiversity and climate change persist despite the proliferation of environmental laws in recent decades.

Unless implementation and enforcement is strengthened, even rules that appear to be rigorous are destined to fail and the fundamental human right to a healthy environment will go unfulfilled. The world needs to shift its focus from development of policies and institutions to implementation and enforcement.

World Wetlands Day

In News

Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Environment Division, along with St. Lawrence River Institute, hosted this year's World Wetlands Day event.

Theme: Wetlands and Climate Change

Background

2nd February of each year is World Wetlands Day to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and our planet. This day also marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

Ramsar Convention

- The Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
- It was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975. Since then, almost 90% of UN member states, from **all the world's geographic regions, have acceded to become "Contracting Parties"**.
- The Convention's mission is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international**

Wetlands

Wetlands are land areas that are saturated or flooded with water either permanently or seasonally. Inland wetlands include marshes, ponds, lakes, fens, rivers, floodplains, and swamps. Coastal wetlands include saltwater marshes, estuaries, mangroves, lagoons and even coral reefs. Fish ponds, rice paddies, and salt pans are human-made wetlands.

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cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”.

Significance

1. **Wetlands are vital for human survival. They are among the world’s most productive environments;** cradles of biological diversity that provide the water and productivity upon which countless species of plants and animals depend for survival.
2. Wetlands are indispensable for the countless benefits or “ecosystem services” that they provide humanity, ranging from freshwater supply, food and building materials, and biodiversity, to flood control, groundwater recharge, and climate change mitigation.
3. Managing wetlands is a global challenge and the Convention presently counts over 160 countries as Contracting Parties, which recognize the value of having one international treaty dedicated to a single ecosystem.

PEPPER IT WITH
Montreux Record, Ramsar sites in India, Chilika Lake, National clean air program, Great Indian Bustard

Elephant corridors

Why in News?

A recent survey found seven elephant corridors in the country impaired, the Asian Elephant Alliance, an umbrella initiative by five NGOs, has come together to secure 96 out of the 101 existing corridors used by elephants across 12 States in India. The joint venture is aiming at raising ₹20 million (₹187.16 crore) to secure the 96 remaining elephant corridors, old and new, in the next ten years.

Details

Out of 101 elephant corridors identified by the Wildlife Trust of India in its 2012-15 study, five of them — two in Meghalaya and one each in Assam, Kerala and Karnataka — have already been secured by the WTI with the help of conservation partners and the support of State governments. The new alliance is aiming to secure the 96 remaining elephant corridors in the next ten years by raising the money.

PEPPER IT WITH
Singhbhum Elephant Reserve, Asthamudi Wetland, Namdapha national park, Orange national park

Project Elephant

1. Elephant (*Elephas maximus*) is the largest terrestrial mammal of India. About 60% of the Asian elephant population is in India.
2. Project Elephant (PE) was launched by the Government of India in the year 1992 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with following objectives :
 - ✓ To protect elephants, their habitat & corridors
 - ✓ To address issues of man-animal conflict
 - ✓ Welfare of captive elephants
3. Till now 28 Elephant Reserves (ERs) have been formally notified by various State Governments. Consent for establishment of 2 more ERs – Khasi Elephant Reserve in Meghalaya and Dandeli Elephant Reserve in Karnataka has been accorded by MoEF&CC. Inclusion of Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary in Mysore Elephant Reserve has also been approved by the Ministry.

Magnetic North Pole drifting fast towards Russia

In News

The magnetic north pole is drifting fast from the Canadian Arctic and towards Russia.

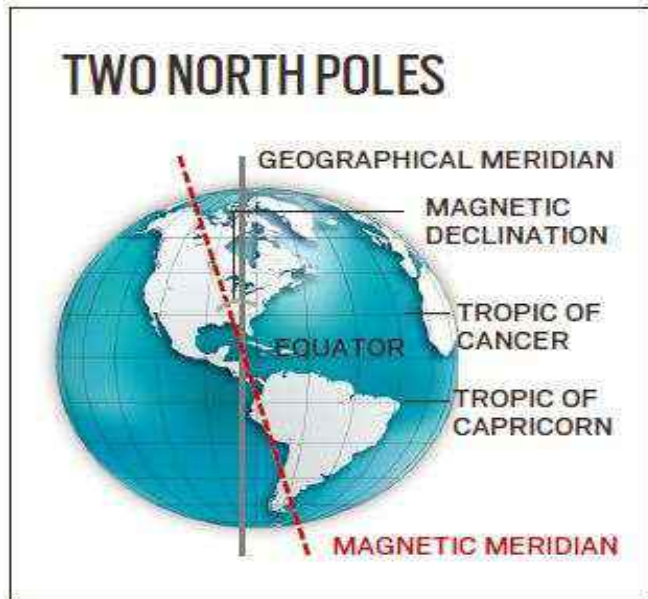
Two north poles

1. The Earth has two pairs of north and south poles. The geographic poles are defined by the axis around which the planet rotates, and are fixed. The Earth behaves like a giant bar magnet — well, almost — and this

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behaviour defines its magnetic north and south poles, which are not static. A compass points towards magnetic north.

2. Its north poles and south poles move around sometimes erratically. Over large periods of time, they change their locations significantly, sometimes even interchanging their positions.
3. The last time it so happened, with the magnetic north pole getting somewhere near where the magnetic South Pole currently is, was about 780,000 years ago.
4. The origin of **Earth's magnetism** lies in its outer core, a more than 2,000-km layer of liquid iron and some other metals like nickel that surrounds the central core, or the innermost part. This liquid iron is in constant motion due to Earth's rotation and various other reasons, and this motion produces a magnetic field.
5. The magnetic north pole, or South Pole, does not coincide with the geographical north or South Pole.



Currently, the magnetic north pole is located somewhere over northern Canada, a fact discovered by Sir James Clark Ross. Since then the magnetic north pole has been moving across the Canadian Arctic towards Russia, and has moved hundreds of miles over the last several decades.

What is new?

- Scientists have now realized the pace of this movement has suddenly increased, quite significantly, from about 14-15 km per year till the 1990s to about 55 km per year in the last few years. This led to scientists updating the World Magnetic Model (WMM) that tracks this movement. It was a year ahead of schedule.
- Every five years, a new and updated version of the WMM is released. The last update was 2015 and the next was scheduled for end-2019. However, by early 2018, scientists realized that the faster movement of the magnetic north pole had made it so inaccurate **that it was “about to exceed the acceptable limit for navigational errors”**.
- This is something that scientists do not have full clarity on. The movement of liquid iron and other metals in the outer core of the Earth is known to influence the magnetic field, but this movement is chaotic and turbulent.
- Scientists do not fully understand how the movement happens or why. Scientists hope that this acceleration in the shifting of magnetic north pole would throw some new insights into the phenomena happening deep inside the **Earth's surface**.

The consequences

- i. The entire transportation sector, especially aviation and shipping, depends on correctly knowing the position of magnetic north to chart out their navigation paths.
- ii. Similarly, it is crucial for militaries, who need to know this for firing their missiles or for other purposes. Knowing the magnetic north is vital for a number of civilian applications as well.
- iii. A standalone school compass would not be affected by this change in position of magnetic north. It will reorient itself to the new resultant magnetic north pole. But this standalone school compass is no longer used for modern requirements of navigation in aviation, shipping or military, or even in our mobile phones.

PEPPER IT WITH
Earth's core, Earthquakes,
Ocean waves, Polar vortex,
Red moon, Tides, Cyclones,
Hurricanes

Bullet train gets green light via flamingo haven

Background

- A committee, chaired by Union Environment Minister, has accorded wildlife clearance to the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed train corridor that encroaches upon a flamingo sanctuary and the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, the home to leopards.
- The proposal involves diversion of 3.2756 ha of forestland from the Thane Creek Flamingo Wildlife Sanctuary and 97.5189 ha of land close to the boundary of the forest's protected area.
- While according clearance, the National Board of Wildlife-- the apex body tasked with according permissions to allow forest land to be diverted for industrial development-- has laid pre-conditions for the bullet train project. These include paying Rs 10 crore (2% of 500 crore—the component of the project in Mumbai) for habitat improvement of the sanctuary, barricading the work site to ensure that no debris fall outside the project area and providing site and funds for penal plantation of at least 5 times the number of mangroves plants anticipated to be lost in this project.

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Thane Creek Flamingo Wildlife Sanctuary

The TCF is situated in Thane, Mumbai and is bird haven with 896 hectares of mangrove forests and 794 hectares of a water-body — is on the western bank of the creek, between the Airoli and the Vashi bridges connecting Mumbai and Navi Mumbai.

It is **recognized as an “Important Bird Area”** and is declared as **“Flamingo Sanctuary”** by Maharashtra government and State Mangrove Cell. It has a great biodiversity and shows the presence of both Greater as well as Lesser Flamingos along with other bird species.

Bullet Train

- The project for one of India's first 'bullet trains' was inaugurated by Prime Minister and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe in Ahmedabad in 2017. It is expected to be ready by 2022.
- Largely funded by a soft loan by Japan, the Rs 1 trillion Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project has a track-length of 508 km, and will originate at the Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai and terminate at the Sabarmati, in Gujarat.
- The length across the State of Maharashtra will be 155.64 km 4.3 km across Dadra & Nagar Haveli. The total length across the state of Gujarat would 348.2 km and would pass through the districts of Ahmedabad, Kheda, Anand, Vadodara, Bharuch, Surat, Navsari, and Valsad in Gujarat.

PEPPER IT WITH

Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Bird Watch International, Bombay Natural History Society, Great Indian Bustard, Chilika Lake

Small Grants Programme (SGP)

In News

A Workshop on MoEFCC-Global Environment Facility, UNDP Small Grants Program (SGP) was inaugurated.

UNDP has been supporting the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in implementing the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and financed Small Grants Programme (SGP) in India. Projects under the SGP are implemented through a National Host Institution – Centre for Environment Education (CEE), and other NGO partners and stakeholders that has presence in different parts of the country.

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SGP

- The GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) provides financial and technical support to communities and Civil Society Organizations to meet the overall objective of global environmental benefits secured through community-based initiatives and actions.

- Launched with 33 participating countries, the Small Grants Programme has expanded to provide assistance to 125 countries currently. The SGP believes that community-driven and civil society-led initiatives can generate environmental benefits, while supporting sustainable livelihoods, gender equality and civil society empowerment.
- The Small Grants Programme, through a decentralized, national-level delivery mechanism, finances community-led initiatives to address global environmental issues. It is currently implemented by UNDP on behalf of the GEF partnership. The Program is specifically designed to mobilize bottom-up actions by empowering local civil society organizations, and poor and vulnerable communities, including women and Indigenous Peoples.
- The Programme funds grants up to a maximum of \$50,000. In practice, the average grant has been around \$25,000. In addition, the SGP provides a maximum of \$150,000 for strategic projects.

SGP-India

1. MOEFCC, GEF UNDP – SGP has been operational and is being implemented throughout the country. The SGP has been working extensively in the areas of biodiversity conservation, climate change and land degradation.
2. Environment degradation such as the destruction of ecosystems and the species that depends upon them, increasing level of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, pollution of international waters, land degradation and the spread of persistent organic pollutants are life – threatening challenges that endanger us all. However, it is the poor and vulnerable communities that are most at risk as they are directly dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods and subsistence. SGP in India aims to support these vulnerable communities through community led approaches towards environmental conservation and livelihoods enhancement.
3. In addition to improving the functioning and productivity of local ecosystems through better resource use practices and restoration activities, SGP projects in India also contributed and resulted in economic, social, and political benefits, access to credit including job creation and expanded local markets, greater social cohesion and community self-reliance, political and social empowerment and increased food security.

PEPPER IT WITH
Global environment facility, UNDP,
UNFCCC, Green Climate Fund, India's
Nationally Determined Contributions

Convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals (CMS)

About

- The 13th Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals (CMS), also referred to as the Bonn Convention, an environmental treaty under the aegis of United Nations Environment Programme, is going to be hosted by India during 2020 in Gujarat.
- India has been a Party to the CMS since 1983. The Conference of Parties (COP) is the decision-making organ of this convention.
- Under this convention, migratory species threatened with extinction are listed on Appendix I and Parties strive towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them. Migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix II of the Convention.
- India has also signed non-legally binding MOU with CMS on the conservation and management of Siberian Cranes (1998), Marine Turtles (2007), Dugongs (2008) and Raptors (2016).

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Significance

India is temporary home to several migratory animals and birds. The important among these include Amur Falcons, Bar headed Gheese, Black necked cranes, Marine turtles, Dugongs, Humpbacked Whales, etc. The Indian sub-continent is also part of the major bird flyway network, i.e, the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) that covers areas between the Arctic and Indian Oceans, and covers at least 279 populations of 182 migratory water bird species, including 29 globally threatened species. India has also launched the National Action Plan for conservation of migratory species under the Central Asian Flyway.

PEPPER IT WITH
Central Asia Flyway, Minamata Convention, UNCCD, Stockholm Convention on PoPs, IPCC, UNEP

Asiatic Lion conservation

Initiatives

- In a bid to protect and conserve lions, identified as one of the endangered species by the government, the Ministry of Environment launched a three-year Asiatic Lion Conservation Project in collaboration with the state of Gujarat, which is the last habitat of the big cat.
- The project will use modern information and communication technology for conservation and protection efforts of the Great Gir Region, including GPS-based animal and vehicle tracking, automated sensor grid with movement sensors, night vision capability and real-time monitoring and report generation.
- In addition, Rs 80 crore will be spent on specialised veterinary hospitals and full-fledged ambulances for lions.

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PEPPER IT WITH
CITES, IUCN red list, Gharial Ganges Shark, Snow leopard, Hangul, Wildlife Board of India, Project Tiger

Asiatic lions

- Asiatic lions were once distributed upto the state of West Bengal in east and Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, in central India. At present Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary is the only abode of the Asiatic lion. The last surviving population of the Asiatic Lions is a compact tract of dry deciduous forest and open grassy scrublands in southwestern part of Saurashtra region of Gujarat.
- They are listed in Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, in Appendix I of CITES and as Endangered on IUCN Red List.

International Dam Safety Conference - 2019

Background

- International Dam Safety Conference 2019 was organized by Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation in collaboration with the Government of Odisha, and the World Bank in Bhubaneswar under the aegis of Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project.
- This Conference provides an excellent platform for global networking where the agencies associated with dams right through planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance around the world come together to share their professional experience, advancement in technology as well as emerging challenges in dam safety management. Several global organizations showcased their technologies, products, and services in the exhibition during the Conference.

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DRIP (Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project)

- Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation through Central Water Commission with an objective to improve safety and operational performance of selected dams, along with institutional strengthening with system wide management approach, embarked upon the six year Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) with World Bank assistance at a cost of INR 2100 Crore (US\$M 437.5). The overall

supervision and coordination has been entrusted to Central Water Commission, and is being assisted by Egis Eau, Engineering and Management Consultant.

- The project originally envisaged the rehabilitation and improvement of 223 dam projects in four states namely, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu. Later Karnataka, Uttarakhand (UJVNL) and Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) joined the DRIP.
- Government of India approved the revised cost of DRIP amounting to INR 3466 Crores (US\$M 533) along with extension till 2020. Union Cabinet approved proposal for enactment of Dam Safety Bill, 2018.
- DRIP has been successful in bringing together dam owners, engineers, scientists, academicians, industries, World Bank as well as renowned dam safety professionals.
- In addition to rehabilitation of dams, other important activities include Design Flood Review, publication of important Guidelines as well as Manuals dealing with Dam Safety Management, preparation of O&M Manuals, Emergency Action Plans, development of web based asset management tool i.e. Dam Health And Rehabilitation Monitoring Application (DHARMA), Seismic Hazard Mapping along with development of Seismic Hazard Assessment Information System (SHAISYS), Risk Assessment of few selected dams, organisation of Dam Safety Conferences, national and international training programmes, technical exposure visits etc.

Pahari Dam Modernization Project

Prime Minister inaugurated Pahari Dam Modernization Project. Pahari Dam is a water storage dam situated on Dhasan River in Jhansi district. The project will benefit farmers by reducing the water leakage from the dam and make more water available for the farmers.

PEPPER IT WITH

DHARMA, SHAISYS, Polavaram Project, Tehri dam, Sardar Sarovar Dam, River water sharing, Indus water treaty

India, Norway joint initiative to combat marine pollution

Background

- ❖ In a bid to fight marine pollution, India signed a letter of intent with the Norwegian government establishing the India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative.
- ❖ Indian and Norwegian governments agreed to work more closely on oceans by signing an MoU and establishing the India-Norway Ocean Dialogue during the Norwegian Prime Minister's visit to India.
- ❖ This is the first joint initiative under this new partnership and the India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative will combat marine pollution, which is one of the fastest growing environmental concerns.

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Highlights

1. In partnership, Norway and India will share experiences and competence, and collaborate on efforts to develop clean and healthy oceans, sustainable use of ocean resources and growth in the blue economy.
2. This initiative will seek to support local governments in implementing sustainable waste management practices, develop systems for collecting and analysing information about sources and scope of marine pollution and improve private sector investment.
3. Support will also be directed towards beach clean-up efforts, awareness raising campaigns and pilot project using plastic waste as fuel substitution for coal in cement production and developing frameworks for deposit schemes.

Marine Pollution

- Covering more than **70 percent of our planet**, oceans are among the earth's most valuable natural resources. They govern the weather, clean the air, help feed the world, and provide a living for millions. They also are home to most of the life on earth, from microscopic algae to the blue whale, the largest animal on the planet.

- The majority of pollutants going into the ocean come from activities on land. Natural processes and human activities along the coastlines and far inland affect the health of our ocean.
- Land-based sources (such as agricultural run-off, discharge of nutrients and pesticides and untreated sewage including plastics) account for approximately 80% of marine pollution, globally.
- Agricultural practices, coastal tourism, port and harbour developments, damming of rivers, urban development and construction, mining, fisheries, aquaculture, and manufacturing, among others, are all sources of marine pollution threatening coastal and marine habitats.
- Excessive nutrients from sewage outfalls and agricultural runoff have contributed to the number of low oxygen (hypoxic) areas known as dead zones, where most marine life cannot survive, resulting in the collapse of some ecosystems.

The North Pacific Gyre, known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, occupies a relatively stationary area that is twice the size of Texas. Waste material from across the North Pacific Ocean, including coastal waters off North America and Japan, are drawn together.

PEPPER IT WITH
Algae bloom, Bio-accumulation, Bio-magnification, Sustainable blue economy conference, Green India Mission, Nilavembu kudineer

Climate action in India

Background

- Union Minister of Environment released a publication on climate action titled 'India - Spearheading Climate Solutions' which mentions the key actions India has taken under various sectors towards combating and adapting to climate change.
- The initiatives captured in this publication are a reflection of India's commitment towards addressing climate change concerns while keeping a fine balance with the sustainable development priorities.

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Highlights of report

1. Some of the major initiatives mentioned in the publication include the Union Ministry's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), National Adaptation Fund on Climate Change (NAFCC), Climate Change Action Programme (CCAP), State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC), International Solar Alliances (ISA), and Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT).
2. The goal of generating 175 GW of renewable energy by 2022, smart cities, electric vehicles, energy efficiency initiatives, leapfrogging from Bharat Stage-IV to Bharat Stage-VI emission norms by April 2020 have been undertaken to minimise the impact of climate change.
3. The renewable energy capacity stands at more than 74 GW which includes about 25 GW from solar energy. India's forest and tree cover has increased by one per cent as compared to assessment of 2015. Schemes like 'Ujala' for LED distribution has crossed the number of 320 million while 'Ujjwala' for distributing clean cooking stoves to women below poverty line has covered more than 63 million households.
4. India submitted its Second Biennial Update Report (BUR) to UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2018 as per the reporting obligations under the convention. The report revealed that the emission intensity of India's GDP came down by 21 per cent between 2005 and 2014, and India's achievement of climate goal for the pre-2020 period is on track.

National Action Plan on Climate Change

The action plan outlines a number of steps to simultaneously advance India's development and climate change-related objectives. The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) encompasses a range of measures. It focuses on eight missions, which are as follows:

- National Solar Mission: The NAPCC aims to promote the development and use of solar energy for power generation and other uses, with the ultimate objective of making solar competitive with fossil-based energy options. It also includes the establishment of a solar research center, increased international collaboration on technology development, strengthening of domestic manufacturing capacity, and increased government funding and international support.
- National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency: The NAPCC recommends mandating specific energy consumption decreases in large energy-consuming industries, with a system for companies to trade energy-saving certificates, financing for public-private partnerships to reduce energy consumption through demand-side management programs in the municipal, buildings, and agricultural sectors, and energy incentives, including reduced taxes on energy-efficient appliances.
- National Mission on Sustainable Habitat: The NAPCC also aims at promoting energy efficiency as a core component of urban planning by extending the existing Energy Conservation Building Code, strengthening the enforcement of automotive fuel economy standards, and using pricing measures to encourage the purchase of efficient vehicles and incentives for the use of public transportation. The NAPCC also emphasizes on waste management and recycling.
- National Water Mission: The NAPCC sets a goal of a 20% improvement in water use efficiency through pricing and other measures to deal with water scarcity as a result of climate change.
- National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem: This particular mission sets the goal to prevent melting of the Himalayan glaciers and to protect biodiversity in the Himalayan region.
- Green India Mission: The NAPCC also aims at afforestation of 6 million hectares of degraded forest lands and expanding forest cover from 23 to 33% of India's territory.
- National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture: The NAPCC aims to support climate adaptation in agriculture through the development of climate-resilient crops, expansion of weather insurance mechanisms, and agricultural practices.
- National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change: To gain a better understanding of climate science, impacts, and challenges, the plan envisions a new Climate Science Research Fund, improved climate modelling, and increased international collaboration. It also encourages private sector initiatives to develop adaptation and mitigation technologies through venture capital funds.

International Solar Alliance

Argentina became the 72nd country to sign the Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance (ISA). The agreement was opened for signature during the COP22 at Marrakech.

The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is a group of 121 solar resource-rich countries located between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, with headquarters in Gurugram, India. The organisation aims to deploy over 1,000 gigawatt of solar energy and mobilise more than USD 1,000 billion into solar power by 2030, according to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

India is on the course to achieving 175 GW renewable energy target and 40% of **India's electricity generation is set to be** from non-fossil fuels, by 2022. India is committed to reducing 33 to 35 percent of emission intensity of its GDP during 2005 to 2030 in tune with its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

NATIONAL ADAPTATION FUND FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

1. The National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC) was established to meet the cost of adaptation to climate change for the State and Union Territories of India that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

- The projects under NAFCC prioritizes the needs that builds climate resilience in the areas identified under the SAPCC (State Action Plan on Climate Change) and the relevant Missions under NAPCC (National Action Plan on Climate Change).
- Considering the existing arrangement with NABARD as National Implementing Entity (NIE) for Adaptation Fund (AF) under Kyoto Protocol and its presence across the country, NABARD has been designated as National Implementing Entity (NIE) for implementation of adaptation projects under NAFCC by Govt. of India.

PEPPER IT WITH
Climate Change Action Programme, State Action Plan on Climate Change, International Solar Alliances (ISA), Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation

Dolphin Census

In News

Odisha's recent annual census of dolphins in its waters have thrown up some shocking numbers, with the aquatic mammals' population declining from 469 in 2018 to 259 this year. The census was carried out by the state's forest and environment department.

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The census covered important aquatic ecosystems in the state including the Chilika lake, **India's largest brackish water lagoon**, the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary and its nearby areas within the Bhitarkanika National Park and the mouth of the Rushukulya River.

Highlights

- The 2019 dolphin census report revealed that **Gahirmatha is the home of the state's largest dolphin population**, having 126 animals. More dolphins were found in Gahirmatha than Chilika due to its bigger areas.
- After Gahirmatha, Chilika had the next largest population at 113, followed by the Rushukulya river in Ganjam district, with 15 dolphins and finally, Balasore, with 5 individuals.
- The dolphin species sighted during the state-wide census included the Irrawaddy, the Bottle Nose and the Humpback. The sighting of dolphins depended on the weather condition of the day the census was carried out.
- Dolphins have been included in Schedule I of the Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972, in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), in Appendix II of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and categorised as **'Endangered' on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List.**

PEPPER IT WITH
Chilika Lake, Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, Bhitarkanika National, Rushukulya River, Ganga river dolphin, Dolphin research centre

Cause of decline

- The reduction in the number of dolphins compared to last year could be due to the migration of species from the Chilika Lake and other water bodies to the deep sea.
- Climate change and bad weather can be also the reasons for the dolphins to migrate towards the deep sea. Death is not the reason behind the decline in numbers as only a **few carcasses of dolphins washed ashore on the state's beaches.**

World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS)

In News

World Sustainable Development Summit 2019, was organized by The Energy and Resources Institute – TERI.

WSDS

- The WSDS is the annual flagship event of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). It has become a focal point for global leaders and

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practitioners to congregate at a single platform to discuss and deliberate over climatic issues of universal importance.

- The Summit series has emerged as the premier international event on sustainability which focusses on the global future, but with an eye on the actions in the developing world which could bend our common future.
- Possibly the sole Summit on global issues taking place in the developing world, WSDS now strives to provide long-term solutions for the benefit of the global community by assembling the world's most enlightened leaders and thinkers on a single platform.

PEPPER IT WITH
SDG's, TERI, Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA), Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design India, Indian Green Building Council

Waste-to-energy (WTE) plants

Background

- Nearly half of India's waste-to-energy (WTE) plants, meant to convert non-biodegradable waste, are defunct. Further, the country's inability** to segregate waste has resulted in even the existing plants working below capacity as per analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment.
- Since 1987, 15 WTE plants have been set up across the country. However, seven of these plants have since shut down. Apart from Delhi, these include plants at Kanpur, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Vijayawada and Karimnagar.
- The key reasons for closure are the plants' inability to handle mixed solid waste and the** high cost of electricity generated by them that renders it unattractive to power companies.

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WTE plants

- The NITI Aayog as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission, envisages 800 megawatt from WTE plants by 2018-19, which is 10 times the capacity of all the existing WTE plants put together. As per the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, MSW generation will reach 4.5 lakh TPD by 2031 and 11.9 lakh TPD by 2050.
- It also proposes setting up a Waste-to-Energy Corporation of India, which would construct incineration plants through PPP models. Currently, there are 40-odd WTE plants at various stages of construction.
- The fundamental reason (for the inefficiency of these plants) is the quality and composition of waste. MSW (municipal solid waste) in India has low calorific value and high moisture content. As most wastes sent to the WTE plants are unsegregated, they also have high inert content. These wastes are just not suitable for burning in these plants as additional fuel is required which makes it expensive.
- About 1.43 lakh tonnes per day of (TPD) MSW is generated across the country. Of this, 1.11 lakh TPD (77.6%) is collected and 35,602 TPD (24.8%) processed. In addition India generates close to 25,940 TPD of plastic waste of which 15,342 remains uncollected.

'Wonders of the World' Park

A theme park featuring a 60-ft Eiffel Tower, a 20-ft Taj Mahal and replicas of five other wonders of the world built using 150 tonnes of industrial and other waste in south Delhi, was inaugurated.

PEPPER IT WITH
Delhi declaration on renewable energy, Indian wind turbine certification scheme, IORA, RE-Invest

EV charging stations

Background

- The government has issued a set of guidelines to set up charging stations for electric vehicles across the country, outlining ways to build such fuelling points every 25 km.

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2. According to the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, the government expects 25 per cent of the total vehicles on roads will be electric vehicles by 2030, necessitating to erect robust electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure across the country.
3. The ministry has made amendments to the Model Building Byelaws (MBBL) 2016 and Urban Regional Development Plans Formulation and Implementation (URDPFI) Guidelines 2014, making provisions for establishing EV charging infrastructure.
4. According to the statement, the guidelines will act as a guiding document to the state governments and Union Territories (UTs) to incorporate the norms and standards of such vehicles in their respective building byelaws.

Features

1. For long range and heavy-duty electric vehicles, there should be at least one station on each side of the highway every 100 kilometers.
2. It stated a public charging station should be on both sides of the highways or roads on every 25 km.
3. The government has also advocated for charging points in residential areas.

PEPPER IT WITH
E-Buses, FDI in automobiles,
Ethanol blending program, Biofuels,
Methanol economy, Tesla, BS VI
norms

FAME-India Scheme

- In order to promote manufacturing of electric and hybrid vehicle technology and to ensure sustainable growth of the same, Department of Heavy Industry is implementing FAME-India Scheme- Phase-I [Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India]
- The Phase-II of the Scheme proposes to give a push to electric vehicles (EVs) in public transport and seeks to encourage adoption of EVs by way of market creation and demand aggregation. The scheme has not been finalized yet.

Grid Connected Rooftop Solar Programme

About

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for the Phase-II of Grid Connected Rooftop Solar Programme for achieving cumulative capacity of 40,000 MW from Rooftop Solar (RTS) Projects by the year 2022.
- Under Phase-II Programme, focus will be on increased involvement of DISCOMs. Performance based incentives will be provided to DISCOMs based on RTS capacity achieved in a financial year over and above the base capacity i.e. cumulative capacity achieved at the end of previous financial year.
- DISCOMs and its local offices shall be the nodal points for implementation of the programme. Since, DISCOMs are required to incur additional expenditure for implementation of scheme, it is approved to compensate them by providing performance linked incentives. These incentives will be provided to enable DISCOMs to create an enabling ecosystem for expeditious implementation of RTS programme in their area. The incentives to the DISCOMs will be available only for initial capacity addition of 18,000 MW under the scheme.

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Significance

1. The Programmes will have substantial environmental impact in terms of savings of CO₂ emission. Considering average energy generation of 1.5 million units per MW, it is expected that addition of 38 GW solar rooftop plants under Phase-II by year 2022 will result in CO₂ emission reduction of about 45.6 tonnes per year.
2. The programme has directed employment potential. Besides increasing self-employment the approval is likely to generate employment opportunity equivalent to 9.39 lakh job years for skilled and unskilled workers for addition of 38GW capacity under Phase-II of the scheme by the year 2022.
3. Rooftop solar provide electricity to those areas that are not yet connected to the grid due to difficult terrain.

Solar rooftop plants

- **India's ambitious 175 gigawatt (GW) of renewable energy target includes 100 GW of solar by 2022.** Of this, 40 GW is to come from rooftop installations around the country. To meet such massive targets, India must mobilise and grow the residential rooftop solar PV segment, so that we can achieve the targets.
- For residential rooftop solar to become a norm, India most importantly needs to ensure clarity of information, awareness, and ease of accessing finance for the installation. Without a consumer centric plan, rooftop solar will face challenges to see the light of the day.

PEPPER IT WITH
RESCO mode, India's First ISTS
 connected Wind Power Project,
 Solar city scheme, KUSUM Scheme

Super-Efficient Air Conditioning programme

Background

- Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) launched its Super-Efficient Air Conditioning Programme for residential and institutional consumers. The programme was launched in the localities in the capital serviced by BSES.
- With the Super-Efficient Air Conditioning programme, EESL aims to distribute air conditioners that are 40 per cent more efficient than, but priced comparably with, the 3-star ACs currently available in the market. EESL will mobilise a capital of ₹ 150 crore for the programme while redeeming its investment through upfront payments for the super-efficient ACs from customers.
- The Super-Efficient AC programme will also help to reduce the peak power demand in South and West Delhi by 22MW.

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India's biggest district cooling system

- ❖ **India's biggest district cooling system is** to come up in Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh). First of its kind in the country, the district cooling system will help save 40 per cent of the energy currently being used.
- ❖ All government, residential and commercial buildings in Amaravati will be supplied chilled water through this **system's pipelines.**
- ❖ In this regard, the corporation will enter into MoU with a Zurich-based organization for construction of energy efficient residential buildings which have below 2,000 W of energy consumption.

EESL

- Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) is a joint venture of four national Public-Sector Undertakings – NTPC Limited, Power Finance Corporation Limited, Rural Electrification Corporation Limited and POWERGRID Corporation of India Limited.
- As South Asia's first and foremost energy efficiency leader, EESL leads the market-related activities of the National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE), one of the eight national missions under the Prime Minister's National Action Plan on Climate Change.
- EESL has reduced India's carbon footprint, peak energy demand, and electricity bills through energy efficiency intervention projects worth Rs. 43 billion in domestic lighting.
- **EESL's flagship initiative, Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA), has revolutionized India's access to energy efficient LED bulbs and reduced carbon emissions by up to 32 million tonnes every year.**

PEPPER IT WITH
 Chiller star labelling program,
 INSPIRE 2018, UJALA Scheme, TERI,
 GRIHA, BEE, National Mission for
 Enhanced Energy Efficiency

Cheetahs

African cheetahs are to be translocated in India from Namibia, and will be kept at Nauradehi wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) told the Supreme Court.

India's last spotted cheetah had died in 1947. In 1952, the animal was declared extinct in the country.

Cheetah

- The Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) is naturally found in the open grasslands of eastern and southwestern Africa. It is a long, lanky cat with a yellow-grey fur spotted with dark dots. The word cheetah comes from the Sanskrit word 'chitraka' meaning 'the spotted one'.
- The cheetah is the world's fastest land mammal, and the most unique and specialized member of the cat family. It can achieve a speed of 96 kph (60 mph) per hour in just 3 seconds.

PEPPER IT WITH
Iran Cheetah, Tiger range countries, IUCN, Wildlife board of India, Corbett national park, Asiatic lions, Bengal tigers, Mangroves, Coral Bleaching

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SATAT scheme

In News

Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas handed over the 100th Letter of Intent (LOI) to the Compressed Bio-Gas(CBG) Entrepreneur (producer) under the SATAT scheme.

SATAT

- SATAT is an initiative aimed at providing a Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation as a developmental effort that would benefit both vehicle-users as well as farmers and entrepreneurs.
- SATAT was launched with a four-pronged agenda of utilising more than 62 million metric tonnes of waste generated every year in India, cutting down import dependence, supplementing job creation in the country and reducing vehicular emissions and pollution from burning of agricultural / organic waste.
- Bio-gas is produced naturally through a process of anaerobic decomposition from waste / bio-mass sources like agriculture residue, cattle dung, sugarcane press mud, municipal solid waste, sewage treatment plant waste, etc. After purification, it is compressed and called CBG, which has pure methane content of over 90%.
- Compressed Bio-Gas is exactly similar to the commercially available natural gas in its composition and energy potential. CBG can be used as an alternative, renewable automotive fuel. Given the abundance of biomass in the country, CBG has the potential to replace CNG in automotive, industrial and commercial uses in the coming years.
- Compressed Bio-Gas plants are proposed to be set up mainly through independent entrepreneurs. CBG produced at these plants will be transported through cascades of cylinders to the fuel station networks of OMCs for marketing as a green transport fuel alternative.

PEPPER IT WITH
Generation of biofuels, CNG, Gulf of Ob, Shale gas boom, Dutch disease, KG Basin, Gulf of Khambhat

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Hothouse Earth Conditions

Background

Marine clouds that protect us from hothouse Earth conditions by reflecting sunlight back into space could break up and vanish if CO₂ in the atmosphere triples.

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Highlights

- So-called stratocumulus clouds cover about 20 percent of subtropical oceans, mostly near western seaboard such as the coasts of California, Mexico and Peru.
- When they disappear, Earth warms dramatically, by about eight degrees Celsius (14 degrees Fahrenheit) - in addition to the global warming that comes from enhanced greenhouse concentrations alone. A temperature increase of that magnitude would melt polar ice and lift sea levels tens of metres.
- The last time the planet was that hot, some 50 million years ago during the Eocene Epoch, crocodiles roamed the Arctic. Even half that much warming would overwhelm humanity's capacity to adapt.

PEPPER IT WITH
IPCC, CoP25, Cirrus
clouds, Cumulus clouds,
International cloud atlas

Tipping points

A major UN report showed that even a 2C hike over the preindustrial benchmark will have dire impacts, such as the demise of shallow-water coral reefs that sustain a quarter of marine biodiversity. Since manmade global warming began, CO₂ concentration in the air has gone up nearly 45 percent, from 285 to 410 parts per million (ppm).

Using an innovative approach to modelling the behaviour of the stratus clouds, Schneider and his colleagues calculated that protective cloud cover could break up if CO₂ levels reached 1200 ppm, though the "tipping point" might be somewhat higher.

Stratocumulus clouds

- Stratocumulus clouds belong to the Low Cloud group. These clouds are low, lumpy, and gray. These clouds can look like cells under a microscope - sometimes they line up in rows and other times they spread out.
- Only light precipitation, generally in the form of drizzle, occurs with stratocumulus clouds. To distinguish between a stratocumulus and an altocumulus cloud, point your hand toward the cloud. If the cloud is about the size of your fist, then it is stratocumulus.

Heat wave

In News

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) conducted a national workshop on heat wave risk reduction at Nagpur.

Background

- Heat wave has emerged as one of the major severe weather events around the globe in recent years. Climate change is driving temperatures higher as well as increasing the frequency and severity of heat waves. India too is experiencing increased instances of heat waves every year.
- Workshop aims to sensitise the States to the need of preparing and implementing specific Heat Action Plans. Some of the most vulnerable States, which have done a commendable job in mitigating the impact of heat waves, will share their experiences and best practices to help other stakeholders draw lessons.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Heat Island Effect, El-Nino,
Anti cyclonic circulation, Polar
vortex, Antarctica greening

Heat Wave

A Heat Wave is a period of abnormally high temperatures, more than the normal maximum temperature that occurs during the summer season in the North-Western parts of India. Heat Waves typically occur between March and June, and in some rare cases even extend till July.

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has given the following criteria for Heat Waves:

1. Heat Wave need not be considered till maximum temperature of a station reaches atleast 40°C for Plains and atleast 30°C for Hilly regions

2. When normal maximum temperature of a station is less than or equal to 40°C Heat Wave Departure from normal is 5°C to 6°C Severe Heat Wave Departure from normal is 7°C or more
3. When normal maximum temperature of a station is more than 40°C Heat Wave Departure from normal is 4°C to 5°C Severe Heat Wave Departure from normal is 6°C or more
4. When actual maximum temperature remains 45°C or more irrespective of normal maximum temperature, heat waves should be declared.
5. Higher daily peak temperatures and longer, more intense heat waves are becomingly increasingly frequent globally due to climate change. India too is feeling the impact of climate change in terms of increased instances of heat waves which are more intense in nature with each passing year, and have a devastating impact on human health thereby increasing the number of heat wave casualties.

Health Impacts

The health impacts of Heat Waves typically involve dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and/or heat stroke. The signs and symptoms are as follows:

- ✓ Heat Cramps: Edema (swelling) and Syncope (Fainting) generally accompanied by fever below 39°C i.e. 102°F.
- ✓ Heat Exhaustion: Fatigue, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps and sweating.
- ✓ Heat Stroke: Body temperatures of 40°C i.e. 104°F or more along with delirium, seizures or coma. This is a potential fatal condition.

SPACE

Hera mission

- **The European Space Agency's (ESA's) Hera mission is set for a new record by becoming the first spacecraft to explore a binary asteroid — the Didymos pair.**
- Named for the Greek goddess of marriage, Hera would fly to the Didymos pair of Near-Earth asteroids: the 780 m-diameter mountain-sized main body is **orbited by a 160 m moon, informally called 'Didymoon', about the same size as the Great Pyramid of Giza.**

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DART

- **Hera mission won't be the first to reach Didymos.** The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in USA plans to launch the Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) between 2020 and 2021, which will target Didymoon as part of its planetary defence programme.
- The programme, designed to protect Earth from dangerous comets and asteroids, aims to crash DART into Didymoon in 2022 to alter its orbit around Didymos. DART will deliberately crash itself into the moonlet at a speed of approximately 6 km per second, using an onboard camera and autonomous navigation software.
- The collision will change the speed of the moonlet in its orbit around the main body. Following the collision, Hera would explore the asteroid in 2026 and check the impact and deflection created by DART.

NASA's Hubble Telescope

- Using the Hubble Space Telescope, astronomers have discovered a dwarf galaxy in a globular cluster which is only 30 million light-years away. The team used the NASA/ ESA (European Space Agency) telescope to study white dwarf stars within the globular cluster NGC 6752.
- The newly discovered cosmic neighbour, nicknamed Bedin 1 by the astronomers, is a modestly sized, elongated galaxy. It measures only around 3, 000 light-years at its greatest extent - a fraction of the size of the Milky Way. Not only is it tiny, but it is also incredibly faint.

- These properties led astronomers to classify it as a dwarf spheroidal galaxy. Dwarf spheroidal galaxies are defined by their small size, low-luminosity, lack of dust and old stellar populations.
- The Hubble Space Telescope is a project of international cooperation between NASA and European Space Agency (ESA).

GSAT-31

India's latest communication satellite GSAT-31 was successfully launched by European launch services provider- Arianespace rocket from French Guiana (French territory located in northeastern coast of South America) by Ariane-5 vehicle.

- Weighing about 2,535 kg, the GSAT-31 will provide continuity to operational services on some of the in-orbit satellites. The satellite derives its heritage from ISRO's earlier INSAT/GSAT satellite series, and it will provide Indian mainland and island coverage.
- GSAT-31 is the country's 40th communication satellite which is configured on ISRO's enhanced 'I-2K Bus', utilising the maximum "bus capabilities" of this type. This satellite will augment the Ku-band transponder capacity in Geostationary Orbit.
- With a mission life of around 15 years, GSAT-31 will be used for supporting VSAT networks, Television uplinks, Digital Satellite News Gathering, DTH-television services, cellular backhaul connectivity and many such applications.
- It also provides wide beam coverage to facilitate communication over large oceanic region, comprising large parts of Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean, using a wide band transponder.

Other Facts

- ❖ The Ariane-5 vehicle (Flight VA247) also carried Saudi Geostationary Satellite 1/Hellas Sat 4 along with GSAT-31.
- ❖ Comprising two payloads, Saudi Geostationary Satellite 1/Hellas Sat 4, also called HS-4/SGS-1, is a geostationary condosat for KACST (King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology Saudi Arabia) and Hellas Sat (Greece Cyprus).
- ❖ HS-4/SGS-1 will provide telecommunication capabilities, including television, Internet, telephone and secure communications in the Middle East, South Africa and Europe, Arianespace said on its website.
- ❖ GSAT-30 is another geostationary satellite to be lofted soon by Arianespace. Since the launch of India's APPLE experimental satellite on Ariane Flight L03, Arianespace has orbited 23 satellites and signed 24 launch contracts with the Indian space agency.

Mars rover Opportunity is dead

- Nasa declared the 15-year mission of the veteran Mars rover Opportunity finally over. The golf buggy-sized vehicle last made contact with Earth eight months ago, after being caught in a global dust storm.
- Opportunity landed on Mars in January 2004 shortly after its twin – a rover called Spirit. **Together, the pair were part of Nasa's Mars Exploration Rover programme. However, the Spirit got stuck in soil in 2009 and was declared defunct in 2011.**
- During its mission, the rover found tiny iron-rich spheres nicknamed "blueberries" at the crater that suggested a wet past, while its analyses of clay minerals near the Endeavour crater confirmed parts of Mars were once covered in neutral water, and could have been a habitable environment. It also came across the first meteorite ever to be discovered on another planet.
- **The rover has sent back stunning images, including capturing a Martian "dust devil" twisting across the planet's surface and panoramic shots that provided breathtaking views of Martian craters.**

Low Frequency Array (LOFAR) telescope

- A new map of the night sky was published, charting hundreds of thousands of previously unknown galaxies discovered using Low Frequency Array (LOFAR) telescope, a telescope that can detect light sources optical instruments cannot see.
- The team used the Low Frequency Array (LOFAR) telescope in the Netherlands to pick up traces — **or "jets"** — of ancient radiation produced when galaxies merge. These jets, previously undetected, can extend over millions of light years.

Significance

1. The discovery of the new light sources may also help scientists better understand the **behaviour of one of space's most enigmatic phenomena called black hole.**
2. In an active black hole, the jets (of radiation) disappear after millions of years, and not see at a higher frequency (of light). But at a lower frequency they continue to emit these jets for hundreds of millions of years, so one can see far older electrons.

LOFAR

- The Low-Frequency Array or LOFAR, is a large radio telescope network located mainly in the Netherlands by ASTRON, the Netherlands Institute for Radio Astronomy and its international partners, and operated by ASTRON's radio observatory, of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research.
- The LOFAR telescope is made up of a network of radio antenna across seven countries, forming the equivalent of a 1,300-km diameter satellite dish.

Hayabusa 2

- Japanese spacecraft Hayabusa 2 successfully touched down on a speeding asteroid 300 million kilometres from the Earth as it attempts an audacious manoeuvre to collect samples and bring them back for scientists to study.
- Hayabusa 2 is a Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) mission planning to rendezvous with an asteroid, land a small probe and three miniature rovers on the surface, and then return samples to Earth.
- The probe is a follow-up to **Japan's original Hayabusa mission, which was the first spacecraft to take samples from an asteroid and also the first mission to successfully land and take off from an asteroid.** It returned the samples from asteroid 25143 Itokawa to Earth.

Beresheet

- **A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket blasted off carrying Israel's first lunar lander on a mission that if successful, will make the Jewish state only the fourth nation to achieve a controlled touchdown on the moon's surface.**
- The unmanned robotic lander dubbed Beresheet – **Hebrew for the biblical phrase 'in the beginning'** – soared into space from the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.
- Beresheet would mark the first non-government lunar landing. The spacecraft was built by Israeli nonprofit space venture SpacelL and state-owned defence contractor Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) with \$100 million furnished almost entirely by private donors.

Wide Field Infrared Survey Telescope mission (WFIRST)

1. It was designed by NASA to find new planets and research dark energy, the mysterious force that pervades otherwise empty space and that could hold the keys to understanding how the universe expands.
2. The new telescope paves the way for a more accurate, more focused search for extraterrestrial life. NASA telescope that will give humans the largest, deepest, clearest picture of the universe since the Hubble Space Telescope could find as many as 1,400 new planets outside Earth's solar system.
3. The mission will build on the work of Kepler, a deep-space telescope that found more than 2,600 planets outside our solar system. The Kepler mission ended in 2018.
4. To find new planets, WFIRST will use gravitational microlensing, a technique that relies on the gravity of stars and planets to bend and magnify the light coming from stars that pass behind them from the telescope's viewpoint.

Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR)

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully flight tested the **second indigenously developed 'Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR)' propulsion based missile system** from ITR, Chandipur, Odisha.
- The success of SFDR propulsion technology is a significant milestone and will pave the way for development of long range air-to-air missiles in the country.
- The success of SFDR propulsion technology is a significant milestone and will pave the way for development of long-range air-to-air missiles in the country.

Ramjet

- A ramjet is a form of **air-breathing jet engine that uses the vehicle's forward motion** to compress incoming air for combustion without a rotating compressor. Fuel is injected in the combustion chamber where it mixes with the hot compressed air and ignites. A ramjet-powered vehicle requires an assisted take-off like a rocket assist to accelerate it to a speed where it begins to produce thrust.
- Ramjets work most efficiently at supersonic speeds around Mach 3 (three times the speed of sound) and can operate up to speeds of Mach 6. However, the ramjet efficiency starts to drop when the vehicle reaches hypersonic speeds.
- A scramjet engine is an improvement over the ramjet engine as it efficiently operates at hypersonic speeds and allows supersonic combustion. Thus it is known as Supersonic Combustion Ramjet, or Scramjet.
- A dual mode ramjet (DMRJ) is a type of jet engine where a ramjet transforms into scramjet over Mach 4-8 range, which means it can efficiently operate both in subsonic and supersonic combustor modes.

PEPPER IT WITH
Ultima Thule, New Horizon Mission,
GSLV, PSLV, Ramjet engines, Cryogenic
stage, Geosynchronous orbit,
Geostationary orbit, SpaceX

Hippocamp

1. Hippocamp is the new tiny moon orbiting Neptune. It was discovered using **NASA's Hubble Space Telescope**.
2. Hippocamp has diameter of only 20 miles, making it smallest moon yet discovered in orbit of Neptune. It is named after mythical half-horse, half-fish sea creature. With this discovery, Neptune now has 14 moons.

Kerala sets up drug price monitor

In News

Kerala has become the first State to set up a price monitoring and research unit (PMRU) to track violation of prices of essential drugs and medical devices under the Drugs Price Control Order (DPCO).

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Background

- The move comes more than five years after the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) proposed such a system for the States and the Union Territories.
- NPPA had fixed the prices of around 1,000 drugs and the unit would track if buyers were being overcharged. It would also check if pharma companies were hiking the prices of non-scheduled drugs by more than 10% a year.

Significance

1. The new watchdog will offer technical help to the State Drug Controllers and the NPPA to monitor notified prices of medicines, detect violation of the provisions of the DPCO, look at price compliance, collect test samples of medicines, and collect and compile market-based data of scheduled as well as non-scheduled formulations.
2. Pharma companies have been accused of overcharging prices of drugs in the scheduled category fixed by the DPCO and those outside its ambit too.
3. The suggestion to set up PMRUs was made against the backdrop of the lack of a field-level link between the NPPA and the State Drugs Controllers and State Drug Inspectors to monitor drug prices.

PEPPER IT WITH
Drugs Price Control Order, National
List of Essential Medicines,
Oxytocin, Anti-microbial resistance

NPPA

- NPPA is an independent body under Department of Pharmaceuticals under the Union Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.

- NPPA is an organization of the Government of India which was established, inter alia, to fix/ revise the prices of controlled bulk drugs and formulations and to enforce prices and availability of the medicines in the country, under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1995.
- The organization is also entrusted with the task of recovering amounts overcharged by manufacturers for the controlled drugs from the consumers. It also monitors the prices of decontrolled drugs in order to keep them at reasonable levels.

8th round of National Deworming Day campaign

In News

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) conducted its eighth round of National Deworming Day (NDD).

Key Features

1. This key program initiative is implemented with an objective to reduce the prevalence of Soil Transmitted Helminths (STH) or parasitic intestinal worms so that they are no longer a public health problem.
2. As per WHO, 64% of the Indian population less than 14 years are at risk of STH infections. Launched in 2015 through a single fixed day approach, the NDD program in this round, targets to reach 24.44 crore children and adolescents in 30 states/UTs, in the age group of 1-19 years.
3. The program is implemented with the Ministries of Women and Child Development and Human Resource Development, where the anganwadi workers and teachers administer the deworming medicine to children and adolescents at the anganwadis and schools.
4. ASHA workers support the efforts through community mobilization and sensitization of communities about the ill effects of worm infestations. The success of the NDD program has incrementally increased with each round as the coverage has increased from 8.9 crores in to 22.69 crores in few years.

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PEPPER IT WITH

National science day, Raman Effect,
Vande Bharat Express,
International year of millets in 2023

NDD

- The NDD program is a cost-effective program at scale that continues to reach crores of children and adolescents with deworming benefits through a safe medicine Albendazole. Deworming has shown to reduce absenteeism in schools; improve health, nutritional, and learning outcomes for children; and increase the likelihood of higher-wage jobs later in life as per global evidence.
- NDD falls under the purview of the Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, and is also committed to improving the nutritional uptake in all children and adolescents and has immensely contributed to the cause of Anaemia Mukt Bharat and Poshan Abhiyaan, under the National Nutrition Strategy, formulated by Niti Aayog, with a vision towards anaemia and malnutrition reduction by 2022.

Medical devices to be treated as drugs

Background

The Centre notified that medical devices — all implantable devices, CT Scan, PET and MRI equipment, defibrillators, dialysis machines and bone marrow separators — will be treated as drugs for human beings with effect from April 1, 2020. The decision was taken in consultation with the Drugs Technical Advisory Board.

Significance

Majority of medical devices are completely unregulated in India. With this move, all implantable devices and some diagnostic equipment will be brought into the regulatory framework which is important from a patient safety perspective.

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Drug Technical Advisory Board

- Drugs Technical Advisory Board is a statutory body constituted under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
- Within the CDSCO (Central Drugs Standard Control Organization), the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) regulates pharmaceutical and medical devices, under the gamut of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The DCGI is advised by the Drug Technical Advisory Board and the Drug Consultative Committee.

PEPPER IT WITH
Food and Agriculture Organisation,
National List of Essential Medicines,
Oxytocin, NPPA, UNICEF

Stem Cells

In News

A team of Japanese researchers will carry out an unprecedented trial using human-induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS) to treat spinal cord injuries. The team will transplant two million iPS cells into the spines of the patients, who will be monitored for a year.

The announcement comes after researchers in Kyoto said in November they had transplanted iPS cells into the **brain of a patient in a bid to cure Parkinson's disease.**

Stem Cells

- Stem cells are the body's raw materials — cells from which all other cells with specialized functions are generated. Under the right conditions in the body or a laboratory, stem cells divide to form more cells called daughter cells.
- These daughter cells either become new stem cells (self-renewal) or become specialized cells (differentiation) with a more specific function, such as blood cells, brain cells, heart muscle cells or bone cells. No other cell in the body has the natural ability to generate new cell types.

Stem cell studies can help to:

1. Increase understanding of how diseases occur.
2. Stem cells can be guided into becoming specific cells that can be used to regenerate and repair diseased or damaged tissues in people.
3. People who might benefit from stem cell therapies include those with spinal cord injuries, type 1 diabetes, Parkinson's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, stroke, burns, cancer and osteoarthritis.
4. Stem cells may have the potential to be grown to become new tissue for use in transplant and regenerative medicine.
5. Test new drugs for safety and effectiveness. Before using investigational drugs in people, researchers can use some types of stem cells to test the drugs for safety and quality.

PEPPER IT WITH
Immune checkpoint therapy,
CRISPER CAS-9, Gene editing,
three parent baby

Sources of stem cells

- Embryonic stem cells: These stem cells come from embryos that are three to five days old. At this stage, an embryo is called a blastocyst and has about 150 cells.
- Adult stem cells: These stem cells are found in small numbers in most adult tissues, such as bone marrow or fat. Compared with embryonic stem cells, adult stem cells have a more limited ability to give rise to various cells of the body.
- Perinatal stem cells: Researchers have discovered stem cells in amniotic fluid as well as umbilical cord blood. These stem cells also have the ability to change into specialized cells.
- Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells (iPS): iPSC are derived from skin or blood cells that have been reprogrammed back into an embryonic-like pluripotent state that enables the development of an unlimited source of any type of human cell needed for therapeutic purposes.

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Global Fund's Sixth Replenishment Preparatory Meeting

Background

- Government of India hosted the Preparatory Meeting of the **Global Fund's Sixth Replenishment to bring together governments, donors, technical partners and civil society groups** in a demonstration of global solidarity to pursue Sustainable Development Goal 3, "health and well-being for all."
- The Global Fund is seeking to raise at least US\$14 billion for the next three years to help save 16 million lives, cut the mortality rate from HIV, TB and malaria in half, and build stronger health systems by 2023.
- France, which this year took over the presidency of the G7, will host the Global Fund's Sixth Replenishment Conference in Lyon on 10 October 2019.** The conference is aimed at raising funds to fight the diseases and build stronger systems for health for the next three years.

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Global Fund

- The Global Fund is a partnership organization designed to accelerate the end of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria as epidemics.
- Founded in 2002, the Global Fund is a partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and people affected by the diseases. The Global Fund raises and invests nearly US\$4 billion a year to support programs run by local experts in countries and communities most in need.
- This partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and affected communities represents a new approach to international health financing. The Global Fund works in close collaboration with other bilateral and multilateral organizations to supplement existing efforts dealing with the three diseases.

PEPPER IT WITH
SATH-E Roadmap, Zero hunger program, Hamburg action plan, Indian Health Fund, Zika virus, Nipah virus

Trans fat

In News

Kerala Health Department has drawn up an action plan to generate public awareness on the harmful effects of trans fatty acids (TFA) in commercially available food items and to encourage the local food industry to meet the current statutory limits set for.

The department is being supported in this initiative by Vital Strategies, the nutrition wing of the World Bank, WHO, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), and the State Food Safety wing, which will be in charge of enforcement.

Trans fatty acids

- There are two broad types of trans fats found in foods: naturally-occurring and artificial trans fats. Naturally-occurring trans fats are produced in the gut of some animals and foods made from these animals (e.g., milk and meat products) may contain small quantities of these fats. Artificial trans fats (or trans fatty acids) are created in an industrial process that adds hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them more solid.
- Trans fats raise bad (LDL) cholesterol levels and lower good (HDL) cholesterol levels. **Eating trans fats increases your risk of developing heart disease and stroke. It's also associated with a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes.**
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and World Health Organization have come up with the recommendation that the contents of TFA in human dietary fat should be reduced to less than 4%.

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PEPPER IT WITH
National Leprosy Eradication Programme, Integrated Child Development Service, Integrated Health Information Platform

India

1. FSSAI launched a new mass media campaign in order to create awareness about trans fats and eliminate them in India by 2022.
2. **“Heart Attack Rewind”, a 30-second public service announcement**, broadcasted in 17 languages for a period of four weeks on YouTube, Facebook, Hotstar, and Voot. The campaign warned citizens about the health hazards of consuming trans fats and offer strategies to avoid them through healthier alternatives.
3. **Swasth Bharat Yatra, an initiative started under the “Eat Right” campaign also seek to create awareness among citizens about trans fats.**

Report on global health expenditure

Background

- A new report on global health expenditure from the World Health Organization (WHO) reveals a swift upward trajectory of global health spending, which is particularly noticeable in low- and middle-income countries where health spending is growing on average 6% annually compared with 4% in high-income countries.
- Health spending is made up of government expenditure, out-of-pocket payments (people paying for their own care), and sources such as voluntary health insurance, employer-provided health programmes, and activities by non-governmental organizations.

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Highlights

1. Spending on health is growing faster than the rest of the global economy, accounting for 10% of global gross domestic product (GDP).
2. Governments provide an average of **51% of a country's health** spending, while more than 35% of health spending per country comes from out-of-pocket expenses. One consequence of this is 100 million people pushed into extreme poverty each year.
3. It highlights a trend of increasing domestic public funding for health in low- and middle-income countries and declining external funding in middle-income countries. Reliance on out-of-pocket expenses is declining around the world, albeit slowly.
4. In middle-income countries, government health expenditure per capita has doubled since the year 2000. On average, governments spend US\$60 per person on health in lower-middle income countries and close to US\$270 per person in upper-middle income countries.
5. In low- and middle-income countries, new data suggest that more than half of health spending is devoted to primary health care. Yet less than 40% of all spending on primary health care comes from governments.
6. As domestic spending increases, the proportion of funding provided by external aid has dropped to less than 1% of global health expenditure. Almost half of these external funds

4th Global Digital Health Partnership Summit

- ❖ Ministry of Health and Family Welfare **inaugurated the ‘4th Global Digital Health Partnership Summit’.**
- ❖ It is being hosted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP).
- ❖ GDHP is an international collaboration of governments, government agencies and multinational organisations dedicated to improving the health and well-being of their citizens through the best use of evidence-based digital technologies.
- ❖ Delhi Declaration on digital health was adopted at the concluding session of the Global Digital Health Partnership Summit. It calls for WHO leadership in digital health

PEPPER IT WITH

Declaration of Astana, Ayushman Bharat, MAA program, ASHA workers, National AIDS Control Organisation, Revised National TB Control Programme

are devoted to three diseases – HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis (TB) and malaria.

India on Health

India's expenditure on the health sector has risen from 1.2 per cent of the GDP in 2013-14 to 1.4 per cent in 2017-18. According to the National Health Profile of 2018, public per capita expenditure on health increased from ₹621 in 2009-10 to ₹1,112 in 2015-16.

National Health Policy 2017 envisages raising government health spending to 2.5 per cent of the GDP by 2025 in a time-bound manner. It also envisages increasing state sector health spending to more than 8 per cent of their budget by 2020.

Formalin in Fish

Background

- The consumption of fish has lately seen an upward trend and with it, the issue of adulteration of fish with unapproved chemicals and additives has also come into the light. Formalin (formaldehyde in water) is a common adulterant in fish. Traders and suppliers use it to extend the storage life of fresh or chilled fish and artificially improve the sensory attributes.
- Consumption of fish adulterated with formalin can cause health conditions such as abdominal discomfort, vomiting, renal injury, etc.

The underlying motive of using formalin on fish is:

- ✓ to extend the storage life of fresh or chilled fish
- ✓ to artificially improve the sensory attributes i.e. appearance
- ✓ As this solution is widely available in market, fish traders and suppliers have easy access to this chemical for adulteration.

Formaldehyde

- Formaldehyde is a chemical commonly used in industry for the manufacturing of plastic resins that can be used in wood, paper and textile industry. Formaldehyde is a highly flammable, colourless gas with pungent and irritating odour. Formalin, which is a solution of about 37% formaldehyde, serves as disinfectant and preservative for household products.
- Ingestion of a small amount of formaldehyde is unlikely to cause acute effect, but ingestion of a large amount of formaldehyde can generally cause severe abdominal pain, vomiting, coma, renal injury and possible death.
- The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of WHO classifies formaldehyde as "carcinogenic to humans", with sufficient evidence for causing nasopharyngeal cancer in humans with occupational exposure, although no carcinogenicity is so far established through ingestion route.

PEPPER IT WITH
FSSAI, Food Fortification, Arsenic in
groundwater, Swasthya Bharat Yatra, B
Sesikeran Committee, RUCO initiative

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Golden rice

In News

Bangladesh farmers and environment groups are angry over the **government's decision** to allow commercial cultivation of the controversial genetically modified (GM) rice, popularly called as the golden rice.

Golden rice

- A group of European scientists led by Dr Ingo Potrykus tried to change traditional rice by developing genetically-engineered rice that contains beta-carotene — by inserting bacteria and daffodil and maize genes into it. This is the golden rice, called so because of the golden colour of its grains.
- The golden rice was introduced in 2000 and argued to be the panacea for world's malnutrition problem.** It was claimed that the rice is bio-fortified, and is supposedly high

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in Vitamin A, Iron and Zinc.

- It was considered as a significant breakthrough in biotechnology, with its first field trials conducted by the agriculture centre. However, all these field trials were marred with controversy over the lack of transparency and credible independent safety studies.

GM Crops

Genetic modification of plants involves adding a specific stretch of DNA into the plant's genome, giving it new or different characteristics. This could include changing the way the plant grows, or making it resistant to a particular disease. The new DNA becomes part of the GM plant's genome which the seeds produced by these plants will contain.

Concerns

- Issues of concern include: the capability of the GMO to escape and potentially introduce the engineered genes into wild populations; the persistence of the gene after the GMO has been harvested; the susceptibility of non-target organisms (e.g. insects which are not pests) to the gene product; the stability of the gene; the reduction in the spectrum of other plants including loss of biodiversity; and increased use of chemicals in agriculture. The environmental safety aspects of GM crops vary considerably according to local conditions.
- Different GM organisms include different genes inserted in different ways. This means that individual GM foods and their safety should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and that it is not possible to make general statements on the safety of all GM foods.
- GM foods currently available on the international market have passed safety assessments and are not likely to present risks for human health. In addition, no effects on human health have been shown as a result of the consumption of such foods by the general population in the countries where they have been approved.

Arguments in favour

"It is better to die eating GM food instead of dying of hunger," said the Nobel laureate Norman Borlaug – father of the Green Revolution. It is seen as solution to eradicate hunger from the world.

Indian Scenario

- The only GM crop permitted for cultivation in the country by the Central Government is Bt cotton.
- The safety aspects of genetically modified crops are assessed by the Institutional Biosafety Committees (IBSCs), Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation (RCGM) and Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) constituted under Environment Protection Act (EPA) – 1986.
- Only GM Mustard and Bt Brinjal have been recommended by GEAC to Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India for consideration for environmental release and cultivation.

PEPPER IT WITH
15-point resolution in favour of
GM crops, GEAC, Bt Brinjal, Bt
Cotton, DMH-11

Inclusive Internet Index 2019

Background

- Inclusive Internet Index is prepared by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) for Facebook. The Index this year was expanded to include 100 countries, representing 94 per cent of the world's population and 96 per cent of global GDP.
- The overall Index score is based on the scores of the Availability, Affordability, Relevance and Readiness categories.

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Highlights

- India has been ranked 47th in the overall "Inclusive Internet Index 2019" score while Sweden topped the chart, followed by Singapore and the US.
- Men still have more Internet access than women globally but low and lower middle income countries narrowed the gender gap in 2018.

3. The UK, Namibia and Ireland, followed by Austria, Chile and South Africa, are among the top performers of the year, all with female digital skills training plans.
4. Inclusion for women and those with disabilities has improved, with low income and lower middle income countries driving progress.
5. However, affordability is declining relative to monthly income in many countries, disproportionately affecting women and people in low income countries, all of whom are more reliant on mobile as their primary means of accessing the Internet.
6. While the percentage of households connected to the Internet globally increased, on average from 53.1 per cent to 54.8 per cent, the rate of growth in Internet connections slowed to 2.9 per cent in 2019 from 7.7 per cent in 2018.
7. While lower middle income countries had a significant 66 per cent improvement in 4G coverage, low income countries saw a moderate 22 per cent improvement. Internet connections in low income countries increased by only 0.8 per cent compared to 65.1 per cent last year.
8. Web accessibility standards also improved globally, led by low and lower middle income countries. There are still about 3.8 billion people around the world without fast and reliable Internet access.

PEPPER IT WITH
NewsWhip, Media Bias/Fast Checker,
Institute of Ethics in AI, Digital Literacy
Library, Project Loon, ASK-DIV

Normalized Difference Vegetation Index

Background

- Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) quantifies vegetation by measuring the difference between near-infrared (which vegetation strongly reflects) and red light (which vegetation absorbs).
- NDVI always ranges from -1 to +1. **But there isn't a distinct boundary for each type of land cover. For example, when you have negative values, it's highly likely that it's water.**
- **On the other hand, if you have a NDVI value close to +1, there's a high possibility that it's dense green leaves. But when NDVI is close to zero, there isn't green leaves and it could even be an urbanized area.**

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How do we calculate NDVI?

- Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) uses the NIR (Near Infrared) and red channels in its formula.
- $NDVI = (NIR - Red) / (NIR + Red)$
- Healthy vegetation (chlorophyll) reflects more near-infrared (NIR) and green light compared to other wavelengths. But it absorbs more red and blue light.
- This is why our eyes see vegetation as the color green. If you could see near-infrared, then it would be strong for vegetation too. Satellite sensors like Landsat and Sentinel-2 both have the necessary bands with NIR and red.

Significance

1. There are hundreds of applications where NDVI and other remote sensing applications is being applied to in the real world.
2. For example, in agriculture, farmers use NDVI for precision farming and to measure biomass. Whereas, in forestry, foresters use NDVI to quantify forest supply and leaf area index.
3. Furthermore, NASA states that NDVI is a good indicator of drought. When water limits vegetation growth, it has a lower relative NDVI and density of vegetation.

Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR)

In News

In a boost to energy security of the country, Prime Minister dedicated to the nation, 1.33 MMT Visakhapatnam Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) facility

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of Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited (ISPRL).

SPR

- The government has to stay prepared with emergency stores of crude oil to tide over severe supply shocks of this critical fuel. Strategic petroleum reserves are essentially huge stockpiles of crude oil to keep the wheels of the country running in crunch situations.
- Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd, a special purpose vehicle under the Oil and Gas Ministry, has constructed three strategic petroleum reserves in huge underground rock caverns at Visakhapatnam on the East Coast, and at Mangaluru and Padur on the West Coast.
- These facilities, with total capacity of 5.33 million tonnes, can meet about 10 days of **India's crude oil requirements**.
- The government had announced setting up of two additional SPRs during the budget announcement for 2017-18. They will be located at Chandikhol (Odisha) and Padur (Karnataka) and, will be underground rock caverns and will have capacities of 4mt and 2.5mt, respectively.
- Combined with an existing storage capacity of 5.3mt, the new strategic petroleum reserve facilities will help support 22 days of **India's crude oil requirements**

Indigenous Semiconductor Chips

India's first Indigenous Semiconductor Chips by Bengaluru based **semiconductor company "SIGNALCHIP"** for 4G/LTE and 5G NR MODEMs was unveiled. With this, India entered into the elite club of the world and this will **have huge implications for India's data security and data sovereignty**, besides the positive economic implications.

At present only 8 companies and a few countries can design and build semiconductor chips and launch of Indigenous Chip is in a real sense Make in India for the World.

Significance

1. India is the **world's third largest energy consumer after the US and China**. The trouble is, we produce very little oil of our own and are dependent on imports for more than 80 per cent of our needs. The chunk of this is from West Asia which is often in the midst some geo-political face-off or the other. **There's no saying when some major supplier would toy with the idea of arm-twisting India.**
2. **Added to this, there's always the risk of supply disruption from natural disasters, war or other calamities.** In short, our energy demand-supply dynamic is delicately poised. SPRs add much-needed heft to the country's energy security, giving us crucial time and breathing space if push comes to shove.
3. The global practice is to maintain strategic reserves of at least 90 days of oil imports. Petroleum reserves are also a good idea because crude oil prices are extremely fickle, and defy punditry. Few anticipated its crash from triple digits in 2014 to less than \$30 a barrel in 2016. Fewer anticipated the near-doubling of prices since then to about \$80 a barrel now.

INSTEX- Instrument In Support Of Trade Exchanges

Background

- Germany, France and United Kingdom have officially set up a European mechanism to facilitate non-dollar trade with Iran and circumvent US sanctions.
- The EU has been preparing the system, in effect a clearing house that avoids monetary transfers in dollars between the EU and Iran for months although it is unlikely to become operational for several months due to technical details.
- The European Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) would be named INSTEX- Instrument In Support Of Trade Exchanges.
- France and Germany had taken joint responsibility for the SPV. A German banker would head up the vehicle, which would be based in France. France, Britain and Germany will be shareholders and they hope other states will join.

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Significance

1. The idea is for the SPV to help preserve the economic benefits for Iran derived from the curbs it placed on its nuclear programme under a 2015 deal with world powers. Europe has been keen to show good faith towards Iran since US withdrew from the deal last year.
2. The entity is not likely to revive trade with Iran to begin with as its focus will primarily be food, medicine and humanitarian, with transactions small. It will not be used for oil-related transactions that have been hit hard by US sanctions.
3. It won't change things dramatically, but it's an important political message to Iran to show that EU is determined to save the JCPOA and also the United States to show that it defend its interests despite their extraterritorial sanctions.

1979 Islamic revolution

- ❖ Iran celebrated the 40th anniversary of the **country's 1979 Islamic Revolution** that toppled the U.S.-backed Shah, overturned 2,500 years of monarchical rule and brought hard-line Shiite clerics to power.
- ❖ The anniversary festivities start every year on Feb. 1 – the day Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned home from France after 14 years in exile, to become the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- ❖ The 10-day anniversary festivities, known as **the “Ten Days of Dawn,” conclude on Feb. 11**, the date Shah Mohammad Reza **Pahlavi's** government collapsed after brief clashes between some army units and revolutionary gunmen, following nationwide protests.

EU-Iran relation

- However, relations between Tehran and the EU have worsened, and the EU imposed its first sanctions on Iran since the 2015 deal in reaction to Iran's ballistic missile tests and assassination plots on European soil. In a symbolic move, the EU added two Iranian individuals and an Iranian intelligence unit to the bloc's terrorist list.
- EU member states are also finalising a joint statement on Iran to outline concerns about Tehran's regional policies and ballistic missile programme, but also to show their desire to maintain the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

LADIS – Least Available Depth Information System

Why in News?

Moving a step ahead towards ensuring optimum use of National Waterways, the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) launched a new portal LADIS – Least Available Depth Information System.

Initially LAD information will be available for NW-1, NW-2, Indo-Bagladesh Protocol route and NW-3, along with the date of survey. The facility will be expanded to other NWs also.

Significance

- LADIS will ensure that real-time data on least available depths is disseminated for ship/barge and cargo owners so that they can undertake transportation on NWs in a more planned way. An assured depth of waterway is required for seamless movement of vessels.
- If real time information is made available regarding LADs in stretches of various NWs, it will help transporters by guiding them on the suitability of time of movement.
- IWAI has designed LADIS to facilitate the day to day operations of inland vessels plying on National Waterways and to avoid any hindrance in service and operation.
- It will enhance credibility and efficiency of information sharing to achieve seamless

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Mohar reservoir

The CAG report has alleged that the, Chhattisgarh Water Resources Department (CWRD) commenced the work on Mohar Reservoir Project in Balod district without ensuring the land required was acquired and obtaining environment and forest clearances.

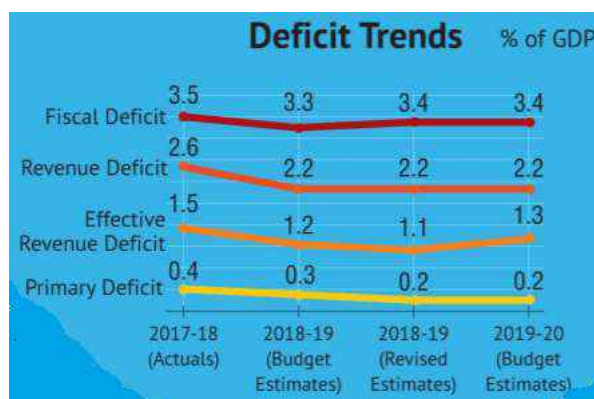
operations on National Waterways, besides pre-empting problems that may occur during movement of vessels.

INTERIM BUDGET 2019-20: MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

Fiscal Programme

- Fiscal deficit pegged at 3.4% of GDP for 2019-20 and target of 3% of fiscal deficit to be achieved by 2020-21.
- Total expenditure increased by over 13%.
- National Education Mission allocation increased by about 20% and allocation for Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) increased by over 18%.
- Substantial increase in allocation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes – For SCs increased by 35.6% and for the STs increased by 28%.
- Government confident of achieving the disinvestment target of 80,000 crore
- **Government's focus now on debt consolidation along with fiscal deficit consolidation programme.**

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Defence

Defence budget to cross Rs 3,00,000 crore for the first time ever.

Banking Reforms and Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

- The IBC has institutionalized a resolution-friendly mechanism
- Government adopted 4Rs approach of recognition, resolution, re-capitalization & reforms.
- Government has implemented measures to ensure „Clean Banking“
- The government has already recovered Rs. 3 lakh crore in favor of banks and creditors.
- Government has invested Rs. 2.6 lakh crore for recapitalization of public sector banks.

Education

10% reservation for the poor in educational institutions and government jobs. To ensure this, the Government will provide for 25% extra seats i.e. around 2 lacs, while maintaining the existing reservation for SC/ST/Other Backward Classes.

Agriculture

- All farmers affected by severe natural calamities, where assistance is provided from National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF), will be provided the benefit of interest subvention

- ❖ All willing households to be provided electricity connections by March 2019
- ❖ The Government to make 1 lakh villages into Digital Villages over next five years.
- ❖ India has achieved 98% rural sanitation coverage.
- ❖ 22nd AIIMS to open in Haryana
- ❖ For “promotion of internal trade including retail trading and welfare of traders, and their employees, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion will now be named as the Department for Promotion of Industries and Internal Trade.
- ❖ Safest year for railways in its history. Also, all Unmanned Level Crossings on broad gauge network eliminated.
- ❖ To promote entertainment industry, the Single window clearance for ease of shooting films, now available only to foreigners, will also be made available to Indian filmmakers. Also, anti-camcording provisions in the Cinematograph Act will be introduced to control the menace of piracy” will be introduced.
- ❖ India is now the world leader in consumption of mobile data.

of 2% and prompt repayment incentive of 3% for the entire period of reschedulement of **their loans.**"

- To provide an assured income support to the small and marginal farmers, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) has been announced.
 - Under this programme, vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land up to 2 hectares, will be provided direct income support at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per year.
 - This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal instalments of Rs. 2,000 each. This programme will be funded by Government of India.
 - Around 12 crore small and marginal farmer families are expected to benefit from this. The programme would be made effective from 1st December 2018.
 - PM-KISAN would not only provide assured supplemental income to the most vulnerable farmer families, but would also meet their emergent needs especially before the harvest season. PM-KISAN would pave the way for the farmers to earn and live a respectable living.
- Allocation of Rs.750 crore for Rashtriya Gokul Mission has been announced for the current year itself. Setting up of "Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog" to upscale sustainable genetic upgradation of cow resources and to enhance production and productivity of cows has also been announced. The Aayog will also look after effective implementation of laws and welfare schemes for cow.
- 2% interest subvention was announced to the farmers pursuing the activities of animal husbandry and fisheries, who avail loan through Kisan Credit Card. Further, in case of timely repayment of loan, they will also get an additional 3% interest subvention.
- To provide sustained and focused attention towards development of Fisheries, the Government has decided to create a separate Department of Fisheries. Through this measure, the Government wants to promote further growth over 7% to promote livelihood of about 1.45 crore people dependent on the sector.

Women development to women led development

- 6 crore free LPG gas connections provided under Ujjwala Yojna ; All 8 crore by next year
- 70% of MUDRA Loan availed by Women
- Maternity leave extended to 26 weeks
- Financial support for pregnant women under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana

Income Tax

- Tax collections nearly doubled in five years- from Rs. 6.38 Lakh crore in 2013-14 to almost Rs. 12 lakh crore this year.
- Individual taxpayers having taxable annual income up to Rs.5 lakhs will not be required to pay any income tax.
- 80% growth in tax base- from 3.79 crore to 6.85 crore in five years
- Technology intensive project approved to improve assessee friendliness –In two years, returns to be processed in 24 hours and refunds issued simultaneously



Roads

India is the fastest highway developer in the world. 27 kms of highways built each day.

Digital India Revolution

More than 3 lakh Common Service Centres (CSCs) exist to deliver services to the citizens. Monthly consumption of mobile data increased by over 50 times in the last five years.

Reaching out to the Most Deprived

Committee under NITI Aayog will be set up to complete the task of identifying De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic communities not yet formally classified.

A Welfare Development Board will be set up to frame special strategies for the benefit of the hard-to-reach De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic communities under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Artificial Intelligence

In order to take the benefits of Artificial Intelligence and related technologies to the people, a National Programme on 'Artificial Intelligence' has been envisaged by the Government. This would be catalysed by the establishment of the National Centre on Artificial Intelligence as a hub along with Centres of Excellence. Nine priority areas have been identified. A National Artificial Intelligence portal will also be developed soon.

Steps against corruption

- RERA and Benami Transaction (Prohibition) Act have brought transparency in real estate
- The Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018 to help confiscate economic offenders
- Government conducted transparent auction of natural resources such as coal & spectrum

Drive against Black money

- Undisclosed income of about Rs 1,30,000 crore brought under tax through initiatives like Black money Law, Fugitive Criminal offenders Act, Demonetisation etc.
- Benami assets worth Rs 6,900 crore have been attached
- 18% growth in Direct tax

Vision for the next Decade

- Foundation for India's growth and development laid in the past 5 years
- Poised to become a Five Trillion Dollar Economy in the next five years
- Aspire to become a Ten Trillion Dollar Economy in the next 8 years thereafter

Ten dimensions of Vision for India of 2030

India would be a modern, technology driven, high growth, equitable and transparent society

1. To build physical as well as social infrastructure and to provide ease of living
2. To create a Digital India, digitize government processes with leaders from youth
3. Making India pollution free by leading transport revolution with Electric Vehicles and focus on Renewables
4. Expanding rural industrialisation using modern digital technologies to generate massive employment
5. Clean Rivers, safe drinking water to all Indians and efficient use of water through microirrigation
6. Besides scaling up of Sagarmala, Coastline and Ocean waters powering India's development and growth
7. Aim at our space programme – Gaganyaan, India becoming the launch-pad of satellites for the World and placing an Indian astronaut into space by 2022

What is Interim Budget

A vote on account, also known as interim Budget, essentially means that the government seeks the approval of Parliament for meeting expenditure for the first four months of the fiscal year (April-March) — paying salaries, ongoing programmes in various sectors etc — with no changes in the taxation structure, until a new government takes over and presents a full Budget that is revised for the full fiscal. Over the years, some governments have made policy announcements or tweaked tax rates in the vote on account. It is a temporary measure which occurs in the run-up to every general election.

Key message in the Interim Budget 2019-20

Moving towards realizing a New India by 2022 –

- ❖ Clean and healthy India with universal access to toilets, water and electricity to all
- ❖ An India where Farmers' income would have doubled
- ❖ Ample opportunities to youth and women to fulfil their dreams
- ❖ An India free from terrorism, communalism, casteism, corruption and nepotism

8. Making India self-sufficient in food, exporting to the world to meet their food needs and producing food in the most organic way
9. A healthy India via Ayushman Bharat with women having equal rights and concern for their safety and empowerment
10. Transforming India into a Minimum Government Maximum Governance nation with proactive and responsible bureaucracy

Best Budget Practises Survey

Why in News?

Report of Survey of Transparency International to analyse the best practises followed by the states in budget formulation was published recently.

Details

- Assam topped the survey and was followed by Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. The states which figured lower in the ranking were Meghalaya, Manipur and Punjab.
- Assam is the only state out of the 29 states and 2 UTs, which has published a Citizens Budget in the public domain. The Assam government is the only government that has conducted budget awareness campaigns across 17 districts.
- The survey is based on 4 parameters which include public disclosure, budgetary process, post budget fiscal management and efforts to make budget more transparent and citizen friendly.

PEPPER IT WITH
International Corruption Day,
Corruption Perception Index

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About Transparency International

- It was created in 1993 to take a stance against corruption and works relentlessly to stir **the world's collective conscience and bring about change**.
- It is based in Berlin, Germany and is a non-governmental organisation.
- India is ranked 78 out of 180 with a score of 41 (100) in Corruption Perception Index-2018, which is published by Transparency International.

Technology Support and Outreach (Tech-SOP)

Why in News?

The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) organised a programme on Technology Support and Outreach (TECH-SOP) in New Delhi. The event explored the role of technology in building a competitive ecosystem and creating better opportunities for MSMEs.

An "India Green Tech Open Challenge" was also launched to encourage MSMEs to adopt sustainable and green technologies.

Highlights

- The objective of the programme was to educate MSMEs about the latest technological innovations currently available in the market.
- The Ministry, through TECH-SOP, aims to bridge the gap between research and development institutions and MSMEs and equip them with state-of-the-art technologies, which will help them become part of the global value chain.
- The government has been working to support the MSME sector in the country over the last few years through initiatives like the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA), the Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), and the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for MSEs (CGTMSE) that have led to credit growth recovery.

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved three-year extension of the Credit Linked Capital Subsidy and Technology Upgradation Scheme for MSMEs.

It is set to boost the competitiveness of MSMEs by integrating ongoing technology upgradation efforts, increasing productivity through waste reduction, and promoting cloud computing.

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Background

In 2018, a MSME Support and Outreach Programme was launched. As part of this programme, 12 key initiatives related to the growth, expansion, and facilitation of MSMEs were launched. These initiatives were based on the five key aspects to facilitate the sector. These include access to credit, access to market, technology upgradation, ease of doing business, and sense of security for employees.

PEPPER IT WITH
CSIR, NIF, ICAR, the Institute
for Design of Electrical
Measuring Instrument

Conclusion

The development of MSMEs has economic benefits. MSMEs are an important part of the economy and contribute significantly to GDP, exports, industrial output, and employment generation.

National Rural Economic Transformation Project

Why in News?

The World Bank and the Government of India signed a \$250 Million Agreement for the National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP), which will help women in rural households shift to a new generation of economic initiatives by developing viable enterprise for farm and non-farm products.

The \$250 Million Loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), has a 5-year grace period, and a final maturity of 20 years.

Key Highlights

- A Key Focus of the Project will be to promote women-owned and women-led farm and non-farm enterprises across value chains; enable them to build businesses that help them access finance, markets and networks; and generate employment.
- This additional funding will help give impetus to the poverty alleviation measures by the Government and ensure equitable and inclusive growth in the country.
- The NERTP will support enterprise development programs for rural poor women and youth by creating a platform to access finance including start-up financing options to build their individual and/or collectively owned and managed enterprises.
- The other key component of the project includes developing financial products using digital financial services to help small producer collectives scale-up and engage with the market.
- It will also support youth skills development, in coordination with the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana. Peer to peer learning across States and across communities was a successful strategy under the NRLP and will also continue to be used in this project.
- The Project will continue to give technical assistance, skills building and investment support to strengthen women-owned and women-led producer collectives diversify into high value farm and non-farm commodities such as commercial crops and livestock products, and fisheries.
- This project aspires to transform the economic participation of SHGs and rural women entrepreneurs by helping them engage on a strong footing with formal private financing, **expand women owned and women managed enterprises and increase women's labour force participation in viable agriculture and non-farm economic activities.**

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The World Bank group consists of 5 closely associated institutions propitiating the role of development in the member nations in different areas. (i) International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, (ii) International Development Agency, (iii) International Finance Corporation (iv) Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency and (v) International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). India is not the member of ICSID.

Background

NRETP is an additional financing to the \$500 million National Rural Livelihoods Project (NRLP) approved by the World Bank in July 2011. The NRLP, which is currently being implemented across 13 states has mobilized more than 8.8 million women from poor rural households into 750,000 self-help groups (SHGs). These SHGs have been further federated into 48,700 Village Organizations and 2900 Cluster/Gram Panchayat-level Federations.

PEPPER IT WITH
Bilateral Investment Promotion
& Protection Agreement (BIPA),
Financial Transaction Plan,
International Monetary System

DAY-NRLM

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojna-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) aims to alleviate rural poverty and create sustainable livelihood opportunities in rural communities by promoting sustainable community-based institutions which will facilitate economic and financial services for the rural poor. Originally called as Aajeevika – National Rural Livelihoods Mission, the programme was renamed as Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission in 2015.

Women Livelihood Bond (WLB)

Why in News?

World Bank, UN Women and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), along with some ten leading wealth managers and corporates, came together to launch a new social impact bond – **women's livelihood bonds** - that will help rural women in some of India's poorest states to set up or scale-up their own enterprises.

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Background

Till date, India's National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) - **the country's largest initiative** to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor, supported by the World Bank - has brought 50 million rural women into collectives and Self-Help Groups (SHG). Over the last 5 years **these rural women's collectives have leveraged \$30 billion in financing from commercial banks.**

Details

- This will be the first time that a social impact bond will connect investors with rural women entrepreneurs.
- The bonds will be raised by SIDBI with the support of the World Bank and the UN Women. SIDBI will act as the Financial **Intermediary and channel funds to women's entrepreneurs** through Participating Financial Intermediaries.
- The WLB will be unsecured, unlisted bonds with a fixed coupon rate of 3 percent per annum and a five-year tenure. They will be backed by a corpus fund to be mobilised through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions and through grant **support from UK's Department for International Development (DFID).**
- The Corpus Fund will monitor and track the program. The Corpus guarantee cover will enable women entrepreneurs to access credit at much lower rates of interest.
- These bonds differ from Social Impact Bonds as they mobilize private sector capital to generate positive social impact, offer financial returns independent of social outcomes, and are able to be listed on both social and traditional stock exchanges.

- ❖ Bond is an instrument of raising long-term debt on which the bond issuer pays a periodic interest.
- ❖ In theory, bonds can be issued by both government as well as private companies.
- ❖ Bonds are supported/secured by collateral in the form of immovable property (i.e fixed assets) while debentures, also used to raise long-term debt, are not supported by any collateral.
- ❖ In a sense, all debentures are bonds but not all bonds are debentures. Whenever a bond is unsecured, it can be referred to as a debenture.

Why is it Needed?

- **While women's collectives could borrow from banks and microfinance institutions**, individual women entrepreneurs faced many challenges when seeking to finance their own enterprises. Loans of Rs. 0.5 - 5 lakh is often viewed as being too small and too risky and charged interest of 20 to 24 percent.
- The new **women's livelihood bonds** will now enable individual women entrepreneurs in sectors such as agriculture, food processing, services, and manufacturing to borrow around Rs.1 lakh to Rs. 1.5 lakh at 13 percent or less per annum - almost half the current cost.
- **Support for individual women's enterprises will help create millions of jobs.** For instance, an investment of Rs.1 crore could potentially support 100 women entrepreneurs, in turn providing jobs to another 300 to 400 people.
- **The new bonds will not only enable SHG women to graduate from "group borrowing" to "individual borrowing" but will also allow them to shift from development assistance towards more market-financed programs.**

PEPPER IT WITH
Company Social Responsibility,
Mortgage bond, Commercial
Papers, Certificate of deposits,
Government securities

Report of Expert Committee on Determining Methodology for Fixing NMW

Why in News?

The Expert Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Anoop Satpathy, constituted in early 2017 by ministry of Labour and Employment has **submitted its report on** "Determining the Methodology for Fixation of the National Minimum Wage (NMW)".

The Report has now been placed for facilitating the process of consultation and dialogue among social partners and stakeholders and seeking necessary approval of methodology from tripartite bodies.

Background

- In 1948, the government enacted the Minimum Wages Act to ensure that workers in low-paid informal jobs were paid the minimum wage.
- Many elements of the minimum wage policy in India were influenced by the first ILO Minimum Wage Fixing Convention (No. 26) and the Declaration of Philadelphia of 1944. The enactment of the Minimum Wages Act, which was in alignment with Convention No. 26, also enabled India to ratify this Convention in 1955.
- Norms for the fixation of the minimum wages were recommended by the 15th Indian Labour Conference in 1957 and subsequently strengthened by the judgement of the Supreme Court in the judgement of Workmen v Reptakos Brett & Co. case in 1992.
- In 1996, a uniform and non-binding National Floor Level Minimum Wage (NFLMW) was introduced to address disparities in minimum wages within and across states in various scheduled employments, on the basis of recommendations made by the National Commission on Rural Labour (1991).
- An expert committee was constituted as per the recommendations of the Central Advisory Board (CAB) on Minimum Wages, which had the mandate to examine and review the norms and methodology for fixation of national minimum wage; and determine the base level National minimum wage/wages through an evidence-based approach.

What is Minimum Wage?

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ILC

The Indian Labour Conference (ILC) is the apex level tripartite consultative committee in the Ministry of Labour & Employment to advise the Government on the issues concerning working class of the country.

The first meeting of the Indian Labour Conference (then called Tripartite National Labour Conference) was held in 1942.

A minimum wage is the lowest remuneration that employers legally pay their workers. Defining appropriate minimum wage is important for securing the minimum standard of living for the workers and their family members.

Methodology

- The report has generated a large amount of evidence relating to changes in the demographic structure, consumption pattern and nutritional intakes.
- The composition of food baskets and the relative importance of non-food consumption items have been addressed in the Indian context by using official data made available by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).
- The report using scientific approach has updated the methodological framework of fixation of minimum wages based on the overall guidelines of the ILC 1957 and the Supreme Court Judgment of Workmen v Reptakos Brett & Co.

Recommendations

- ✓ Using the nutritional requirement norms as recommended by the Indian Council of Medical Research for Indian population, the report has recommended a balanced diet approach which is culturally palatable for fixation of national minimum wage.
- ✓ Accordingly, it has proposed that food items amounting to the level of $\pm 10\%$ of 2,400 calories, along with proteins **≥ 50 gm and fats ≥ 30 gm per day per person** to constitute a national level balanced food basket.
- ✓ Further, the report proposes minimum wage should include **reasonable expenditure on 'essential non-food items'**, such as clothing, fuel and light, house rent, education, medical expenses, footwear and transport.
- ✓ **Essential non-food items must be equal to the median class and expenditure on any 'other non-food items' and be equivalent to 25-30 per cent** of the household expenditure distribution as per the NSSO-CES 2011/12 survey data.
- ✓ The report has recommended to fix the need based national minimum wage for India at Rs 375 per day (or Rs 9,750 per month) as of July 2018, irrespective of sectors, skills, occupations and rural-urban locations for a family comprising of 3.6 consumption unit.
- ✓ It has also recommended to introduce an additional house rent allowance (city compensatory allowance).
- ✓ Apart from proposing the level of a single national minimum wage at an all-India level, the report has also estimated and recommended different national minimum wages for different geographical regions of the country to suit the local realities and as per socio-economic and labour market contexts.
- ✓ For the purpose of estimating national minimum wages at regional levels it has grouped the states into five regions based on a composite index and have recommended region specific national minimum wages.
- ✓ The committee has also recommended reviewing the consumption basket every five years, subject to the availability of NSSO-CES data, and – within the period of 5 years - revising and updating the basic minimum wage at least in line with the consumer price index every six months, to reflect changes in the cost of living.

India's position on ILO Convention

No. 131

ILO's Minimum Wage Fixing Convention (No. 131) requests member states to establish a system of minimum wages at levels that take into account the needs of workers and their families, as well as economic factors such as state of economic development and productivity. The convention came into force in 1972.

The Government of India, as part of its submission under the Article 19 report, has submitted that Convention No. 131 can only be ratified after necessary amendments have been made to the Minimum Wages Act 1948.

PEPPER IT WITH
National Sample Survey Office,
Central Advisory Board, Code
on wages bill, Labour
Investigation Committee

Way Forward

The government is ever committed to improving the living conditions of informal economy workers who contribute significantly to India's economic growth and progress. A minimum guaranteed income for all workers would therefore go a long way towards bettering workers' living standards and help India achieve many of its socio-economic goals, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund

In News

The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs recently gave its approval for the creation of a corpus of Rs. 2000 crore for Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund (AMIF) to be created with NABARD for development and up-gradation of agricultural marketing infrastructure in Grameen Agricultural Markets and Regulated Wholesale Markets.

Background

The Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund was announced in 2018 Budget for developing and upgrading agricultural marketing infrastructure in the 22,000 GrAMs and 585 APMCs. The guidelines for GrAMs were issued in December last year after detailed consultation with states and other concerned ministries.

Details

- AMIF will provide the State/UT Governments subsidized loan for their proposal for developing marketing infrastructure in 585 Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMCs) and 10,000 Grameen Agricultural Markets (GrAMs).
- States may also access AMIF for innovative integrated market infrastructure projects including Hub and Spoke mode and in Public Private Partnership mode. The Scheme being demand driven, its progress is subject to the demands from the States and proposals received from them.
- The rural markets, named as GrAMs, will be eligible to avail loan from this fund at cheaper interest rates for creation of necessary facilities in the market complex.

Agricultural Science Congress - 2019

The "14th Edition of Agricultural Science Congress - 2019" jointly organized by the National Academy of Agricultural Science (NAAS) and ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute at National Agricultural Science Centre Complex was held. Theme "Innovation for Agricultural Transformation".

Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees

- It is a statutory market committee constituted by a State Government in respect of trade in certain notified agricultural or horticultural or livestock products, under the Agricultural Produce Market Committee Act issued by that state government.
- APMCs are intended to be responsible for:
 - ✓ Ensuring transparency in pricing system and transactions taking place in market area;
 - ✓ Providing market-led extension services to farmers;
 - ✓ Ensuring payment for agricultural produce sold by farmers on the same day;
 - ✓ Promoting agricultural processing including activities for value addition in agricultural produce;
 - ✓ Publicizing data on arrivals and rates of agricultural produce brought into the market area for sale; and
 - ✓ Setup and promote public private partnership in the management of agricultural markets
- The typical amenities available in or around the APMCs are: auction halls, weigh bridges, godowns, shops for retailers, canteens, roads, lights, drinking water, police station, post-office, bore-wells, warehouse, farmers amenity center, tanks, Water Treatment plant, soil-testing Laboratory, toilet blocks, etc.

- Under Constitution of India, agricultural marketing is a state (provincial) subject. While intra-state trades fall under the jurisdiction of state governments, inter-state trading comes under Central or Federal Government (including intra-state trading in a few commodities like raw jute, cotton, etc.).
- Thus, agricultural markets are established and regulated mostly under the various State APMC Acts. Most of the state governments and Union Territories have since enacted legislations (APMC Act) to provide for development of agricultural produce markets and to achieve an efficient system of buying and selling of agricultural commodities.

PEPPER IT WITH
e-NAM, Grameen Bhandaran
Yojna, Integrated Scheme for
Agricultural Marketing, Khadi
and Gramodyog Vikas Yojana

States' ranking on Startup initiatives

Why in News?

Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) released second edition of Startup Ranking for 2019. The Startup Ranking framework aims to rank the States/UTs for establishing a robust ecosystem for supporting Startups. The framework also encourages States and UTs to identify, learn and replicate good practices from each other.

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Details

- The Ranking Framework 2019 comprises of 7 pillars and 30 action points. The pillars will assess **States'/UTs efforts across** institutional support, simplifying regulations, easing public procurement, incubation support, seed funding support, venture funding support and awareness and outreach related activities.
- The ranking exercise aims to evaluate measures taken by States/UTs during the assessment period from May 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019.
- The launch of the ranking framework in 2018 galvanized the States/UTs into action, thereby giving impetus to the Startup movement across the country.
- Till date, 25 States and UTs have launched their dedicated Startup policies to incentivize Startups in their jurisdiction.
- The Startup Ranking 2019 is expected to take forward the Startup ecosystem in the country and give impetus to the vision of India becoming a Startup Nation.

Norms relaxed for Start-ups

- ❖ The income tax department has notified the modified norms for startups to enable them to seek 'angel tax' exemption for investments of up to Rs 25 crore and extended the period of availing benefits to 10 years for start-ups.
- ❖ Earlier, the investment limit for a startup to seek exemption, was Rs 10 crore and they were permitted to avail the benefits only for seven years.

Dare to Dream (DRDO)

- ❖ The scheme comprises that if an individual or a start-up comes up with an innovative idea the DRDO will screen the ideas and the top three winners will be rewarded.
- ❖ A startup or the individual needs to provide information on how it would transform the idea into a product of utility, the resources on hand, the resources required, the timeframes, and the constraints are foreseen and any other additional requirements.
- ❖ It would also require to inform how the innovation will benefit the Defence and Aerospace.

Significance

- Entrepreneurs are often referred to **as the "Agents of Change" are** committed to formulating innovative solutions for the most pressing problems in the world. India is currently seeing an upsurge in the number of startups being the third largest country in terms of its startups. A Nasscom-

PEPPER IT WITH
Angel tax, New definition for start-ups, DPIIT

Zinnov report says the number of startups in the country is expected to more than double its base by 2020.

- A certain number of startups of this big chunk are also aiming to solve one or the other social problem, building a niche for social entrepreneurship.
- In recent years, startups have turned out to be an extension of micromanagement for the society wherein their business models are helping India solve its teething problems.

Asia LPG Summit

Why in News?

India hosted the 2nd Edition of Asia LPG Summit in New Delhi. World LPG Association in partnership with Indian LPG Industry organized the event.

India's success story on 'Ujjwala' and other policy interventions that have significantly helped expand the usage of LPG as a safe cooking fuel was the major talking point in the 2nd edition of the Asia LPG Summit.

GiveltUp Campaign

- Domestic LPG is heavily subsidized by the Government of India and every cylinder that we use in our kitchen carries a substantial subsidy.
- This translates to a huge annual subsidy burden on the Government, draining precious resources which otherwise could have been used in developmental activities. Subsidy on domestic LPG instead of being universal needs to meet the needs of the truly needy citizens.
- Fortunately, many able and aware citizens are not in favor of subsidies and would rather pay the full price for the products and, thereby they also make a personal contribution towards nation-building. There is a need to spread this message.
- Accordingly, the Government has launched **the '#GiveItUp' campaign which is aimed** at motivating LPG users who can afford to pay the market price for LPG to voluntarily surrender their LPG subsidy.

Ujjwala Utsav

Oil industry observed Ujjwala Utsav under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, celebrating the stellar role played by all stakeholders – District Nodal Officers, Policy makers, Distributors, and beneficiaries – in making Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) a resounding success.

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Exercise Cutlass express-19

Why in News?

INS Trikanth, a front-line warship of the Indian Navy, participated in a **multinational training exercise 'CUTLASS EXPRESS – 19'** which was held recently.

Through INS Trikanth, the IN provided a platform for live Visit Board Search Seizure (VBSS) drills.

Aim of the Exercise

The aim of the exercise was to improve law enforcement capacity, promote regional security and progress inter-operability between the armed forces of the participating nations for the purpose of interdicting illegal maritime activity in the Western Indian Ocean.

Details

During the exercise, Naval, Coast Guard and Marine Police personnel from a number of East African countries were jointly trained by mentors from participating nations, with support of international organisations like the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), Combined Maritime Force (CMF) and European Naval Forces (EUNAVFOR). The exercise was conducted in two phases.

INS Trikanth is equipped with a versatile range of sensors and weapons enabling her to address threats in all the three dimensions – air, surface and sub-surface. The **ship's extended endurance at sea** makes it an ideal platform for prolonged deployments. The ship is **a part of the Indian Navy's Western Fleet**.

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About the Exercise

Cutlass Express is an exercise sponsored by U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) and conducted by Naval Forces Africa (NAVAF) to assess and improve maritime law enforcement capacity, promote national and regional security in eastern Africa, inform planning and operations, and shape security force assistance (SFA) efforts. It demonstrates partner nation commitment to regional stability and maritime security, with participating nations.

PEPPER IT WITH
Exercise Croix Du Sud
(Southern Cross) 18, IMO, CMF

Exercise Vayu Shakti-19

Why in News?

The Indian Air Force recently displayed its precision strike capability in a pre-scheduled firepower demonstration. The targets simulated include terrorists outpost and vehicle convoy inside enemy territory as well as conventional ones like an enemy airbase, ammunition dump and fuel storage.

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- The exercise is carried out by IAF once every three years, to demonstrate it is equipped, rehearsed and ready for action. It was conducted at the Pokhran ranges.
- Vayu Shakti 2019 comes a year after Exercise Gagan Shakti where the IAF showcased its ability to fight a two-front by quickly moving the troops from the western front to the east.

Firepower of the IAF

1. MiG 21-Bason: The MiG-21 is the most widely used aircraft. It is a Multi-role, all-weather Air Defence aircraft. The aircraft is equipped with modern Radar & Avionics systems and carries a mix of air to air missiles.
2. Mirage-2000: It is a multi-role, single-engine, air defence 4th-generation fighter aircraft. The aircraft is employed in air defence & ground attack missions, with all-weather interception capability, with a full range of weapons and electronic warfare suite. It has its origin from Dassault Aviations, France.
3. Mig-29 upgrade is a multi-role, air dominance fighter aircraft of IAF. It is upgraded to carry a veritable plethora of air-to-air, air-to-surface, precision-guided & standoff weapons along with air-to-air refueling capability.
4. Mi-17V5: One of the crucial roles of IAF is to provide aid to civil authorities. With Bambi Bucket water dispensing system in Mi- 17 V5, it resolves fire contingencies expeditiously.
5. Hawk MK132: It is a single engine advanced jet trainer aircraft and can also fire a variety of weapon. The aircraft can engage pin point or area targets depending upon the type of **warhead used**. It **has its** origins from UK.
6. MiG-27: MiG-27 upgrade is a very potent air to ground strike aircraft which can carry a variety of armament loads comprising of bombs, rockets & front guns. Its swing-wing design permits it to operate over a wide range of speeds. It has its origin from Russia.
7. Tejas: The HAL built Light Combat Aircraft '**Tejas**', is a light weight multirole fighter developed indigenously. It integrates technologies such as relaxed static stability, fly-by-wire flight control system, advanced avionics, multi-mode radar & modern weapons.
8. The Jaguar: It is a ground attack deep penetration fighter aircraft. With over-wing missile pylons, multi-purpose nose radar, anti-shipping weapons, night sensors, photo reconnaissance & laser range finder, the aircraft is a mean fighting machine.

Exercise Topchi

Indian Army recently demonstrated its artillery firepower using ultra light Howitzers and indigenous Swathi weapon-locating radar at the annual "Exercise Topchi" held near Nashik. It also showcased the the aviation and surveillance capabilities.

Latest ultra light Howitzer M-777, self-propelled gun K-9 Vajra and indigenous Swathi weapon-locating radar is testimony to the increasing lethality and technical threshold of Indian Army.

9. Mi-35: It is an assault anti-armour helicopter, used in numerous combat roles. These include anti-tank operations, escort to Special Heliborne Operations & destruction of enemy Air Defence missions.
10. Ilyushin IL-76: It is a multi-purpose four-engined strategic airlift aircraft. It is a heavy duty, long haul military freight transport & has proven to be a first class strategic & tactical transport aircraft of IAF.

PEPPER IT WITH
SU-30MKI, Akash (Mid Range
Surface to Air Missile), HAL
Rudra

Cobra Gold Military Exercise

- Cobra Gold Exercise, **one of the world's largest and longest-running** international military exercises was held in Thailand. The exercise is a showcase of the growing multilateralization of a defence engagement.
- The 38th annual Cobra Gold exercise was co-sponsored by the Royal Thai and U.S armed forces. It is the biggest activity of its type in the Asia-Pacific region with 29 nations taking part as participants or observers including India.
- There are three major components of the exercise: military field training, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief training. Its goals include "enhancing maritime security, preventing and mitigating emerging disease threats, and responding to large-scale natural disasters.
- Cobra Gold has proven effective in improving coordinated military response to natural disasters, including the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2011 Tohoku tsunami, and disaster relief provided to the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan struck in November 2013.

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PEPPER IT WITH
East Asia Summit, ASEAN

QRSAM

In News

India successfully test fired the short range Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile (QRSAM) from a test range along the coast of Odisha. The missile was first tested in 2017.

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Details

- It is developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and has a strike range of 25 km to 30 km with the capability of engaging multiple targets.
- The sleek and highly mobile air defence system has been developed for the Indian Army. It uses solid fuel propellant.
- The indigenously developed QRSAM will replace the 'Akash' missile defence system which is on its way out due to technological obsolescence.
- A QRSAM is different from normal air defence system, as this is an all-weather, all-terrain missile with electronic counter measures against jamming by aircraft radars.

PEPPER IT WITH
Barack-8, Astra-1 BVRAAM, Akash-1

Conference on Guru Padmasambha

Why in News?

A conference on the Life And Legacy of Guru Padmasambhava was organized by India International Centre, Centre for Escalation of Peace, and Sahapedia recently.

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- The Conference seeks to explore the life and legacy of Guru Padmasambhava in their various dimensions. More importantly, it focuses on the contemporary relevance of his teachings and the rich and diverse tradition associated with him.
- The conference was slated as one of the events celebrating the 50 years of diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan.

About Guru Padmasambhava

- Guru Padmasambhava or Guru Rinpoche is known all over the Himalayan region as the Sage of Himalayas.
- He lived in the 8th century and is credited with having spread the message of Lord Buddha to the countries and regions located in the Himalayan belt, including India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Tibet.
- He is one of the most revered and iconic figures in the Buddhist world today and to many Buddhists, he is the Second Buddha.
- Guru Padmasambhava taught the Vajrayana. The Vajrayana is also known as Tantra. Tantric teachings are based on the Sutra Mahayana, but offer a more subtle understanding of our experience and additional methods to realize enlightenment.
- The Buddha only gave Vajrayana teachings privately to select groups of disciples. Because the essence and even the form of these higher teachings are beyond common conception, **they are known as “secret teachings.”**
- After the Buddha entered mahaparinirvana, these secret teachings were preserved by many wisdom dakinis. When Guru Rinpoche as believed appeared as the reincarnation of Buddha Shakyamuni, he revealed the Vajrayana teachings in their entirety; this is why Guru Rinpoche is known as the Buddha of the Vajrayana.

PEPPER IT WITH
Thangkas, Jaldhaka agreement,
Chukha Hydro Power Project, Treaty
of Friendship and cooperation,
Buddha Shakyamuni

India-Bhutan Relation

Diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan were established in 1968 with the appointment of a resident representative of India in Bhutan. Before this, Political Officer in **Sikkim looked after India's relations with Bhutan. The basic framework of India-Bhutan bilateral relations is the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1949 between the two countries. The treaty was revised in 2007.**

Dard Aryans (Aryan Valley)

Why in News?

A delegation of the Dard Aryans submitted their charter of demands to Minister of State for Tribal Affairs. The tribe is not part of the notified scheduled tribe list.

GS CONNECT										
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Who are the Dard Aryans

- Some 200 km from Leh are the villages of Dha, Hanu, Garkone and Darchik on both sides of the Indus River, inhabited by the Buddhist Dard Tribes. The villages are **together called the “Aryan valley”.**
- The word ‘Dard’ is derived from a Sanskrit word, ‘Daradas’, which means people who live on hillsides. People of this region are culturally and linguistically different from those in other parts of Ladakh.
- Many believe that the “Aryans of Ladakh” or the “Brokpas” might have descended from soldiers in Alexander’s army who had come to the region over 2,000 years ago. The Dard Aryans, however, do not document their history.
- Dards find mention in the Mahabharata and other Hindu scriptures. They have adopted Buddhism but their customs are very similar to those of hindu brahmins.

Ghumot to get Heritage Instrument Tag

- ❖ Ghumot, Goa’s indigenous traditional percussion instrument made from an earthen vessel, will soon be notified as a heritage instrument of Goa.
- ❖ The instrument was banned due to the use of the skin of the endangered monitor lizard for the drum membrane. In recent years, ghumot makers have started using goat skin instead.

Concerns

- A number of researchers, as well as the tribals, perceive a threat to the heritage of the community owing to modernisation, migration and religious conversion including lack of education and geographical limitation.
- The community now numbers about 4,000. Over the last few decades, many of them have embraced different religions. The community prohibits marriage with outsiders to keep the gene pool intact.
- The tribe is struggling to find a balance between modernity and traditional values. Also, after the Kargil War, development work in this region has been restricted.

PEPEPR IT WITH
Line of Actual Control, Line
of Control, Miniratna,
Navratna

Conclusion

Dard aryanas have demanded the government to **set up a tribal hostel and declare the “Aryan valley” a heritage village to boost tourism**. Special status should be given to them and government should help them become self-sufficient so that they don't have to migrate.

Salt Satyagraha Memorial

In News

Dandi March Memorial was dedicated to the nation on the occasion of **Mahatma Gandhi's death anniversary**. The Salt Satyagraha March, also **known as ‘Dandi March’**, was a historic event in India's freedom struggle. The project was started in 2005.

GS CONNECT											
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Details

- The memorial, located in Dandi, Gujarat is conceived as an experiential journey recreating the spirit and the energy of the March 12-April 6, 1930 Dandi March led by Mahatma Gandhi and 80 of his fellow Satyagrahis.
- The Monument takes the visitors step-by-step in order to visualise and understand the history of the Salt March and the methodology of Satyagraha. It has 24-narrative murals depicting various events and stories from the satyagraha.
- The project is endorsed by the Ministry of Culture, GoI and is advised by a High Level Dandi Memorial Committee (HLDMC) with IIT Bombay as a Design Coordination Agency.

A project for “Development of Gandhi Circuit: Bhitiharwa-Chandrahia-Turkaulia under Rural Circuit theme of **Swadesh Darshan Scheme**” has been sanctioned in Bihar with central financial assistance.

PEPPER IT WITH
Individual Satyagraha, Aruna Asaf Ali, Gadar Party, Simon Commission, GoI Act 1919, Poona Pact

Background

Mahatma Gandhi, in protest against the British Raj, led with Satyagrahis, marched from **Ahmedabad's Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi (241 miles)**. Upon reaching the place, he made salt from seawater, breaking Salt Law announced by the Britishers.

It inspired millions of Indians to join the freedom struggle and brought worldwide attention to the movement. The Dandi March demonstrated the effectiveness of non-violent civil disobedience as a form of protest for the first time.

Jalliwala Bagh Massacre

Why in News?

The Punjab Assembly unanimously passed a resolution, seeking an apology from the British government for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

About Jalliwala Bagh Massacre

- In 1919, the British government passed the Rowlatt Act, which authorised the government to imprison any person without trial and conviction in a court of law.

GS CONNECT											
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Gandhiji **started 'satyagraha' and called for a countrywide passive resistance movement** in protest against the Act.

- To put down this movement, the government decided to meet the protest with repression, particularly in Punjab, under its Lieutenant-Governor, **Sir Michael O' Dyer**.
- At the same time, two prominent leaders, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlu and Dr. Satyapal, were arrested in Punjab. In protest against these arrests, an unarmed and defenseless crowd gathered on 13 April 1919 in Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar.
- Under the orders of General R.E.H. Dyer, British troops surrounded the Bagh, closed the only exit and mercilessly fired on the peaceful gathering. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre was indeed a dark tragedy.
- After this massacre, martial law was proclaimed in Punjab and people were submitted to the most inhuman atrocities and humiliating punishments. There were indiscriminate arrests, confiscation of property, floggings and whippings and cutting off of water and electric supplies.
- All these outrages shocked the people of India and raised a strong wave of discontent throughout the country.
- Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood in protest against the Punjab tragedy. Congress boycotted the special committee headed by Lord Hunter to enquire into the killings.
- When Gandhi came to know about the atrocities in Punjab, he decided to break off his relations with the British, and started a non-violent campaign of non-cooperation against the British government.

PEPPER IT WITH
Chauri Chaura Incident,
Non-Cooperation Movement,
Khilafat Movement

Bharat Rang Mahotsav

In News

The 20th edition of Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM) was held recently and included several national and international performances, and various associated events in a wrap-around program.

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Details

- Bharat Rang Mahotsav was established two decade ago by the National School of Drama to stimulate the growth and development of theatre across the country.
- Originally a national festival showcasing the work of the most creative theatre workers in India, it has evolved to international scope, hosting theatre companies from around the world, and is now the largest theatre festival of Asia.
- One of the driving factors to organise a festival like BRM is to dispel the myth that theatre is an elitist medium and detached from the realities of the common man – nothing can be as ironical as that.
- The National School of Drama (NSD), one of the prominent training institutions in the world, is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India.

PEPPER IT WITH
Theatre Olympic, Sangeet
Natak Akademi

Awards

Tagore Award

- Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony was instituted by the Government of India from 2012 recognizing the contributions made by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore to humanity at large with his works and ideas, as part of the Commemoration of his 150th Birth Anniversary in 2012, for promoting values of Cultural Harmony.
- This annual award is given to individuals, associations, institutions or organizations for their outstanding contribution towards promoting values of Cultural Harmony.

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- The Award is open to all persons regardless of nationality, race, language, caste, creed or gender.

Seoul Peace Prize

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi received the prestigious Seoul Peace Prize for 2018 for his contribution to international cooperation and fostering global economic growth.
- The award was presented to him by the Seoul Peace Prize Foundation. A short film on the life and achievements of Mr. Modi was screened at the event.
- Mr. Modi is the 14th recipient of the award.
- The Prize was established in 1990 to commemorate the success of the 24th Olympic Games held in Seoul. The award was established to crystalise Korean people's yearning for peace on the Korean peninsula and in the rest of the world.

Carnot prize

- Union Minister for Railways, Coal and Corporate Affairs Piyush Goyal will receive the prestigious Carnot prize for his contribution towards sustainable energy solutions.
- **The Carnot Prize is the Kleinman Center's annual recognition of distinguished contributions to energy policy through scholarship or practice. The award in the energy sector is named after French physicist Nicolas Sadi Carnot who recognized that the power of the steam engine would "produce a great revolution" in human development.**

Miscellaneous

World's Largest Bhagwat Gita

- World's largest and heaviest Bhagavad Gita was inaugurated recently by Prime Minister of India at the Delhi ISKCON temple. As per ISKCON, the holy book measuring 2.8 meters by 2 meters has 670 pages and weights at 800 kg. It is also the world's largest sacred book.
- With an artistic touch of 18 exquisite paintings and an innovative elegant layout, the book has been printed in Milan, Italy, on YUPO synthetic paper so as to make it untearable and waterproof.
- The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), known colloquially as the Hare Krishna movement, is a worldwide confederation of more than 400 temples.

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WORLD GOVERNMENT SUMMIT

- The World Government Summit is a global platform dedicated to shaping the future of governments worldwide. Each year, the Summit sets the agenda for the next generation of governments, focusing on how they can harness innovation and technology to solve universal challenges facing humanity.
- The World Government Summit is a neutral, non-profit organization at the intersection of government and innovation. It functions as a knowledge exchange platform for leaders in the public and private sectors to convene and collaborate with world-renowned experts to create a positive impact for citizens worldwide.
- The Annual Gathering of the World Government Summit, held in Dubai recently.

Vat Cau festival

- It is a centuries-old sport which began as a training exercise for soldiers and contains elements of wrestling and rugby.
- Vat Cau is the annual festival held during Vietnam's much celebrated Tet Lunar New Year in Thuy Linh village, just 10 kilometers from the center of the capital Hanoi.
- A single match has four separate teams of eight men wearing waist straps of different colors. They tussle over a 17-kilogram ball made from the wood of a jackfruit tree, laboriously inching it towards one of the holes dug in each team's corner.

Parmanu Tech 2019

'Parmanu Tech 2019' conference, was organised by the Ministry of External Affairs and Department of Atomic Energy (DAE). The conference discussed issues related to Nuclear Energy and Radiation Technologies.

DAE

- The Indian Atomic Energy Commission was first setup in the Department of Scientific Research. The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) was setup under the direct charge of the Prime Minister through a Presidential Order. Subsequently, in accordance with a Government Resolution, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) was established in the Department of Atomic Energy.
- According to the Resolution constituting the AEC, the Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Atomic Energy is ex-officio Chairman of the Commission. The other Members of the AEC are appointed for each calendar year on the recommendation of the Chairman, AEC and after approval by the Prime Minister.

National Board for Wild Life

- Wildlife (Protection) Act provided for special legal protection to our wildlife and to the endangered species of fauna in particular. As per the amendment of the Act in 2002, a provision was incorporated for the constitution of the National Board for Wildlife, replacing the Indian Board for Wildlife.
- The National Board for Wildlife has 47 members with the Prime Minister as the Chairman. The Minister in charge of the Ministry of Environment & Forests in the Central Government is the Vice-Chairperson. The Board is responsible for promotion of conservation and development of wildlife and forests.
- **The statutory board is “advisory” in nature** and advises the Central Government on framing policies and measures for conservation of wildlife in the country.
- It is apex body to review all wildlife-related matters and approve projects in and around national parks and sanctuaries. No alternation of boundaries in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries can be done without approval of the NBWL.

Crying Keelback

A Guwahati-based zoologist has found a new species of ‘crying snake’ in Lepa-Rada district of Arunachal Pradesh. The non-venomous crying keelback’s zoological name is *Hebius lacrima*. The mark below its eyes give the snake an impression as if it is crying.

Siamese fighting fish

Tiny, testy and eye-catching with a colourful fin plumage, the Siamese fighting fish was named Thailand’s national aquatic animal. Known in the West as a betta fish, the underwater brawler is popular in home aquariums for its iridescent body and many-hued tail. It is classified as Vulnerable in IUCN Red List.

Bramble Cay melomys

- Australia officially declared a Great Barrier Reef rodent extinct, making it the first mammal believed to have been killed off by human-induced climate change.
- The rat-like Bramble Cay melomys — whose only known habitat was a small sandy island in far northern Australia — has not been spotted in a decade.
- **Researchers from Queensland determined a key factor in its disappearance was “almost certainly” repeated ocean inundation of the cay — a low-lying island on a coral reef — over the last decade, which had resulted in dramatic habitat loss.**

Blackbuck

- In 2019, so far, as many as eight blackbucks have died in the Abohar Wildlife Sanctuary (Punjab), and a majority of them succumbed to their injuries caused by barbed wires.
- Blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*) also known as the Indian antelope.
- IUCN Status: Near Threatened
- Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972

Tags to protect biodiversity zones

- Goa State Biodiversity Board recently came up with a tagging system to ensure communities residing within the biodiversity zone get Access Benefit Share (ABS) from their profits. The tag will show that the ingredients used are sourced from the nature.

- The sellers are supposed to pay 0.01 per cent of their annual profit to the GSBB and the board will then use this amount to protect the habitat from where the ingredients are. **This initiative is also expected to boost the products' sale.**

Massive mountains under **Earth's crust**

- **Scientists have discovered massive mountains in the Earth's mantle, an advance that may change our understanding of how the planet was formed.**
- Scientists used data from an enormous earthquake in Bolivia to find mountains and other topography on a layer located 660 km straight down, which separates the upper and lower mantle. **Lacking a formal name for this layer, the researchers simply call it "the 660-km boundary."**
- Data from earthquakes that are magnitude 7.0 or higher send out shockwaves in all directions that can travel through the core to the other side of the planet — and back again.

Delhi-Meerut rapid rail corridor

- **Union Cabinet has recently approved India's** first regional rail corridor between Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut. The RRTS is a first-of-its-kind, rail-based, high-speed regional transit system to be implemented in India. Once operational, it will be the fastest, most comfortable and safest mode of commuter transport in the National Capital Region (NCR).
- The project is proposed to be undertaken by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) namely the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) as a joint ownership of the Centre and State Governments with equal contribution, loan from multilateral/bilateral agency through the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA)/Ministry of Finance (MoF).
- Implementation of the RRTS would provide much-needed additional public transport infrastructure to National Capital Region to address issues of congestion, air-pollution and catalyse balanced and sustainable regional development.

Atmospheric Water Generator

- Navratna Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) has unveiled its new product, the Atmospheric Water Generator (AWG), an innovative solution to meet the ever-increasing need for drinking water worldwide, at Aero India 2019.
- BEL's Atmospheric Water Generator can be used to generate water straight from the humidity present in the atmosphere.
- BEL's Atmospheric Water Generator employs a novel technology to extract water from the humidity present in the atmosphere and purify it. It uses heat exchange for condensing the atmospheric moisture to produce pure, safe and clean potable water.
- It comes with a Mineralisation Unit, which is used to add minerals which are required to make the water potable.
- The Atmospheric Water Generator is being manufactured by BEL in collaboration with CSIR-IICT and MAITHRI, a start-up company based in Hyderabad.

Zero fatality corridor

- **The Delhi government kicked off its pilot project of creating Delhi's first 'zero fatality corridor' while also issuing actionable points to all agencies to ensure a 10% reduction in road accidents by the end of the year.**
- As per the plan, a 3km stretch between Burari Chowk and Bhalswa chowk will be taken as a case study for scientific assessment of accidents, road engineering, road-user engagement and for checking police enforcement and rapid emergency care.
- To mark the opening of the 30th Road Safety Week of the government, the first-ever Annual Action Plan for 2019 to ensure greater road safety in the national capital was released.
- The plan includes conducting a host of audits such as studying and identifying unsafe roads, transportation of schoolchildren, road signage, and emergency care service and enforcement activities of agencies.

Lighthouse projects

- The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has instituted a challenge for States/ UTs to select six sites across the country for constructing the Lighthouse projects under

GHTC-India (Global Housing Technology Challenge-India).

- The winning six States/ UTs that score the highest marks across the prescribed criteria will be awarded lighthouse projects. The States/ UTs will receive Central Assistance to construct these projects as per PMAY (U) guidelines.
- In addition to this, a Technology Innovation Grant (TIG) for the States/ UTs is provisioned to offset the impact of any additional cost implication due to the use of new technology and to absorb the issues related to economies of scale and other related factors.
- The selected sites for lighthouse projects **will be used as an 'open laboratory' for live demonstration** and will receive due attention from academia, practitioners, policy makers and media apart from felicitation/ recognition in Grand Expo-cum-Conference.

All India Citizens Survey of Police Services

To strengthen the good governance practices in the working of police, Ministry of Home Affairs has commissioned the Bureau of Police Research and Development to conduct a pan-India **survey called "ALL INDIA CITIZENS SURVEY OF POLICE SERVICES" & will be conducted** through the National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi.

The survey is aimed to understand public perceptions about Police, gauge the level of non-reporting of crimes or incidents to Police, the position on ground relating to crime reporting & recording, timeliness and quality of police response and action, and to assess citizens' **perception and experience about women and children's safety.**

New railway zone

A new railway zone for Andhra Pradesh was approved. The new railway zone - Southern Coast Railway - will be headquartered in Visakhapatnam. It will be the 18th zone in the country. As per the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2014, the Indian Railways was required to examine establishing a new railway zone in the successor state of Andhra Pradesh.

Eco Circuit

- **'Development of Eco Circuit: Pathanamthitta – Gavi – Vagamon – Thekkady' under the Swadesh Darshan scheme** of Ministry of Tourism was inaugurated.
- This Eco Circuit project was sanctioned in 2015. Major works carried out under the project includes Eco Adventure Tourism Park, Cultural Centre, Eco Log Huts, Approach Roads, Walking trails, Rain Shelters at Pine Valley Forest, Thekkady, Kumily, Moozhiyar Dam, Penstock and Kakki Dam.

LAIRCM Self-Protection Suites

- U.S approved a possible foreign military sale to India — two 777 Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures (LAIRCM) Self-Protection Suites (SPS). These systems will protect protect two Boeing-777 Head-of-State aircraft.
- LAIRCM is a programme meant to protect large aircraft from man-portable missiles. It increases crew-warning time, decreases false alarm rates and automatically counters advanced infrared missile systems.

Concept Clearing Assignment

1. Bring out the salient features of National e-commerce Policy. Discuss the impact of the policy on the domestic digital ecosystem.
2. EVMs have been in the spotlight recently as several Opposition leaders have raised doubts about the credibility of **the machines. Should EVM be treated as "information"** under RTI purview? Critically analyse.
3. The Supreme Court has asked the governments of 17 states to evict an estimated one million tribal and other households living in forests after their claims of the right to live in forests were rejected under the Forest Rights Act. Comment.
4. The government in a notification said it had decided to exempt the women employed in any mine above and mine below ground from the provisions of section 46 of the Mines Act, 1952, which restricts the women from working in mines. Critically analyse **the aftermath of this move in light of 'Vision Zero'.**

5. India has seen an exponential rise in the unregulated deposit scheme in recent years. Enumerate legislations chalked out by govt to deal with the menace of illicit deposit schemes in the country.
6. Briefly discuss about Nuclear Suppliers Group. Discuss the importance of membership of NSG for India.
7. The controversy over the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, whose objective is to identify illegal immigrants, mostly from Bangladesh but also from Nepal. Where does India stand on refugees? Support your answer in light of international frameworks for refugee.
8. The recent horrendous terrorist attack of Pulwama has further strained the ties of Ind-Pak. How will this event affect the Indus Water Treaty and India Afghanistan trade route via Pakistan? Discuss.
9. Pakistan announced that the Indian Air Force pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, will be released. While Pakistan called it a peace gesture, it is likely that the Geneva Conventions are likely to have been applied. Critically analyse the return of pilot to India in light of Geneva Convention. Also Enumerate the Rights of Prisoner of War.
10. This compelling new report solves the mystery of why problems such as pollution, declining biodiversity and climate change persist despite the proliferation of environmental laws in recent decades. Highlight the reason of failure for implementation of environmental laws and initiatives in India. Elucidate.
11. Briefly discuss Normalized Difference Vegetation Index. Bring out the parameters for the index and discuss the significance of NDV Index.
12. The Expert Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Anoop Satpathy, has submitted its report on **Fixation of the National Minimum Wage. "The free market should determine minimum wages, not the government"**. Write your answer with substantive arguments either in favour or against the above statement.
13. Bring out the salient features of National Rural Economic Transformation Project. How will it help women in rural households shift to a new generation of economic? Discuss.
14. **Entrepreneurs are often referred to as the "Agents of Change" are committed to** formulating innovative solutions for the most pressing problems in the world. Enumerate the initiatives taken by Indian govt to support start-ups in the micro-economics of India.
15. The Union Government in the interim budget 2019 unveiled its vision for 2030, listing 10 dimensions to create a new India. Enumerate the important 10 dimension briefly discussing each.

P.T Oriented Questions

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Hand-in-Hand' military drills is between <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) India and China (b) India and U.S (c) India and Russia (d) China and Pakistan 2. "World Development Report" is published by <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) IMF (b) WEF (c) UNDP (d) World Bank | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Consider the following statements about Kyoto Protocol and choose the correct one/s <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is an international treaty under UNFCCC and gives binding targets to all member countries 2. It is based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities 3. India recently ratified the second commitment period of Kyoto Protocol |
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Code

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| <p>(a) 1 and 2
(b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3
(d) All the above</p> <p>4. Consider the following statements about Osiris-Rex mission and choose the correct one/s</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is a joint mission of NASA and ESA 2. It will explore asteroids in Kuiper belt <p>Code
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None of above</p> <p>5. Consider the following statements about GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) and choose the correct one/s</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 39th session of the GCC summit was held in UAE 2. It is the second biggest inter-government body after UN <p>Code
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None of above</p> <p>6. Consider the following statements about GOBAR-DHAN Scheme and choose the correct one/s</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is a scheme of MoEFCC 2. It aims to change solid waste in farms to biogas and bio-CNG <p>Code
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None of above</p> <p>7. Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary is located in</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Uttarakhand (b) Madhya Pradesh (c) UP (d) Jharkhand <p>8. Consider the following statements about Agni-5 missiles and choose the correct one/s</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is the only intercontinental nuclear capable ballistic missile of India 2. It is a surface-surface missile with "fire and forget system" <p>Code</p> | <p>(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None of above</p> <p>9. Sarkaria Commission was constituted for</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Emergency provisions (b) Fundamental Duties (c) Centre-State Relation (d) Parliamentary Privileges <p>10. Florianopolis Declaration is related to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Snow leopard (b) Whales (c) Olive ridley turtles (d) Marine ecosystem <p>11. A decrease in tax to GDP ratio of a country indicates which of the following? CSE 2015</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slowing economic growth rate 2. less equitable distribution of national income <p>Code
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) neither 1 nor 2</p> <p>12. In the South Atlantic and South-Eastern Pacific regions in tropical latitudes, cyclone does not originate. What is the reason? CSE 2015</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Sea surface temperatures are low (b) Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone seldom occurs (c) Coriolis force is too weak (d) Absence of land in those regions <p>13. In the 'Index of Eight Core Industries', which one of the following is given the highest weight? CSE 2015</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Coal production (b) Electricity generation (c) Fertilizer production (d) Steel production <p>14. With reference to Rowlatt Satyagraha, which of the following statements is/are correct? CSE 2015</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Rowlatt Act was based on the recommendations of the 'Sedition Committee'. 2. In Rowlatt Satyagraha, Gandhiji tried to utilize the Home Rule League. 3. Demonstrations against the arrival of Simon Commission |
|--|---|

- coincided with Rowlatt Satyagraha.
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- (a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3
15. The Government of India Act of 1919 clearly defined. CSE 2015
(a) The separation of power between the judiciary and the legislature
(b) The jurisdiction of the central and provincial governments
(c) The powers of the Secretary of State for India and Viceroy
(d) None of the above
16. Consider the following about New Agenda Coalition and choose the correct one/s
1. It is a group of middle income countries supporting UNSC reforms
2. India is member of this group
Code
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None of above
17. Consider the following about Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA) and choose the correct one/s
1. It has been jointly set up by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and the MoEFCC
2. It promote and rate green buildings in India
Code
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None of above
18. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/s
1. Angel Tax is a 30% tax that is levied on the funding received by startups from an external investor
2. It was introduced by government to fight money laundering
Code
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None of above
19. Consider the following statements about Panda bonds and choose the correct one/s
1. It was launched to raise foreign exchange by Pakistan
2. It is a dollar dominated bond to be sold in China
Code
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None of above
20. The *70 point Performance Grading Index (PGI)* to assess
(a) MSME performance
(b) Education system
(c) Industries for GHG emission
(d) Ports
21. Which of the following countries border Red Sea
1. Saudi Arabia
2. Yemen.
3. Ethiopia
4. Sudan
Code
(a) 1 and 3
(b) 1, 2 and 3
(c) 1, 2 and 4
(d) All the above
22. Consider the following statements about Marshall Island and choose the correct one/s
1. It is an island country located in Atlantic Ocean
2. It is part of the larger island group of Micronesia
3. It is the first country to launch its own crypto-currency
Code
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) 2 and 3
23. The web portal psbloansin59minutes.com is for
(a) MSME sector
(b) Agricultural sector
(c) Entrepreneurs
(d) Exports
24. Consider the following statements about HySIS and choose the correct one/s
1. HySIS is an earth observation satellite developed by NASA

2. It study the earth's surface in visible, near infrared and shortwave infrared regions of the electromagnetic spectrum
Code
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None of above
25. Consider the following statements about Saubhagya scheme and choose the correct one/s
1. It aims to provide access to electricity to all the households in the country
2. It will provide free electricity connections to below poverty line (BPL) households identified by SECC 2011
Code
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None of above
26. Which of the following provisions of constitution related to concept of secularism
1. Article 16
2. Article 44
3. Preamble
4. Article 325
Code
(a) 1, 2 and 3
(b) 1, 2 and 4
(c) 1, 3 and 4
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
27. What are Giffen Goods?
(a) Goods that are not affected by price change
(b) Goods that is in greater demand as its price increases
(c) Goods that are for super rich
(d) Goods that are inferior and demanded by poor only
28. Consider the following statements about August offer and choose the correct one/s
1. It was made in order to secure the cooperation of the Indians in 1st world war
2. It provided for Dominion status as the objective for India
3. The Congress rejected the August Offer
Code
(a) 1 and 2
(b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3
(d) All the above
29. 3rd Buddhist Council was held at
(a) Rajgriha
(b) Patliputra
(c) Kashmir
(d) Burma
30. Operation Greens is for
(a) GHG emission
(b) Bio fuels
(c) Agriculture
(d) Residential building