CURRENT CONNECT
JANUARY- 19

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 3rd Floor, 5th 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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S.N.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
GS-I	Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.	Indian history significant events, personalities, issues and the Freedom Struggle	Post independence issues, National boundary and disputes	Indian society features, 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 e-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, PQI and other import ant aspects of S&T	Environment and disaster-government initiative, various judgment, pollution, degradation and conservation efforts	International agreements and works of various international bodies, awards, effort by individuals and misc.	Challenges to internal security, Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate. Cyber security; money laundering and its prevention.
GS-IV	Ethical issues related to family society, education. Corruption etc.	Ethics in public and private administration	Issues	Related laws and rules	Governance/e-Governance	Ethics in international issues	Personalities and their teachings	Other import ant topics			
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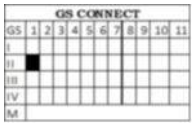
Space Activities Bill, 2017



In News

The Government has invited suggestions from the public or stakeholders regarding the draft Space Activities Bill, 2017. The objective of the Space Bill is to facilitate the overall growth of the space activities in India with higher order of participation of public/ non-governmental/ private sector stakeholders.

About

Pursuance of Space activities were focused on **three major areas** namely – **i)** Space Infrastructure which includes realization of spacecraft for various applications and associated ground infrastructure**, ii)** Space Transportation systems, which include through realization of various types / class of launch vehicles and associated ground infrastructure including launch facilities, and **iii)** Space applications for various national requirements through establishment of necessary ground infrastructure and coordination mechanisms.

Salient features

1. The provisions of this Act shall apply to every citizen of India and to all sectors engaged in any space activity in India or outside India.
2. The Bill encourages the **participation of non-governmental/private sector agencies** in space activities in India under the guidance and authorisation of the government through the Department of Space.
3. A **non-transferable licence** shall be provided by the Central Government to any person carrying out commercial space activity
4. The Central Government will formulate the **appropriate mechanism for licencing, eligibility criteria, and fees for licence.**
5. The government will maintain a register of all space objects (any object launched or intended to be launched around the earth) and develop more space activity plans for the country
6. It will provide professional and technical support for commercial space activity and regulate the procedures for conduct and operation of space activity
7. It will ensure safety requirements and supervise the conduct of every space activity of India and investigate any incident or accident in connection with the operation of a space activity.
8. It will share details about the pricing of products created by space activity and technology with any person or any agency in a prescribed manner.
9. If any person undertakes any commercial space activity without authorisation they shall be punished with imprisonment up to 3 years or fined more than ₹1 crore or both.

"Space activity" means the launch of any space object, use of space object, operation, guidance and entry of space object into and from outer space and all functions for performing the said activities including the procurement of the objects for the said purposes.

National Museum of Indian Cinema

The National Museum of India Cinema (NMIC) was recently opened at the Gulshan Mahan by Prime Minister.It serves as a 'ready-reckoner' of Indian cinema history, showcasing technological aspects of production and screening of films as well as the social aspects during the past 100 years of its existence.

PEPPER IT WITH

ISRO, Kuiper belt, Samwad with Student, Young Scientist Programme

International Treaties

1. UN Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS)
2. UN Treaties on Outer Space activities

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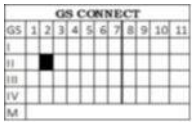
Need for Space Act in India:

- Over a period, with the logical evolution of space activities in India from conceptual, experimental, operational, commercial and further expansion phases, the demands for space systems, applications andservices for national needs and beyond have been rapidly growing. This scenario also encourages the participation of Indian industry and service providers at much higher levels in all round space activities under the technical guidance and authorization of the Government through Department of Space.
- Further, a few start-up companies too in India are showing interest in engaging in space systems activities. Commercial opportunities in space activities and services, nationally and internationally demand higher order of participations by private sector agencies. This situation demands for a necssary legal environment for orderly performance and growth of space sector. Constitution of India too provides for implementation of international treaty obligations, vide Articles 51 and 253.
- Thus there is a need for national space legislation for supporting the overall growth of the space activities in India. This would encourage enhanced participation of non-governmental/private sector agencies in space activities in India, in compliance with international treaty obligations, which is becoming very relevant today.

NALSA

In News



President Ram Nath Kovind has nominated Justice AK Sikri as Executive Chairman of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).

About NALSA

- The NALSA has been constituted under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to provide free Legal Services to the weaker sections of the society**. The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief and the senior most Hon'ble Judge, Supreme Court of India is the Executive Chairman of the Authority.
- In every State, State Legal Services Authority has been constituted **to give effect to the policies and directions of the NALSA** and to give free legal services to the people and conduct Lok Adalats in the State. The State Legal Services Authority is headed by Hon'ble the Chief Justice of the respective High Court who is the Patron-in-Chief of the State Legal Services Authority.
- In every District, District Legal Services Authority has been constituted to implement Legal Services Programmes in the District. The District Legal Services Authority is situated in the District Courts Complex in every District and chaired by the District Judge of the respective district.

PEPPER IT WITH
NALSA compensation scheme, Nirbhaya Fund,

Functions

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

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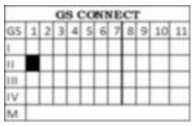
The Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018

In News



The Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 was introduced by the Ministry of Law and Justice, and Electronics and Information Technology in Lok Sabha recently. The Bill amends the **Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016, the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.** The Aadhaar Act provides targeted delivery of subsidies and benefits to individuals residing in India by assigning them unique identity numbers, called Aadhaar numbers.

Salient Features

1. **Offline verification:** Under the Aadhaar Act, an individual's identity may be verified by Aadhaar 'authentication'. Authentication involves submitting the Aadhaar number, and their biometric and demographic information to the Central Identities Data Repository for verification. The Bill additionally allows 'offline verification' of an individual's identity, without authentication, through modes specified by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) by regulations.

   During **offline verification**, the agency must (i) obtain the consent of the individual, (ii) inform them of alternatives to sharing information, and (iii) not collect, use or store Aadhaar number or biometric information.

2. **Voluntary use of Aadhaar to verify identity:** *The Act previouslyprovides for the use of Aadhaar number as proof of identity of a person, subject to authentication.* The Bill replaces this provision to state that an individual may voluntarily use his Aadhaar number to establish his identity, by authentication or offline verification. The Bill states that authentication of an individual's identity via Aadhaar, for the provision of any service, may be made mandatory only by a law of Parliament.
3. **Virtual ID**: The Bill changes definition of 'aadhaar number' to include 'virtual ID', in addition to the 12 digit number. The Virtual ID enables one to authenticate identity without providing aadhaar number.
4. **Entities using Aadhaar:** *Under the Actpreviously, usage of Aadhaar number for establishing the identity of an individual, by the State or a body corporate under any law, is permitted.* The Bill removes this provision. An entity may be allowed to perform authentication through Aadhaar, if the UIDAI is satisfied that it is (i) compliant with certain standards of privacy and security, or (ii) permitted by law, or (iii) seeking authentication for a purpose specified by the central government in the interest of the State.
5. **Disclosure of information in certain cases:** *Under the Act previously, restrictions on security and confidentiality of Aadhaar related information do not apply in case the disclosure is pursuant to an order of a District Court (or above).* The Bill amends this to allow such disclosure only for orders by High Courts (or above).

   Further, under the Act, an officer not below the rank of a Joint Secretary may issue directions for disclosing information in the interest of national security. The Bill amends this to allow such disclosure on directions of officers not below the rank of a Secretary.
6. **UIDAI Fund:** *Under the Actpreviously, all fees and revenue collected by the UIDAI shall be credited to the Consolidated Fund of India.* The Bill removes this provision, and creates the Unique Identification Authority of India Fund. All fees, grants and charges received by the UIDAI shall be credited to this fund. The fund shall be used for expenses of the UIDAI, including salaries and allowances of its employees.
7. **No denial of services due to authentication failure:** The Bill clarifies that failure in authentication of Aadhaar number due to old-age, sickness, or technical reasons should not result in denial of any service, benefit or subsidy. It states that alternate means to verify identity should be used in such cases.

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8. **Complaints:** Under the Act, courts can take cognizance of an offence only if the UIDAI registers a complaint. The Bill amends this to allow the individual to register complaints in certain cases, including impersonation or disclosure of their identity.
9. The Bill defines the Aadhaar ecosystem to include **enrolling agencies, requesting agencies, and offline verification-seeking entities**. It allows the UIDAI to issue directions to them if necessary for the discharge of its functions under the Act.
10. **Penalties:** Under the Bill, the UIDAI may initiate a complaint against an entity in the Aadhaar ecosystem for failure.**Adjudicating Officers appointed by the UIDAI** shall decide such matters, and may impose penalties up to one crore rupees on such entities. **The Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal** shall be the appellate authority against decisions of the Adjudicating Officer.
11. **Bank accounts and Aadhaar:** The Bill proposes amendment to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act to permit voluntary use of Aadhaar for identity verification by banks before opening bank accounts. As in the case of mobile connections, Aadhaar is specified as one of the means of identity verification, and there is no compulsion to use it. The PMLA(Maintenance of Records)(Second Amendment) Rules brought by the Government in 2017 mandating the linking of bank accounts with Aadhaar was also struck down by the SC.

PEPPER IT WITH
Data Protection Bill, Justice B.N. SrikrishnaCommittee, Assam Accord, NRC

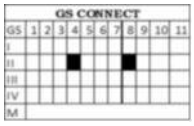
12. **Use of Aadhaar by telecom service providers**: The Bill proposes to amend Indian Telegraph Act 1855 to provide for voluntary use of Aadhaar number for identity verification. The telecom companies, which provide services as licensees under the Telegprah Act, are authorised to use Aadhaar number for verification of identity. Offline verification using Aadhaar is also permitted. However, the Bill does not say that Aadhaar has to be compulsorily used for verification.

Way Ahead

The Aadhaar has been acknowledged as an inclusive tool that effectively delivers social welfare programmes to the poor. However, it is also riddled with highly problematic privacy issues and other challenges. The privacy concerns and data security around the Aadhaar identity number are a high priority to address and necessitates a robust data protection regime and privacy protection legislation in India. The Aadhaar project should also have a transparent mandate and no ensure no citizen is left behind while delivering social benefits.

Assam Accord

In News



Union Home AffairsMinistry recently announced that a high-level committee will be set up for the implementation of **Clause 6 of the Assam Accord**.

Assam Accord and its Clauses

- **Clause 5:** Foreigners Issue
- **Clause 6:** Constitutional, Legislative & Administrative safeguards
- **Clause 7:** Economic Development
- **Clause 8:**Government will arrange for the issue of citizenship certificates in future
- **Clause 9:** Security of International Border
- **Clause 10:** Prevention of Encroachment of Government lands
- **Clause 11:** Restricting acquisition of immovable property by foreigners
- **Clause 12:** Registration of births and deaths
- **Clause 13:**Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) agitation called off.
- **Clause 14:** employment, ex-gratia, age relaxation

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- **Clause 15:**The Ministry of Home Affairs will be the nodal Ministry for the implementation

What is Assam Accord?

The Assam Accord (1985) was a **Memorandum of Settlement (MoS)** signed between representatives of the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Movement on 15 August 1985.

As per the Accord, those Bangladeshis who came between 1966 and 1971 will be barred from voting for ten years. The Accord also mentions that the international borders will be sealed and all persons who crossed over from Bangladesh after 1971 are to be deported.

What does Clause 6 state?

Clause 6 of the Assam Accord*"*states that appropriate constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.*"*

The Committee function:

1. The panel will even examine the effectiveness of all government actions since 1985 to implement Clause 6 of the Assam Accord.
2. The committee will hold discussions with all stakeholders and assess the required quantum of reservation of seats in the Assam Legislative Assembly and local bodies for Assamese people.
3. The committee will also assess the requirement of measures to be taken to protect Assamese and other indigenous languages of Assam, quantum of reservation in employment under the government of Assam and other measures to protect, preserve and promote cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of Assamese people.
4. The committee will also look into issues of the Bodo people, especially the measures mentioned in the Memorandum of Settlement signed between the Government of India, Assam government and the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force in 2003.
5. The committee will pave the way for the implementation of the Assam Accord in letter and spirit and will help fulfill longstanding expectations of Assamese people.
6. Suggest constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards and examine the effectiveness of actions since 1985 to implement the clause.
7. The committee will also take necessary measures related to appropriate land policy and land laws.

The **Bodo Accord** was signed in 2003 which resulted in the establishment of a Bodoland Territorial Council under the sixth schedule of the constitution of India

What is NRC?

NRC means the register containing the names of Indian citizens. NRC updation basically means the process of enlisting the names of citizens based on Electoral Rolls up to 1971 and 1951 NRC.

PEPPER IT WITH

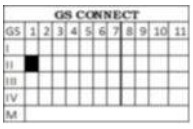
Assam's Wage Compensation Scheme, NRC for Tripura

What is NRC 1951?

National Register of Citizens, 1951 is a register prepared after the conduct of the Census of 1951, in respect of each village showing the houses or holdings in a serial order and indicating against each house or holding the number and names of persons staying therein. These registers covered each and every person enumerated during the Census of 1951 and were kept in the offices of Deputy Commissioners and Sub Divisional Officers according to instructions issued by the Government of India in 1951.

UAPA

In News



A special UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967) court in rejected the anticipatory bail application of prominent Dalit scholar and Anand Teltumde,

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an accused in a case pertaining to Elgar Parishad. The parishad had preceded the caste riots at **Bhima Koregaon** recently.

Organizations Banned Under UAPA

- Both al-Qaida in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham-Khorasan (ISIS-K), an Afghanistan-based affiliate of ISIS, have been declared unlawful by the Union home ministry as they were found to be radicalising Indian youths for 'global jihad' and encouraging terror acts on Indian interests.
- Islamic Research Foundation (IRF)
- National Liberation Front in Tripura (NLFT)
- All Tripura Tiger Forum (ATTF)
- Khalistan Liberation Force and all its manifestations.
- Currently, 39 terror outfits including ISIS, LeT, Jaish and BKI have been banned under the UAPA.

UAPA

- UAPA is India's foremost anti-terrorism legislation, which has been amended twice- in 2008 and
- 2012. The law has become increasingly repressive, regressive and draconian.
- Its main objective is to make powers available for dealing with activities directed against the integrity and sovereignty of India.
- The Act makes it a crime to support any secessionist movement or to support claims by a foreign power to what India claims as its territory.

The draconian provisions of the UAPA

1. The Act introduces a vague definition of terrorism to encompass a wide range of non-violent political activity, including political protest. It empowers the government to declare an organisation as 'terrorist' and ban it. Mere membership of such a proscribed organisation itself becomes a criminal offence.
2. Additionally, it allows detention without a chargesheet for up to 180 days and police custody can be up to 30 days. It also creates a strong presumption against bail and anticipatory bail is out of the question. It creates a presumption of guilt for terrorism offences merely based on the evidence allegedly seized.
3. In addition, the Act authorises the creation of special courts, with wide discretion to hold in-camera proceedings (closed-door hearings) and use secret witnesses but contains no sunset clause and provisions for mandatory periodic review.

About NIA

1. The NIA aims to set the standards of excellence in counter terrorism and other national security related investigations at the national level by developing into a highly trained, partnership oriented workforce. NIA aims at creating deterrence for existing and potential terrorist groups/individuals. It aims to develop as a storehouse of all terrorist related information.
2. National Investigation Agency (NIA) is a central agency established by the Indian Government to combat terror in India. At present NIA is functioning as the **Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency** in India.

Special NIA Courts:

- Various Special Courts have been established under Section 11 and 22 of the NIA Act 2008 for trail of the cases registered at various police stations of National Investigation Agency.
- The Central Government has the power to constitute one or more Special NIA courts in an area. As of now, there are 38 Special NIA Courts.

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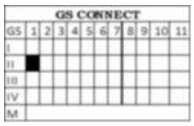
Functioning of NIA:

1. To check various aspects of terrorist financing, a Terror Funding and Fake Currency Cell (TFFC) has been created under NIA.
2. The Cell maintains data base of terror financing and cases of Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN).
3. It also conducts part investigation in terror financing aspects of Naxalite groups operating in various parts of India, the TFFC Cell has conducted a number of verifications of bank accounts suspected to be linked with Naxalite groups.

The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2018

In News



The center has approved The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2018 to be introduced in the Parliamentso as to modify the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) of Arunachal Pradesh.

The following changes will be made in list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh:

1. Deletion of 'Abor', as it is the same as 'Adi'.
2. Replace Tai Khamti' instead of 'Khampti'.
3. Inclusion of 'Mishmi-Kaman' (Miju Mishmi), Idu (Mishmi) and Taraon (Digaru Mishmi).
4. Inclusion of Monpa, Memba, Sartang,Sajolong (Miji) in lieu of 'Momba'.
5. Inclusion of 'Nocte', "Tangsa', Tutsa', 'Wancho' in lieu of 'Any Naga Tribes' in list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.

HunarHaats are organised by Ministry of Minority Affairs under USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme.

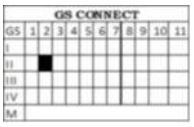
The **USTTAD** scheme aims at preserving & promoting the rich heritage of the traditional arts & crafts of the Minority communities. This is one of the flagshipprogrammes of the Ministry.

Significance

The rationale for the proposed amendments are removal of duplication and replace Khampti – as there is no tribe called 'Khampti'. After the Bill becomes an Act, member of the communities newly listed in the revised list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh will also be able to derive benefits meant for STs under the existing schemes of the Government. In addition to above, they will also be entitled to benefits of reservation in services and admission to educational institutions as per Government policy.

Withdrawal and Suspension of Members

In News



Speaker has suspended 45 Lok Sabha members belonging to the TDP and the AIADMK after they created ruckus in the House and continuously disrupted proceedings for days.

Withdrawal and Suspension of Members in Lok Sabha

Rule 373Withdrawal of member

The Speaker, if is of the opinion that the conduct of any member is grossly disorderly, may direct such member to withdraw immediately from the House, and any member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall remain absent during the remainder of the day's sitting.

Rule 374Suspension of Members

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(1) The Speaker, may, if deems it necessary, name a member who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the House by persistently and willfully obstructing the business.

(2) If a member is so named by the Speaker, the Speaker shall, on a motion being made forthwith put the question that the member (naming such member) be suspended from the service of the House for a period not exceeding the remainder of the session.

(3) A member suspended under this rule shall forthwith withdraw from the precincts of the House.

Rule 374A. Automatic Suspension of a Member

(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in rules 373 and 374, in the event of grave disorder occasioned by a member coming into the well of the House or abusing the Rules of the House persistently and wilfully obstructing its business by shouting slogans or otherwise, such member shall, on being named by the Speaker, stand automatically suspended from the service of the House for five consecutive sittings or the remainder of the session, whichever is less.

(2) On the Speaker announcing the suspension under this rule, the member shall forthwith withdraw from the precincts of the House.

A Parliamentary Standing Committee (PSC) has recommended that the Centre accord **statutory status** to the Staff Selection Commission (SSC), one of the largest recruitment agencies in the country.

Withdrawal and Suspension of Members in Rajya Sabha

Rule 255. Withdrawal of member

The Chairman may direct any member whose conduct is in his opinion grossly disorderly to withdraw immediately from the Council and any member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall absent himself during the remainder of the day's meeting.

256. Suspension of member

(1) The Chairman may, if he deems it necessary, name a member who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the Council by persistently and willfully obstructing the business.

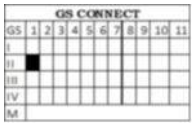
(2) If a member is so named by the Chairman he shall forthwith put the question on a motion being made, no amendment, adjournment or debate being allowed, that the member (naming him) be suspended from the service of the Council for a period not exceeding the remainder of the Session.

PEPPER IT WITH
Joint Parliamentary Committee, Ethic Committee, Whip

(3) A member suspended under this rule shall forthwith quit the precincts of the Council.

The New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Bill, 2018

In News



The New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Bill, 2018 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of State for Law and Justice to establish an autonomous and independent institution for better management of arbitration in India.

Key features of the Bill include:

1. **New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC):** The Bill seeks to provide for the establishment of the NDIAC to conduct arbitration, mediation, and conciliation proceedings. The Bill declares the NDIAC as an institution of national importance.
2. **International Centre for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ICADR):** The ICADR is a registered society to promote the resolution of disputes through alternative dispute resolution methods (such as arbitration and mediation). The Bill seeks to transfer the

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existing ICADR to the central government. Upon notification by the central government, all the rights, title, and interest in the ICADR will be transferred to the NDIAC.

3. **Composition:** Under the Bill, the NDIAC will consist of **seven members** including: **(i)** a Chairperson who may be a Judge of the Supreme Court or a High Court, or an eminent person with special knowledge and experience in the conduct or administration of arbitration; **(ii)** two eminent persons having substantial knowledge and experience in institutional arbitration; **(iii)** three ex-officio members, including a nominee from the Ministry of Finance and a Chief Executive Officer (responsible for the day-to-day administration of the NDIAC); and **(iv)** a representative from a recognised body of commerce and industry, appointed as a part-time member, on a rotational basis.
4. **Term and superannuation:** The members of NDIAC will hold office for three years and will be eligible for re-appointment. The retirement age for the Chairperson is 70 years and other members is 67 years.
5. **Finance and audit**: The NDIAC will be required to maintain a fund which will be credited with grants received from the central government, fees collected for its activities, and other sources. The accounts of the NDIAC will be audited and certified by the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India.
6. **Institutional support:** The Bill specifies that the NDIAC will establish a Chamber of Arbitration which will maintain a permanent panel of arbitrators. Further, the NDIAC may also establish an Arbitration Academy for training arbitrators and conducting research in the area of alternative dispute resolution. The NDIAC may also constitute other committees to administer its functions.

Objectives and functions of the NDIAC:

The key objectives of the NDIAC include

1. promoting research, providing training and organising conferences and seminars in alternative dispute resolution matters
2. providing facilities and administrative assistance for the conduct of arbitration, mediation and conciliation proceedings
3. maintaining a panel of accredited professionals to conduct arbitration, mediation and conciliation proceedings

Key functions of the NDIAC will include:

- facilitating conduct of arbitration and conciliation in a professional, timely and cost-effective manner
- promoting studies in the field of alternative dispute resolution

Arbitration

It is a procedure in which a dispute is submitted, by agreement of the parties, to one or more arbitrators who make a binding decision on the dispute. In choosing arbitration, the parties opt for a private dispute resolution procedure instead of going to court.

Under the WIPO Arbitration Rules, the parties agree to carry out the decision of the arbitral tribunal without delay. International awards are enforced by national courts under the New York Convention, which permits them to be set aside only in very limited circumstances. More than 140 States are party to this Convention.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

The concept of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism is capable of providing a substitute to the conventional methods of resolving disputes. ADR offers to resolve all type of matters including civil, commercial, industrial and family etc., where people are not being able to start any type of negotiation and reach the settlement. Generally, ADR uses neutral third party who helps the parties to communicate, discuss the differences and resolve the dispute. It

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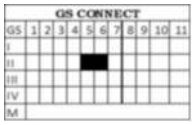
is a method which enables individuals and group to maintain co-operation, social order and provides opportunity to reduce hostility.

Various modes of Alternative Dispute Resolution

1. Arbitration
2. Mediation
3. Negotiation
4. Conciliation
5. Best Alternative to Negotiated Agreement (BATNA)
6. Most Likely Alternative to Negotiated Agreement (MLATNA)
7. Worst Alternative to Negotiated Agreement (WATNA)
8. Lok Adalat

PEPPER IT WITH
WIPO, Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2018

10% reservation for economically weak among upper caste



In News

The Union cabinet has approved 10% reservation in jobs and educational institutions for the economically backward section in the general category.

The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Fourth Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced and passed by Parliament. The Bill seeks to provide for the advancement of "economically weaker sections" of citizens.

Key Highlights

Quantum of Reservation

The recently introduced Article 16(6) of the Constitution of India as per Constitution (103rd) Amendment Act empowers government to give EWS reservation up to 10%. Based on this, the government has declared that the quantum of EWS reservation will be 10%.

Income Criteria

Persons whose family has gross annual income less than Rs. 8 lakhs will be considered for EWS quota (Family will include parents, spouse, children and siblings below the age of 18 years). Income will cover income from all sources, whether salary, profession, business, agriculture etc.

Also, persons having the following possessions will be excluded from EWS quota:

1. 5 acres of agricultural land or above.
2. Residential flat of 1000 square feet or above.
3. Residential plot of 100 square yards or above in notified municipalities.
4. Residential plot of 200 square yards or above in areas other than notified municipalities

No carrying forward of unfilled EWS posts

Where in any recruitment year any vacancy earmarked for EWS cannot be filled up due to non-availability of a suitable candidate belonging to EWS, such vacancies for that particular recruitment year shall not be carried forward to the next recruitment year as backlog.

EWS person can be adjusted in unreserved posts

A person belonging to EWS cannot be denied the right to compete for appointment against an unreserved vacancy. Persons belonging to EWS who are selected on the basis of merit and not on account of reservation are not to be counted towards the quota meant for reservation.

Periodic reports on EWS representation

The Ministries and Departments have to prepare fortnightly and annual reports on EWS representation.

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Exempted posts

Posts classified as "Scientific and Technical" are exempt from EWS quota.

What would it take for the quota to become reality?

1. It will need an amendment of Articles 15 (prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth) and 16 (equality of opportunity in matters of public employment) of the Constitution.
2. The amendment will have to be ratified in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, by at least two thirds of members present and voting, and by the legislatures of not less than half the states.
3. The legislation will be known as ***the Constitution (103 Amendment) Act, 2019*** and it shall come into force on such date as the Centre notifies.

Constitutionality and Rationality

- **Article 15** of the Constitution prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of race, religion, caste, sex, or place of birth. However, the government may make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes, or for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. **The Bill seeks to amend Article 15** to additionally permit the government to provide for the advancement of "economically weaker sections". Further, up to 10% of seats may be reserved for such sections for admission in educational institutions. Such reservation will not apply to minority educational institutions.

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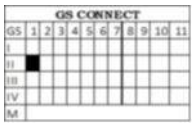
Indira Sawhney case

- **Article 16** of the Constitution prohibits discrimination in employment in any government office. However, the government can allow reservation for any "backward class of citizens", if they are not adequately represented in the services under the state. The Bill seeks to amend Article 16 to permit the government to reserve up to 10% of all posts for the "economically weaker sections" of citizens.
- The directive principles of State policy contained in **article 46** of the Constitution enjoins that the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- Vide the Constitution (**Ninety-third Amendment**) Act, 2005, clause (5) was inserted **in article 15** of the Constitution which enables the State to make special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens, or for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes, in relation to their admission in higher educational institutions. Similarly, **clause (4) of article 16** of the Constitution enables the State to make special provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.

The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018

Key Highlights



1. It seeks to amend five Acts: (i) the Divorce Act, 1869, (ii) the Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1939, (iii) the Special Marriage Act, 1954, (iv) the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, and (v) the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956.
2. The Amendment Bill proposes to amend the provisions in these Acts which prescribe leprosy as a ground for divorce or separation from the spouse. The Bill seeks to remove this as a ground for divorce or separation.
3. The Bill also acknowledges the judgment rendered by the Supreme Court in September last year, issuing a slew of directions for treatment and rehabilitation of those affected by

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leprosy, while also ensuring that the discrimination against them and their family members is eliminated.

4. Having regard to the recommendations of the National Human Rights Commission, the observations of the Committee on Petitions of the Rajya Sabha, recommendations of the Law Commission and the observations made by the Supreme Court, the Government has decided to omit such discriminatory provisions from the Personal Laws
5. The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill acknowledges the medical advances made in the field, thereby making leprosy curable. Calling for elimination of discrimination against leprosy patients in various statutes in view of such advancements.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted a Resolution in 2010 on the **'Elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members'**. India has signed and ratified the said Resolution.

Supreme Court Directions:

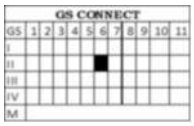
- The SC has, inter alia, directed the Union Government as well as the State Governments to take necessary steps for rehabilitation and integration of the leprosy affected persons into the mainstream.
- The Supreme Court has asked to undertake a campaign to spread awareness about the curability of leprosy so that those suffering from it are not discriminated.
- It advocated for repealing archaic provisions from 119 statutes that stigmatise leprosy patients.
- SC directed that no government hospital shall decline treatment to leprosy patients. People suffering from leprosy also have the right to live with human dignity.

Government Initiatives

1. National Leprosy Eradication Programme
2. Leprosy Case Detection Campaign
3. National Health Mission

Committee on Section 126 of RPA

In News



The Election Commission (EC) has set up a **14-member committee** to suggest changes to Section 126 of the Representation of the People (RP) Act, which prohibits poll campaign in the last 48 hours leading to voting, in the wake of media expansion.

Objective

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SVEEP, Voter Awareness Forums

Apart from suggesting modifications to the election law, the committee, constituted through an order, will also study the impact of new media and social media during the "silence period" and its implication in view of Section 126 and suggest changes to the model code of conduct (MCC) accordingly.

Composition

Apart from nine officers of the EC, the panel will have one nominated member each from the I&B Ministry, Law Ministry, IT Ministry, National Broadcasters Association and Press Council of India.

The Committee constituted under the chairmanship of Sr. Deputy Election Commissioner Sh. Umesh Sinha.

The Committee had the following scope of work:

1. Study and examine the present provisions of the Section 126 and other related Sections of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and identify difficulties/critical gaps to regulate the violation of the said provisions of the act, particularly during the prohibitory period of

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48 hours before the completion of the poll, mentioned in section 126 and suggest necessary amendment/modification.

2. Examine the type, category or growth of communication technology or media platform in the country and difficulties in regulating these media platforms during multiphase election when prohibitory period of 48 hours are in force.
3. Impact of new media platforms and social media during the prohibitory period of 48 hours before the close of poll and its implication in view of the provisions of section 126.
4. Examine the present provisions of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) related to the above issues and suggest modification in this regard.

Recommendations

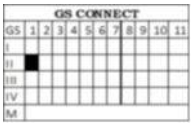
- The committee has also recommended changes in the model code of conduct to ensure that parties release their manifesto **at least 72 hours** prior to polling (or 72 hours prior to polling for first phase in a multi-phase election).
- The committee recommended that Internet service providers and social media companies should take down content **violating the 48-hour ban** on campaigning prior to polling, instantly and **latest within 3 hours of EC** issuing such a direction.
- The committee suggested **amending Section 126 (1) of RPA** to impose the "campaign silence period" on print, electronic media and intermediaries. The **definition of intermediaries**, as per **Section 2(w)** of the **Information Technology Act**, includes telecom service providers, internet service providers, web-hosting service providers, search engines, etc.
- The committee suggested that **intermediaries** should report to the Commission on measures taken to prevent abuse of their platforms, including generating publicly-available action taken reports. All political advertisements may be clearly labelled as such and be pre-approved by a EC-appointed content monitoring committee.
- The committee recommended that intermediaries would also **need to maintain a repository of political advertisements** with information on their sponsors, expenditure and targeted reach.
- The committee has suggested that **Star campaigners** should desist from addressing press conferences or giving interviews on election matters during silence period. Also, in a multi-phased election, there should be no direct or indirect reference seeking support for parties/candidates in constituencies observing silence period.

What is election silence/ campaign silence period?

The day of reflection or the election silence is a ban on political campaigning prior to an election, to give voters a peaceful condition to consider and make a final decision on their vote. During this period, which usually begins just before the voting day and ends after polling ends, no active campaigning by the candidates or political parties is allowed, and television or any digital media cannot carry any election matter.

Right to Disconnect Bill 2018

In News



The Right to Disconnect Bill 2018 was introduced recently to seek to establish an Employees' Welfare Authority "as a Private member Bill.

What is Right to Disconnect?

It confers right to every employee to disconnect from work-related telephone calls and emails beyond work hours and on holidays and right to refuse to answer calls and emails outside work hours and for all matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

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Key Highlights

1. Section 7 of this Bill states: Every employee shall have the right to disconnect out of work hours. In case an employee refuses to reply any call during out-of-work hours, such employee shall not be subject to any disciplinary action by the employer."
2. The Bill seeks to recognise right to disconnect as a way to reduce stress and ease tension between an employee's personal and professional life.
3. It proposes constitution of Employees' Welfare Committees at every company to assist the employees in such negotiations. Provisions to ensure that these negotiations are held frequently at regular intervals, to keep in line with dynamic business demands are to be incorporated.
4. The Authority proposed is expected to consist of Minister of State, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology as its Chairperson ex-officio and the Minister of State, Ministry of Communication and Ministry of Labour and Employment as the Vice-Chairmen ex-officio.
5. The Bill also seeks to impose sanctions at the rate of one per cent of its total employees' remuneration, on entities (companies or societies) for any non-compliance with the provisions of the Bill. It further provides for counselling services to increase awareness among employees and citizens, on reasonable use of digital and communication tools, for professional and personal use.
6. It will apply to companies with more than 10 employees who will have to set up an Employee Welfare Committee to ensure compliance.

PEPPER IT WITH
info-obesity, 'Size India' project, SFIO

Concerns

- According to a study, the constant monitoring of work related messages and e-mails, may over tax employees' brains leading to a condition **called 'info-obesity'**. The condition is characterized by stress, burnouts and sleeplessness.
  A 2016 study found that always being on call is linked with decreased calmness, moodand energy levels. "Non-work hours, during which employees are expected to respond to work issues, constrain employee behavior and cannot be considered leisure time," said the authors of the study that was published in journal Work and Stress.
- Another study by researchers from Northern Illinois University showed that workers who answered work-related emails after 9pm had worse quality of sleep.
- The service sector has to often deal with unreasonable work hours, working overtime without extra compensation, or carrying their work home.

Global Scenario

1. France was the trend-setter when it comes to these policies — employees have had the right to disconnect since 2017 in companies with more than 50 employees. The country's minister of labour said the aim was to re-build the boundary between professional and personal life.
2. In Spain, regardless of the number of employees, all companies must create right to disconnect policies. New York is also mulling over such a bill.
3. These out-of-work correspondences don't just apply to the workday, but also to holidays. German car and truck maker Daimler made the bold step of introducing software that automatically deletes any emails you get while on vacation, back in 2014.

Way Ahead

The need is to respect the personal space of the employees by recognizing their right to disconnect and not respond to their employer's calls, e-mails etc., during out-ofwork hours. The need is also to recognize the rights of the employees, it also takes into consideration the competitive needs of the companies and their diverse work cultures. Flexibility in the right to disconnect rules and leaves it to the individual companies to negotiate terms of service with their employees is need of the hour.

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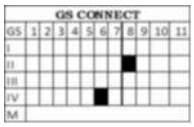
Chakma and Hajong Crisis

In News



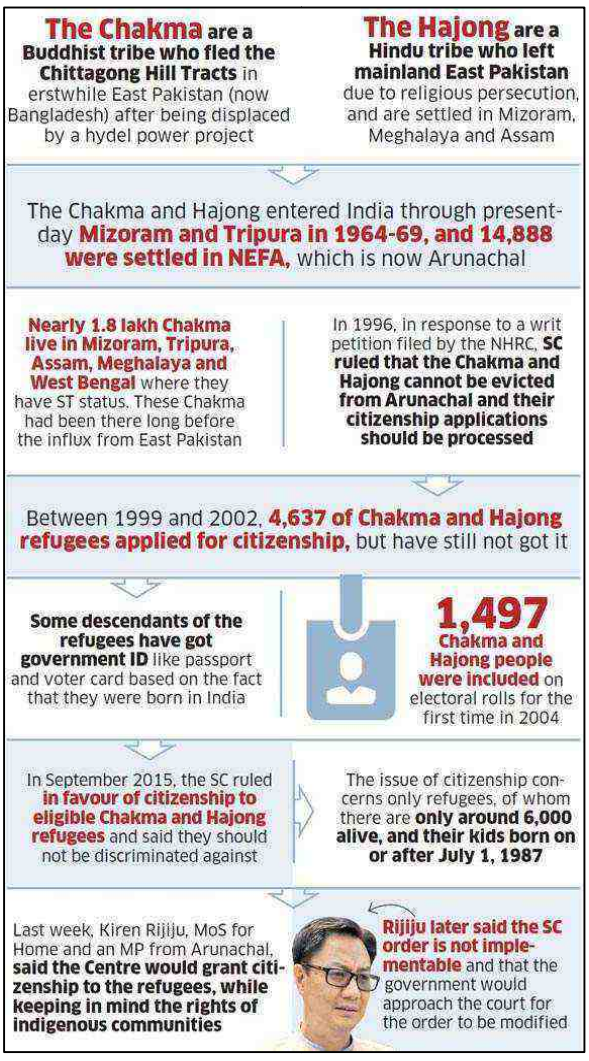
Mizoram fears Buddhist Chakmas from Bangladesh may take advantage of the Act. Meghalaya and Nagaland are apprehensive of migrants of Bengali stock.

Issue

- All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) strongly opposed the **'limited citizenship'** granted to the Chakma-Hajong refugees. AAPSU sought the removal of the Chakma and Hajong from Arunachal and the movement led to an end to the perks they enjoyed like government jobs and rations. They worry that refuges integration poses a demographic challenge to state composed of several small tribe which would have negative impact on the indigenous people's rights.
- The **Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2018**seeks to grant citizenship to six minority communities — **Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians** — without valid documents from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan after six years of stay in India. **Locals are concerned as this bill seeks to grant citizenship to Chakma and Hajong refugees.**
- Manipur wants the Inner-line Permit System to stop outsiders like Chakma and Hajongsetc from entering the state.

Background

1. Chakmas and Hajongs were originally residents of Chittagong Hill Tracts in the erstwhile East Pakistan.
2. The Chakmas, who are Buddhists, and Hajongs, who are Hindus, also allegedly faced religious persecution and entered India through the then Lushai Hills district of Assam (now Mizoram).
3. The Centre moved the majority of them to the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), which is now Arunachal Pradesh.
4. The number of these refugees has increased from about 5,000 in 1964-69 to 100,000. At present, they do not possess citizenship and land rights but are provided basic amenities by the state government.
5. Their numbers have gone up from about 5,000 in 1964-69 to one lakh. At present, they don't have citizenship and land rights but are provided basic amenities by the state government.



Nagaland has the constitutional provision to reject the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2018.

1. **Article 371(A):** Not withstanding anything in this constitution:-
   (a) No Act of parliament in respect of:-
   (i) Religious or social practices of the Nagas.
   (ii) Naga customary law and procedure.
   (iii) Administration of civil and criminal Justice involving decision according to Naga customary law.

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(iv) Ownership and transfer of land and its resources shall apply to the state of Nagaland unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution decides.

The parliament of India passed the **(Thirteen Amendment) Act, 1962**, and inserted Article 371 (A) on the eve of the creation of the new state of Nagaland.

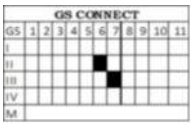
2. Nagaland is also protected by the **Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873**, whereby an Inner Line Permit is issued to outsiders for safeguarding the citizenship, rights and privileges of the Nagas.

Chin Refugee Crisis

- Chins, who are mostly Christians, have been fleeing their homeland Myanmar following the attempt by the majority community in Myanmar to make Buddhism the state religion, reportedly leading to their persecution on religious grounds.
- The Delhi-based Chin Human Rights Organisation (CHRO) counts 20,000 living in Indian soil, of whom 4,500 are settled in the capital.
- Since India is not a signatory to the **1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol,** the **UNHCR cards** issued to Chin refugees don't automatically allow them the right to stay in India or have any legal validity to be able to open bank accounts or seek admission in educational institutions. But they do help the refugees in applying for long-term visas.
- In Malaysia, the Chins are said to be the second largest refugee group. As per latest UNHCR statistics, out of the 157,580 refugees who registered themselves with the agency in Malaysia, 31,150 are Chin.
- Further famine in their homeland, forced the Chin community into exile. Some fled to Malaysia. Many reportedly sought to cross into the neighbouring northeastern Indian state of Mizoram; where they suffered discrimination, detentions and massive deportations detailed by Human Rights Watch.
- While the situation in Myanmar is still fluid and unstable in parts of the country, the situation in Chin State is now stable and secure from a refugee protection perspective. Based on this, UNHCR presumes the ethnic Chin refugees are safely able to avail themselves to the protection of the Myanmar government and hence are no longer in need of international protection from UNHCR

National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR)

In News



The Ministry of **Social Justice and Empowerment** has drafted **NAPDDR (2018-2023)** for addressing the problem of drug and substance abuse in the country, dumping a long-pending draft policy on the matter.

Key Highlights

1. The objective of the NAPDDR is to **create awareness and educate** people about the ill-effects of drugs abuse on the individual, family, workplace and the society at large in order to integrate them back into the society.
2. The aims ofNAPDDR to employ a **multi-pronged strategy** — involving education, de-addiction and rehabilitation of affected individuals and their families — to address the issue.
3. The plan focuses on preventive education, awareness generation, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent people, besides training and capacity-building of service providers through collaborative **efforts of the Centre, state and NGOs**.
4. Under the national action plan several measures, including coordination with implementing agencies for **controlling sale of sedatives, painkillers and muscle relaxant drugs, and checking online sale of drugs** by stringent monitoring by cyber cell.

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5. It includes holding awareness generation programmes**at schools, colleges, universities, workplaces** and for police functionaries, paramilitary forces, law enforcement agencies, judicial officers and Bar council, among others.
6. Under it plans are also afoot for **awareness generation through social, print, digital and online media**, **andengagement of celebrities**, besides strengthening the national toll-free helpline for drug prevention.
7. Under it, increasing **community participation and public cooperation** in the reduction of demand by involving Panchayati Raj institutions, Urban Local Bodies, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan and other local groups like MahilaMandals, self-help groups etc.
8. The ministry, in collaboration with the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (**NDDTC**) under the AIIMS, is also conducting a national survey on the extent and pattern of substance abuse.
9. **A steering committee** would be constituted under the chairmanship of the secretary, Social Justice Ministry, and with representatives from the Ministries of Health, Human Resource Development, Women and Child Development, Home Affairs, Skill development and Entrepreneurship, among others.
10. It also includes **identification of vulnerable areas based on survey**, skill development, vocational training and livelihood support of ex-drug addicts through National Backward Classes Finance and other Development Corporations and continuous research on drug use pattern.

India is vulnerable to narcotic drug trafficking as it is located between two largest Opium producing regions of the world i.e. Golden Crescent in the west and Golden Triangle in the east.

PEPPER IT WITH

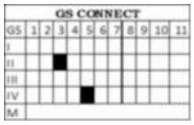
NCORD, Seizure Information Management System, National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse, National Drug Abuse Survey

Controlling the drug menace in India

1. Need for the study
2. Control through legislation
3. Control through Administration
4. Plugging porous borders
5. Strategies and policies
6. Institution level control
7. Comparative Analysis with the other countries
8. Ratifying and following various International Conventions

Central Information Commissioner Appointment

In News



RTI activists have termed the appointment of former Law Secretary Suresh Chandra as a CIC an "arbitrary process", as he had not applied for the position.

Issue

1. According to documents released by the Department of Personnel and Training, Chandra's name was not on the list of 280 applicants to the post. However, he was among the 14 names that were short-listed.
2. In an affidavit filed in Supreme Court, the DoPT had said that the search committee would shortlist candidates "out of the applications received."
3. Shortlisting has been done outside the list of applicants, in violation of procedure laid out by the department in their own affidavit to the Supreme Court.

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4. However, the department defends its move by saying that **the search committee is not restricted to applicants, but to deserving candidates** and this is including "arbitrary process" diluting transparency at every stage, and public scrutiny under RTI.

Central Information Commission

- Under the provision of Section-12 of RTI Act 2005 the Central Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, constitute a body to be known as the Central Information Commission.
- The Central Information Commission shall consist of the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and such number of CIC not exceeding 10 as may be deemed necessary.

Eligibility criteria for appointment of CIC/IC

1. **Section 12(3) of the RTI Act 2005:** The CIC and Information Commissioners (IC) shall be appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of:-
   - The Prime Minister, who shall be the Chairperson of the committee;
   - The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha ; and
   - A Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister.
2. **Section 12(5) of the RTI Act 2005** provides that the CIC and IC shall be persons of eminence in public life with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass media or administration and governance.
3. **Section 12(6) of the RTI Act 2005** provides that CIC or an IC shall not be a Member of Parliament or Member of the Legislature of any State or Union Territory as the case may be or hold any other office of profit or connected with any political party or carrying on any business or pursuing any profession.

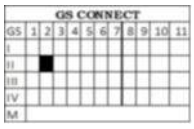
9th National Voters Day on 25th Jan

- The agenda to celebrate voters'day is to raise awareness of the importance of voting, especially among the newly eligible voters of the country.
- Voting is a basic process that helps to form a country's government. One can choose their representatives through voting.
- Voting rights enables people with the right to question the government about issues and clarifications.
- It also provides a sense of freedom to express opinion in major decision making for the benefit of the country in a democratic nation.
- The Constitution (Sixty-First Amendment) Act, 1988 had lowered the threshold voting age from 21 years to 18 years.

Tenure

The CIC shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office and shall not be eligible for reappointment.

Anti-Defection Law



In News

The Punjab Assembly has issued notice to Sukhpal Singh Khaira, Former rebel AAP leader and MLA from Bholath, for disqualification under ***the 10th Schedule of the Constitution***.

Anti-Defection Law

- The 10th Schedule to the Constitution, popularly referred to as the 'Anti-Defection Law,' was inserted by the 52nd Amendment in 1985.
- The grounds for disqualification are mentioned under Articles 102 (2) and 191 (2).

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Provision of Act

Disqualification

Members of Political Parties: A member of a House belonging to any political party becomes disqualified for being a member of the House, (a) if he voluntarily gives up his membership of such political party; or (b) if he votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party without obtaining prior permission of such party and such act has not been condoned by the party within 15 days.

PEPPER IT WITH
PIL, RTI, Plebiscite

- **Independent Members:** An independent member of a House (elected without being set up as a candidate by any political party) becomes disqualified to remain a member of the House if he joins any political party after such election.
- **Nominated Members:** A nominated member of a House becomes disqualified for being a member of the House if he joins any political party after the expiry of six months from the date on which he takes his seat in the House. This means that he may join any political party within six months of taking his seat in the House without inviting this disqualification.

Exceptions

The above disqualification on the ground of defection does not apply in the following two cases:

1. If a member goes out of his party as a result of a merger of the party with another party. A merger takes place when two-thirds of the members of the party have agreed to such merger.
2. If a member, after being elected as the presiding officer of the House, voluntarily gives up the membership of his party or rejoins it after he ceases to hold that office. This exemption has been provided in view of the dignity and impartiality of this office.

It must be noted here that the provision of the Tenth Schedule pertaining to exemption from disqualification in case of split by one-third members of legislature party has been deleted by the 91st Amendment Act of 2003. It means that the defectors have no more protection on grounds of splits.

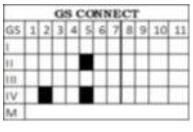
Rule-Making Power

The presiding officer of a House is empowered to make rules to give effect to the provisions of the Tenth Schedule. All such rules must be placed before the House for 30 days. The House may approve or modify or disapprove them. Further, he may direct that any wilful contravention by any member of such rules may be dealt with in the same manner as a breach of privilege of the House.

Decision of the Presiding Officer is subject to judicial review:

The law initially stated that the decision of the Presiding Officer is not subject to judicial review. This condition was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1992, thereby allowing appeals against the Presiding Officer's decision in the High Court and Supreme Court. However, it held that there may not be any judicial intervention until the Presiding Officer gives his order.

Contempt of court issued to RBI



In News

The Supreme Court has issued notice to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on two contempt petitions filed against it for non-disclosure of information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act

Issue

1. The Supreme Court has issued notice to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on a contempt petition which alleged that the central bank did not provide information sought about the

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inspection reports of some banks and on the alleged irregularities in the **case of Sahara Group** of companies **under the transparency law.**

2. The petition filed alleges violation of the Supreme Court decision by RBI's issuance of a "**Disclosure Policy**" directing its **Public Information Officers (PIOs)** to not disclose certain kinds of information. It points out that the policy bars disclosure of information relating to applications received under the RTI Act.

SC on the matter

- RBI is supposed to uphold public interest and not the interest of individual banks. RBI is clearly not in any **fiduciary relationship** with any bank. RBI has no legal duty to maximize the benefit of any public sector or private sector bank, and thus there is no relationship of 'trust' between them.
- **RBI has a statutory duty** to uphold the interest of the public at large, the depositors, the country's economy and the banking sector. One of the main characteristic of a Fiduciary relationship is "Trust and Confidence". Something that RBI and the Banks lack between them.
- RBI ought to act with transparency and not hide information that might embarrass individual banks. It is duty bound to comply with the provisions of the RTI Act and disclose the information sought by the respondents.

RTI Provision

Under the RTI Act, 2005, it is the PIOs who have been cast with the statutory duty to comply with the provisions of the RTI Act (as interpreted by the Courts) and it is the PIOs who face penalty for non-compliance. The policy issued by the RBI headquarter / Respondent herein to the PIOs is not only in violation of this Hon'ble Court's judgment, but it is also in violation of the provisions of the RTI Act. PIOs have to be governed by the provisions of the RTI Act and not the whims and fancies of the department bosses where they work.

Significance of this move

1. The policy's aims and objectives state that the list was being framed "to attain the objectives of the RTI Act, without jeopardizing the financial stability and economic interests of the State".
2. This attitude of the RBI will only attract more suspicion and disbelief in them. RBI as a regulatory authority should work to make the Banks accountable to their actions." RBI is to reveal such information in the interest of shoring up public confidence in the banking system and as a deterrent to bank frauds.
3. The baseless and unsubstantiated argument of the RBI that the disclosure would hurt the economic interest of the country is totally misconceive. The disclosure of the information sought by the respondents would hugely serve public interest, and non-disclosure would be significantly detrimental to public interest and not in the economic interest of India.
4. This Hon'ble Court defined the role of RBI as a watchdog more dedicated towards disclosing information to the general public under the Right to Information Act.

Contempt of court

Under the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, "contempt of court" means civil contempt or criminal contempt.

1. The **"civil contempt"** means willful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other process of a court or willful breach of an undertaking given to a court.
2. **The "criminal contempt"** means the publication (whether by words, spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise) of any matter or the doing of any other act whatsoever which—
    A. scandalises or tends to scandalise, or lowers or tends to lower the authority of, any court; or
    B. prejudices, or interferes or tends to interfere with, the due course of any judicial proceeding; or

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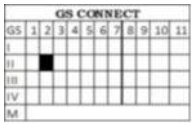
C. interferes or tends to interfere with, or obstructs or tends to obstruct, the administration of justice in any other manner;

Significance of Contempt of court

There can be no doubt that the purpose of contempt jurisdiction is to uphold the majesty and dignity of law courts and their image in the minds of the public is no way whittled down. If by contumacious words or writings the common man is led to lose his respect for the judge acting in the discharge of his judicial duties, then the confidence reposed in the courts is rudely shaken and the offender needs to be punished. In essence of law of contempt is the protector of the seat of justice more than the person sitting of the judge sitting in that seat.

Curative petition

In News



The curative petition has sought Rs 7,844 crore over and above the earlier settlement amount of $ 470 million to compensate the victims.

What is a Curative Petition?

- A curative petition is the last judicial corrective measure which can be pleaded for in any judgment or decision passed by the Supreme Court which is normally decided by **Judges in-chamber**. It is only in rare cases that such petitions are given an open-court hearing. Therefore, it is considered as the last and final option available for redressal of grievances.
- The concept of curative petition was first evolved by the Supreme Court of India in the matter of **Rupa Ashok Hurra vs. Ashok Hurra and Anr. (2002)** where the question was whether an aggrieved person is entitled to any relief against the final judgement/order of the Supreme Court, after dismissal of a review petition.
- The Supreme Court in the said case held that in order **to prevent abuse of its process and to cure gross miscarriage of justice**, it may reconsider its judgements in exercise of its inherent powers. For this purpose the Court has devised what has been termed as a "**curative" petition**.

> **Article- 137** of the Constitution of India, 1950 subjects to the provisions of the guidelines made under **Article 145**, by which it is clear that the Supreme Court has the ability to review any judgment declared by it. This petition needs to be filed within 30 days from the date of the impugned order.

- The objective behind allowing such a petition is only to minimize any abuse of the processes of law and to cure gross miscarriage and lapses in the system of justice.
- Once the Supreme Court decides the issue, an interesting doctrine of '**interest *Republicaeut sit finislitium'***finds worth. This phenomenon states that it is for the public good that there should be an end of litigation after a long hierarchy of appeals. However, in the interest of justice the founding fathers and mothers inserted Article 137 of the Constitution, which allows a review of orders passed by the Supreme Court.

Issue with curative petition

A logical question arises, what if even after disposal of a review petition, injustice survives? Can an aggrieved person say that I am affected by a judicial order of the Supreme Court and claim issuance of a writ against it?

What are the grounds for filing a curative petition?

1. The petitioner will have to certify and confirm that there was a genuine infringement of principles of natural justice and that there had been a bias of the judge and judgment that affected him.
2. The petition shall state expressly that the grounds mentioned under Review Petition were dismissed by circulation.

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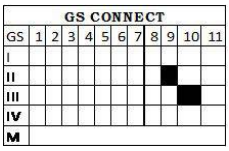
3. The Curative Petition must come with the certification of a Senior Advocate for fulfilling the above requirements.
4. The petition is to be sent to the 3 senior most judges and judges of the bench who passed the judgment, if available.
5. If the majority of the judges on the above bench agree that the matter needs a hearing, then it would be sent to the same bench.
6. The court could impose "exemplary costs" to the petitioner if his plea lacks merit".

Bangladesh parliamentary election



In News

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's alliance won Bangladesh's election with a thumping majority, giving her a third straight term following a vote that the opposition rejected as rigged.

The alliance dominated by Hasina's **Awami League, seen as close to regional power India**, won 287 of the 298 seats for which results were declared.

PEPPER IT WITH

Teesta river, CORPAT, Border haats, India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline

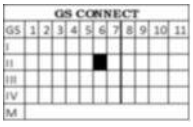
How does her win impact India?

- Hasina's victory is a positive development for India, which has been a stable ally during her term. The return of a trustworthy ally **in economic cooperation and in the fight against terrorism** bodes well for New Delhi.
- Bangladesh is key to India's plans to connect with South-East Asia, as well as developing the landlocked Northeast.
- India's plans to forge a viable alternative to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation rests on Bangladesh, given its location bridging South Asia and South-East Asia.

What will be the impact on terrorism?

Hasina has assured that no anti-India activity would be allowed on Bangladeshi soil. Since being elected to office for the first time in 2008, she has been determined to fight terrorism. While **the two countries share a 4,000km border**, it has been peppered by ethnic conflicts, sporadic infiltration and smuggling of fake currency. Under her rule, insurgency dipped in the Northeast, with kingpins of militant groups such as the United Liberation Front of Assam general secretary Anup Chetia being handed over to India.

B V R Mohan Reddy Committee



In News

A committee headed by IIT-Hyderabad chairman B V R Mohan Reddy has submitted its report "ENGINEERING EDUCATION IN INDIA– SHORT & MEDIUM TERM PERSPECTIVES" with recommendation to AICTE.

Concerns

- The **low enrollment, lower placements, and low employability** are causes for concern. Employment generation is very critical to a nation's economic development.
- More than half the engineering seats fall vacant every year. **There were no takers for 51% of the 15.5 lakh B.E/B.Tech seats in 3,291 engineering colleges in 2016-17.**
- There were glaring gaps in regulation, including alleged corruption; a vicious circle of poor infrastructure, labs and faculty; non-existent linkages with industry; and the absence of a technical ecosystem to nurture the classroom. All this accounted for low employability of graduates.

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Recommendations

1. Current (2017-18) capacity utilization in undergraduate and post-graduate level is as low as 49.8%. (**Capacity Vs. Enrollment).** Creating any further capacity is a big drain on investments since, at the very basic level, it involves the creation of physical infrastructure like buildings and lab infrastructure. The Committee recommended that do not create any new capacity starting from the academic year 2020.
2. Traditional engineering disciplines such as Mechanical, Electrical, Civil and Electronics engineering capacity utilization around 40% as opposed to Computer Science and Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, Mechatronics being in the high 60%. This is clear pointer that the demand lies in emerging technologies as opposed to traditional engineering. The Committee recommended that no additional seats are approved in traditional engineering areas, but institutions need to be encouraged to convert current capacity in traditional disciplines to emerging new technologies.
3. The Committee recommended that AICTE should take capacity utilization as a key consideration while granting additional capacities in different states.

Nari Shakti

Oxford Dictionaries announced '**Nari Shakti' as the Hindi Word of the Year**. The Hindi Word of the Year chosen every year, in many ways, **reflects the conversations, ethos of a particular year**. The word this year, Nari Shakti, has been derived from Sanskrit and when broken down, the word 'nari' means women and 'shakti' means power.

The word rose to prominence last year due to two reasons. One of them being the **Supreme Court's decision to ban the controversial Islamic practice of triple-talaq** and second was the historical decision of the apex court **to allow girls and women into the Sabarimala temple** in Kerala. Several other momentous decisions in favour of women empowerment were taken last year.

4. The poor employability of engineering graduates is reflecting poorly on the faculty – **shortage and quality, and pedagogy**. It may be very important to take immediate steps to improve the quality of our teachers.
    - Competencies of the faculty need to be developed, especially in new age technologies and research
    - To improve pedagogy in the immediate term, we recommend focused industry visits for faculty for hands-on exposure to the latest technologies.
5. Academic institutions have to continuously monitor the future skill requirements and make suitable changes to content and pedagogy so that the graduating students have the right capabilities for the job-in-demand.

PEPPER IT WITH

Venture Capital,NKFH, ATL, QIP

6. **Start-ups ecosystem are a key driver** for employment generation and wealth creation. Every education institution should be mandated for the following:
    - Entrepreneurship should be a minor elective for undergraduates.
    - Tinkering labs similar to Atal Innovation Labs to be setup in every educational institution.
    - To promote start-ups, educational institutions need to setup incubation centers, mentoring clubs, and accelerator programs.
7. The Committee recommended introducing undergraduate engineering programs exclusively focused in **AI, IoT, Blockchain, Robotics, Quantum Computing, Data Sciences, Cyber Security, 3D Printing & Design, AR/VR** to tap global opportunities.

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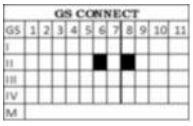
Way Ahead

Technology and globalization have turned countries into knowledge–driven economies. They are radically accelerating the pace of change in the world and raising the long-term risks. Success in knowledge-driven and innovation-driven world order depends largely on the capabilities of the people, and higher education, especially engineering education, is the key to building those requisite capabilities.

India has done phenomenally well in creating large infrastructure across the country to disseminate engineering education to lakhs of aspirants in every State year after year. However, to be able to cater to the next-generation of engineering skill requirements, we need to facilitate quality and accredited technical education at scale.

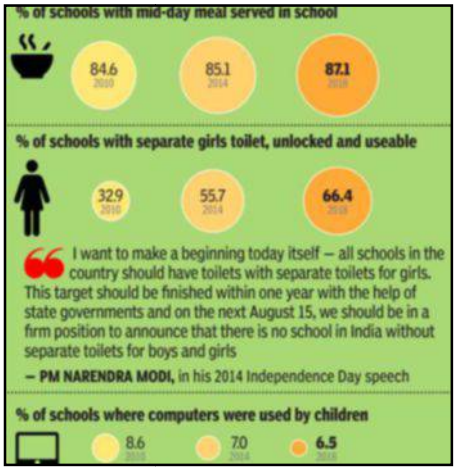
ASER 2018

In News



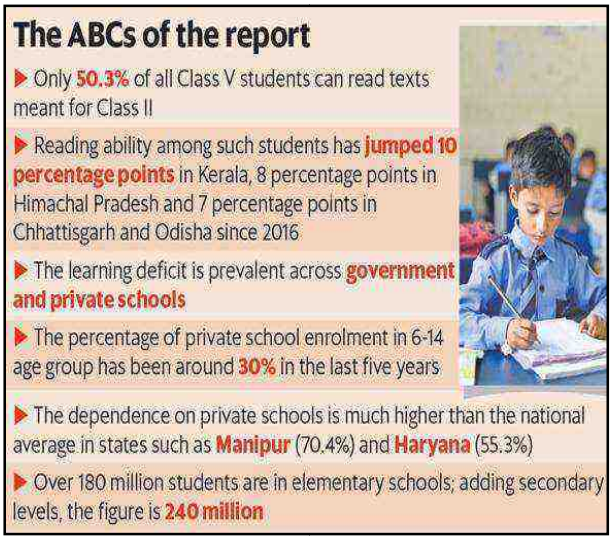
The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2018 has been published. The latest report collected data from 596 districts by surveying 546,527 students from 354,944 homes.

It is conducted by an autonomous unit of education-**NGO Pratham**.



Key findings of the study

- School drop- out rate is 10 per cent more in girls than boys at age 18.
- 73 per cent of youngsters had access to mobile phones. Only 28 per cent had used the internet.
- Overall enrollment (age 6-14): For more than ten years, since 2007, the enrollment of children for the age group 6 to 14 has been above 95%. The proportion of children (age 6-14) who are not enrolled in school has fallen below 3% for the first time and stands at 2.8% in 2018.
- There seems to have been some improvement in learning levels, especially among students of Class III and Class V, in 2018 compared with those of the previous five years. However, the improvement is not visible at a higher level, for example among students of Class VIII.
- The deficit is across government and private schools in foundational skills in reading and arithmetic in higher class like 8th but there is very marginal push in above mentioned skills in lower classes.



The following are the main problems faced in the progress of education:

1. Lack of funds
2. Expensive higher education
3. Neglect of Indian languages
4. Problem of Brain drain
5. Mass illiteracy
6. Wastage of resources
7. General education oriented
8. Problems of primary education
9. Social Disparity

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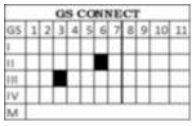
10. Child Labour

Significance

India's growth relies on a well-educated and skilled workforce. Improving education is a critical area of investment. A shabby foundation in primary education can overturn the lives, careers and productivity of millions of its citizens. Already, a considerable proportion of the adult workforce in India is acutely under-equipped to be eligible for skilled and semi-skilled jobs. In order to build India as a consumer market of global standards, it is very important that every child reaps the benefits of quality education.

PEPPER IT WITH
National Skill Qualification Framework

National Agricultural Higher Education Project



In News

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) launches National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP) to attract talent and strengthen higher agricultural education in the country.

About NAHEP

1. The NAHEP has been formulated by the **ICAR** in partnership with the **World Bank**with a focus to improve and sustain quality of higher education in agriculture.
2. ICAR has launched Rs **1100** crore ambitious NAHEP to attract talent and strengthen higher agricultural education in the country.
3. The project has been launched for a period of four years with **50:50** cost sharing basis with the **World Bank.**
4. The Project supports the Country Partnership Strategy and addresses the three engagement areas of **integration, transformation and inclusion.**
5. These engagement areas foresee increased agricultural productivity and support quality improvements of higher education to create a more skilled workforce that continuously improves the productivity of key sectors, including agriculture.
6. The proposed Project is also a **multi-Global Practice collaboration** (Agriculture and Education) and is expected to support activities and results directly related to cross-cutting strategic areas of climate change, jobs and gender.

PEPPER IT WITH
ICAR, Dean Committee, IARI, National Bamboo Mission, GEF, CCPI

There are three components to the project:

1. Support to Agricultural Universities
2. Investments in ICAR for Leadership in Agricultural Higher Education
3. Project Implementation, Management and Learning Unit

Significance

- The focus on skilled human resources in agriculture must become the basis of agricultural advancement and in view of this, the government has given special emphasis on the upliftment of agricultural education.
- In order to make agriculture education useful, the recommendations of **the 5th Dean Committee** have been implemented in all the Agricultural Universities under which amendment of agricultural degree courses has been done to include biotechnology, information technology, bio-informatics, remote sensing, organic farming, agriculture business management etc.
- Emphasis has been given on experiential learning, skill and entrepreneurship development.
- In order to promote the participation of students in agricultural business, Student READY (Rural Entrepreneurship Awareness Development Yojana) scheme is being run, under

Agri-Vision 2019, a two-day conference on 'Envisioning Agro Solutions for Smart and Sustainable Agriculture'.

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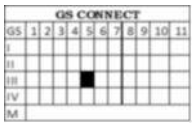
which practical experience of agriculture and entrepreneurship is provided to undergraduate students.

Factsheet

1. Agriculture sector accounts for 18 per cent of India's GDP and provides employment to 50 per cent of the workforce of the country.
2. The Gross Value Added by agriculture, forestry and fishing is estimated at Rs 17.67 trillion (US$ 274.23 billion) in FY18.
3. The Indian food and grocery market is the world's sixth largest, with retail contributing 70 per cent of the sales.
4. The Indian food processing industry accounts for 32 per cent of the country's total food market.
5. It contributes around 8.80 and 8.39 per cent of Gross Value Added (GVA) in Manufacturing and Agriculture respectively, 13 per cent of India's exports and six per cent of total industrial investment.
6. India is home to 30 per cent of the total organic producers in the world, but accounts for just 2.59 per cent (1.5 million hectares) of the total organic cultivation area of 57.8 million hectares.
7. The contribution of livestock output to the total output of the agriculture sector has significantly increased to 29 per cent in 2015-16, growing faster than crop sector.
8. India is also the world's second largest milk producer and is emerging as a major exporter now. It is contributing around 26 per cent to total agriculture GDP.

Performance Grading Index (PGI)

In News



The Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has introduced a 70-point grading index to assess the quality of school education offered by states.

- The Index will grade States and UTS thus allowing for more than one State/UT to occupy the same grade, and therefore all 36 States and UTS to ultimately reach the highest level.
- The PGI has been conceptualised as a tool to encourage States and UTS to adopt certain practices like online recruitment and transfer of Teachers, electronic attendance of Students & Teachers etc.
- The PGI has seventy (70) indicators divided into two categories viz Outcomes and Governance processes. The first category is divided into four domains viz. Learning outcomes, Access outcomes, Infrastructure and Facilities and Equity outcomes; the second category is about Governance processes which covers attendance, teacher adequacy, administrative adequacy, training, accountability and transparency.
- The total weightage under PGI is thousand points. Each indicator has been given either twenty or ten points.

PEPPER IT WITH
State Education Quality Index,Khele India Khile India, PISA

Significance

- ✓ The move is in keeping with the government's overall thrust on quality improvement, teacher training and learning outputs. It will prioritize areas for intervention to ensure that the school education system is robust at every level.
- ✓ An essential element in the Right to Education Act, 2009, the availability of basic infrastructure is missing in the State Education Quality Index.

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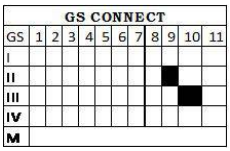
City Momentum Index



Why in News?

6th City Momentum Index was released by JLL. **The Index covers 131 major established and emerging markets and tracks a broad range of factors to identify cities that have the strongest short-term socio-economic and commercial real estate momentum**, and those that have the future-proofing capacity for longer-term success.

Highlights

- Bengaluru is the world's most dynamic city among 131 major established and emerging business hubs globally, followed by Hyderabad.
- Closely following Bengaluru is Hyderabad that is ranked second with Delhi (4th), Pune (5th), and Chennai (7th) featuring in top 10 cities. At 15th position, Kolkata was the sixth Indian city ranked amongst top 20.
- With 19 of the top 20 cities from Asia Pacific, the rankings highlight and showcase the region's continued rapid urbanization and strong economic growth. In the 2018 edition of the City Momentum Edition, Hyderabad topped the rankings followed by Bengaluru.

Reason for India's performance

- Some of India's fastest growing cities have been successful in recent years in drawing high levels of foreign direct investment with structural reforms also encouraging greater interest from foreign real estate investors who are seeking to tap into the country's favourable growth dynamics.
- Post the implementation of landmark policy reforms such as RERA and GST coupled with a focus on improving infrastructure and improving ease of doing business, the government's reforms driven agenda and measures are expected to bring in more transparency in the real estate sector and give a strong impetus to the sector.
- Both Bengaluru and Hyderabad have a thriving information technology and start-up culture which has helped them top the rankings.

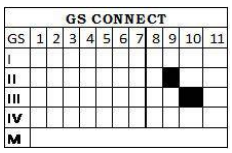
PEPPER IT WITH

Venezuela crisis, Gender gap index, Jerusalem, UN Global Counter Terrorism Coordination Compact, FAO

East-west growth divide

The absence of European and American cities demonstrates a marked East-West growth divide driven by globalization, innovation and demographic factors. In fact, the only non-Asian city on the list is Nairobi in sixth place which is heavily influenced by significant amounts of infrastructure-focused investment from China.

Global Aviation Summit 2019



Why in News?

A first-of-its-kind event, Global Aviation Summit 2019, commenced with the participation of 13 transport and civil aviation ministers, 36 civil aviation authorities, 800 delegates, more than 35 exhibitors from over 80 countries across the world.

The inaugural session, which was **held in Mumbai, primarily focused on the summit's main theme of 'Flying for all'** which touts to make air travel affordable for citizen of every class in the country. The summit, which is historical in opening a dialogue on several verticals like importance of drones, affordable air travel, use of sustainable fuels in future, infrastructural development in a compact two-day event, seeks to pave the way for greater growth in the aviation sector through better policy-framing.

Significance

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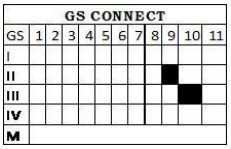
- The aviation industry in India has been experiencing exponential growth with the **domestic aviation market growing at 20 percent annually for the last four years**. There is a need for technology to pervade all aspects of aviation.
- A summit of this stature is necessary to ensure collective thinking that helps in combating challenges of the aviation sector and bring about greater reforms. The rise of fuel prices has been an issue in recent times but can be dealt with through an exchange between the minds in the industry.

PEPPER IT WITH
News Whip, Iffy quotient, Asian development bank, UNHCR, RCEP

- All the panellists and ministers together unveiled the Vision 2040 document which aims to have 1.12 billion air passengers in 2040 from 187 million air passengers in 2018.

Future of Work

Why in News?



International LabourOrganisation released Future of Work report.UN agency that sets international labour standards is asking World Economic Forum leaders to commit to a universal labour guarantee, universal social protection from birth to old age, an international governance system for the **gig economy**, and a human-in-command approach to artificial intelligence.

Highlights

- In the report on the 'Future of Work', released in Geneva to mark its centenary, the International LabourOrganisation (ILO) warned that "without decisive action we will be sleepwalking into a world that widens inequality, increases uncertainty and reinforces exclusion, with destructive political, social and economic repercussions."
- Around the world, 190 million people are unemployed, while 300 million workers live in extreme poverty. Wage gaps are growing at a time of declining wage growth.

Henley Passport Index 2019

The Henley Passport Index is the only passport index **that is based on IATA data**, enhanced by extensive in-house research, supported by expert commentary, and updated regularly throughout the year, making it the most robust, credible, and reliable index of its kind. It covers 99 passports and 227 travel destinations.

The Henley Passport Index is the most rigorous and sophisticated measure of global access. It goes beyond a simple ranking of passports to provide you with an in-depth picture of your travel freedom.India jumped two place, **from 81st in 2018 to 79th this year**.Japan topped the index with access to 190 juridictions.

- Two-thirds of jobs in the developing world are susceptible to automation, and only 15% of households in emerging countries have Internet access. **Implementing the Paris Climate Agenda could create 24 million new jobs, but it could still be brutal to the 6 million workers** expected to lose their jobs in the transition to a greener economy.

PEPPER IT WITH
Global Economic Prospects, Global Financial System Report, Technical Cooperation Report, World Social Protection Report, World investment report, Universal Basic Income

Recommendations

- In such a situation, the ILO asked all countries to "place people at the centre of economic and social policy", ensuring that final decisions are taken by human beings.
- It suggested that an international governance system be set up to police the gig economyand ensure that 'digital labour platforms' such as Uber and Swiggy respect certain **minimum rights and protections**.
- To reduce inequalities, the ILO recommends that "the development of the rural economy,

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where the future of many the world's workers lies, should become a priority".

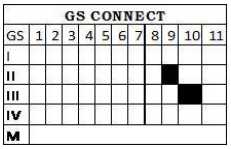
- Urging a **universal labour guarantee** to ensure a living wage, the ILO sought limits on working hours and work safety norms.
- In its report the labourorganisation observes that "the future of work requires a strong and responsive social protection system based on the principles of solidarity and risk sharing, which supports people's needs over the life cycle".
- In order to cope with change, it suggests that countries commit to a universal entitlement to lifelong learning, which would help people reskill and upskill.

ILO

The **only tripartite U.N. agency**, since 1919 the ILO brings together governments, employers and workers of 187-member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.

Global Talent Competitive Index

Why in News?



At 80th rank, India moves up one position on the **Global Talent Competitive Index (GTCI) 2019,** according to a report released by INSEAD business school in partnership with Tata Communications and Adecco Group.

According to the report, **India's biggest challenge is to improve its ability to attract and retain talent**. It further added, there is a need to address its poor level of Internal Openness in particular with respect to weak gender equality and low tolerances towards minorities and immigrants—and its disappointing showing in lifestyle indicators.

PEPPER IT WITH

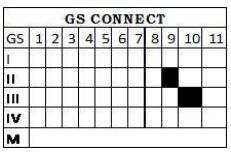
Global Environment Outlook, State of world population, Industrial Development Report, World Drug Report

Highlights

China emerged as the best performer among the BRICS countries. In the top ten of talent competitiveness ranking, only two non-European countries can be seen: Singapore and the USA. This underlines that Europe remains a talent powerhouse, but also that **countries with great universities and a strong education sector are best at attracting talents**. Because high-level talents are also more mobile internationally, no comparative advantage can be seen as irreversible, and those countries will need to remain open and innovative to keep their leadership.

CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2018

Why in News?



The 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) **released by Transparency International reveals** that the continued failure of most countries to significantly control corruption is contributing to a crisis of democracy around the world.

About the Index

Since its **inception in 1995**, the CPI, Transparency International's flagship research product, has become the leading global indicator of public sector corruption. The index offers an annual snapshot of the relative degree of corruption by ranking countries and territories from all over the globe. Transparency International is the global civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption for the last 25 years.

Highlights

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- More than two-thirds of countries score below 50, with an average score of only 43. Since 2012, only 20 countries have significantly improved their scores, including and 16 have significantly declined, including, Australia, Chile and Malta.
- Denmark and New Zealand top the Index with 88 and 87 points, respectively. Somalia, South Sudan, and Syria are at the bottom of the index. The highest scoring region is Western Europe and the European Union, with an average score of 66, while the lowest scoring regions are Sub-Saharan Africa (average score 32) and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (average score 35).
- India's ranking increased from 81st in 2017 to 78 in 2018.

Edelman Trust Barometer report

- ❖ India is among the most trusted nations globally when it comes to government, business, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and media but the country's brands are among the least-trusted, according to a report.
- ❖ The 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer report released, noted that the **Global Trust Index witnessed a marginal increase** of 3 points to 52. The Index is the average per cent of trust in NGOs, business, government and media.
- ❖ China topped the Trust Index among both the informed public and the general population segments, with scores of 79 and 88 respectively. India was at the second place in the informed public category and third place in the general population category.

Corruption and Democracy

- ➢ **Cross analysis with global democracy data reveals a link between corruption and the health of democracies**. Full democracies score an average of 75 on the CPI; flawed democracies score an average of 49; hybrid regimes – which show elements of autocratic tendencies – score 35; autocratic regimes perform worst, with an average score of just 30 on the CPI.
- ➢ More generally, countries with high levels of corruption can be dangerous places for political opponents. Practically all of the countries where political killings are ordered or condoned by the government are rated as highly corrupt on the CPI.
- ➢ Corruption is much more likely to flourish where democratic foundations are weak and, as we have seen in many countries, where undemocratic and populist politicians can use it to their advantage.

International forum for advancing global collaboration in Homoeopathy

The World Integrated Medicine Forum on the regulation of Homoeopathic Medicinal Products with the theme 'Advancing Global Collaboration' was inaugurated in India. The three-day forum wasorganised by Central Council for Research in Homeopathy (CCRH), with the support of Ministry of AYUSH.

Way forward

To make real progress against corruption and strengthen democracy around the world, Transparency International calls on all governments to:

- Strengthen the institutions responsible for maintaining checks and balances over political power, and ensure their ability to operate without intimidation;
- Close the implementation gap between anti-corruption legislation, practice and enforcement;
- Support civil society organisations which enhance political engagement and public oversight over government spending, particularly at the local level;
- Support a free and independent media and ensure the safety of journalists and their ability to work without intimidation or harassment.

PEPPER IT WITH

IBSA, Global Peace Index, Global Liveability Index, World Cities Summit

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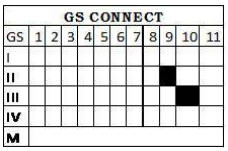
The Future of Rail



Why in News?

The Future of Rail **released by IEA** examines how the role of rail in global transport might be elevated as a means to reduce the energy use and environmental impacts associated with transport.

This first ever global report has a focus on India, elaborating on the unique social and economic role of rail in India, together with its great enduring potential, to show how India can extend and update its networks to harness rail at a scope and scale that is unparalleled.

Highlights

- The report stated that the rail sector carries 8% of passengers across the world and 7% of global freight movement. However, it utilises 2% of the total transport energy demand in the world, signifying its efficiency.
- By diversifying energy sources and providing more efficient mobility, **rail can lower transport energy use and reduce carbon dioxide and local pollutant emissions**.
- Today, three-quarters of passenger rail transport activity takes place on electric trains, which is an increase from 60% in 2000 - the rail sector is the only mode of transport that is widely electrified today. This reliance on electricity means that the rail sector is the most energy diverse mode of transport.
- In contrast, significant investments have been made in high-speed rail and metros. *High-speed rail provides an important alternative to aviation while urban rail provides a solution to cities impacted by congestion and air pollution.* Growth has been most notable in China, which has overtaken all other countries in terms of network length of both types within a single decade.
- Total energy demand for the rail sector in 2050 is around 42% more than in the Base Scenario. Yet despite increases in activity, **rail transport still accounts for only 4% of total transport energy demand in 2050**. In both of the scenarios the rail sector experiences strong electrification, and therefore energy diversification.

Aadhaar to visit Nepal, Bhutan

- Aadhaar cards are now valid travel documents for Indians under 15 and over 65 years **travelling to Nepal and Bhutan**. Indians other than those in the two age brackets will not be able to use Aadhaar to travel to the two neighbouring countries, for which no visas are needed.
- Indian citizens going to Nepal and Bhutan **don't need a visa** if they have a valid passport, a photo identity card issued by the government of India or an election ID card issued by the Election Commission.
- Earlier, persons over 65 and under 15 could show their PAN card, driving licence, Central Government Health Service (CGHS) card or ration card, but not the Aadhaar, to prove their identity and visit the two countries.
- A certificate of registration issued by the Embassy of India, Kathmandu, to Indian nationals is not an acceptable travel document for travelling between India and Nepal. However, the emergency certificate and identity certificate issued by the Indian Embassy in Nepal will be valid for single journey for travelling back to India.

PEPPER IT WITH

Global education monitoring Report, World Wildlife Crime Report, World Drug Report, Global Competitiveness Report

India

Investments in Indian urban rail infrastructure is estimated to reach nearly $190bn by 2050. Along with the development of high-speed rail, fuel expenditures are estimated to reduce by nearly $450bn. As a result, India can save up to $64bn on fuel expenses by that time. Rail

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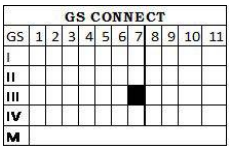
passenger traffic increased by nearly 200% since 2000. The future prospects of rail services in the country continue to remain bright.

Significance

The transport sector is responsible for more than half of global oil demand and **around one-quarter of global CO2 emissions from fuel combustion**. Therefore changes in transportation are fundamental to achieving energy transitions globally.

World Malaria Report of 2018

Why in News?



The World Health Organisation's World Malaria Report of 2018 turned the spotlight on India's recent strides against malaria. **India is the only country among the 11 highest-burden countries that saw substantial progress in reducing disease burden**: it saw a 24% decrease in 2017 compared to 2016.

This shows that India has assumed a leadership role in advancing global efforts to end malaria. The country's success provides hope to the other highest-burden countries to tackle malaria head-on.

India's Progress

India's progress in fighting malaria is an outcome of concerted efforts to ensure that its malaria programme is country-owned and country-led, even as it is in alignment with globally accepted strategies. The turning point in India's fight against malaria came at the **East Asia Summit in 2015, when it pledged to eliminate the disease by 2030**. Following this public declaration, India launched the **five-year National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination**. This marked a shift in focus from malaria "control" to "elimination". The plan provides a roadmap to achieve the target of ending malaria in 571 districts out of India's 678 districts by 2022.

DAMaN

- Among the States, **Odisha has emerged as an inspiration in the fight against malaria**. In recent years it has dramatically scaled-up efforts to prevent, diagnose and treat malaria through its DurgamaAnchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN) initiative, which has produced impressive results in a short span of time.
- In 2017, accredited social health activists (ASHAs) helped distribute approximately 11 million bed nets, which was enough to protect all the residents in areas that were at highest risk. This included residential hostels in schools. As a result of its sustained efforts, Odisha recorded a 80% decline in malaria cases and deaths in 2017.
- DAMaN aims to deliver services to the most inaccessible and hardest hit people of the State. The initiative has in-built innovative strategies to combat asymptomatic malaria.
- DAMaN has been accorded priority in the State's health agenda. There is financial commitment for a five-year period to sustain and build on the impact created by the initiative.

PEPPER IT WITH

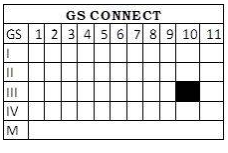
Nipah virus, Gaming addiction, trans-fat, Malaria summit, Hepatitis, Bird flu

Significance

The new country-driven **'high burden to high impact' plan to reduce disease burden in the 11 countries** reflects the global sentiment that business as usual is no longer an option when it comes to fighting the disease. By prioritising malaria elimination, India, and especially Odisha, is showing the world the way.

Democracy Index

Why in News?



The **eleventh edition of the Democracy Index**was released recently. It reveals that political participation is on the rise in almost every region of the world. Whilst clearly disillusioned with formal political institutions, the population has turned anger into action, and turned out to vote, and to

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protest.

The **most striking advance has been in the participation of women** – in the past decade the indicator has improved more than any other single indicator. This improvement takes place amid a deterioration of trust in democracy, evident in the worsening of most categories in this year's Index.

Digital detox app by shutt clinic

The Service for Healthy Use of Technology (SHUT) clinic has developed a Digital Detox app that has been found to be effective in bringing about behavioural changes among users. The app, available on Google Playstore as 'Digital Detox by Shut Clinic' tracks your pattern of mobile usage every week and offers self-help strategies.

Index Rankings

1. **India is ranked at 41** – a notch above last year. It is still classified as a **'flawed democracy'** according to the index. India achieved a score of 7.23 (out of 10) on the index to maintain its position – the same it did last year. This is the lowest ever score attributed to India in the index ever since its publication.
2. The Index was topped by Norway while North Korea was at the bottom. **Among the BRICS nations**, China was ranked 130, South Africa (40), Russia (144) and Brazil (50.
3. Australia and New Zealand are the only "**full democracies**" in the entire Asia-Pacific region, while the United States is among those that couldn't find its way into the top category.

What is Flawed Democracy

The report defines a flawed democracy as nations that "have free and fair elections and, even if there are problems (such as infringements on media freedom), basic civil liberties are respected. However, there are significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy, including problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation."

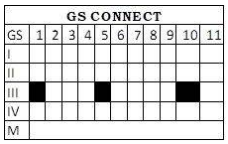
About EIU Democracy Index

PEPPER IT WITH

Economist Intelligence Unit, Freedom in the world-2019, NIPCCD

- The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Democracy Index which is being published since 2006 provides a snapshot of the state of **world democracy for 165 independent states and two territories**.
- The Index is based on five categories: **electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture**.
- Based on their scores on 60 indicators within these categories, each country is then itself classified as one of four types of regime: **full democracy; flawed democracy; hybrid regime; and authoritarian regime**. EIU is headquartered in London.

Asia Competitive Institute's Ease of Doing Business Index



- **Andhra Pradesh** has topped the Ease of Doing Business (EDB) list compiled by **Asia competitiveness institute** (ACI) and is followed by Maharashtra and Delhi.
- Unlike the World Bank-Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion rankings, the EDB Index employed both de facto and de jure factors to measure the EDB in 21 sub-national economies of India.
- The index captured the business environment at the sub-national level on the basis of 72 hard and soft indicators.
- Despite Andhra Pradesh's excellent performance in the index, the government needs to bridge numerous institutional and infrastructural gaps in order to sustain its position in the future.

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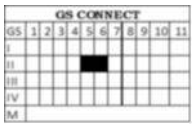
- International investors look for a stable government with strong policies before coming forward for investments. **State governments need to take into consideration the observations including weaknesses and try to strengthen those areas**.
- Asia Competitiveness Institute at Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore was established as a research centre in 2006 with an aim to build intellectual leadership and network for understanding and developing competitiveness in the Asia region.

KALIA Scheme

In News



To gear up growth in the agriculture sector and alleviate the poverty rate in Odisha state, the state cabinet of Odisha has approved a novel scheme KALIA (Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation).

The five major aspects of the scheme are as follows:

- Financial assistance to the farmers
- Livelihood assistance to landless families
- Support to landless labourers and vulnerable agriculture households
- Insurance cover
- Interest-free crop loan

Gangajal Project

The Prime Minister of India dedicated Gangajal project, **which will provide Agra with better and more assured water supply**, at an estimated cost of Rs.2880 crores. Gangajal project aims to bring 140 cusecs of Ganga water to Agra. This will help meet thedrinking water demands i n the city.

Key Highlights

1. Under the scheme, **Rs 10,180 crore** will be spent over three years until 2020-21 in providing financial assistance to cultivators and landless agricultural labourers.
2. KALIA scheme brings under its umbrella **92% of cultivators** of the state and Small & marginal farmers, landless Agricultural household, vulnerable Agricultural household, landless Agricultural laborers and sharecroppers (Actual cultivators), who can avail the benefits of this scheme through **Direct Benefit Transfer Mode**.
3. All farmers will be provided **Rs 10,000 per family** as assistance for cultivation. Each family will get Rs 5,000 separately in the kharif and rabi seasons, for five cropping seasons between 2018-19 and 2021-22.
4. This targets **10 lakh landless households**, and specifically SC and ST families. They will be supported with a unit cost **of Rs 12,500 for activities** like goat rearing, mushroom cultivation, beekeeping, poultry farming and fishery.
5. One of the interventions will assist the elderly, sick and differently-abled population who are unable to take up cultivation, by providing Rs 10,000 per household per year. This is meant to be used for sustenance.

Significance

Unlike a loan waiver, (through which) banks appease a few farmers, KALIA's main targets are rural activities as a whole. It will support farming on a small scale, sharecropping, fishing, animal herding, which are not covered under bank loans, but are caught in debt traps set up by local moneylenders. Also, a farm loan waiver will reduce credit available to farmers in the long term, while income support can be used to make a repayment or at least activate a bank account which can then receive a loan.

A **small farmer** is cultivator who owns 1 hectare (2.5 acres) to 2 hectares (5 acres) of Agricultural land. A marginal farmer is a farmer who owns less than 1 hectare of Agricultural land.

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KHUSHI scheme

- ✓ As part of its initiatives to empower women, the Odisha government recently launched KHUSHI scheme to provide free sanitary napkins to school girls across the state.
- ✓ The state will provide free sanitary napkins to 17 lakh girls studying **in Classes 6 to 12** in government and government-aided schools.
- ✓ In addition to school-going girls government will also provide napkins to women in rural communities at subsidized rates.
- ✓ The scheme will be implemented by the health and family welfare department of the state at a cost of 70 crore per year.

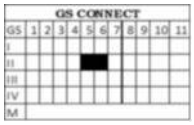
PEPPER IT WITH
Ujjwala Sanitary Napkin initiative, Common Service Centres, Menstrual Hygiene Scheme

District Mineral Foundation

- The Odisha government is planning to move its district mineral foundations (DMF) to its steel and mines department from the planning and convergence department.
- DMFs were established under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Amendment Act 2015 as non-profit trusts to work for the interest and benefit of persons and areas affected by mining-related operations.
- The objective of District Mineral Foundation is to work for the interest of the benefit of the persons and areas affected mining related operations in such manner as may be prescribed by the State Government.
- Pradhan Mantri KhanijKshetra Kalyan Yojana programme is meant to provide for the welfare of areas and people affected by mining related operations, using the funds generated by District Mineral Foundations (DMFs).

Web- Wonder Women

In News



The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, has launched an online campaign, '#www: Web- WonderWomen'.

About

- The Campaign has been launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India in association with the NGO Breakthrough and Twitter India.
- The Campaign aims to discover and celebrate the exceptional achievements of women, who have been driving positive agenda of social change via social media.
- Through the campaign, the aim is to recognize the fortitude of Indian women stalwarts from across the globe who have used the power of social media to run positive & niche campaigns to steer a change in society. This Campaign will recognize and acknowledge the efforts of these meritorious Women.
- Indian-origin women, working or settled anywhere in the world, are eligible for nomination.
- Based on the nominations received from a large number of categories including Health, Media, Literature, Art, Sports, Environmental protection, fashion, the entries would be shortlisted. Then the shortlisted entries will be open for public voting on Twitter. The finalists would then be selected by the panel of judges.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is organising the three-day 6th **'Women of India Organic Festival'** in Chandigarh, to celebrate and promote women farmers and entrepreneurs in the organic sector from the remotest parts of India.

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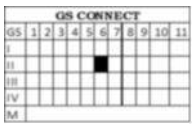
Womaniya on GeM

1. The initiative seeks to develop women entrepreneurship on the margins of society to achieve gender-inclusive economic growth.
2. GeM has launched "Womaniya on GeM".
3. It is an initiative to enable women entrepreneurs and women self-help groups [WSHGs] to sell handicrafts and handloom, accessories, jute and coir products, home décor and office furnishings, directly to various Government ministries, departments and institutions.
4. Womaniya on GeM will spur hyper-local economic opportunities for women entrepreneurs and address goals and objectives under United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

One family One Job scheme

Highlights

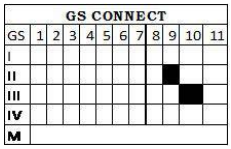


1. The scheme envisions employment to a member of every family which does not have a government job in the state.
2. Under this scheme, all loan debts in the farming and agriculture sector would be revoked.
3. At present recruitments are being made for Group C and Group D posts in 12 government departments.
4. Sikkim is the first state in the country to launch an exclusive programme which entitles every family in the state with a government job and Sikkim earmarks 70% of its revenues towards salaries for state government employees.
5. Sikkim is also the only state in the country that gives the highest salaries to state government employees.

Govt. inaugurated a project for the development of spiritual circuit comprising three important pilgrimage centres of **SreePadmanabha Swamy Temple, Aranmula and Sabarimala in Kerala**under the **Swadesh Darshan scheme** of the tourism ministry.

Asia Reassurance Initiative Act

Why in News?



U.S. President signed into law the **Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA)**, which has passed the U.S. Senate. The act establishes a multifaceted U.S. strategy to increase U.S. security, economic interests, and values in the Indo-Pacific region.

Highlights

- Specifically, the ARIA will authorize $1.5 billion in spending for a range of U.S. programs in East and Southeast Asia and "develop a long-term strategic vision and a comprehensive, multifaceted, and **principled United States policy for the Indo-Pacific region, and for other purposes**."
- The ARIA includes multiple provisions and largely supports the Trump administration's own **National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy documents**, both of which have identified the Indo-Pacific as a strategic region of particular priority.
- ARIA draws attention to U.S. relations with China, India, the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Northeast Asian allies Japan and South Korea.
- The ARIA devotes considerable energy to reasserting U.S. support for Taiwan and calls on the president of the United States to "encourage the travel of high level United States officials to Taiwan, in accordance with the **Taiwan Travel Act," which was made law in**

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2018.

- Additionally, the act addresses U.S. policy toward North Korea. Specifically, ARIA calls on the U.S. Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Secretary of the Treasury, to justify the termination of U.S. support for any United Nations Security Council resolutions sanctioning North Korea or the lifting of any unilateral U.S. sanctions on North Korea.
- North Korea has made clear that it seeks sanctions relief from the United States for the limited disarmament gestures it offered in 2018, including the closure of its one known nuclear testing site and the partial dismantlement of a test stand for missile engines associated with its intercontinental-range ballistic missiles capable of striking the United States.

25TH edition of Partnership Summit

The **25th edition of Partnership Summit 2019**, a global platform for dialogue, debate, deliberation and engagement among Indian and global leaders on economic policy and growth trends in India, **was held in Mumbai**. It is expected to build new partnerships and explore investment opportunities through high level exchanges and B2B meetings.

This edition of the Summit, will showcase India in the present landscape of an emerging "**New India", the "New Global Economic Address"**. It was organized by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, State Government of Maharashtra and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

- Elsewhere, ARIA devotes attention to the maritime commons in the Asia and the South China Sea, where it calls on the United States to **support the ASEAN nations as they adopt a code of conduct in the South China Sea with China**.
- The law calls for the president to develop a diplomatic strategy that includes working with United States allies and partners to conduct joint maritime training and freedom of navigation operations in the Indo-Pacific region, including the East China Sea and the South China Sea, in support of a **rules-based international system benefiting all countries**.
- It also focuses on other issues, including human rights, terrorism – especially in Southeast Asia – and nuclear disarmament on the Korean peninsula, requiring the president to certify to Congress in writing a justification for any kind of sanctions relief granted to Pyongyang.

Significance

- The ARIA welcomes a continued close relationship with India but does not measurably move the needle or initiate notable new projects with the United States' largest democratic partner.
- In a sign of what may be to come, the U.S. navy conducted its first freedom of navigation operation in the South China Sea – in the **Paracel Islands** – just days after Trump signed the new act into law.
- In the broader picture of growing U.S.-China confrontation, the ARIA should primarily be seen as a bipartisan show of support for a more engaged U.S. in Asia – and a statement of concern about China's rise.
- It is a sign of the times and a recognition that the Trump National Security Strategy's open assertion of a great power competition between the U.S. and China is shared by lawmakers – Democrat and Republican alike.

PEPPER IT WITH

YOUTH PRAVASI BHARTIYA DIWAS, Cope India, USAID, Chabahar port, COMCASA, LEMOA, Techno Tex-2019

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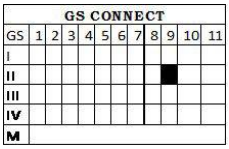
India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway

In News



- The 1360 kms long India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway is an initiative pertaining to India, Myanmar and Thailand. India is undertaking construction of **two sections of the Trilateral Highway in Myanmar** namely:
  - Construction of 120.74 km **Kalewa-Yagyi road** section, and
  - Construction of 69 bridges along with the approach road on the 149.70 km **Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa** (TKK) road section.

PEPPER IT WITH

Diffo bridge (ArPr), Operation Insaniyat, Rohingya, Cyclone Maarutha, SASEC, Kaladan Multi Modal Project

- The work on both these sections were awarded on Engineering, Procurement and Construction mode. The scheduled time for completion of both the projects are three years from the date of commencement at the project site by the executing agency.
- Both the projects are being funded by Government of India under grant assistance to the Government of Myanmar.
- A **Motor Vehicles Agreement** along with protocols for regulating and facilitating movement of cargo and passenger vehicular traffic is under inter-governmental negotiations between India, Myanmar and Thailand.

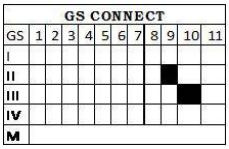
India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway

This is the ambitious project that seeks to connect India with Myanmar and onwards to Thailand, which India hopes will be its **gateway to ASEAN**. The first 160 km stretch is called the **India-Myanmar Friendship Highway (IMFH)**.

The 1,360 km long trilateral highway will connect Moreh, India with Mae Sot, Thailand via Myanmar and is constructed under India's Act East Policy.

Iran proposes new regional forum for Gulf

Why in News?



In a diplomatic initiative to address the lingering conflicts and mistrust in the Gulf region, Iran proposed a new platform for regional peace building. Such a forum should offer membership to countries based on a set of general principles to address real issues that affect people of the region and the world.

Significance

PEPPER IT WITH

Raisina dialogue, Gulf Cooperation Council, Iran sanctions, Iran nuclear deal

- The announcement of **Persian Gulf Regional Dialogue Forum** is significant as it comes in the wake of continued erosion of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which in the recent years has been divided between the Iranian and the Saudi spheres.
- Iran suggested that the new forum could focus on promotion of peace and prosperity in the region.
- It could connect people of various member countries cutting across all traditional boundaries. It will have effectiveness in dealing with threats like terrorism and extremism that has left the countries of the region in a state of continuous state of insecurity.

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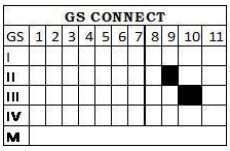
World Gold Council



Why in News?

According to the latest report by the World Gold Council (WGC), **Increased market uncertainty and expansion of protectionist economic policies** will make gold increasingly attractive as a hedge in 2019.

The report also added that structural economic reforms in key markets will continue to support demand for gold in jewellery, technology and as means of savings in the year. It is expected that the interplay between market risk and economic growth in 2019 will drive gold demand.

Key trends

- According to WGC, key trends that are expected to influence the precious metal's price performance include financial market instability, monetary policy and the U.S. dollar and the structural economic reforms.
- Against this backdrop, gold has an increasingly relevant role to play in investors' portfolios,while in 2019 global investors would continue to **favour gold as an effective diversifier and hedge against systemic risk**.
- Gold's performance in the near-term would **be heavily influenced by** perceptions of risk, the direction of the dollar, and the impact of structural economic reforms. In the longer term, gold will be supported by the development of the middle class in emerging markets, its role as an asset of last resort, and the ever-expanding use of gold in technological applications.

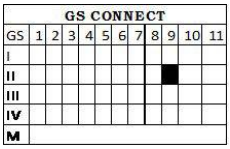
PEPPER IT WITH

World coustom organization, WIPO, BASIC, IORA, ITU

WGC

- The World Gold Council is the market development organisation for the gold industry. Its purpose is to stimulate and sustain demand for gold, provide industry leadership, and be the global authority on the gold market.
- The World Gold Council's **26 Members** are some of the world's most forward-thinking gold mining companies. They are headquartered across the world and have mining operations in over 45 countries.
- The World Gold Council is governed by Board of Directors, which meets four times per year and comprises representatives from its Members and its Chief Executive Officer.

Sino-Indian Digital Collaboration Plaza



Why in News?

The Sino-Indian Digital Collaboration Plaza (SIDCOP), **an initiative to bring Indian IT companies and Chinese enterprises closer** to each other on a single AI enabled platform was launched.

This is a partnership by National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) with Municipal Governments of Guiyang and Dalian. A Joint Venture comprising of one Indian and Chinese company has been tasked with the running of the platform.

Significance

Indian IT enterprises are world renowned for their expertise in business transformation and operational optimization by using IT tools in complex business environments. Indian IT enterprises have a long and distinguished pedigree of international clients, whom they have helped transform their businesses and globalize and revolutionize with changing times.

SIDCOP, **which is a boundary-less marketplace** offers this opportunity for Chinese enterprises in order to assist them in operational optimization and adopting industry best

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practices in business solutions. This platform could be useful to connect with top providers from India and help Chinese enterprises source the right solution providers for their projects.

NASSCOM

NASSCOM, a **not-for-profit industry association, is the apex body for the 154 billion dollar IT BPM industry in India**, an industry that has made a phenomenal contribution to India's GDP, exports, employment, infrastructure and global visibility.

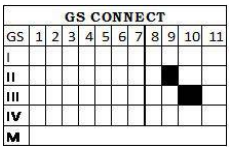
Established in 1988, NASSCOM's relentless pursuit has been to constantly support the IT BPM industry in India, in the latter's continued journey towards seeking trust and respect from varied stakeholders, even as it reorients itself time and again to remain innovative, without ever losing its humane and friendly touch.

PEPPER IT WITH

Industrial and commercial bank credit suisseindia market fund, Wuhan summit, Chicken neck, Doklam

Raisina Dialogue

Why in News?



The fourth edition of the Raisina Dialogue, **India's flagship annual conference on geopolitics and geo-economics**, titled 'World Reorder', reflected the country's global ambitions spanning across continents amid prevailing uncertainties.

It was held in Delhi, the conference had wide-ranging participation from global leaders.

PEPPER IT WITH

OPEC, SCO, Anti dumping duty, SCO-RATS, Heart of Asia Conference

Fair Value for Innovation

The United States Chamber of Commerce's Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) launched a new innovation initiative at the Raisina Dialogue.

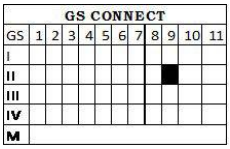
The initiative, titled "Fair Value for Innovation", will examine economic underpinnings that would enable breakthrough innovation, and explore how policymakers can harness innovation capital in India and around the globe through research, advocacy, partnerships, and programs.

Raisina Dialogue

- The Raisina Dialogue is a multilateral conference committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community.
- Every year, global leaders in policy, business, media and civil society are hosted in New Delhi to discuss cooperation on a wide range of pertinent international policy matters.
- The Dialogue is structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral discussion, involving heads of state, cabinet ministers and local government officials, as well as major private sector executives, members of the media and academics.
- The conference is hosted by the Observer Research Foundation in collaboration with the Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs.

Gilgit-Baltistan

Why in News?



The Deputy High Commissioner of Pakistan was summoned and a strong protest was lodged on recent order by Supreme Court of Pakistan on the so-called "Gilgit-Baltistan" which is an interference in India's internal affairs.

- It was reiterated that the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir, which also includes the so-called 'Gilgit-Baltistan' has been, is and shall remain an integral part of India. Pakistan Government or judiciary have no locus standii on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it. Any action to alter the status of these occupied territories by Pakistan has no legal basis whatsoever.

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- India rejected such continued attempts by Pakistan to bring material change in these occupied territories and to camouflage grave human rights violations, exploitation and sufferings of the people living there. Pakistan was asked to immediately vacate all areas under its illegal occupation.

Indus Food 2019

- ❖ INDUS FOOD-II with the theme of 'World Food Supermarket' was held, at India Expo Mart, Greater Noida by Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- ❖ The event was aimed at **promoting India as a strong and reliable exporter** of food and beverage products to the world.
- ❖ It promoted value addition to India's agriculture exports and integrate Indian farmers and agricultural products with global value chains.
- ❖ It is a platform of its kind exclusively devoted to enhancing Indian exports in F&B sector.
- ❖ It enables B2B engagements of buyers and suppliers, after careful business matchmaking, which takes care of precise business requirements of each participant, and enables him to pick and choose whom to meet.

Gilgit-Baltistan

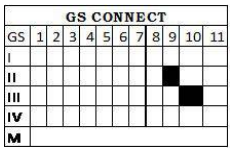
- Geographically, Gilgit-Baltistan is situated in the trans-Himalayan region on the northwestern corner of the Kashmir Valley, a part of which has been illegally occupied by Pakistan since it invaded the region after the partition of India.
- Gilgit-Baltistan **was part of the formerly princely state of Jammu and Kashmir** (then identified as the state of Kashmir and Jammu).
- After gaining control of the region, Pakistan renamed the Gilgit Wazarat and Gilgit Agency as **The Northern Areas of Pakistan**. It is directly administered by the federal government of Pakistan.
- Gilgit-Baltistan has an elected Assembly with limited powers to frame laws. The area is governed by a council headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan. It has been treated as a separate geographical entity by successive Pakistani governments and does not find any mention in Pakistan's Constitution.

PEPPER IT WITH
CPEC, B&R initiative, Sir creek, IORA Delhi Declaration, UNISDR

- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has further changed the dynamics. Pakistan has already gifted a portion (about 5,000-8,000 sq km) of Gilgit-Baltistan in 1963, a year after the Indo-China war.

Palestine takes over reins of G77

Why in News?



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the "historic leadership" of **Palestine which assumed the chairmanship of G77**, the global body's largest intergovernmental organisation of developing countries including India.

Egypt was the previous Chair of the Group of 77 (G77), a coalition of 134 members, along with China which aligns itself with the bloc.

PEPPER IT WITH
G4, G7, Coffee club, UNSC reforms, Asia pacific policy group, Red Fort Declaration

G77

The Group of 77 (G-77) was established in 1964 by seventy-seven developing countries signatories of the "**Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Developing Countries**" issued at the end of the first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva.

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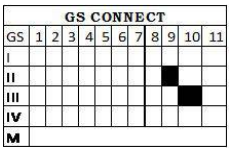
The Group of 77 provides the means for the countries of the South to articulate and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues within the United Nations system and promote South-South cooperation for development.

Smart Food Executive Council

Why in News?



The largest agriculture associations in Africa and Asia met on January 13, 2019, in Hyderabad to sign an agreement for diversifying major food staples.

Associations including the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF), Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) got together **to form the Smart Food Executive Council**.

Background

The Smart Food Executive Council has been formed under the **aegis of the Smart Food Initiative that was launched in 2013 and stemmed from the strategic thinking** around the need for food that fulfils the criteria of being good for the consumer, good for the planet and good for the farmer.

Significance

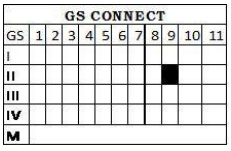
- A major objective under the initiative is to diversify staples which can have the strongest impact on nutrition, the environment and farmer welfare. Given that **staples may typically constitute 70 per cent of a meal and are often eaten three times a day**, diversifying them can have a pronounced impact on overcoming malnutrition and poverty and coping with climate change and environmental degradation.

PEPPER IT WITH
ISA, FATF, BIMSTEC, FOCAC, SAARC, Iran action group

- This would contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for overcoming poverty and hunger **(SDG 1 and 2**), responsible consumption and production **(SDG 12**), along with adaptation to climate change (Goal 13). The approach taken will include gender equality **(SDG 5)** and action through partnerships **(SDG 17).**
- This new partnership strengthens collaborations between Asia and Africa and can open up opportunities to join forces at any point along the value chain, from consumers through to processors, chefs through to farmers, researchers and others.

Pakistan concludes Indus Waters inspection

Why in News?



A delegation of officials from India and Pakistani, concluded an inspection of two hydel power projects on the Chenab river basin as part of the bilateral Indus Water Treaty. They visited the under-construction Indian hydropower projects - **PakalDul** (1000MW), **Ratle** (850 MW) and **Lower Kalnai** (48MW).

This tour is an obligation imposed on both the countries by the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan, which mandates both the commissioners to undertake, **once in every five years, a general tour of inspection of the rivers** to ascertain facts connected with various developments and works on the rivers on both sides.

Indus Water Treaty

- In 1960, India and Pakistan signed a water distribution agreement -- came to be known as Indus Water Treaty -- **which was orchestrated by the World Bank**.

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- This agreement took nine years of negotiations and **divides the control of six rivers** between the two nations once signed.
- The treaty specifies that the waters of **three eastern rivers** - Ravi, Beas and Sutlej- have been reserved for India while that of **western rivers**- Indus, Chenab and Jhelum- are for Pakistan.
- Indus, Chenab and Jhelum are the lifelines of Pakistan as the country is highly dependent on these rivers for its water supply. Since these rivers do not originate from Pakistan but flow to the country through India, Pakistan fears the threat of drought and famine.

Macedonia

- After countless rounds of UN-mediated talks, the two Balkan neighbours Greece and Macedonia, announced that they had agreed to end the row over what to call the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- The tiny state will henceforth be known as the Republic of North Macedonia – a geographical qualifier that ends any fear in Athens of territorial ambition against the neighbouring Greek province of the same name.
- The new name not only made a clear distinction between Greek Macedonia and the country's northern neighbour, but put a decisive end to the irredentism the country's erstwhile title had conveyed.

- While **Chenab and Jhelum originate from India, Indus originates from China**, making its way to Pakistan via India.
- The treaty clearly spells the do's and don'ts for both countries; as it allows India to use only 20 per cent of the total water carried by the Indus river.

Nuclear non-aggression agreement between India and Pakistan

- The agreement, which was signed in 1988 and entered into force in1991 provides that the **two countries inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities to be covered under the agreement on the first of January of every calendar year**.
- Pakistan and India shared a list of its nuclear installations and facilities as per the provisions of the bilateral agreement.
- The list was handed over in accordance with **Article-II of the Agreement** on Prohibition of Attacks Against Nuclear Installations and Facilities between Pakistan and India.
- **This has been done consecutively since 1992**. The practice of exchanging lists of nuclear installation has endured despite many low in bilateral ties.

Dispute

India claims it has unrestricted rights to develop hydroelectric power projects on the western rivers within the specified parameters of the design. Pakistan says that the design of two under-construction hydroelectric projects PakalDul and Lower Kalnai violate the river water treaty, while Indian officials insist on their right to build these projects and hold that their design is fully in compliance with the guidelines of the treaty.

PEPPER IT WITH

Ceasefire agreement, Thar-Link express, Kishanganga hydro plant, Ratle hydro plant, ICJ, ICC, PCA

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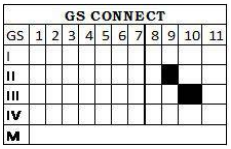
PISA

Why in News?



A Signing ceremony of Agreement between India and OECD for India's participation in **Programme forInternational Student Assessment (PISA) 2021, was held in New Delhi**. OECD have agreed to contextualize the questions for Indian students.

Schools run by Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and schools in the UT of Chandigarh will participate. **PISA covers a sample of 15-year-old students representing all forms of schooling i.e. public, private, private aided etc**.

PEPPER IT WITH
2+2 dialogue, APTA, OPCW, Australian group, NSG, NPT

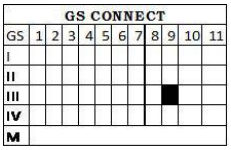
PISA

PISA is a triennial international survey (**every three years**) which aims to evaluate the education system worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. Students are assessed in reading, mathematics, science and collaborative problem-solving.

Participation in PISA allows benchmarking performance against a wide range of countries. It uses test items aligned with international benchmarks. Test items are adapted to the local context and language, pilot tested and validated before being used for the test.

Climate change a security issue

Why in News?



India has questioned the rush at the UN to declare climate change an international security issue, potentially giving the Security Council the right to take action on it and pointed out the pitfalls in the approach.

The Council was discussing the impact of climate-related disasters on international peace and security after the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, said that the trends of heat waves, heavier rain events, higher sea levels and severe damage to agriculture "represent a security risk for the entire world. The relationship between climate-related risks and conflict is complex and often intersects with political, social, economic and demographic factors.

PEPPER IT WITH
UNRWA, AIIB, SIPRI, UNCCD, Qingdao declaration

Issues

- A "mere decision of the Council" to takeover enforcement of climate change action would **disrupt the Paris Agreement and multilateral efforts to find solutions**.
- India has been wary of the Council's mission creep as it tries to extend its reach beyond what is allocated in the UN Charter by redefining other issues, even as it struggles to fulfil its primary functions.
- The composition of the Council does not reflect the contemporary world. Can the needs of climate justice be served by shifting climate law-making from the inclusive **UN Framework Convention of Climate Change** (UNFCCC) to decision-making by a structurally unrepresentative institution with an exclusionary approach decided in secretive deliberations?
- The **main point of contention** "is about what manner, which aspects and which global governance mechanisms are best suited to tackle these phenomena, and India favours a cautious approach.

Conclusion

Making climate change an international security issue, may help heighten public awareness. It may even help in surmounting opposition. But securitisation also carries significant downsides. Taking a security approach brings overly militarised solutions to problems, which inherently require non-military responses. It brings the wrong actors to the table.

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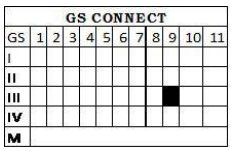
Sixth National Report to the Convention of Biological Diversity



Why in News?

India submitted its **Sixth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**. The report was submitted online to the CBD Secretariat by the Union Environment Ministry, during the inaugural session of the 13th National Meeting of the State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) organized by the National Biodiversity Authority. The Minister also released the document 'Progress on India's National Biodiversity Targets: A Preview' on the occasion.

Background

Submission of national reports is a mandatory obligation on Parties to international treaties, including CBD. As a responsible nation, India has never reneged on its international commitments and has earlier submitted on time five National Reports to the CBD. Parties are required to submit their NR6 by 31 December 2018.

About NR6

The NR6 provides an update of progress in **achievement of 12 National Biodiversity Targets** (NBT) developed under the Convention process in line with the 20 global **Aichi biodiversity targets**. Briefly, the Report highlights that while India has exceeded/overachieved two NBTs, it is on track to achieve eight NBTs and in respect of the remaining two NBTs also, India is striving to meet the targets by the stipulated time of 2020.

AmaGhare LED

Odisha government launched the 'AmaGhare LED' (LED bulbs in our houses) scheme. Each beneficiary family will get four LED bulbs free of cost under the scheme.The beneficiaries will have to produce their bio-metric authentication to avail benefits under the scheme.

Rural areas use incandescent or CFL bulbs due to non-availability of quality LED bulbs at a reasonable price, and as a result, are forced to pay higher electricity bills. With introduction of the scheme, **electricity bills of the beneficiaries will go down**.

Significance

1. India has done well on raising awareness about biodiversity, which is an important thrust area in several programmes of the Government.
2. As a megadiverse country harbouring nearly 7-8% of globally recorded species while supporting 18% of the global human population on a mere 2.4% of the world's land area, India's quest for inclusive economic development while maintaining integrity of its natural capital is being pursued through various programmes and strategies.
3. India has been investing a huge amount on biodiversity directly or indirectly through several development schemes of the Central and State Governments, to the tune of Rs 70,000 crores per annum as against the estimated annual requirement of nearly Rs 1,09,000 crores.

Philip Kotler award

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi received the first-ever Philip Kotler Presidential award in New Delhi.
- The award focuses on the **triple-bottom-line** of 'people, profit and planet'. It will be offered annually to the leader of a nation.
- According to the award citation, Indian PM was selected for his "outstanding leadership for the nation".
- The citation also states that under his leadership, **India is now identified as the centre for innovation and value-added manufacturing** (Make in India), as well as a global hub for professional services such as information technology, accounting and finance.
- Prof. Philip Kotler is a world renowned Professor of Marketing at Northwestern University, Kellogg School of Management.

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4. India has nearly two third of the population of wild tigers in the world. The population of lion has risen from 177 in 1968 to over 520 in 2015, and elephants from 12,000 in 1970s to 30,000 in 2015. One-horned Indian Rhino which was on the brink of extinction during the early 20th century, now number 2400.
5. Further, while globally over 0.3 % of total recorded species are critically endangered, **in India only 0.08% of the species recorded are in this category**. India is committed to protecting its rich heritage of biodiversity which are so vital to our economic and social development.

India on biodiversity

India is among the first five countries in the world, the first in Asia and the first among the biodiversity rich megadiverse countries to have submitted NR6 to the CBD Secretariat. While globally, biodiversity is facing increasing pressure on account of habitat fragmentation and destruction, invasive alien species, pollution, climate change and oversuse of resources, **India is one of the few countries where forest cover is on the rise**, with its forests teeming with wildlife. India is on track to achieve the biodiversity targets at the national level and is also contributing significantly towards achievement of the global biodiversity targets.

Aichi Biodiversity Targets

- In the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, **held in 2010, in Nagoya**, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, adopted a revised and updated Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, **for the 2011-2020 period.**
- This Plan provides an overarching framework on biodiversity, not only for the biodiversity-related conventions, but for the entire United Nations system and all other partners engaged in biodiversity management and policy development.
- The short term plan provides a set of 20 ambitious yet achievable targets, collectively known as the Aichi Targets.

PEPPER IT WITH

Nagoya Protocol, COP10, Kyoto protocol, Green climate fund, UNFCCC, Climate Adaptation Fund

Strategic goals

Strategic Goal A: Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society.

Strategic Goal B: Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use.

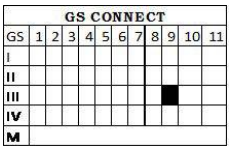
Strategic Goal C: To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity.

Strategic Goal D: Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Strategic Goal E: Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.

Western Ghats

Why in News?



Over 56,000 km of ecologically sensitive areas in the Western Ghats could not be earmarked as '**no-go' zones** due to State governments' 'insensitivity', a parliamentary panel has said in its report.

Details

- It urged the Union Environment and Forests Ministry to constitute a committee to address the issues and grievances of the local people.
- The recent catastrophic monsoon floods in Kerala and parts of Karnataka should serve as alarm bells for administrations in the six States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka that have failed to mark ecologically sensitive areas in the Western Ghats, the Committee on Government Assurances in the Rajya Sabha stressed.

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- The panel had examined issues regarding the categorisation of Western Ghats parts as Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) as per the recommendations of two different committees **led by Madhav Gadgil and K. Kasturirangan**.

Issues highlighted

- The Committee observed that despite three draft notifications issued over four years for earmarking the ESAs, the six States could not be brought on board for action. As a result, over 56,000 sq km of ESA could not be earmarked as 'no-go' zones for polluting activities. Largescale de-forestation, mining and construction activities were continuing unabated, hurting the ecology of the Western Ghats.
- Insensitivity towards ecology of Western Ghats has made the six States of Western Ghats vulnerable to floods and landslides. The report stressed that the recent monsoon floods should force the six States to earmark the ESAs.
- The Committee is of the view that implementation of recommendations of Kasturirangan report is only possible with active support of local population and requires intrinsic consultation with the State Government at micro level to achieve the desired objectives of saving the Western Ghats.

Kasturirangan report

Environment ministry accepted the crucial report on Western Ghats prepared by K Kasturirangan-led 10-member high-level working group and decided to declare the Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) over 37% of the Western Ghats under the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

Recommendations

- ✓ The report by the Kasturirangan panel had said that **37% of the total area of the Western Ghats is ecologically sensitive, covering about 60,000 sq.** km spread across Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- ✓ The report **distinguishes between cultural and natural landscape**. It said that cultural landscapes, which include human settlements, agricultural fields and plantations, covered 58.44% of the Western Ghats. It identified 90% of the remaining natural landscape area marked as an ESA.
- ✓ The panel called for a complete ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining in this area. All current mining areas in the ESA should be phased out within the next five years, or at the

Small Woodbrown butterfly

After a span of 120 long years, researchers at the Sikkim University in Gangtok have rediscovered the Small Woodbrown butterfly species from Bakhim in **Khanchendzonga National Park**.

The Small Woodbrown butterfly, scientifically known as Lethe nicetella is named after its brown-coloured wings patched with white round spots. It is amongst the smallest members of the genus Lethe, with wings that are up to 50 millimeters long. The species is endemic to the eastern Himalayas and occurs in forests lying between elevations of 1,800-2,800 metres. Across the world, species of Lethe are found in Sunda Islands, Japan, Siberia, Himalayas and peninsular India. Of the 41 species of Lethe that are found in India, 32 species are reported from Sikkim alone.

Moss rose

- ❖ Two new species of Portulaca, commonly known as moss rose have been discovered in southern penisularr region.
- ❖ The two new species were discovered from Badami hills in Bagalkot district of Karnataka. The species have been named Portulacabadamica and Portulacalakshminarasimhaniana.
- ❖ Portulacabadamica is listed under the data deficient category and Portulacalakshminarasimhaniana is listed as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

PEPPER IT WITH

Madhav Gadgil report, Nilgiri biosphere reserve, Lion tailed macaque, Nilgiritahr

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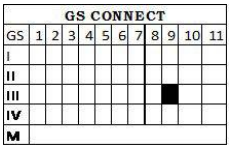
time of expiry of mining lease, whichever is earlier.

- ✓ The panel had recommended that no thermal power projects should be allowed in the ESA and hydropower projects should be allowed only after "**a cumulative study which assesses the impact of each project on the flow pattern of the rivers and forest and biodiversity loss**" is conducted.
- ✓ The report had said that all **red category industries** which are identified as heavily polluting by the environment ministry and include fertilizer plants, oil refineries, tanneries and copper smelters in a list of more than 60 items should be strictly banned.

Climate Change Performance Index 2019

In News



The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) is an instrument designed to enhance transparency in international climate politics. Its aim is to put political and social pressure on those countries that have, until now, failed to take ambitious action on climate protection, and to highlight those countries with best practice climate policies.

The ranking results are defined by a country's aggregated performance **regarding 14 indicators within the four categories** "GHG Emissions", "Renewable Energy" and "Energy Use", as well as on "Climate Policy", in a globally unique policy section of the index.

Highlights

- The CCPI 2019 results illustrate the main regional differences in climate protection and performance within the 56 evaluated countries and the EU. **No country performed well enough to reach the ranking very good in this year's index**, meaning that no country has yet made it to one of the top three places in the rankings.
- In this year's index, Sweden leads the ranking, followed by Morocco and Lithuania. The bottom five in this year's CCPI are Saudi Arabia, the United States, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Korea and Chinese Taipei, scoring low or very low across almost all categories.
- **India ranks 11th**, improving its standing by three places compared to the previous edition. Most notably **India improved its performance in the renewable energy category**, joining the group of medium performers. Comparatively low levels of per capita GHG emissions and a relatively ambitious mitigation target for 2030 give India an overall high rating in the emissions category.

Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development

Italian Prime Minister **opened a new centre in Rome,** set up by the government in partnership with the UN to fight climate change and boost sustainable development in Africa.

The new centre will help develop and scale-up innovative solutions for sustainable development, implement the goals of the UN's 2030 Agenda and the landmark 2015 Paris Climate Agreement to end reliance on fossil fuels and cap global warming.

Rosewood

- ➢ India has proposed to remove rosewood (Dalbergia sissoo) from Appendix II of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), a multilateral treaty to protect endangered plants and animals.
- ➢ The species is currently part of **Appendix II of CITES that has species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled** to avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival. But, India doesn't want that for rosewood.
- ➢ The species grows at a very fast rate and has the capacity to become naturalised outside its native range, even it is invasive in some parts of the world. The regulation of trade in the species is not necessary to avoid it becoming eligible for inclusion in Appendix I in the near

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future and the harvest of specimens from the wild is not reducing the wild population to a level at which its survival might be threatened by continued harvesting or other influences.

CITES

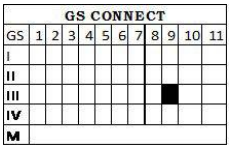
It works by subjecting international trade in specimens of selected species to certain controls. All import, export, re-exports and introduction from the sea of species covered by the convention has to be authorized through a licensing system.

PEPPER IT WITH

Xian smog tower, SAFAR, PM 2.5, Air quality index, Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organisation

It has three appendices. **Appendix I has species threatened with extinction**. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances. **Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country**, which has asked other CITES parties for assistance in controlling trade.

National Clean Air Programme



Why in News?

Air pollution is one of the biggest global environmental challenges of today. A time bound national level strategy for **pan India implementation to tackle the increasing air pollution problem across the country** in a comprehensive manner in the form of National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) was launched by Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

NCAP

- It **willfocus on all sources of pollution forms**. The tentative national level target of 20%–30% reduction of PM2.5 and PM10 concentration by 2024 is proposed under the NCAP taking 2017 as the base year for the comparison of concentration.
- Overall objective of the NCAP is comprehensive mitigation actions for **prevention, control and abatement of air pollution** besides augmenting the air quality monitoring network across the country and strengthening the awareness and capacity building activities.
- The NCAP will be a mid-term, **five-year action plan with 2019 as the first year**. However, the international experiences and national studies indicate that significant outcome in terms of air pollution initiatives are visible only in the long-term, and hence the programme may be further extended to a longer time horizon after a mid-term review of the outcomes.
- The **approach for NCAP includes** collaborative, multi-scale and cross-sectoral coordination between the relevant central ministries, state governments and local bodies. Dovetailing of the existing

$1 billion fund ESG fund

- Former Tata Group leaders and industry veterans are set to partner with Quantum Advisors to launch **a billion-dollar environment, social, and governance (ESG) fund**, which will take meaningful stakes in a range of listed companies, mostly in the mid-cap space, by adopting an active approach to work with promoters, boards and managements.
- ESG funds are those that take environmental, social and governance factors into consideration while investing.
- The proposed joint venture will be chaired by Mukund Govind Rajan, former Tata Brand custodian.
- They intend to raise capital outside India and will approach long-term oriented capital pools like pension funds, sovereign wealth funds and university endowments. The fund has a tenure of 8-10 years and is closed-ended. Capital may come from across the globe from long-term investors panning across the US, Europe, etc.

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policies and programmes including theNAPCC and other initiatives of GoI in reference to climate change will be done while execution of NCAP.

- There will be use of the Smart Cities program to launch the NCAP in the 43 smart cities falling in the list of the 102 non-attainment cities. The NCAP is envisaged to be dynamic and will continue to evolve based on the additional scientific and technical information as they emerge.
- NCAP will be institutionalized by respective ministries and will be organized through inter-sectoral groups.The program will partner with multilateral and bilateral international organizations, and philanthropic foundations and leading technical institutions to achieve its outcomes.
- City specific action plans are being formulated for non-attainment cities identified for implementing mitigation actions under NCAP. Cities have already prepared action plans in consultation with CPCB. Institutional Framework at Centre and State Level comprising of Apex Committee at the MoEFCC in the Centre and at Chief Secretary Level in the States are to be constituted.
- In addition, sectoral working groups, national level Project Monitoring Unit, Project Implementation Unit, state level project monitoring unit, city level review committee under the Municipal Commissioner and DM level Committee in the Districts are to be constituted under NCAP for effective implementation and success of the Programme.
- Other features of NCAP include, increasing number of monitoring stations in the country including rural monitoring stations, technology support, emphasis on awareness and capacity building initiatives, setting up of certification agencies for monitoring equipment, source apportionment studies, emphasis on enforcement, specific sectoral interventions etc.

PEPPER IT WITH

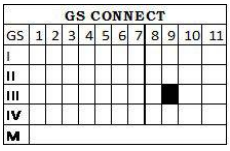
Coke, CSIR, BS norms, Methanol economy, ASH TRACK, Ethanol blending

Significance

NCAP is a path breaking initiative and one of the most critical and most significant programme as it addresses one of the most alarming challenges of urbanization i.e. air pollution. **Today cities occupy just 3% of the land, but contribute to 82% of GDP and responsible for 78% of Carbon dioxide emissions**; cities though are engines of growth and equity but they have to be sustainable and it is in this context that NCAP being a very inclusive program holds special relevance.

Energy efficiency in buildings

Why in News?



The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) and the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU), kick starting cooperation in building energy efficiency.

According to the MoU, BEE and CPWD will cooperate on promoting designs and construction of **Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC)** compliant new buildings, star rating of CPWD managed buildings across the country with no registration or renewal fee, awareness on energy efficiency in building sector and support for capacity building of CPWD officials in ECBC.

The following areas of cooperation have been identified by CPWD and BEE:

1. Star rating of Commercial CPWD managed buildings with no registration or renewal fee
2. Awareness on of Energy Efficiency in commercial buildings.
3. Support for ECBC (Commercial & Residential and capacity building of CPWD officials
4. Construction of ECBC compliant new buildings.
5. Any other area with mutual consent in the area of building energy efficiency.

Details

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In the first stage approx. 150 buildings will be taken under star rating scheme and to promote energy efficiency in CPWD managed buildings. It is anticipated that this initiative will result in energy saving of more than 260 million units in the first stage with operational savings of about Rs 100 crore.

ECO Niwas Samhita 2018

Recently, ECO Niwas Samhita 2018 an Energy Conservation Building Code for residential buildings, to push for energy efficiency in residential sector was launched. **The code aims for promoting design and construction of homes including apartments and townships** to give benefits of energy efficiency to the occupants. During 2017, the Govt. of India had launched the updated version of ECBC-2017 for commercial buildings.

Significance

The MoU will remain in force for five years unless rescinded by either party. This association of **BEE, a statutory body under Ministry of Power** which is mandated to implement policy and programmes in energy efficiency and conservation with CPWD, a premier construction agency of Govt. of India would establish new benchmarks for energy efficient buildings in the country and will support Government of India's vision for achieving energy security, economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Star rating of buildings

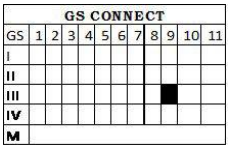
The rapid economic growth in the construction sector would require a large number of new commercial as well as residential buildings and apartments to be constructed in various parts of the country. **Commercial building sector in India is expanding rapidly at over 9% per year spurred largely by the strong growth in the services sector**. It has been estimated that more than 50% of building stock that will exist in the year 2030 is yet to come up in the country; a situation that is fundamentally different from developed countries. Having regard to the fact that the rate of growth in commercial building sector is amongst the highest, and that, this sector needs to be moderated in its energy consumption **BEE introduced the Star Rating for existing buildings as a voluntary policy measure to reduce the adverse impact of buildings on the environment**.

- The Star Rating Programme for buildings is based on the actual performance of a building in terms of its specific energy usage in kwh/sqm/year.
- **This programme rates office buildings on a 1-5 Star scale, with 5 Star labelled buildings being the most efficient**.
- The scheme is in vogue on a voluntary basis and label provided under it is applicable for a period of 5 years from the date of issue.
- The Star rating Programme provides public recognition to energy efficient buildings, and creates a "demand side" pull for such buildings.
- Various categories of buildings such as Day Use Office Buildings, BPOs, Shopping Malls and Hospitals in the five climatic zones have been identified under the scheme.

PEPPER IT WITH

Bureau of Energy Efficiency, Central Public Works Department, GRIHA, TERI

Trishna gas project



Why in News?

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Tripura Asset would soon start extracting natural gas from **Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary** in Gomati district following National Wildlife Board's clearance of its proposal.

10-12 gas bearing wells were discovered long back in Trishna Wildlife sanctuary. As the gas bearing zones are in the wildlife sanctuary, it needed permission from the National Wildlife Board. The National Wildlife Board, following recommendations from the state Wildlife Board, has cleared the project.

Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary

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Located in **South Tripura District**, the wildlife Sanctuary is famous for its rich variety of flora and fauna. Occupying an area of 197.7 sq km, it was established in 1988. The vegetation of the sanctuary consists of four types of forest – the tropical semi-evergreen forest, the east Himalayan lower Bhanarsal, Moist mixed deciduous forest and the Savanah woodland.

NBWL

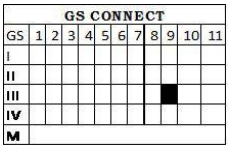
PEPPER IT WITH

Conservation reserves, Community reserves, Snjay Gandhi National Park, Kaziranga national park

National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is a statutory Board **constituted in 2003 under Section 5 of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**. The NBWL is chaired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister. It NBWL has 47 members including the Chairman. Amongst these, 19 members are ex-officio members. The board is "advisory" in nature and advises the Central Government on framing policies and measures for conservation of wildlife in the country.

Asian Waterbird Census

Why in News?



Birdwatchers counted 94 species of waterbirds during the **Asian Waterbird Census conducted in Kochi**. Around 50 people participated in the census organised around Kochi by the Cochin Natural History Society (CNHS) and the Varappuzha Unit of the Kerala SasthraSahithya Parishad (KSSP).

As part of the survey, participants took into account not only the bird species they spot, but also the numbers of each species as well. Teams spotted 570 of the ducks in the Kadamakkudy-Devaswompadam area. Other bird species that occurred in high numbers included the little cormorant (323) and migratory species such as the Pacific golden-plover (230 individuals) and brown-headed gulls (195).

The Asian Waterbird Census

PEPPER IT WITH

Alien invasive species, Bombay Natural Society, Flemingo sanctuary, Snake bird, Satkosia Tiger Reserve, Namamigange, "Beat Plastic Pollution" resolve

It is an international programme that monitors the status of waterbirds and **aims to increase awareness about wetlands and waterbird conservation, is conducted in 27 countries** including India.

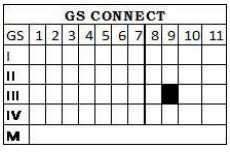
The AWC is an integral part of the global waterbird monitoring programme, the International Waterbird Census (IWC), coordinated by Wetlands International. It runs in parallel with other regional programmes of the International Waterbird Census in Africa, Europe, West Asia, the Neotropics and the Caribbean.

Waterbirds

The Ramsar Convention defines 'waterfowl' as species of birds that are "ecologically dependent upon wetlands" and has **defined "waterbird" as being synonymous with "waterfowl" for the purposes of the application of the Convention**. Waterbirds are one of the key indicators of wetlands health. Wetlands provide feeding, resting, roosting and foraging habitats for these charismatic species.

Crocodile count rises to 1,742 in Odisha

Why in News?



The population of saltwater crocodiles in Bhitarkanika has increased with the annual census, putting the head-count at 1,742. The authorities of Bhitarkanika National Park, home to the largest population of estuarine crocodiles, had carried out the enumeration in the creeks, rivers and water bodies located across the four ranges in the park.

Details

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The increase in population was primarily due to the far-sighted measures of the Government. In **1975**, the Union Ministry of Forest and Environment **in collaboration with the UNDP** had started a crocodile breeding and rearing project in Dangamala within the park.

Thanks to the success of the project, the crocodile population started increasing in the creeks, river and other water bodies of the park and its nearby areas. Nine years back, the Guinness Book of World Records had registered a 23-foot-long saltwater crocodile in Bhitarkanika as the largest crocodile in the world.

Flamingo festival

A visual treat for avid birdwatchers, the Flamingo Festival, kicked-off at Pulicat Lake and Nellapattu in Sullurpetmandal, Andhra Pradesh.The Flamingo Festival is organised annually to encourage tourism.

Pulicat Lagoon

It is the **second largest brackish water lagoon in India**, after Chilika Lake. The lake encompasses the Pulicat Lake Bird Sanctuary. The barrier island of Sriharikota separates the lake from the Bay of Bengal and is home to the Satish Dhawan Space Centre.

Crocodiles

There are three primary species of crocodiles in India: the Mugger (or marsh) crocodile, gharial and the Saltwater or estuarine (coast) crocodile.

SALTWATER CROCODILE/ESTURIAN CROCODILE

- Earth's largest living crocodilian. Average-size males reach 17 feet and 1,000 pounds, but specimens 23 feet long and weighing 2,200 pounds are not uncommon.
- Saltwater crocs, have an enormous range, populating the brackish and freshwater regions of eastern India, Southeast Asia, and northern Australia. They are excellent swimmers and have often been spotted far out at sea.
- Classified as Least Concern in the **IUCN Red List**, they are considered at low risk for extinction. But saltwater croc hides are valued above all other crocodilians, and illegal hunting, habitat loss, and antipathy toward the species because of its reputation as a man-eater continue to put pressure on the population.

Pakke Hornbill Fest

The government of Arunachal Pradesh declared the PakkePaga Hornbill Festival (PPHF)–the state's only conservation festival, as a "**state festival**".

PPHF had helped in creating awareness on nature conservation and lauded the Nyishi tribe for its part in putting the festival on the national map.

Gharial

- ✓ Gharial derives its name from ghara, an Indian word for pot because of a bulbous knob (narial excrescence) present at the end of their snout.
- ✓ Dam, barrages, and water abstraction adversely affects gharial by turning suitable river habitats into marginal/ unsuitable lakes, and by altering the quantity and quality of water available to downstream river sections.
- ✓ Gharial, with its long, toothy rostrum is particularly vulnerable to entanglement in fishing nets, where it is frequently trapped underwater and drowns. Entangled gharial are also commonly killed or have their rostrums chopped off to disentangle nets and perhaps, in retaliation for damaging nets.
- ✓ River bed cultivation threatens gharial survival by alienating them from the terrestrial component of its habitat leading to desertion and migration. Removal of sand from riverbanks disrupts gharial behaviour and may even force local populations to desert the area.
- ✓ Sustained mining activity may destroy vital basking and nesting sites and may also result in direct mortality of eggs during the nesting season.

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- ✓ **It is listed in Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and as Critically Endangered on IUCN Red List.**
- ✓ Historically, gharial were found in the river system of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and southern part of Bhutan and Nepal. Today they survive only in the waters of India and Nepal.
- ✓ The surviving population can be found within the **tributariesof theGanges river system**: Girwa (Uttar Pradesh), Son (Madhya Pradesh), Ramganga (Uttarakhand), Gandak (Bihar), Chambal (Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) and Mahanadi (Orissa).

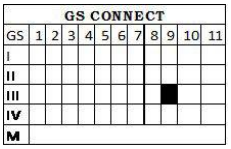
PEPPER IT WITH
species Recovery Programme, National Chambal Gharial crisis, Gharial reintroduction programme, Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary, Kukrail Rehabilitation Centre, Relocation of crocodile in Gujarat

Mugger

The marsh mugger crocodile (Crocodyluspalustris) is found throughout the Indian subcontinent and the surrounding countries of Nepal, as well as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Iran. Sometimes exceeding 15ft in length, the crocodile, eats fish, other reptiles, and small and large mammals. It is classified as vulnerable by IUCN.

1st Turtle Festival in Puri

Why in News?



First **Odisha Turtle Festival** was held in Puri, to create awareness and promote ideas on conservation of olive ridley turtles.

The one-day festival organised by Cox & Kings Foundation in association with Humane Society International/India and Action for Protection of Wild Animals (APOWA) featured events like sand art and painting exhibitions. Several attractive stalls showcasing local artifacts were also put up at the festival.

Olive Ridley Turtles

- The Olive ridley turtles are **the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles** found in the world, inhabiting warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.
- These turtles, along with their cousin the Kemps ridley turtle, are best known for their unique **mass nesting called Arribada,** where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- Though found in abundance, their numbers have been declining over the past few years, and the species is recognized as **Vulnerable** by the IUCN Red list.

A **Hawaiian tree snail**, who was an 'Endling', died on New Year's Day 2019, making his species the first to be declared officially extinct in 2019.

- The coast of Orissa in India is the largest mass nesting site for the Olive-ridley, followed by the coasts of Mexico and Costa Rica.
- Olive-ridleys face serious threats across their migratory route, habitat and nesting beaches, due to human activities such as turtle unfriendly fishing practices, development and exploitation of nesting beaches for ports, and tourist centres.

PEPPER IT WITH
Leatherback Turtles, Loggerhead Turtles, Hawksbill Turtles, Green Turtles, Operation Kachhapa

- Though international trade in these turtles and their products is **banned under CITES Appendix I, they are still extensively poached** for their meat, shell and leather, and their eggs, though illegal to harvest, have a significantly large market around the coastal regions.
- However, the most severe threat they face is the accidental killing of adult turtles through entanglement in trawl nets and gill nets due to uncontrolled fishing during their mating season around nesting beaches.

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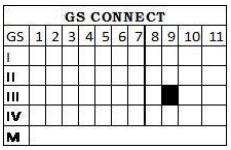
- To reduce accidental killing in India, the Orissa government has made it mandatory for trawls to use **Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs), a net specially designed with an exit cover which allows the turtles to escape** while retaining the catch. However, this has been strongly opposed by the fishing communities as they believe TEDs result in loss of considerable amount of the catch along with the turtle.

Clean Ganga Fund

Why in News?



The officials and partners of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) came together on one platform, to make personal donations to the Clean Ganga Fund on a voluntary basis.

Clean Ganga Fund

- The Clean Ganga Fund was **established as a Trust under the Indian Trusts Act**, duly approved by the Union Cabinet and with the Union Finance Minister heading the Board. DG, NMCG acts as the CEO of the Clean Ganga Fund.
- Domestic donors to the CGF are **eligible for 100% income tax exemption under Section 80 G** (1) (i) of the Income Tax Act 1961. Contributions to CGF also fall within the purview of CSR activity as defined in Schedule VII to the Companies Act, 2013.
- The total fund available in CGF as on date is Rs. 269.12 crores. Out of this, projects worth Rs. 203. 91 crores have already been taken up in areas such as afforestation, treatment of nalas through in-situ bioremediation process, redevelopment of ghats and crematoria and provision of amenities.

First human rights TV channel

The world's first television channel dedicated to human rights was launched in London with a promise to deliver hidden stories ignored by mainstream media into people's living rooms.

The International Observatory of Human Rights (IOHR) said its web-based channel would bring human rights issues to audiences in over 20 countries across Europe, Latin America and the Middle East.

NMCG

NMCG was registered as a society. It acted as implementation arm of National Ganga River Basin Authority(NGRBA). NGRBA has since been dissolved, consequent to constitution of National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga (referred as National Ganga Council).

PEPPER IT WITH

Namamigange, Ganga protection corps, Jal margvikas project, NGT, Turtle snctuary

The Act envisages **five tier structure** at national, state and district level to take measures for prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution in river Ganga and to ensure continuous adequate flow of water so as to rejuvenate the river Ganga as below;

1. National Ganga Council under chairmanship of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.
2. Empowered Task Force (ETF) on river Ganga under chairmanship of Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.
3. National Mission for Clean Ganga(NMCG).
4. State Ganga Committees and
5. District Ganga Committees in every specified district abutting river Ganga and its tributaries in the states.

NMCG has a two tier management structure and **comprises of Governing Council and Executive Committee**. Both of them are headed by Director General, NMCG. Executive Committee has been authorized to accord approval for all projects up to Rs.1000 crore. Similar

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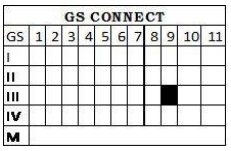
to structure at national level, State Programme Management Groups (SPMGs) acts as implementing arm of State Ganga Committees.

The Director General (DG) of NMCG is a Additional Secretary in Government of India. For effective implementation of the projects under the overall supervision of NMCG, the State Level Program Management Groups (SPMGs) are, also headed by senior officers of the concerned States.

Sustainable catchment forest management

Why in News?



Tripura launched a project for Sustainable Catchment Forest Management at State Forest Academy Ground in Hatipara in West Tripura. The project would help develop the quality of forestlands and livelihood of forest dwellers in the state.

The project is jointly funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Government of India. JICA is providing us Rs. 1,000 crores for a span of 10 years to improve forestlands in targeted catchment areas of Tripura. **This will involve sustainable forest management, soil and moisture conservation and livelihood development**. Eighty per cent of the project would be funded by JICA while Government of India would fund 20 per cent of the project value.

PEPPER IT WITH

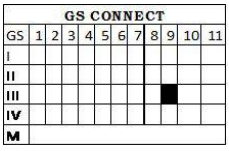
ICFRE, Indian Forest Act, Compensatory afforestation fund, Collective farming

Significance

- Forest dwellers and people at large have faced problems to access forest resources due to soil erosion caused by massive degradation of forestlands. The new project has got provisions to built 1,447 check dams in hilly terrains of Tripura.
- This new project has got many components including fisheries, agriculture, forest, tourism etc. 1,447 check dams would be constructed in hilly terrains of the state to make sure that there is no chance of a flood in the plains. The water this conserved would be used for agricultural purposes and for fisheries and poultry farming.
- The check-dams built as part of the JICA funded project would help put an end to flood-induced disasters across the hilly Northeast Indian state.

Great Indian Bustards

Why in News?



Almost two years after the Rajasthan government proposed setting up of captive breeding centres for the Great Indian Bustards to boost their wild population, the wildlife activists have called for enforcement of recovery plan for the country's most critically endangered bird. **The GIB's last remnant wild population of about 50 in Jaisalmer district** accounts for 95% of its total world population.

No progress has been made on the proposal for establishing a captive breeding centre at Sorsan in Kota district and a hatchery in Jaisalmer's Mokhala village for conservation of the State bird of Rajasthan.

PEPPER IT WITH

Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary, Chilka lake, Birds International

GIB

- The great Indian bustard can easily be distinguished by its black crown on the forehead contrasting with the pale neck and head. The body is brownish and the wings are marked with black, brown and grey.
- The biggest threat to this species is hunting, which is still prevalent in Pakistan. This is followed by occasional poaching outside Protected Areas, collisions with high tension electric wires, fast moving vehicles and free-ranging dogs in villages.

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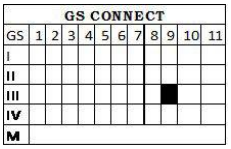
- Other threats include habitat loss and alteration as a result of widespread agricultural expansion and mechanized farming, infrastructural development such as irrigation, roads, electric poles, as well as mining and industrialization.
- Historically, the great Indian bustard was distributed throughout Western India, spanning 11 states, as well as parts of Pakistan. **Its stronghold was once the Thar desert in the north-west and the Deccan plateau of the peninsula**.
- Today, its population is confined mostly to Rajasthan and Gujarat. Small population occur in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Bustards generally favour flat open landscapes with minimal visual obstruction and disturbance, therefore adapt well in grasslands.
- **Listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection)Act, 1972,** in the CMS Convention and in Appendix I of CITES, as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List and the National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016).
- It has also been identified as one of the species for the recovery programme under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India.

Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar



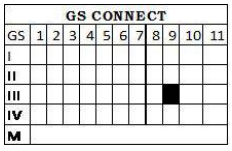
- Government has instituted an annual award titled Subhash Chandra Bose AapdaPrabandhanPuraskar. **The award is to be announced every year on 23rd January on the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose**.
- In the aftermath of any disaster, many organisations and individuals work silently but effectively to alleviate suffering of the affected population. Their immense contribution and selfless service to humanity often goes unacknowledged. Keeping this in view, the National Award has been instituted, so as torecognise the efforts of such organisations and individuals.
- All Indian Citizens and organizations, who have excelled in areas of Disaster Management; like Prevention, Mitigation, Preparedness, Rescue, Response, Relief, Rehabilitation, Research/ Innovations or Early Warning are eligible for the Subhash Chandra Bose AapdaPrabandhanPuraskar.
- For the year 2019, **8th Battalion of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) located at Ghaziabad** has been selected for the Subhash Chandra Bose AapdaPrabandhanPuraskar for its commendable work in Disaster Management. The Award recipient will receive a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 51 lakh.

PEPPER IT WITH

Odisha coastal disaster alert system, RIMES, Call for code initiative, NDRF

Nitrogen pollution

Why in News?



The UK Government has announced its commitment to fund up to £20 million of a major international research programme to tackle the challenge that nitrogen pollution poses for environment, food security, human health and the economy in South Asia.

The **South Asian Nitrogen Hub, a partnership led by the UK's Centre for Ecology & Hydrology** and comprising around 50 organisations from across the UK and South Asia, will be established with funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under its Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF).

Details

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The Hub is one of 12 GCRF hubs announced by the UKRI to address intractable challenges in sustainable development. The interdisciplinary hubs will work across 85 countries with governments, international agencies, partners and NGOs. India is a major partner with 18 Indian institutions in this project.

Nitrogen pollution impact

Nitrogen pollution comes in many forms, with multiple impacts – for humans, animals and plant life. Gases such as ammonia (NH3) and nitrogen dioxide (NO2) contribute to poor air quality and can aggravate respiratory and heart conditions, leading to millions of premature deaths across the world; while nitrous oxide (N2O) is a greenhouse gas that depletes the ozone layer. Nitrate from chemical fertilizers, manure and industry pollutes rivers and seas, posing a health risk for humans, fish, coral and plant life.

PEPPER IT WITH
Paris aggrement, CoP, Green climate fund, Adaptation fund, COP 24, Asiatic lions

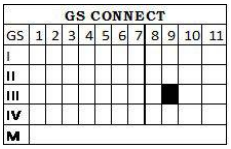
UKRI GCRF South Asian Nitrogen Hub

The UKRI GCRF South Asian Nitrogen Hub will study the impact of the different forms of pollution to form a coherent picture of the nitrogen cycle. In particular, it will look at nitrogen in agriculture in eight countries – India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives. The Hub's recommendations will support cleaner and more profitable farming, as well as industrial recycling of nitrogen, fostering development of a cleaner circular economy for nitrogen.

As a global society, we struggle with the intractable problems of air pollution, climate change and declining water quality, biodiversity and health. However, **better nitrogen management will provide solutions to all of them and offers a triple win** – for the economy, health and environment.

Alliance to End Plastic Waste

In News



An alliance of global companies launched a new organisation, to help eliminate plastic waste, especially in the ocean.

Details

- The Alliance to End Plastic Waste (AEPW), comprising about 30 companies, pledged over $1 billion to eliminate plastic waste across the world. They aim to invest $1.5 billion **over the next five years for the same**.
- The aim is to develop solutions to mitigate plastic pollution and promote a circular economy by utlising used plastics.
- Designed as a non profit organization, the Alliance includes companies from across North and South America, Europe, Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa as well as the Middle East are part of the Alliance.
- Member companies include those that make, use, sell, process, collect and recycle plastics, as well as chemical and plastic manufacturers, consumer goods companies, retailers, converters, and waste management companies, also called the plastics value chain. From India, Reliance Industries will advance efforts towards a sustainable future.

PEPPER IT WITH
Akademik Lomonosov, African carnivorous initiative, CSIR-NEERI, STAPCOR, Mangroves

Way Forward

Success will require collaboration and coordinated efforts across many sectors – some that create near-term progress and others that require major investments with longer timelines. Addressing plastic waste in the environment and developing a circular economy of plastics requires the participation of everyone across the entire value chain and the long term commitment of businesses, governments, and communities. No one country, company or community can solve this on their own.

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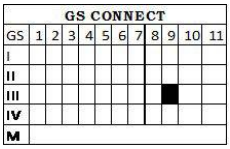
E-waste Challenges



Why in News?

Seven UN entities have come together, supported by the World Economic Forum, and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), to call for an overhaul of the current electronics system, with the aim of supporting international efforts to address e-waste challenges.

About the Report

The report, "**A New Circular Vision for Electronics – Time for a Global Reboot**", launched in Davos, says technologies such as cloud computing and the internet of things (IoT), support gradual "dematerialization" of the electronics industry.

The report calls for a systematic collaboration with major brands, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), academia, trade unions, civil society and associations in a deliberative process to reorient the system and reduce the waste of resources each year with a value greater than the gross domestic product (GDP) of most countries.

B.Tech. In Artificial Intelligence

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Hyderabad is launching a full-fledged B.Tech. programme in Artificial Intelligence from the coming Academic Year (2019-2020). It has become the first Indian Educational Institution to offer such a full-fledged B.Tech. programme in AI and likely the third institute globally - after Carnegie Mellon University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), both of which are in the U.S.

Highlights

- Meanwhile, to capture the global value of materials in the e-waste and create global circular value chains, the report also points to the use of new technology to create service business models, better product tracking and manufacturer or retailer take-back programs.
- The report notes that material efficiency, recycling infrastructure, and scaling up the volume and quality of recycled materials to meet the needs of electronics supply chains will all be essential for future production.And if the electronics sector is supported with the right policy mix and managed in the right way, it could lead to the creation of millions of decent jobs worldwide.
- **The joint report calls for collaboration** with multinationals, SMEs, entrepreneurs, academia, trade unions, civil society and associations to create a circular economy for electronics where waste is designed out, the environmental impact is reduced, and decent work is created for millions.

PEPPER IT WITH

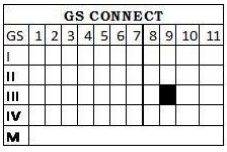
International Telecommunication Union, Basel and Stockholm conventions, World Business Council for Sustainable Development

Significance

Each year, approximately 50 million tonnes of electronic and electrical waste (e-waste) are discarded — the weight of more than all commercial airliners ever made. In terms of material value, this is worth 62.5 billion US dollars — more than the GDP of most countries.

Less than 20% of this is recycled formally. Informally, millions of people worldwide (over 600,000 in China alone) work to dispose of e-waste, much of it done in working conditions harmful to both health and the environment.

Sarus crane



- Its numbers pushed to the edge by habitat degradation and human callousness, the world's tallest flying bird now seems to be getting a new lease of life in **Uttar Pradesh, where it enjoys the status of official State bird**.
- Sarus crane, a bird distinguishable by its red upper neck and white

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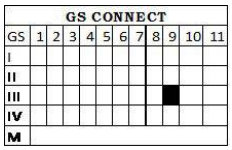
collar. Towering at 152-156 cm, over 5 feet on average, the Sarus (Grus antigone) is **not only the tallest flying bird in the world, it is also India's only resident breeding crane**.

- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has marked it as 'vulnerable' in its list of threatened species.
- The Sarus habitat is outside protected areas, in natural wetlands with low water depth, marshy and fallow areas and agricultural fields.

PEPPER IT WITH
Wildlife Trust of India, Gharial., Forest Owlet, Pygmy Hog, Indian Vulture, Ganges Shark.

- **They play a vital role in ecological balance** by controlling the population of harmful insects and have significant cultural importance, while also being sociable. Sarus is omnivorous, feeding on fish and insects, as well as roots and plants.

India can't handle more tigers

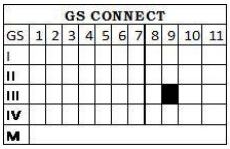


- While conservation efforts are aimed at increasing the tiger count in India, global experts and officials in the government suggest that India must also prepare for a new challenge — of reaching the limits of its management capacity.
- Officially, India had 2,226 tigers as of 2014. An ongoing census is expected to reveal an update to these numbers. India's current capacity to host tigers ranged from 2,500-3,000 tigers. **Moreover, 25-35% of India's tigers now lived outside protected reserves**.

PEPPER IT WITH
National Tiger Conservation Authority, Tiger-range countries, Anaimalai Flying Frog, Malabar Large Spotted Civet

- With dwindling core forest as well as the shrinking of tiger corridors, there were several challenges — alongside the traditional challenges of poaching and man-animal conflict — to India's success at tiger conservation. Recent attempts at translocating tigers to unpopulated reserves, such as Satkosia in Orissa, have ended badly, with one of the tigers dying.
- **Since 2006**, the WII has been tasked with coordinating the tiger estimation exercise. The once-in-four-years exercise calculated, in 2006, that India had only 1,411 tigers. This rose to 1,706 in 2010 and 2,226 in 2014 on the back of improved conservation measures and new estimation methods.

Airpocalypse III - The Greenpeace Report



Why in News?

There are 139 Indian cities that breach air pollution standards but are not included in the Centre's National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), says a report by Greenpeace. **Airpocalypse III, as the Greenpeace report is titled, analyses air pollution data** of 313 cities and towns for the year 2017.

Highlights

1. Of these 313 cities, 241 (77%) had PM10 levels beyond the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). These specify upper limits to a range of airborne chemicals and compounds. While 102 of these cities were included in the NCAP, the remaining 139 cities were left out.
2. That's because, say the authors of the report, the government's list of 102 cities relied on average pollution data until 2015, whereas Airpocalypse III used data updated up to 2017.
3. Even if the NCAP were to able to reduce pollution by 30% by 2024, 153 cities would still be left with pollution levels exceeding the NAAQS.

NCAP

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- The NCAP was launched by the government, and is a ₹300 crore initiative **to reduce particulate matter (PM) pollution by 20-30% in at least 102 cities by 2024**.
- The 102 cities, identified as hotspots of pollution, were asked to submit a plan for how they would address the problem. Broadly, the plans include increasing the number of monitoring stations, providing technology support, conducting source apportionment studies, and strengthening enforcement.
- As part of the NCAP, cities have been given a specified number of days to implement specific measures such as "**ensuring roads are pothole-free to improve traffic flow and thereby reduce dust**" (within 60 days) or "ensuring strict action against unauthorised brick kilns" (within 30 days). It doesn't specify an exact date for when these obligations kick in.

Vande Bharat Express

India's first indigenously built engineless semi-high speed train, Train 18, has been named Vande Bharat Express. The train is set to run between Delhi and Varanasi at a maximum speed of 160 kmph and will soon be flagged off.

PEPPER IT WITH

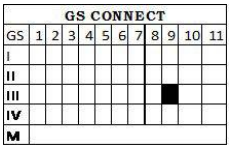
Prakriti program, National environment survey, IPCC, EPCA

Significance

The World Health Organisation's database on air pollution over the years has listed Tier I and Tier II Indian cities as some of the most polluted places in the world. In 2018, 14 of the world's 15 most polluted cities were in India. A study in the journal Lancet ranked India as No.1 on premature mortality and deaths from air pollution.

Golden langurs

In News



The Assam state zoo-cum-botanical garden is all set to achieve another milestone with the authorities planning to build a **conservation breeding centre for the highly endangered golden langurs inside its premises**.

Golden Langurs

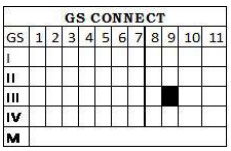
- Golden langur (Trachypithecusgeei) is listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, granting it the highest level of protection in the country. Yet, vehicle hits, poaching, conflicts with people and habitat degradation continue to take a toll on the species in Bodoland.
- Less than 2500 mature individuals of the golden langur are estimated to be found in the wild today. It is listed as 'endangered' by the IUCN Red List, owing to an estimated reduction in population by more than 50% in the past three decades.
- Only a handful of the highly endangered golden langurs are found in the Manas Tiger reserve in lower Assam and in the Umananda temple on river Brahmaputra.

PEPPER IT WITH

Northern River Terrapin, Namdapha Flying Squirrel, Amboli Toad, Jeypore Ground Gecko, Himalayan brown bear

Global housing tech challenge

Why in News?



To make the construction of houses cost-effective and innovative, the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched** the Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC).

Details

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- The aim of the initiative —**under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban** (PMAY-U) — is to fast-track the construction of affordable housing and meet the target of constructing 1.2 crore houses by 2022.
- Under the challenge, a grand expo-cum-conference on GHTC will be organised which will be a unique platform not only for the stakeholders but also for the States/Union Territories and technical institutions.
- The challenge will also focus on identifying and mainstreaming proven demonstrable technologies for lighthouse projects and spotting potential future technologies for incubation and acceleration support through ASHA (Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators) — India.

Young Scientist programme

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced the Young Scientist programme for the young minds who want to explore themselves in space research. Under Young Scientist programme at ISRO, **three students from each state will be selected**. They will be given lectures and they will be given access to R&D labs and practical experience of building a small satellite.Mostly 8th standard passed out students will be selected for the one-month programme.

PMAY-U

The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Programme launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA), in Mission mode **envisions provision of Housing for All by 2022**, when the Nation completes 75 years of its Independence. The Mission seeks to address the housing requirement of urban poor including slum dwellers through following programme verticals:

- **Slum rehabilitation** of Slum Dwellers with participation of private developers using land as a resource.
- Promotion of Affordable Housing **for weaker section** through credit linked subsidy
- **AffordableHousing** in Partnership with Public & Private sectors
- **Subsidy** for beneficiary-led individual house construction /enhancement.

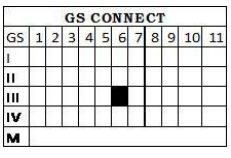
PEPPER IT WITH

PMAY-G, WAYU, Champions of Earth award, T*2 program

Beneficiaries include Economically weaker section (EWS), low-income groups (LIGs) and Middle Income Groups (MIGs). The annual income cap is up to Rs 3 lakh for EWS, Rs 3-6 lakh for LIG and Rs 6 + -18 lakhs for MIG. **EWS category of beneficiaries is eligible for assistance in all four verticals** of the Missions whereas LIG and MIG categories are eligible under only Credit linked subsidy scheme (CLSS) component of the Mission.

SPACE

Yutu-2



- China has named the lunar rover, successfully deployed to carry out a string of experiments on the far side of the moon, as 'Yutu-2'. Yutu-2 touched the lunar surface, leaving a trace on the loose lunar soil. **The rover's touchdown is part of China Chang'e-4 lunar probe**.
- Analysts say that China's lunar probe is part of its **'Made in China-2025'** project, which focuses on advanced technology, including space applications.
- It follows the **BeiDou** Navigation Satellite System — China's homegrown Global Positioning System that started worldwide service last month. Next year China plans to launch its Mars explorer mission. In 2022, it hopes to complete its own Earth-orbiting space station.
- The rover has been programmed to launch penetration radar that would help map the moon's inner structures. It would also analyse soil and rock samples for minerals, apart from activating a radio telescope to search for possible signals from deep space.

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- The China National Space Administration (CNSA) said the Chang'e-4 mission had "lifted the mysterious veil" from the far side of the moon, which is permanently blocked from view from earth, and "opened a new chapter in human lunar exploration".
- Some observers say that China's advances can mutate into a Cold war-style competition in outer space with the United States. Already China and the United States are roiled in a so-called trade war. U.S. administration officials are on record stating that there deep opposition to the 'Made-in-China 2025' project.

ISRO launches Samwad with Students

As part of the enhanced outreach programme of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), a new platform named "Samwad with Students" (SwS) was launched in Bengaluru. **Through the SwS initiative, ISRO aims to constantly engage youngsters across India** to capture their scientific temperament. The new conversation mission will inspire students cutting across schools and colleges.

Nasa's planet-hunting spacecraft Tess

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) which launched Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (Tess) for searching exoplanets in April, 2018 has discovered a third small planet outside our solar system. **The new planet is named HD 21749b.**
- The newly discovered planet orbits a bright and nearby star which is about 53 light years away in the constellation Reticulum.
- HD 21749b appears to have the **longest orbital period of the three planets so far identified by Tess**. The surface of the new planet is hotter than 100 degrees Celsius.

Human Space Flight centre

Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC) was inaugrated at ISRO Headquarter campus in Bengaluru. HSFC shall be responsible for implementation of **GAGANYAAN Project which involves** end-to-end mission planning, development of Engineering systems for crew survival in space, crew selection & training and also pursue activities for sustained human space flight missions. HSFC will take support of the existing ISRO Centres to implement, the first development flight of GAGANYAAN under Human Space Flight Programme.

TESS

- TESS is an MIT-led NASA mission, an all-sky survey for transiting exoplanets. Transiting planets are those that go in front of the star as seen from the telescope and, to date, is the most successful discovery technique for finding small exoplanets.
- It was launched in April, 2018 aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket out of Cape Canaveral.
- TESS will tile the sky with 26 segments, observing the southern hemisphere in the first year of mission operation and the northern hemisphere in the second year.
- It has a unique, 13.7 day, highly elliptical cislunar orbit about Earth. With a 27.4 day observing period per segment, the satellite is most sensitive to exoplanets with a period of less than 13 days (so that at least two transits are used for discovery).
- The circular regions where segment overlap at the ecliptic poles have observing period of just over 100 days, enabling longer period planets to be discovered. These regions are known as the continuous viewing zones (CVZs).

PEPPER IT WITH

International Year Of The Periodic Table, NASA's OSIRIS-Rex, NASA New Horizons, Gangayaan Mission, Supernova, Higgs Boson

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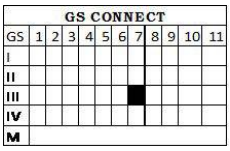
Mission Indradhanush



Why in News?

Mission Indradhanush has been selected as one of the 12 best practices globally and has been featured in a special issue of the British Medical Journal titled '**Improving vaccination coverage in India**: lessons from Intensified Mission Indradhanush, a cross-sectoral systems strengthening strategy'.

Mission Indradhanush was showcased during the 'Partner's Forum' held at New Delhi in December 2018 which was attended by delegates working on Maternal, New-born, Child and Adolescent Health.

Mission Indradhanush

- Mission Indradhanush was launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India in 2014.
- Between 2009-2013 immunization coverage has increased from 61% to 65%, indicating only 1% increase in coverage every year. To accelerate the process of immunization by covering 5% and more children every year, Indradhanush mission has been adopted to **achieve target of full coverage by 2020 to children who are either unvaccinated, or are partially vaccinated against vaccine preventable diseases**.
- India's Universal ImmunisationProgramme (UIP) **provide free vaccines against 12 life threatening diseases**, to 26 million children annually.
- The UIP provides life-saving vaccines to all children across the country free of cost to protect them against Tuberculosis, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Hepatitis B, Pneumonia and Meningitis due to Haemophilus Influenzae type b (Hib), Measles, Rubella, Japanese Encephalitis (JE) and Rotavirus diarrhoea. (Rubella, JE and Rotavirus vaccine in select states and districts).
- Focused and systematic immunization drive will be through a "catch-up" campaign mode where the aim is to cover all the children who have been left out or missed out for immunization. Also the pregnant women are administered the tetanus vaccine, ORS packets and zinc tablets are distributed for use in the event of severe diarrhoea or dehydration and vitamin A doses are administered to boost child immunity.

UNNATI (UNispace Nanosatellite Assembly & Training by ISRO)

- Around 30 participants are being trained under the Unispace Nano-satellite Assembly and Training by ISRO (UNNATI), which was launched earlier in Bengaluru.
- The Indian space agency will share its knowledge and expertise in space sector with other countries that can benefit. Spread over eight weeks the participants will get trained at UR Rao Satellite Centre (URSC)'s facilities in technologies related to making nano-satellites.
- This programme is the **agency's initiative to commemorate the 50th anniversary** of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE+50) in 1968.
- Nano-satellites are small satellites weighing between 1-10 kg. The course will include theoretical work, as well as training on assembly, integration and testing of nano-satellites.

PEPPER IT WITH

Indian health fund, spinnaker, Cyclone 30, e-Cigarettes, BIRAC

Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI)

To further intensify the immunization programme, government launched the Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI). Through this programme, Government of India aims to reach each and every child up to two years of age and all those pregnant women who have been left uncovered under the routine immunisationprogramme/UIP.

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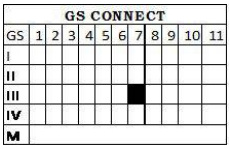
Fish from Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal banned in Patna



In News

Bihar's heath department imposed a blanket ban for 15 days on sale of fish from Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal in capital Patna after **samples were found to be contaminated with formalin - a cancer causing chemical**, used to preserve the fish. Apart from formalin, traces of other heavy metals like lead, chrorium and mercury was also found to be more than normal levels in the samples.

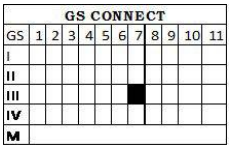
About Formalin

Formalin is derived from formaldehyde which is a known cancer-causing agent. It is used to preserve bodies in mortuaries. It can also increase shelf life of fresh food. While fromalin can cause nausea, coughing and burning sensation in eyes, nose and throat in the short term, it can cause cancer if consumed over a long period of time.

Sagar Rani

Kerala food safety department officials seized nearly 9,600 kg of fish preserved in formalin at a border check post in Kollam district. The seized fish included 7,000 kg of prawns and 2,600 kg of other species. The seizure was part of '**Operation Sagar Rani**' launched by the state.

Monkey fever



In News

Monkey Fever, otherwise known as **Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD), has broken out in the area of Karnataka**. The rare disease affects both primate and human cases, so work is underway to prevent contact with infected monkeys, as they carry ticks which transmit the virus. Five people have so far been killed by the disease and further 15 have been diagnosed, according to health officials in the area.

What is Monkey Fever?

- According to the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) based in the USA, Monkey Fever is caused by Kyasanur Forest disease virus (KFDV). The Fever was first identified in 1957, when one monkey from the Kyasanur Forest in Karnataka was isolated and tested.
- Annually, about 500 cases of the disease is reported and a death rate of three to 10 percent. The virus is transmitted **via hard ticks** (Hemaphysalisspinigera), which are then passed through contact with primates.
- While there are vaccinations against the disease, there is no specific treatment as of yet according to the CDC. The KFD vaccination is administered within 5km of an infected monkey's location and are currently being administered by Indian health officials.

PEPPER IT WITH

Human genome project, BIRAC ace fund, RTSS vaccine, Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health

Symptoms

- Symptoms of Monkey Fever traditionally develop **from three to eight days after being bitten by an infected tick**. After this, the first signs begin suddenly, starting with flu-like symptoms of hills, fever and headaches.
- Symptoms then become more severe, with severe muscle pain and vomiting, gastrointestinal issues and bleeding problems.
- Most patients will recover without issue over two weeks but some may experience a resurgence of fever, mental disturbance, tremors and vision problems by week three.

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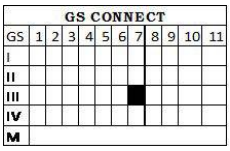
10 global health threats for 2019



Why in News?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has listed out the top 10 global health threats for 2019, ranging from vaccine-preventable diseases to drug-resistant infections, from obesity and physical inactivity to cancer and environmental diseases like heart and lung problems. According to the WHO, unless steps are taken to address these threats millions of lives are at risk.

WHO's new 5-year strategic plan, the 13th General Programme of Work, aims to address these and other threats. The UN's health agency said its plan focuses on a triple billion target that includes ensuring 1 billion more people benefit from access to universal health coverage, 1 billion more people being protected from health emergencies and 1 billion more people enjoy better health and well-being.

The top 10 threats to global health in 2019

Air pollution and climate change: This year, air pollution is considered by WHO as the greatest environmental risk to health. Air pollution kills 7 million people prematurely every year from diseases such as cancer, stroke, heart and lung ailments. India records highest number of child deaths due to air pollution in the world.

Non-communicable diseases: WHO data reveals that non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease, are collectively responsible for over 70% of all deaths worldwide, or 41 million people.

Global influenza pandemic: The world will face another influenza pandemic - the only thing we don't know is when it will hit and how severe it will be.

Fragile and vulnerable settings: As per the report, more than 22 per cent of the world population lives in places where protracted crisis and weak health services leave people without access to basic care.

Antimicrobial resistance: WHO report warned that antimicrobial resistance threatens to send us back to a time when we were unable to easily treat infections such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, and salmonellosis.

Congenital Central Hypoventilation Syndrome (CCHS)

- An infant under treatment at Delhi is suffering from a rare disease, with less than 1,000 known cases all over the world. Those suffering from the disease, called Congenital Central Hypoventilation Syndrome (CCHS), **can lose their life if they fall into deep sleep**.
- CCHS is a disorder of the nervous system in which the cue to breathe is lost when the patient goes to sleep. This results in a lack of oxygen and a build-up of carbon dioxide in the body, which can sometimes turn fatal.
- The mutation of a gene called **PHOX2B**, which is crucial for the maturation of nerve cells in the body, can cause CCHS.

Ebola and other high-threat pathogens: In 2018, the Democratic Republic of the Congo witnessed two separate Ebola outbreaks, both of which spread to cities of more than 1 million people. According to WHO, one of the affected provinces is also in an active conflict zone.

PEPPER IT WITH

SATH-E Roadmap, ZERO hunger program, Hamburg action plan, Swasthyaraksha program

Weak primary health care: WHO said many countries do not have adequate primary health care facilities that are usually the first point of contact people have with their health care system. In 2019, WHO will work with partners to revitalise and strengthen primary health care in countries, and follow up on specific commitments made by in the Astana Declaration.

Vaccine hesitancy: Vaccination is one of the most cost-effective ways of avoiding disease, however, the reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines, threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccine-preventable diseases.

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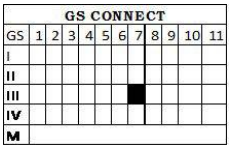
Dengue: The mosquito-borne disease can be lethal and kill up to 20% of those with severe dengue. WHO said an estimated 40% of the global population is at risk of dengue fever, which has been a growing threat for decades.

HIV: The epidemic continues to rage with nearly a million people every year dying of HIV/AIDS although enormous progress has been made in terms of testing and treatment. According to WHO, about 22 million people are currently getting treated for HIV, while others who are at risk of getting the infection are taking antiretroviral medications to prevent getting infected.

Zearalenone in cereals

In News



Zearalenone is a fungal toxin infesting cereals such as wheat, maize and barley. **It attacks crops while they are growing but can also develop when cereals are stored without being dried fully**. This month, a Journal of Food Science study detected zearalenone in wheat, rice, corn and oats from markets in Uttar Pradesh.

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India **does not impose maximum limits for zearalenone, though the European Union (EU) does**. Twenty-four of the U.P. samples exceeded the EU regulatory limits of 100-200 mcg/kg of cereals. Based on this, the authors say India should set limits on zearalenone in cereals.
- India regulates the levels of some of these, including aflatoxin, deoxynivalenol, ergot and patulin. The first three infest cereals, while patulin is found in apples. Each of these toxins has been associated with disease outbreaks.

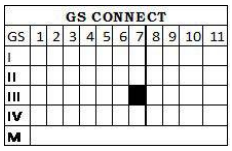
PEPPER IT WITH
FAO, NIKSHAY, HORIZON 2020, Ebola virus

Significance

Zearalenone behaves like **oestrogen, the female sex hormone**, and could cause endocrine disturbances in humans. Its nasty effects in animals, such as pigs, are documented. When fed with mouldy corn, pigs develop inflamed vaginas, infertility and other symptoms. In humans, the data are fuzzier. It is probably dangerous to humans too.

Charter of Patients' Rights

Why in News?



Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA), a national platform of patient groups and civil society organisations, urged Union Health Ministry to **finalise and adopt the charter of patient's rights the ministry had proposed in August 2018**.

The organisation alleged that despite enacting a National Clinical Establishments Act and subsequent rules, the government failed to notify the standards that are central to the implementation of the Act.

Background

In August 2018, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare announced its plans to implement the Charter of Patient's Rights developed by National Human Rights Commission after a public consultation. The draft was also placed in the public domain for inviting comments.

The draft charter, **which includes 17 rights with descriptions**, draws upon all relevant provisions, inspired by international charters and guided by national-level provisions.

Significance

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- According to the Supreme Court, all hospitals, both in the government and in the private sector, are duty-bound to provide basic emergency medical care to injured persons. Such care must be initiated without demanding payment or advance, and it should be provided irrespective of the patient's paying capacity. However, this right is violated most of the time by hospitals.
- It is expected that this charter will act as reference framework for the Union Government and State Governments to give complete protection to patients.
- The charter is especially important and an urgent need at the present juncture, **because India lacks effective regulation of the private medical sector**.
- It is also notable while the present government is actively promoting '**Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana**' wherein over ten crore households would be supported to seek care in private hospitals, in addition to providing land free of cost in tier 2 and tier 3 cities, there seems to be no corresponding push to ensure that patients are protected from violation of their rights when they access such care, according to JSA.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, **which represents "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations**. The Declaration was proclaimed by the UNGA in Paris on 10 December 1948

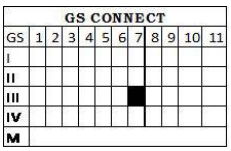
The **1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child** highlighted the unique nature of childhood and thus the application of rights pertaining specifically to children.

PEPPER IT WITH

Sugar tax, ICMR, END-TB Summit, Kochon prize, DASTAK campaign

Non-communicable diseases

Why in News?



Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) — mainly cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes and cancer — continue to be the top killers in the South-East Asia Region, claiming 8.5 million lives each year, **according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).**

Containing the NCDs has been listed by the WHO as its health goal for this year along with reducing mortality related to air pollution and climate change, global influenza pandemic etc.

PEPPER IT WITH

Polio, Leprosy, Rotavac, AMRIT pharmacy, Kala Azar

Significance

- One third of these deaths are premature and occur before the age of 70, affecting economically productive individuals. The **four 'major' NCDs** are caused, to a large extent, by four modifiable behavioural risk factors: tobacco use, unhealthy diet, insufficient physical activity and harmful use of alcohol.
- The NCDs disproportionately affect the poor, impoverish families, and place a growing burden on health care systems," noted the WHO.
- Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease, are collectively responsible for over 70% of all deaths worldwide, or 41 million people. These include 15 million people dying prematurely, aged between 30 and 69.

Fibre, whole grains

A study conducted world-wide has noted that consuming fibre and whole grains can reduce health risks from non-communicable diseases such as heart disease.

Eating fibre-rich foods reduces the incidence of coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and colorectal cancer by 16% to 24%. A higher fibre intake is also associated with lower bodyweight, systolic blood pressure and total cholesterol when compared with lower intake.

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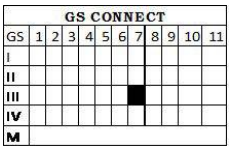
New Delhi superbug gene reaches the Arctic

Why in News?



In a significant find in the global spread of multi-drug resistant (MDR) bacteria, scientists have found a "**superbug**" gene — first detected in New Delhi over a decade back — in one of the last "pristine" places on Earth.

Details

- Soil samples taken in Svalbard — a Norwegian archipelago between mainland Norway and the North Pole — have now confirmed the spread of blaNDM-1 (called New Delhi Metallo-beta-lactamase-1) into the High Arctic.
- This **Antibiotic-Resistant Gene** (ARG), originally found in Indian clinical settings, conditionally provides **multi-drug resistance** (MDR) in microorganisms.
- Carried in the gut of animals and people, the new research said that blaNDM-1 and other ARGs were found in Arctic soils that were likely spread through the faecal matter of birds, other wildlife and human visitors to the area.

AMR

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the ability of a microorganism (like bacteria, viruses, and some parasites) to stop an antimicrobial (such as antibiotics, antivirals and antimalarials) from working against it. As a result, standard treatments become ineffective, infections persist and may spread to others.

PEPPER IT WITH
Tokyo 2020, RISECREEK, Blockchain technology, Meghalayan age, LEAP microscope

Concern

- New resistance mechanisms are emerging and spreading globally, threatening our ability to treat common infectious diseases, resulting in prolonged illness, disability, and death.
- Without effective antimicrobials for prevention and treatment of infections, medical procedures such as organ transplantation, cancer chemotherapy, diabetes management and major surgery (for example, caesarean sections or hip replacements) become very high risk.
- Antimicrobial resistance increases the cost of health care with lengthier stays in hospitals and more intensive care required.
- Antimicrobial resistance is putting the gains of the Millennium Development Goals at risk and endangers achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Present situation

- Resistance in Klebsiella pneumoniae – common intestinal bacteria that can cause life-threatening infections – to a last resort treatment (carbapenem antibiotics) has spread to all regions of the world.
- Resistance in E. coli to one of the most widely used medicines for the treatment of urinary tract infections (fluoroquinolone antibiotics) is very widespread. There are countries in many parts of the world where this treatment is now ineffective in more than half of patients.
- Treatment failure to the last resort of medicine for gonorrhoea (third generation cephalosporin antibiotics) has been confirmed in at least 10 countries.
- **Colistin is the last resort treatment for life-threatening infections caused by Enterobacteriaceae** which are resistant to carbapenems. Resistance to colistin has recently been detected in several countries and regions, making infections caused by such bacteria untreatable.

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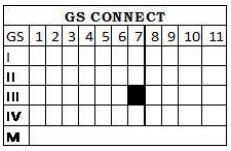
Rajasthan Zika strain is endemic to Asia



Why in News?

The Zika virus that infected 159 people in an outbreak in Rajasthan last year, could have been circulating in India for several years and is endemic to Asia, **according to a new study published in the journal Infection, Genetics and Evolution**.

During the latter half of 2018, India recorded its first major Zika outbreaks in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

Confers herd immunity

The finding that the outbreak was caused by an endemic virus is quite important. It suggests that people in the region may have been previously exposed to the virus, building herd immunity that may limit future outbreaks.

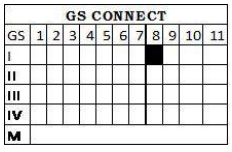
While this is good news, because it implies that **a portion of the population could be immune, it could also mean that Zika-related birth defects such as microcephaly** were occurring even before the virus was first detected in India.

Zika virus

PEPPER IT WITH
Wings BSNL, Oxytocin, REMOVE Debris, CSIR, GRACE-FO

- Zika virus is a **mosquito-borne flavivirus that was first identified in Uganda in 1947** in monkeys. It was later identified in humans in 1952 in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.
- In March 2015, Brazil reported a large outbreak of rash illness, soon identified as Zika virus infection, and in July 2015, found to be associated with **Guillain-Barré syndrome**.
- Zika virus infection during pregnancy is a cause of microcephaly and other congenital abnormalities in the developing fetus and newborn. Zika infection in pregnancy also results in pregnancy complications such as fetal loss, stillbirth, and preterm birth.
- Zika virus infection is also a trigger of Guillain-Barré syndrome, neuropathy and myelitis, particularly in adults and older children.
- The virus is primarily transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito from the Aedes genus, **mainly Aedes aegypti, in tropical and subtropical regions**. Aedes mosquitoes usually bite during the day, peaking during early morning and late afternoon/evening. **This is the same mosquito that transmits dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever**.
- Zika virus is also transmitted from mother to fetus during pregnancy, through sexual contact, transfusion of blood and blood products, and organ transplantation.

Earth's magnetic field



Why in News?

Earth's north magnetic pole has been skittering away from Canada and towards Siberia, driven by liquid iron sloshing within the planet's core. The magnetic pole is moving so quickly that it has forced the world's geomagnetism experts into a rare move.

Significance

1. Experts are set to **update the World Magnetic Model**, which describes the planet's magnetic field and underlies all modern navigation, from the systems that steer ships at sea to Google Maps on smartphones.
2. The most recent version of the model came out in 2015 and was supposed to last until 2020 — but the magnetic field is changing so rapidly that researchers have to fix the model now.

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3. The problem lies partly with the moving pole and partly with other shifts deep within the planet. Liquid churning in Earth's core generates most of the magnetic field, which varies over time as the deep flows change.
4. In 2016, for instance, part of the magnetic field temporarily accelerated deep under northern South America and the eastern Pacific Ocean**. Satellites such as the European Space Agency's Swarm mission tracked the shift**.
5. By early 2018, the World Magnetic Model was in trouble. Researchers from NOAA and the British Geological Survey in Edinburgh had been doing their annual check of how well the model was capturing all the variations in Earth's magnetic field. They realized that **it was so inaccurate** that it was about to exceed the acceptable limit for navigational errors.

Reason

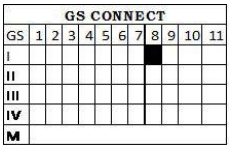
- Geomagnetic pulses, like the one that happened in 2016, might be traced back to **'hydromagnetic' waves arising from deep in the core** and the fast motion of the north magnetic pole could be linked to a high-speed jet of liquid iron beneath Canada.
- The jet seems to be smearing out and weakening the magnetic field beneath Canada which means that Canada is essentially losing a magnetic tug-of-war with Siberia.
- The location of the north magnetic pole appears to be governed by two large-scale patches of magnetic field, one beneath Canada and one beneath Siberia.

PEPPER IT WITH

IMD, Lunar eclipse, KremPuri, International geological congress, CCEA

Polar vortex

Why in News?



Weather experts are predicting an extremely cold January and February for the northeastern United States, much of northern Europe and parts of Asia. **The reason being given is the polar vortex**.

In this decade, the polar vortex has also been blamed on extremely cold weather in the United States in 2014 and the infamous '**Beast from the East'**, the blast of cold weather that blew from Siberia towards western Europe and the UK in February and March of 2018.

Polar vortex

- It is described as a **whirling cone of low pressure over the poles that is strongest in the winter months due to the increased temperature** contrast between the polar regions and the mid-latitudes, such as the US and Europe.
- The polar vortex spins in the **stratosphere**, a layer of the atmosphere 10-48 km above the ground and above the troposphere, where most familiar weather patterns develop.
- Usually, when the vortex is strongest, cold air is less-likely to plunge deep into North America or Europe. In other words, it forms a wall that protects the mid-latitudes from cold Arctic air. But occasionally, the polar vortex is disrupted and weakens, due to wave energy propagating upward from the lower atmosphere.

Cyclone Pabuk

A '**yellow alert'** was issued in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as Cyclone Pabuk made its way towards the archipelago. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places from this evening.

The cyclone, which originated over the Gulf of Thailand, has moved west-northwestwards with a speed of 10 kmph and lay centred over Thailand and neighbourhood.

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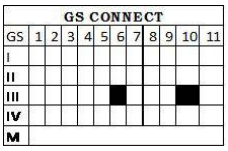
- When this happens, the stratosphere warms sharply **in an event known as sudden stratospheric warming**, in just a few days, miles above the Earth's surface.
- The warming weakens the polar vortex, shifting its location somewhat south of the pole or, in some instances, 'splitting' the vortex up into 'sister vortices'.
- The split higher up in the atmosphere can give rise to both, sudden and delayed effects, much of which involves declining temperatures and extreme winter weather in the eastern US along with northern and western Europe.

PEPPER IT WITH
Malpelo plate, Zealandia, Ocean currents, Saraswati river, KS Valdiya committee, Cylonewarnig system

- A sudden stratospheric warming also leads to a warm Arctic not only in the stratosphere but also in the troposphere as well. A warmer Arctic, in turn, favours more severe winter weather in the Northern Hemisphere mid-latitudes including the eastern US.

Indian Science Congress

Why in News?



Indian Prime Minister inaugurated the **106th Indian Science Congress, at Lovely Professional University in Jalandhar, Punjab**.

The five-day-long congress, involved over a hundred conferences and events of significance to both science and technology.

Highlights

- Inaugurated on the 2nd day of ISC, **Children's Science Congress** targeted 10-17 years of children for carrying forward innovation and research in science to a next level.
- On the third day of ISC, two-day **Science Communicators' Meet- 2019** was inaugurated, where the main aim was to brainstorm ways of dissemination of scientific information and inculcation of scientific attitude among masses.
- '**Women's Science Congress' at ISC** showcased the contribution of women in Science, Technology and the Society. Here, renowned women scientists and leaders from Government, academia and industry, who are decision-makers delivered lectures and participated in panel discussions for promoting talent among women.

15th PravasiBharatiya Divas

In reverence to the sentiments of the larger diaspora community to participate in Kumbh Mela and Republic Day celebrations, the 15th PravasiBharatiya Divas Convention was organized from 21 to 23 January 2019 instead of 9th January. The Convention was **held at Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh**.

PravasiBharatiya Divas Convention is the flagship event of the Government and provides an important platform to engage and connect with the overseas Diaspora. The theme of PBD 2019 was "**Role of Indian Diaspora in building a New India**."

- Other major attraction of ISC-2019 was **'Pride of India' Expo** organized separately under six gigantic stalls specially raised at LPU Campus. Exhibition organization was to popularize science amongst the youth to further prepare brilliant scientists and innovators of tomorrow. Major exhibitors included CSIR, ISRO, DAE, ICMR, DST, DRDO, ICAR and more.

PEPPER IT WITH
Neglected diseases, Mount Shindake, Lymphatic filariasis, El Niño

- The theme for the Congress this year was 'Future India – Science and Technology'. Through the event, the organisers at the Indian Science Congress Association and Lovely Professional University hope to stimulate scientific research efforts and raise scientific temper among the researchers and students in attendance.

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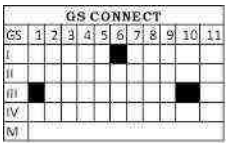
WEF report titled Future of Consumption in Fast-Growth Consumer Market- India

Why in News?



According to the World Economic Forum report, India is on the cusp of a tremendous opportunity for both economic progress and improvement in the general wellbeing of its citizens. India's annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate is 7.5%, **a momentum that is expected to sustain over the next decade**.

Domestic consumption, which powers 60% of the GDP today, **is expected to grow into a $6 trillion opportunity by 2030**. This consumption growth will be supported by a 1.4 billion strong population that is younger than that of any other major economy.

Summary of the Report

- Household savings have historically been high as thrifty and cautious Indian families put away **more than a fifth of their incomes for a rainy day**. This buffer provides support to domestic consumption expenditure even through challenging cycles in economic activity.
- The vision for the future of consumption in India is anchored in the growth of the upper-middle income and high income segments, **which will grow from being one in four households today, to one in two households by 2030**.
- At the same time, India will also lift nearly 25 million households out of poverty, to reduce the share of households below the poverty line to 5%, down from 15% presently. Thus, **India represents a relatively broad-based pattern of growth and benefit sharing**.
- Over the next decade, **one of the biggest changes in India will be the coming of age of liberalization's true children** – the nearly 700 million people born through the late 1980s to the 2000s. These individuals will have grown up in a more open and confident India and will not carry the cultural or economic baggage of their predecessors.
- One of the most challenging and exciting implications for companies in India is the opportunity to shape consumption patterns – in terms of categories consumed, brands purchased or ways of accessing products and information. **Companies will need to look beyond Western assumptions and rules of doing business**.
- A massive increase in internet penetration will lead to more than a billion internet users in India by 2030. Online connectivity, and the resultant access to information, is proving to be a key driver of differences in aspiration and the desire to spend and upgrade consumption, even among people at similar income levels.
- Those who are more connected have a keener sense of what is "desirable" and are willing to invest in more comfortable living – including a greater spend on household durables and services. **As a vast majority of India is connected over the next decade, this pattern will become a driver of overall consumption growth**.

Global Risk Report-2019

The 14th edition of global risk report (GRR) was **published recently by WEF**. The highlights of the report are:

- During 2018, macroeconomic risks moved into sharper focus. Financial market volatility increased and the headwinds facing the global economy intensified.
- Geopolitical and geo-economic tensions are rising among the world's major powers. These tensions represent the most urgent global risks at present.
- Environmental risks continue to dominate the results of annual Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS).
- Rapidly growing cities and ongoing effects of climate change are making more people vulnerable to rising sea levels.

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- The coming decade presents numerous opportunities for businesses to serve the growing needs and demands in India. Richer, younger, more confident and more connected consumers will pave the way for tremendous innovation in products, services and business models.
- To unlock the full potential of the opportunities and ensure equitable growth, the private sector and governments will need to proactively address **three critical challenges**:
  1. **Skill development and future-focused employment generation** will be critical to direct the potential of India's young workforce.
  2. **Social and economic inclusiveness of rural India** is also a key imperative, especially as connectedness creates aspirations. Innovative efforts by businesses and governments, like the impetus to cashless, digital transactions, can accelerate the inclusion of rural India.
  3. A broad set of stakeholders will need to evaluate and respond to the **challenges of creating a sustainable and healthy future** through better access to healthcare, reduction in pollution and better urban planning to reduce congestion.

Policy initiatives that enable a positive macroeconomic environment in India:

i. Easing of foreign direct investment (FDI) norms:

a) Retail: 100% foreign ownership for single-branded retail and marketplace model e-commerce, 51% foreign ownership in multi-brand retail subject to minimum of $100 million investment and approval by individual states

b) Food: 100% in food processing, 100% in food retailing provided food is manufactured and/or produced in India

c) Telecom: 100% FDI, 49% through automatic route

d) Automotive and automobiles: 100% FDI

e) Private-sector banking: 49% through automatic route

f) Launched Foreign Investment Facilitation Portal (FIFP) as an online interface for single window clearance of FDI applications that need government approval

LocalCircles report on challenges faced by start- ups in India

According to a report by citizens engagement forum LocalCircles, A large number of start-ups, small and medium enterprises view corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies, securing loans as well as funding as major challenges in 2019.The report is based **on responses from over 15,000 start-ups, SMEs and entrepreneurs**.

Several start-ups and angel investors have raised concerns over notices received from the authorities related to taxation of angel funds.

ii. Make in India

Launched in 2014 to encourage global and domestic companies to manufacture in India and to create jobs and enhance skills in 25 sectors of the economy. Key initiatives include de-licensing and deregulation to increase speed and transparency of doing business, thrust to infrastructure via smart cities and industrial clusters in industrial corridors with connectivity and eased investment caps and controls in industrial sectors such as defence, construction, railways, among others

iii. Start-up India

Aimed at the continued growth of innovative start-ups across sectors (e.g. manufacturing, rural) and creation of a vibrant entrepreneurship ecosystem, with incremental gainful employment for urban and rural population.

iv. Goods and Services Tax (GST)

v. Digital India

Aims to provide internet connectivity to 250,000 villages. Other initiatives include provision of public internet access, e-governance, electronic delivery of government services, digital lockers,

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digital signatures, medical records, digitized government records, rural business process outsourcing centres, etc.

vi. Smart Cities Mission

Launched in 2015 to promote cities that provide core infrastructure, decent quality of life, a clean and sustainable environment and application of "smart" solutions to their citizens; the focus is on sustainable and inclusive development and creating a replicable model for other cities to follow.

Way Forward

India will continue on its path as one of the world's most dynamic consumption environments, propelled by five major drivers: income growth; steady and dispersed urbanization; favourable demographics; technology and innovation; and evolving consumer attitudes. Through shared accountability, both the private and public sector can ensure an inclusive and responsible future of consumption in India.

PEPPER IT WITH

UN's report, the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019, SFIO, Size India Project

Tokenisation of card transactions by RBI

Why in News?

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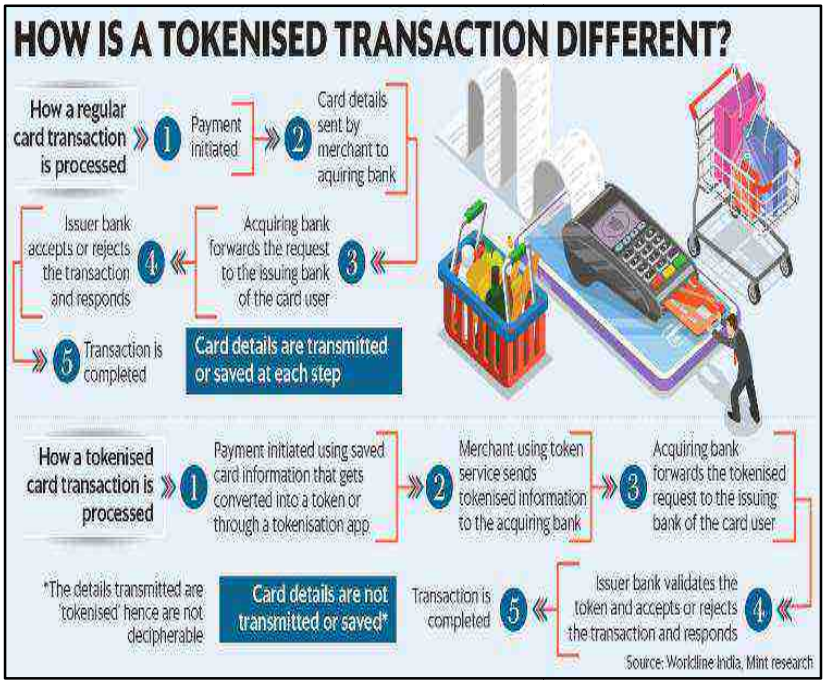
RBI recently issued guidelines on tokenisation for various card transactions including from debit and credit cards.

It has permitted card networks to offer card tokenisation services to all third-party mobile appproviders **in a bid to make digital transactions more secure and less prone to hacking-related frauds**.

What is Tokenisation

- Tokenisation refers to replacement of actual card details with a unique alternate code, which is referred to as the "token". **This token is unique for each combination of card, token requester and device**.
- Tokenisation devalues and depersonalises card data. The token is used to perform card transactions in **contactless mode at Point of Sale (**POS**)** terminals, Quick Response (QR) code payments, etc.
- The **token is more like an encryption key or a hash**. "How it usually works is that the token is generated by a container app. This generated token is shared with the merchant using modes like QR code or NFC (near-field communication) or server to server.



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- Tokenisation is the foundational aspect of taking payment security and safety to the next level by devaluing data and replacing payment credentials with tokens. According to a study, global mobile payments are expected to top $3.3 trillion by 2024, **at a CAGR of 60% between 2018 and 2024**.
- This method is being used only for card transactions because other forms of payments like UPI or Netbanking or mobile banking has been designed keeping in mind the current technology while card designs used older technology and need an additional layer of security.

PEPPER IT WITH

Mastercard Digital Enablement Services, Additional Factor of Authentication, Quick Response Code, Magnetic Secure Transmission based contactless transactions

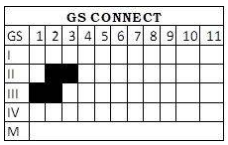
- A card holder may use these services by registering the card on the token requestor's app only with explicit customer consent through additional factor authentication and not by way of a forced / default / automatic selection of check box or radio button. **No charges can be recovered from thecustomer for availing the service**.

Conclusion

Token or no token, it is important to maintain basic hygiene while using digital payments. Do not share sensitive information like card details, security PIN or one-time passwords with anyone. Also, be cautious while using cards for payments on lesser known or untrustworthy platforms.

External Commercial Borrowings (ECB)

Why in News?



The Reserve Bank recently came out with a new policy for overseas borrowings, allowing all eligible borrowers for raising External Commercial Borrowings (ECB) **up to $750 million or equivalent per financial year under the automatic route** replacing the existing sector wise limits.

The "liberalisation/rationalisation" in the new framework ECB and rupee-denominated bonds has been done to further improve the ease of doing business.

Details

- It relaxed norms for external commercial borrowings (ECBs) by reducing the mandatory hedging provision to 70 per cent from the current 100 per cent.The relaxed norms will apply to the ECBs with a maturity period between three and five years.
- The list of eligible borrowers has been expanded. **All entities eligible to receive foreign direct investment can borrow under the ECB framework**. The new framework takes immediate effect.
- Any entity who is a resident of a country **which is financial action task force compliant, will be treated as a recognised lender**. This change increases lending options and allows various new lenders in ECB space while strengthening the anti-money laundering or combating the financing of terrorism framework.

- ❖ **Credit Default Swap** is a credit derivative that can be used to transfer credit risk from the investor exposed to the risk (called protection buyer) to an investor willing to take risk (called protection seller).
- ❖ **Hedge funds** are the lot of investible (free floating capital) capital that move swiftly towards the more profitable sector of an economy.
- ❖ **Initial Public Offering** (IPO) is an event of share issuing when a company comes up with its share/securities issued for the first time.

- The minimum average maturity period (MAMP) has been kept at three years for all ECBs, irrespective of the amount of borrowing in lieu of various layers of MAMPs as at present, except the borrowers specifically permitted in the circular to borrow for a shorter period.

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- The common negative list of end-uses for which ECBs cannot be raised or utilised remains unchanged. An eligible borrower cannot raise ECBs for real-estate activities, capital market investments, equity investments etc.

What is ECB

ECB is basically a **loan availed by an Indian entity from a nonresident lender**. In the post reform period, ECBs have emerged a major form of foreign capital like FDI and FII.

ECBs includes commercial bank loans, buyers' credit, suppliers' credit, securitized instruments such as Floating Rate Notes and Fixed Rate Bonds etc., credit from official export credit agencies and commercial borrowings from Multilateral Financial Institutions.

Advantages of ECBs

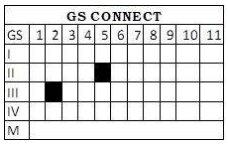
1. ECBs provide opportunity to borrow large volume of funds.
2. The funds are available for relatively long term.
3. Interest rate are also lower compared to domestic funds.
4. ECBs are in the form of foreign currencies. Hence, they enable the corporate to have foreign currency to meet the import of machineries etc.
5. Corporate can raise ECBs from internationally recognised sources such as banks, export credit agencies, international capital markets etc.

PEPPER IT WITH

Track I, II and III ECB, SEZ, Overseas Borrowings, European Central Bank, Limited Liability Partnership, P-Notes

National Bench of Goods and services tax

In News



The Union Cabinet recently approved the creation of National Bench of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) which will be situated at New Delhi.

Chapter XVIII of the CGST Act provides for the Appeal and Review Mechanism for dispute resolution under the GST Regime. Section 109 of this Chapter under CGST Act empowers the Central Government to constitute, on the recommendation of Council, an Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by the Appellate Authority or the Revisional Authority.

Details:

- GSTAT is the forum of second appeal in GST laws and the **first common forum of dispute resolution between Centre and States**.
- The appeals against the orders in first appeals issued by the Appellate Authorities under the Central and State GST Acts lie before the GST Appellate Tribunal, which is common under the Central as well as State GST Acts.
- Being a common forum, GST

Input Credit under GST

Input Tax Credit means reducing the taxes paid on inputs from taxes to be paid on output. **When any supply of services or goods is supplied to a taxable person, the GST charged is known as Input Tax**.The concept is not entirely new as it already existed under the pre-GST indirect taxes regime (service tax, VAT and excise duty). Now its scope has been widened under GST.

Earlier, it was not possible to claim input tax credit for Central Sales Tax, Entry Tax, Luxury Tax and other taxes. In addition, manufacturers and service providers could not claim the Central Excise duty.Input Tax Credit can't be applied to all type of inputs, each state or a country can have different rules and regulations. Input Tax Credit is also viable to a dealer who has purchased good to resale.

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Appellate Tribunal will ensure that there is uniformity in redressal of disputes arising under GST, and therefore, in implementation of GST across the country.

Composition

GSTAT shall be presided over by its President and shall consist of one Technical Member (Centre) and one Technical Member (State).

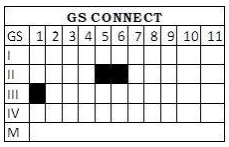
Reasons Behind its formation

Since GST was launched in July 2017, the state-level authorities of **advance ruling** (AARs) gave divergent orders on applications dealing with the same provision of the GST Act. Besides, some of the rulings have upended conventional tax principles established in the earlier regimes.

PEPPER IT WITH
Advance rulings, GST Law, GST council, HSN codes

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojna

Why in News?



The finance ministry has asked the banks to review all loans sanctioned under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY or Mudra loan scheme), **as the non-performing assets (NPA) have crossed Rs 11,000 crore within three years of the launch of the scheme**.

Need for the Review

- In order to push the scheme, there had been an **overemphasis on banks to meet loan disbursal targets**. In the race to meet the target, the credentials of loan-seekers were not being properly verified and in many instances, loans were being given without any collateral or security, making it difficult for the banks to go after defaulters.
- Recently, former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan in his report to Parliament had mentioned that while non-performing assets stemming from corporate loans are a current problem, the **government should focus on sources of the next crisis**. In particular, he warned, the government should refrain from setting ambitious credit targets or waiving loans.
- He called out Mudra loans as those with potential credit risks. He particularly flagged the culture of meeting targets by rushing through due process and then offering populist sops such as mass waiver of loans. In his note, he also mentioned to examine the **kisan credit cardcredit guarantee scheme** for the MSME run by the SIDBI.
- The RBI has already flagged its concerns regarding the bad loans to the government.

MUDRA Card

MUDRA Card **provides working capital facility as a cash credit arrangement**. It is a **RuPay debit card** issued against the MUDRA loan account for working capital portion of the loan. The borrower can make use of MUDRA card in multiple withdrawal and credit facilities, so as to manage the working capital limit efficiently and keep the interest burden minimum. **MUDRA card can be operated across the country** for withdrawal of cash from any ATM / micro ATM and also make payment through any 'Point of Sale' machines.

About Mudra Yojna

- Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) is a scheme launched in 2015 for providing **loans upto 10 lakh to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises**. These loans are classified as MUDRA loans under PMMY.
- These loans are given by Commercial Banks, RRBs, Small Finance Banks, Cooperative Banks, MFIs and NBFCs. The borrower can approach any of the lending institutions or can apply online through portal.

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- Under the aegis of PMMY, MUDRA has created three products namely 'Shishu', 'Kishore' and 'Tarun' to signify the stage of growth / development and funding needs of the beneficiary micro unit / entrepreneur and also provide a reference point for the next phase of graduation / growth.
  1. **Shishu:** Covering loans upto Rs 50,000
  2. **Kishore:** Covering loans above 50,000 and upto 5,00,000
  3. **Tarun:** Covering loans above Rs 5,00,000 and upto Rs 10,00,000

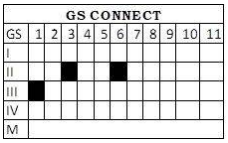
PEPPER IT WITH
Debt Recovery Tribunal, Kisan Credit Card, Credit Guarantee Scheme, Government E-Marketplace

Some Facts Related to Mudra Yojna:

- Almost **13 crore people** were given loans under the scheme till May 2018.
- The total sanctioned amount of loan under Mudra Yojana was around Rs 6 lakh crore.
- The average of sanctioned loans under Mudra Yojana comes at **Rs 46,530** while that of disbursed amount is Rs 45,034. This amount could not be considered enough to launch a start up that could provide jobs to others.
- This amount is also much lower than the average per capita income of Indians - **Rs 1.11 lakh for 2017-18**, according to advance estimates of the Central Statistics Organisation (CSO).
- The number of large-sized loans or disbursements from the banks exceeding Rs 5 lakh - that can generate employment - are mere 1.3 per cent under Mudra Yojana.
- There was no record for employment generated by the loans disbursed under Mudra Yojana.

NITIAyog 2.0

Why in News?



In a paper titled '**Towards India's new fiscal federalism**,' Vijay Kelkar (Former Finance Commission Chairman) has pitched for **setting up of a 'new NITI Aayog'** and giving it the responsibility for allocating capital and revenue grants to the States.

He argued that replacing the Planning Commission, which was promoting regionally-balanced growth in India, with the NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Aayog, a think tank, **has reduced the government's policy reach**.

Details

- It is desirable that a functionally-distinct entity such as the new NITI Aayog or NITI Aayog 2.0 be put to use to do the job at hand related to the structural issues, including **removal of regional imbalances in the economy**.
- The Niti Aayog 2.0 shall be a permanent invitee of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), **just like the Planning Commission**. This is to enable it to contribute to the highest level of policy making with knowledge-based advice and the national and long term perspective on the policy proposals.
- Kelkar argued for NITI Aayog 2.0 to be responsible for **allocating development or transformational capital or revenue grants to the States**. It need not be involved with the approval of the State's annual expenditure programmes.
- NITI Aayog 2.0 should strive to be a think-tank with 'praxis' possessing considerable financial muscle and devote its energies to outline coherent medium and long term strategy and corresponding investment resources for transforming India.

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- According to the study, new NITI Aayog will annually need the **resources of around 1.5 to 2 per cent of the GDP** to provide suitable grants to the states for mitigating the development imbalances.

Background

Socialist-era Planning Commission was replaced by think-tank NITI Aayog on **January 1, 2015**.The erstwhile PC was abolished in the spirit of cooperative federalism and a new think tank 'Niti Aayog' was created to facilitate grass root planning and help the government in policy making.

By its very design, NITI Aayog has differed with its predecessor- the PC. The former does not have powers to allocate funds but could only make recommendations to the government. Funding is the sole purview of the finance ministry, unlike with the Planning Commission, **which could also allocate funds**. Secondly, it couldn't impose policies for state governments to follow, again something where the Planning Commission had a strong say.

Way Forward

The new NITI Aayog **should not take the form of the erstwhile Planning Commission**. It should be tasked with preparing roadmaps for transformation of the country and should take forward the idea of cooperative federalism, for which it needs to reach out to state governments to resolve issues that get stuck at various Central levels. It should focus on covering structural issues including regional imbalances in the economy.

The NITI Aayog **which is chaired by the Prime Minister** comprises of the following:

a) **Governing Council** comprising the Chief Ministers of all the States and Lt. Governors of Union Territories.
b) **Regional Councils** which is formed to address specific issues and contingencies impacting more than one state or a region. These are formed for a specified tenure. It is convened by the PM and comprises of the CMs of States and Lt. Governors of UTs in the region and is chaired by the Chairperson of the NITI Aayog or his nominee.

The full-time organizational framework comprises of:

i. **Vice-Chairperson**: To be appointed by the PM
ii. **Members:** Full-time
iii. **Part-time members**: Maximum of 2 on a rotational basisfrom leading universities research organizations and other relevant institutions.
iv. **Ex Officio members**: Maximum of 4 members of the Union Council of Ministers to be nominated by the PM.
v. **Chief Executive Officer**: To be appointed by the PM for a fixed tenure, in the rank of Secretary to the Government of India.
vi. **Secretariat** as deemed necessary.

Conclusion

Indian economy today is on a growth turnpike, not very different from the growth miracles experienced by Asian tigers as well as China in earlier decades.India's democracy has proved to be **sine qua non** for effectively formulating key economic policies and conducting policy reforms in a country that is so diverse.**It needs to focus to transform an unequal society into a fair and modern economy which can ensure welfare of all citizens**.

PEPPER IT WITH

National institute of public finance and policy, One nation one card policy for public transport, Team India Hub, Knowledge and Innovation Hub

Bharatmala Taxable bonds

In News

A draft self prospectus (DSP)/offer document has been filed with the stock exchanges and SEBI to raise **Bharatmala Taxable Bonds through public issue with shelf limit of Rs10,000 crore**.

GS CONNECT

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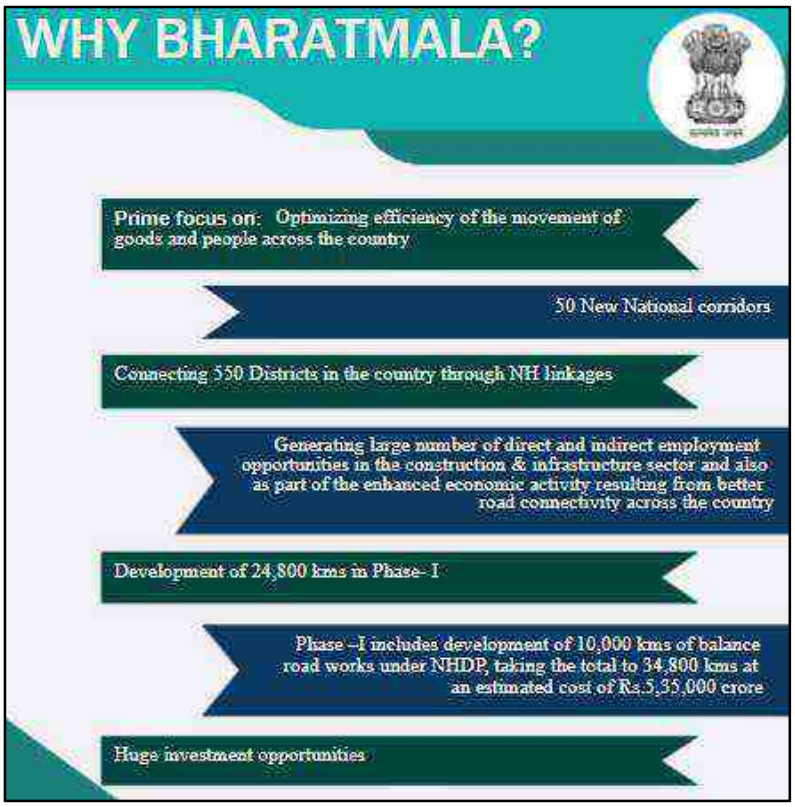
- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) will to raise Rs10,000 crore through Bharatmala Taxable Bonds in the ongoing financial year.
- It will have **maturity period of 3,5 and 10 years**. There is no lock-in period in the case of NHAI **quasi judicial bonds** and investors can sell these bonds in the secondary market after allotment.
- The government has approved raising of Rs62,000 crore by NHAI in 2018-19.

Panda Bonds

A Panda bond is a **Chinese renminbi-denominated** bond from a non-Chinese issuer, sold in the People's Republic of China. Recently, the Pakistan cabinet has approved the issuance of these bonds to raise funds from the Chinese capital Market

BharatmalaPariyojana

- The development of any nation depends on the transportation networks and the ways in which they are being maintained.



- BharatmalaPariyojana is a new umbrella program **for the highways sector** that focuses on optimizing efficiency of freight and passenger movement across the country by bridging critical infrastructure gaps through effective interventions like development of Economic Corridors, Inter Corridors and Feeder Routes, National Corridor Efficiency Improvement, Border and International connectivity roads, Coastal and Port connectivity roads and Green-field expressways.
- It includes development of about 65,000 km of border roads, international connectivity roads, coastal roads, port connectivity roads, ring roads, among others. Phase 1 of the**Pariyojana** is period of five years from 2017-18 to 2021-22.
- It focuses on optimising the efficiency of freight and passenger movement across the country by **bridging critical infrastructure gaps through effective interventions**. All key aspects of the scheme is managed by the Road Transport and Highways Ministry of the country.

KEY FEATURES OF THE SCHEME

Improving the quality of roads - The launch of the scheme has been done for bring a new wave of development in the nation in the form of well-maintained and developed roads. Under this project, the construction of roads, in all parts of the nation will be undertaken.

Integrated scheme - The Bharatmala is the name that is given to the road development and it will include many other related schemes as well. With the completion of all the schemes, the overall success of the scheme will be guaranteed.

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Segmentation in phases - Due to the sheer magnitude and spread of the scheme, it will be divided into seven distinct phases. As of now, the first phase in under construction.

Constriction on a daily basis - To finish the first phase in time, the respective department has made efforts of constructing at least 18 km of path on a daily basis. To beat the clock, continued efforts are being made to raise it to 30 km/day.

Different categories of road construction - It has been highlighted in the official draft of the scheme that to provide better connectivity, the construction of various categories of roads will be undertaken.

PEPPER IT WITH

NHAI, Sagarmala, Viability gap funding, Public Private Partnership

Multi-source of finding - One source will not be enough for funding a mammoth project. Thus, the government will have to depend on other sources for generating adequate money to meet the expenses.

Committee on Deeping of Digital Payments

Why in News?

GS CONNECT

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With a view **to encourage digitisation of payments and enhance financial inclusion through digitisation**, the Reserve Bank of India has constituted a High-Level 5 memberCommittee on Deepening of Digital Payments under the chairmanship of **Shri Nandan Nilekani** (former Chairman, Unique Identification Authority of India).

The Committee will submit its report within a period of 90 days from the date of its first meeting.

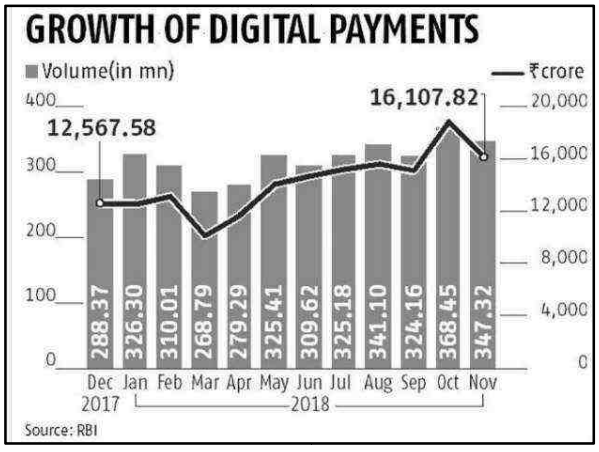
Aber

The central banks of the UAE and Saudi Arabia have launched a **common digital currency called "Aber",** which will be used in financial settlements between the two countries through Blockchains and Distributed Ledgers technologies.

Through this digital currency, both the United Arab Emirates Central Bank (UAECB) and the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA) are studying the impact on the improvement and reduction of remittance costs and the assessments of risks.

Terms of Reference of the Committee:

- To **review the existing status of digitisation of payments in the country**, identify the current gaps in the ecosystem and suggest ways to bridge them;
- To assess the current levels of digital payments in financial inclusion;
- To undertake **cross country analyses** with a view to identify best practices that can be adopted in our country to accelerate digitisation of the economy and financial inclusion through greater use of digital payments;
- Suggest measures to **strengthen the safety and security of digital payments**;
- To provide a road map for increasing customer confidence and trust while accessing financial services through digital modes;
- To suggest a **medium-term strategy** for deepening of digital payments.



Why is it Required?

- The idea is to encourage digitisation of payments and enhancing of financial inclusion through digitisation.
- The payments space has seen much of change in the past year, on rules and in other aspects, from data localisation to

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wallet interoperability.

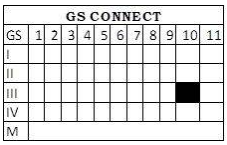
- **Supreme Court's Aadhaar judgment** which barred private companies from using that database for paperless verification of customers has lead banks and wallet companies unable to perform KYC verification and unable to digitally enroll customers.
- RBI needs to come up with a solution for **electronic Know Your Customer (KYC)** norms.
- The country's affinity for cash remains strong, despite the massive demonetisation exercise. The estimate is cash transactions form 90 per cent of the total in volume and 60-70 per cent in terms of value.
- Payments through all electronic forms such as debit and credit cards, mobile wallets, real-time gross settlement (**RTGS**), national electronic funds transfer (**NEFT**) and Unified Payments Interface (**UPI**) have seen a huge rise over the last few years.

PEPPER IT WITH

Ombudsman scheme for digital transactions, Limited liability of customers to payment entities, Unified Payment Interface, Payment and settlement system Act

Global Economy Watch report

In News



Global Economy Watch report has been released by London based multinational professional services network- **PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)**.

It is a short publication that looks at the trends and issues affecting the global economy and details its latest projections for the world's leading economies.

Three Themes of 2019:

Global growth will slow; The global economy enjoyed a mini-boom between the end of 2016 and early 2018, when growth picked up in most major economies. This phase is now over, and in 2019 we expect growth to moderate from an estimated 2.8% in 2018 to around 2.3% in 2019.

Workers and wages will come to the fore; Labour markets in advanced economies are likely to continue to tighten, even if job creation slows.

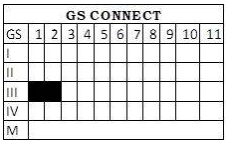
Trade conflicts will deepen; We expect trade wars to continue in 2019. This is likely to generate further uncertainty for policymakers and businesses.

India and the Report

- **India is likely to surpass the United Kingdom** in the world's largest economy rankings in 2019. It projects real GDP growth of 1.6 per cent for the UK, 1.7 per cent for France and 7.6 per cent for India in 2019.
- According to World Bank data, India became the world's sixth largest economy in 2017 surpassing France and was likely to go past the UK which stood at the fifth position.
- India's growth will be supported through further realisation of efficiency gains from the newly adopted GST and policy impetus expected in the first year of a new government.
- India is the fastest growing large economy in the world, with an enormous population, favourable demographics and high catch-up potential due to low initial GDP per head.

Debt to GDP ratio of Centre and states

Why in News?



According to the Status Paper on Government Debt for 2017-18, the **Centre's total debt as a percentage of GDP reduced to 46.5% in 2017-18 from 47.5% in 2014**. The total debt of the States, however, has been rising over this period, to 24% in 2017-18, and is estimated to be 24.3% in 2018-19.

Details of the Report

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- In absolute terms, the Centre's total debt saw a 45% increase, while that of the States saw an increase of almost 63% in the same period.
- **States do have some fiscal space to reduce their borrowing** in the coming years due to the large cash surpluses they hold.
- State governments as a group have exhibited a tendency to hold large cash surpluses/investments in Cash Balance Investment Account on a consistent basis while at the same time resorting to market borrowings to finance their GFD (Gross Fiscal Deficit).
- This indicates scope for reducing the quantum of market borrowings by State governments in case they bring down their cash surpluses (parked as investment in treasury bills of the Central government).

What is Laissez-Faire

Laissez-faire is an economic theory from the 18th century that **opposed any government intervention in business affairs**. The driving principle behind laissez-faire, a French term that translates as "leave alone" (literally, "let you do"), is that the less the government is involved in the economy, the better off business will be – and by extension, society as a whole. Laissez-faire economics are a key part of free market capitalism. **John Meynard Keynes was a prominent critique of laissez faire economics**.

Why States are lacking behind

Outstanding **liabilities of States have increased sharply during 2015-16 and 2016-17, following the issuance of UDAY bonds** in these two years, which was reflected in an increase in liability-GDP ratio from 21.7% in 2015 to 23.4% in 2016 and further to 23.8% in 2017.

Ratings agencies have predicted that the combined fiscal deficit of the States to be 3.2% of GDP in financial year 2020 (higher than the prescribed 3%), and it begins to look increasingly unlikely that the States will meet their 20% debt-GDP ratio target by 2023.

N.K. Singh Committee

The N.K. Singh-headed FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management) Review Committee report had recommended the ratio to be **40% for the Centre and 20% for the States, respectively, by 2023**.

PEPPER IT WITH

Open Market Operations, FRBMA, Gross Fiscal Deficit, core of the core schemes

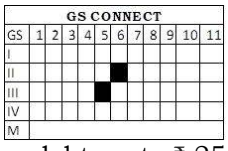
It said that the 60% consolidated Central and State debt limit was consistent with international best practices and was an essential parameter to attract a better rating from the credit ratings agencies.

Conclusion

While the Centre is moving in the right direction in terms of meeting the N.K. Singh Committee recommendations on public debt, the States are moving in the opposite direction. The increase in the debt stock at the State level is worrying because they don't have the wherewithal to service the debt if it goes beyond a certain point. They could then start getting into a debt trap situation.

U.K. Sinha Panel

Why in News?



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up an expert committee under former Sebi chairman U.K. Sinha to suggest long-term solutions for the economic and financial sustainability of the MSME sector.

The panel was announced after RBI allowed a one-time restructuring of existing debt up to ₹ 25 crore for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) which have defaulted on payment but the loans given to them have continued to be classified as standard assets.

Details

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- The eight-member committee will also examine the factors affecting the timely and adequate availability of finance to the sector and will submit its report by the end of June 2019.
- The panel has been asked to review the current institutional framework in place to support the MSME sector and study the impact of the recent economic reforms on the sector and "identify the structural problems affecting its growth".
- To study the global best practices with respect to MSMEs and recommend its adoption in India, wherever appropriate, and review the existing MSME-focused policies and its impact on the sector are among the issues which the panel will look into.
- The U.K. Sinha-led MSME panel has also been asked to propose measures for leveraging technology in accelerating growth of the sector and suggest long-term solutions for the economic and financial sustainability of the MSME sector.

Gold Monetisation Scheme

RBIrecently made changes in the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS). Apart from individual and joint depositors, the scheme **could now be availed by charitable institutions**, the central government, the state government or any other entity owned by the central government or the state government.

In 2015, the government launched the GMS to mobilise the gold held by households and institutions in the country.The scheme allows banks' customers to deposit their idle gold holdings for a fixed period in return for interest.

What are Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises?

Definitions of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises: In accordance with the provision of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006 the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) are classified in two Classes:

1. **Manufacturing Enterprises**: The enterprises engaged in the manufacture or production of goods pertaining to any industry specified in the first schedule to the industries (Development and regulation) Act, 1951) or employing plant and machinery in the process of value addition to the final product having a distinct name or character or use. The Manufacturing Enterprise are **defined in terms of investment in Plant & Machinery.**

Manufacturing Sector	
Enterprises	**Investment in plant & machinery**
Micro Enterprises	Does not exceed twenty five lakh rupees
Small Enterprises	More than twenty five lakh rupees but does not exceed five crore rupees
Medium Enterprises	More than five crore rupees but does not exceed ten crore rupees
Service Sector	
Enterprises	**Investment in equipments**
Micro Enterprises	Does not exceed ten lakh rupees:
Small Enterprises	More than ten lakh rupees but does not exceed two crore rupees
Medium Enterprises	More than two crore rupees but does not exceed five crore rupees

2. **Service Enterprises**: The enterprises engaged in providing or rendering of services and are **defined in terms of investment in equipment.**

Note:

The limit for investment in plant and machinery / equipment for manufacturing / service enterprises are given in the figure.

PEPPER IT WITH
Financial Stability report, MSME Act, NBFC

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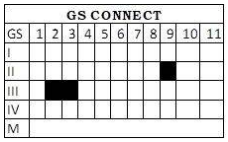
Way Forward

The MSME sector has been facing stress due to the demonetisation exercise and implementation of GST.**Considering the importance of the MSMEs in the Indian economy,** it is essential to understand the structural bottlenecks and factors affecting the performance of the MSMEs**. Such enterprises contribute about 40% to India's export and 45% in the manufacturing sector.**

India to grow crops for UAE and Saudi Arabia



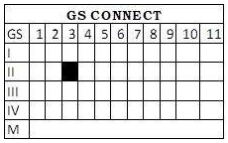
- UAE and Saudi Arabia had decided to use India as a base to address their food security concerns.
- The **farm-to-port project** will be similar to a special economic zone but in the style of a corporatised farm, where crops would be grown keeping a specific UAE market in mind. The concept has been accepted by both governments.
- Ensuring food security remains an area of high priority for India and the two countries whose partnership has been on the upswing since 2015.
- Great buyback is possible from the Gulf region. The UAE wants to invest in organic and the food processing industries. **If a farmer exports, he will earn much more**.
- The Indian government has already welcomed proposal from the UAE for establishing food security parks, including through the creation of high-quality food processing infrastructure, integrated cold chains, value addition, preservation technology, packaging of food products and marketing.
- For the first time, India's export policy identifies the potential of agriculture along with horticulture, dairy, plantation and fisheries.

Arab Economic and Social Development Summit

- ❖ Arab leaders and officials have urged the international community to support nations hosting Syrian refugees and take steps to minimise the impact of the refugee crisis.
- ❖ The call was made in the **Beirut Declaration** at the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit that concluded in the Lebanese capital.
- ❖ The declaration said, the refugee crisis leads to an economic slowdown, increases the expenditure and deficit, imposes burdens on public sectors and infrastructure and poses risks to the society.
- ❖ This is the first time Arab countries have reached a consensus on encouraging Syrian refugees to return to their country.

National Statistical Commission

Why in News?



The institution was in news due to the resignation of its remaining two non-official members.

About NSC

- The Government of India set up the **National Statistical Commission (NSC) in 2005**. The setting up of the NSC followed the decision of the Cabinet to accept the recommendations of the **Rangarajan Commission**, which reviewed the Indian Statistical System in 2001.
- The NSC was constituted with effect from 12th July 2006 with a mandate to evolve policies, priorities and standards in statistical matters.
- The NSC has four Members besides a Chairperson, each

PEPPER IT WITH

NSSO Employment Report, Back series GDP, Annual Employment Survey 2017-18

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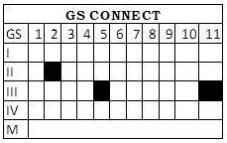
having specialization and experience in specified statistical fields.

- The Chief Statistician of India, the post created specifically as the Head of the National Statistical Office is the Secretary of the Commission. He is also the Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Defence Manufacture Licensing Policy Simplified

Why in News?



Union government recently issued a notification simplifying the manufacturing of a range of defence and aerospace equipment and components by private industry, by bringing them under the licensing authority of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP).

Details

- Items are listed in three categories (i) **Defenceaircraft** (ii) **Warships of all kinds** and (iii) **Allied items of defence equipment.** The most significant aspect is that warships of all kinds, surface and sub-surface, have been included in the listing.
- With the list of defence items requiring industrial licenses being pruned down by removing the requirement of licensing for 'parts and components of the equipment', this would accrue benefits towards Tier-I/Tier-II vendors giving a boost to the small and medium enterprises (SMEs),
- It **segregates defence items in two categories covered by two different Acts** — the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951, and the Arms Act, 1959. Items of defence aerospace and warships now do not require a licence under Arms Act. Such items shall now be covered by IDRA.
- This move is also expected to help **foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers** (OEM) looking for partnerships with the private sector. The Defence Ministry has formulated an ambitious Strategic Partnership (SP) model under the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP), covering four specific areas to promote role of private sector in defence manufacturing.

Second Defence Industrial Corridor

- The second Defence Industrial Corridor connecting five cities of **Tamil Nadu**was inaugurated recently by defence minister.
- The corridor is expected to attract investments worth Rs 3,123 crore. It aims to bolster defence manufacturing in India.
- The **first Defence Industrial Corridor** was thrown open in Uttar Pradesh last year.
- Typically comprising small, medium and big industries, the specialised corridors are expected to provide a base to boost **manufacturing of indigenous defence equipment in India**.
- India topped the list of arms importer accounting for **13 % of the trade in weapons** platform between 2012-2018, according to data released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

PEPPER IT WITH

Defence Procurement Procedure, IDRA, Arms Act, 1959 Strategic Partnership Mode, Department of Defence Production (1962)

Background

Manufacturing in defence sector is governed through industrial licensing under the IDRA and Arms Act 1959/Arm Rules 2016. Prior to 2001, manufacturing in defence sector was limited to

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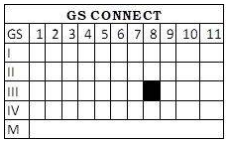
public sector companies only. However, **in 2001, the Government allowed 100% participation by Indian private sector in defence manufacturing subject to licensing**.

In 2017, the DIPP was allowed to process applications for grant of licence for manufacture of defence items. Earlier, the home ministry was carrying out this exercise. DIPP,which is under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) is **mainly responsible for the formulation of policies with regard to the promotion of foreign investment and manufacturing industries**.

China's Mother of all bombs



- China has developed a massive bomb, said to be the country's answer to the US-built 'Mother of All Bombs', **the most powerful non-nuclear weapon**. The aerial bomb was showcased by China's defence industry giant NORINCO.
- It is dubbed as the Chinese version of the "Mother of All Bombs" due to its huge destruction potential. The Chinese weapon is smaller and lighter than its American counterpart. **It is not a thermobaric weapon**.
- In 2017, while waging war against militants in Afghanistan, the US military dropped a GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB) weapon, more commonly known as the "Mother of All Bombs," on the Islamic State.
- To match the US weapon, Russia developed the "**Father of All Bombs" which is both bigger and thermobaric**, meaning it uses gas to create a huge fireball rather than a shockwave, Wired reported.
- India has the Smart Precise Impact and Cost Effective - simply called SPICE bomb. **SPICE is the biggest conventional bomb that Indian Air Force has under its command for use**.
- The SPICE is manufactured by Israeli firm Rafael Advanced Defence Systems Ltd. It is a precision guided bomb that can be carried on Mirage 2000 fighter planes of the Indian Air Force.

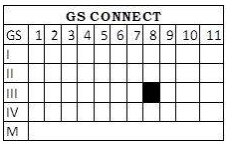
IMBAX-2019

6 day long **India Myanmar** Bilateral Military Exercise (IMBAX-2019) was held recently at the joint warfare centre, Shillong. Itis aimed at building and promoting closer relations with armies of the neighbouring countries to train the officers of Myanmar Army in various United Nations Peacekeeping roles and tasks.

PEPPER IT WITH

Nangarhar Airstrike, Little Boy and Fat Man

Arrow 3 Ballistic Missile Defence System of Israel



- Israel successfully tested the country's **advanced missile defence system capable of defending against long-range ballistic missile threats**. The test of the Arrow-3 interceptor is "a major milestone" in Israel's ability to defend itself "against current and future threats in the region.
- Arrow-3, which **intercepts missiles outside the atmosphere**, is part of the multi-layered system Israel is developing to defend against short- and mid-range rockets as well as long-range missiles. It includes Iron Dome, David's Sling and the Arrow-2 systems.

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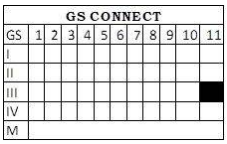
- Arrow 3 represents the uppermost tier of Israel's layered missile defences and can reportedly engage any time of ballistic missile, including higher- and faster-flying **intercontinental ballistic missiles** (ICBM).
- The interceptor carries a kinetic kill vehicle that is supposed to physically smash into an incoming threat above the earth's atmosphere, thereby destroying it before it can pose a danger to anyone on the ground.
- The complete system uses **the Green Pine family of active electronically scanned array (AESA) radars to spot and track threats**. The interceptor builds on the experience of the previous Arrow 2, which is not capable of exo-atmospheric intercepts.

Sea Vigil Exercise



- The first **coastal defence Exercise Sea Vigil**, conducted by the Navy and Coast Guard, in close coordination with State Governments and Union Territories was held recently. **It was the largest such exercise the country had ever witnessed in recent times**.
- The **2 day exercise** facilitated in establishing shortfalls, working out new ways to optimise resources, recommend solutions to higher authorities and refine Standard Operating Procedures.
- The Exercise involved **all stake holders across mainland and Island territories**, and saw the participation of almost all operational ships, submarines and aircraft as well as units of Indian coast guards, Indian Army and the Indian Air Force.
- With active support from all stakeholders, such exercises further strengthen the overall security architecture and enhance confidence to thwart any misadventure by anti-national elements.

Operation Kabaddi

Operation Kabaddi which never came into being was a wide spectrum of evolving punitive operations. **The objective of the Operation was to change the geography of the LoC** with access to tactical points there, which would then help the Army tackle the infiltration of militants by the Pakistani side. It was cancelled by India due to 9/11 terror attacks as it would have been viewed as taking advantage of a tragedy and viewed unfavourably by the international community.

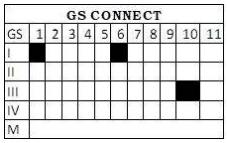
- Joint coastal security exercises such as '**Sagar Kavach**' and '**Avardhan**' have significantly augmented the collective surveillance efforts along the coastal areas. Theatre level operational readiness exercise '**Tropex**' also augments the collective efforts.
- The main goal of the large-scale exercise is to test the overall security of the coastal regions and their preparedness in thwarting an attack by infiltration through the sea route. **The exercise covered the entire 7,516.6 km coastline and Exclusive Economic Zone of the country**.

PEPPER IT WITH

Varuna, RIMPAC, Kakadu, IFR, IBSAMAR, SLINEX, CORPAT, Operation Parakram

World capital of Architecture

Why in News?



The United Nation Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has named the **Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro as the World Capital of Architecture for 2020**. The city will also host the next UIA world congress, which is held every three years.

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Having defeated Paris and Melbourne, Rio **will be the first city to receive the title under a programme launched together by UNESCO and the International Union of Architects (UIA) in November 2018**.

About the Programme

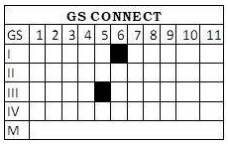
- Through the initiative of World Capital of Architecture, UNESCO and the UIA are joining forces to develop urban solutions for the benefit of future generations through culture.
- As part of the programme, Rio de Janeiro will host several events on the theme "**All the worlds. Just one World" and promote the 11th goal of the Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**."
- Within the framework of the programme, the future "capitals" will become "global forums for discussion on the pressing challenges of our world, through the prisms of culture, heritage, urban planning and architecture."
- The UIA is an international representative body for architects. The organization also manages international design competitions for significant buildings, including the competition for the Sydney Opera House that was won by Jorn Utzon.

PEPPER IT WITH
Museum of Tomorrow, Christ the Redeemer statue, Chowmahalla Palace

Conclusion

UNESCO and the UIA have been at the forefront of the challenges of our time: mass urbanization, climate change and the need to preserve architectural heritage. The Agreement between UNESCO and the UIA aims to extend the response to these challenges by developing opportunities through the mobilization of local and national governments, the media and communities.

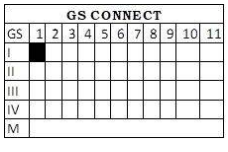
Renuka Dam



- The Centre has signed an **agreement with Chief Ministers of five States** - Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh to restart construction of the Renuka multipurpose dam project in the Upper Yamuna Basin.
- The Renuka dam project has been conceived as a storage project on the **Giri river (a tributary of the Yamuna) in Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh**.
- The project envisages making a 148-metre-high dam for supplying water to Delhi and other basin States. It will also generate 40 MW of power.
- After the construction of the dam, the flow of the Giri river will increase by about 110%, which will help meet the drinking water needs basin States.
- The project is proposed to be executed by Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd. The live storage of the Renukaji Multi-Purpose Project is 0.404 million acre-foot and it would ensure supply of 23 cubic metres per second water to the basin states.
- **Plans to construct the Renuka dam started in 1976** but were aborted. Around 90% of the cost of irrigation/drinking water component of the project will be provided by the Central government and the remaining by the rest of the basin States.

PEPPER IT WITH
Mandal Dam Project, Polavaram Project

Makaravilakku festival Season



- It is an annual festival **held at sabarimala temple**, Kerala on Makara Sankranti.
- Makara jyothi is a star that appears in the sky on Makara Samkramam, when the Sun moves from dhanurasi (Sagittarius)

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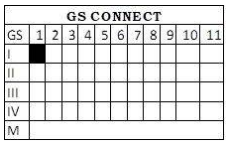
to Makaramrasi (Capricorn) on the first day of the Malayalam month of Makaram.

- The star, Sirius located in Canis Major constellation, which is worshipped by devotees on Makara Sankranti. **According to beliefs, Lord Ayyappa affirms himself as Makarajyothi to bless his followers**.
- Makara vilakku is a light lit at Ponnambalamedu, a plateau across the Sabarimala shrine. The light, believed to have celestial origins, is shown three times by the chief priest of Pamba temple.
- The light is dubbed as **Makara vilakku**. This ritual is done after the Makarajyothi star appears in the sky.

PEPEPR IT WITH
Mandalam Festival, Lord Ayappan, Pamba river,

Kumbh Mela



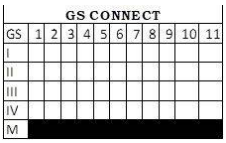
- 2019 Kumbh Mela is being held at Allahabad (Prayagraj). **It is a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage**.
- The government of Uttar Pradesh has decided to change the nomenclature of the mega religious congregations and now ArdhKumbh, held every six years, would be called Kumbh and Kumbh, organised every 12 years, would be termed MahaKumbh.
- Kumbh Mela, in Hinduism, is a religious pilgrimage **that is celebrated four times over a course of 12 years**.
- The geographical location of Kumbh Mela spans over four locations in India and the Mela site keeps rotating between one of the four pilgrimages on four sacred rivers:
    1. **Haridwar on the Ganges in Uttarakhand**
    2. **Ujjain on the Shipra in Madhya Pradesh**
    3. **Nashik on the Godavari in Maharashtra**
    4. **Prayagraj at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the mythical Sarasvati in Uttar Pradesh**

PEPPER IT WITH
Vikram Samvat Calendar, Akharas, ManiyaroRaas (Gujarat)

- Each site's celebration is based on a **distinct set of astrological positions of the Sun, the Moon, and the Jupiter**. The celebrations occur at the exact moment when these positions are fully occupied, as it is considered to be the holiest time in Hinduism.
- The Kumbh Mela is an event that intrinsically encapsulates the science of astronomy, astrology, spirituality, ritualistic traditions, and socio-cultural customs and practices, making it extremely rich in knowledge.

Awards and Persons in News

Bharat Ratna:



Pranab Mukherjee, Bhupen Hazarika, Nanaji Deshmukh were awarded Bharat Ratna.

Bhupen Hazarika is one of the most popular regional singers and someone who is synonymous with the Assamese identity.

Social activist **Nanaji Deshmukh** was conferred with the award for his contribution to the nation.He played an important role in the JP movement of the 1970s and was the driving force behind social activist Jayaprakash Narayan's agitation for total revolution.

Gandhi Peace Prize

Winners of the Gandhi Peace Prize for four years beginning 2015 to 2018 was announced. It was last conferred to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in 2014.

2015:Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, gets the award for 2015 for their contribution to rural development, education, development of natural resources.

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2016: It has been jointly given to **Akshaya Patra foundation** for its contribution in providing mid-day meals to children and **Sulabh International** for its contribution in improving the condition of sanitation and emancipation of manual scavengers.

2017: **Ekal Abhiyan Trust** has won the award for 2017 for their contribution in providing education for rural and tribal children in remote areas, rural empowerment, gender, and social equality.

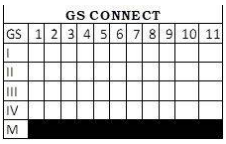
2018:YoheiSasakawa for 2018, who is Goodwill Ambassador of the World Health Organisation for Leprosy Elimination, for his role in leprosy eradication.

Gita Gopinath

Mysore-born Gita Gopinath has **joined International Monetary Fund as its chief economist, becoming the first woman to occupy the top IMF post**.

2019-Milestones

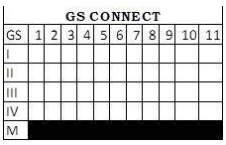
2019 marks a cluster of anniversaries



- ✓ The Quadricentennial of the **Arrival of the First Slaves in the American Colonies**
- ✓ Centennial of the **Paris Peace Conference**, the Signing of the Treaty of Versailles and the U.S. Senate's Rejection of the **Treaty of Versailles**
- ✓ 150th anniversary of the birth of **Mahatma Gandhi**
- ✓ 150th anniversary of the **death of Mirza Ghalib**
- ✓ 100th anniversary of the **Government of India Act of 1919**
- ✓ 100th anniversary of **Rowlatt Act**
- ✓ 100th anniversary of **Jallianwala Bagh massacre**
- ✓ Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of **D-Day, the Liberation of Paris, and the Battle of the Bulge**
- ✓ Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the **Bretton Woods Conference**
- ✓ Fiftieth Anniversary of the **Moon Landing, July 20, 1969**. "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." **Astronaut Neil Armstrong**
- ✓ 35th anniversary of **first Indian to be in outer space (Rakesh Sharma)**
- ✓ 35th anniversary of **Operation Blue Star**
- ✓ Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the **Rwandan Genocide**

Miscellaneous

Jan ShikshanSansthan



- Jan ShikshanSansthan (JSS) is conceived as an institute for conducting skill upgradation in the areas of programmes of Non-formal, Adult and Continuing Education to disadvantaged groups.
- Jan ShikshanSansthan (formerly known as Shramik Vidyapeeth) have a challenging mandate of providing vocational skills to non-literate, neo-literates as well as school drop-outs by identifying skills that have a market in the region of their establishment.
- Jan ShikshanSansthan was transferred to the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship in 2018 from control of MHRD.

New guidelines

1. Alignment of JSS course and curriculum with National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) to standardize training.
2. Linking JSS to Public Finance Management system to maintain transparency and accountability of the ecosystem.

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3. To identify and promote traditional skills in the district through skilling / upskilling.
4. Evidence-based assessment system with Easy Online certification.
5. Training of Trainers to develop the capacity through National Skills Training Institutes.

Street Light National Programme

- The target is to to replace 1.34 crore conventional street lights with energy efficient LED street lights by March 2019.
- Energy Efficiency Services Limited, a Public Energy Services Company under the administration of Ministry of Power, Government of India (GoI) is the implementing agency for SLNP.
- ULBs have signed the implementation agreement with EESL for replacement of conventional street lights with LED street lights. The program is to be implemented by the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).
- It has also helped in reduction of 3.29 lakh tonnes of CO2 annually.
- Rajasthan is leading the country with an installation of LED street lights followed by Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat respectively.

Atal Solar Krishi Pump Yojana (ASKP)

- The government of Maharashtra introduced the ASKP to reduce losses due to non-payment of electricity bills and also promote solar energy.
- The State has launched the ASKP for farmers with a subsidy of up to 95 per cent on solar pumpsets. The State plans to install one lakh solar pumps.
- The State aims to reduce losses due to non-payment of electricity bills and also promote solar energy by implementing the scheme.
- The state government has decided to give two LED bulbs, a DC fan and a mobile charging socket as freebies to farmers.
- The Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Co Ltd (Msedcl) is the implementing agency.
- Farmers with less than five acres will have to pay 5 per cent of the cost of a 3 HP solar pump while farmers with more than five acres will get a 5 HP solar pump and the sops.

Pradhan Mantri RozgarProtsahan Yojana (PMRPY)

1. The PMRPY Scheme aims to incentivise employers for employment generation by the Government paying the employers' EPS contribution of 8.33%, for the new employees, for the first three years of their employment and is proposed to be made applicable for unemployed persons that are semi-skilled and unskilled.
2. The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Employment through the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO).
3. This Scheme has a dual benefit, where, on the one hand, the employer is incentivised for increasing the employment base of workers in the establishment, and on the other hand, a large number of workers will find jobs in such establishments.
4. A direct benefit is that these workers have access to social security benefit through Provident Fund, Pension and Death Linked Insurance.
5. All establishments registered with Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) can apply for availing benefits under the scheme.

The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions has initiated an inter-ministerial consultation note to rename the **Indian Forest Service as Indian Forest and Tribal Service**. The consultation note also contains the proposal to train the cadre to be more receptive towards tribals and forest dwellers.

The renaming is based on the recommendation made by the **NCST** which highlights the close ties between tribals, the forest and forest ecosystem. Merging forest and tribal welfare administrations will further the participation of 'tribals' in forest management

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6. The entire system is online and AADHAR based with no human interface in the implementation of the scheme.

Jiban Sampark Project

- It was launched at the annual Adivasi Mela-2019 in Odisha.
- The Jiban Sampark Project in partnership with **UNICEF** aims to generate awareness among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Odisha on various development and welfare initiatives of State Government, especially on women and child welfare.
- The Jiban Sampark's focus areas will include skill development, empowering communities, cooperation and innovation among the groups of 75 tribal communities in the country, 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups residing in remote and far off areas of 12 district in Odisha.

Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC)

1. SFAC is an Autonomous Society promoted by Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare, Government of India.
2. SFAC is implementing the central schemes of Government of India namely VCA, EGCGS for economic inclusion of small and marginal farmers in agribusiness activities.
3. It provides a platform for increased accessibility and cheaper availability of agricultural inputs to small and marginal farmers and establishing link in supply chain management.
4. SFAC is commendable in realizing dream of doubling farmers' income by 2022.

Project ReWeave

- Microsoft India launched a **new e-commerce platform** for handloom weavers under its Project ReWeave, as part of its philanthropic initiative. The e-commerce platform would help connect artisans to the buyers directly enabling them to expand to newer customers and markets while also reviving traditional forgotten Indian art.
- Project ReWeave was initiated by Microsoft India (R&D) Pvt. Limited in 2016 as part of its with the aim to revive the handloom weaving ecosystem in India.
- Under the initiative, Microsoft is working closely with NGO partner, Chaitanya Bharathi to provide infrastructure, financing and marketing support to help weaver families keep their weaving traditions alive by sustaining livelihoods.

Concept Clearing Assignment

1. The Election Commission (EC) has set up a 14-member committee to suggest changes to Section 126 of the Representation of the People (RP) Act, which prohibits poll campaign in the last 48 hours leading to voting, in the wake of media expansion. Bring out the recommendations by committee.
2. Reserve Bank of India recently issues guidelines on tokenisation of card transactions. Why is Tokenisation required only for card transactions and not for other types of payments like mobile banking or Unified payment Interface or Net-banking or Mobile Banking. Discuss.
3. The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) is an instrument designed to enhance transparency in international climate politics. Discuss the salient features of Index and how it will help global community to pursue best practices for climate policies.
4. Vijay Kelkar has proposed setting up a new NITI Aayog to overcome the challenges faced by the present NITI Aayog. Discuss his vision of New NITI Aayog or NITI Aayog 2.0. Also discuss the problems being faced by the present NITI Aayog and critically analyse differences between the erstwhile planning commission and the NITI Aayog.
5. The Aadhaar has been acknowledged as an inclusive tool that effectively delivers social welfare programmes to the poor. However, it is also riddled with highly problematic privacy issues and other challenges. Critically analyse.

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6. Government recently formed Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal. Discuss the reasons behind its formation. Also discuss the problems if an appellate tribunal was formed in each state.
7. The Union cabinet has approved 10% reservation in jobs and educational institutions for the economically backward section in the general category. Bring out the salient features of the initiative. Also elucidate on the constitutionality of this move.
8. Comment on the present scenario of education in India. Suggest step to improve education in India in light of BVR Mohan Reddy Committee.
9. The Mudra loan scheme has done very well. However, the rising NPAs under the scheme are a matter of concern. The finance ministry has raised its concern with the banks. What is the reason behind the rising NPAs? Do you think there is a need to review how the banks are sanctioning the loans? Discuss.
10. The report "A New Circular Vision for Electronics – Time for a Global Reboot" mentioned that technologies such as cloud computing and the internet of things (IoT), support gradual "dematerialization" of the electronics industry which is leaving trail of e-Watse behind its path of development. Discuss the ways to check the increased dumping of e-Waste in India.
11. Briefly discuss the Right to Disconnect. Discuss the importance of Right to Disconnect Bill 2018 in welfare of employee.
12. U.S. President signed the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA), which has passed the U.S. Senate. The act establishes a multifaceted U.S. strategy to increase U.S. security, economic interests, and values in the Indo-Pacific region. Critically analyze the effect of ARIA on relation of India and China.
13. Discuss electronic Know your Customer norms. What were the effects of supreme court order on digital enrolment of customers?
14. What is Nitrogen Pollution? Discuss the impact of Nitrogen pollution and suggest ways to combat its harmful effects.
15. Briefly discuss the salient features of NCAP. How it can help check the Air pollution and reduction of PM2.5 and PM10 concentration by 2024? Comment.

P.T Oriented Questions

1. Consider the following statements about Pamba river
   1. Sabarimala temple is located on its bank
   2. It is also known as Dakshin Ganga river and is located in Kerala

   Which among the following is/are correct?
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 only
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

2. Clause 6 of Assam accord deals with
   (a) Foreigner's issue
   (b) Constitutional, Legislative & Administrative safeguards
   (c) Registration of birth and death
   (d) Restricting acquisition of immovable property by foreigners
3. Consider the following statements about Shale gas and mark the correct one/ones
   1. It is a natural gas primarily methane found in shale formation
   2. This is believed to be formed in the carboniferous period of earth's history
   3. Shale gases are trapped in the rocks in the form of microbubbles

   Code:
   (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 3 only
   (c) 2 and 3 only (d) Only 3

4. Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) is convened
   (a) To deal with dispute between the WTO members
   (b) To deal with dispute between the IMF members
   (c) To deal with the dispute between the United Nations
   (d) None of the above

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5. Consider the following statements about Central Information Commission (CIC) and choose the correct one/ones
   1. CIC was set up under the Rights to Information Act
   2. There can be more than five Information Commissioners (IC)
   3. Chief Information Commissioner holds office for a term of 5 years

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

6. Consider the following statements about Jiban Sampark Project
   1. The project in partnership with UNICEF aims to generate awareness among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups
   2. It was launched in Andaman and Nicobar

   Which among the following given above is/are correct?
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 only
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

7. Which among the following is correctly matched?

1. World Economic Situation and Prospects	(a) International Air Transport Association
2. Corruption Perception Index	(b) Transparency International
3. Democracy Index	(c) European Intelligence Unit

   Code:
   (a) 1 and 2 only
   (b) 2 and 3 only
   (c) Only 3
   (d) Only 2

8. Chin refugees were recently in news. Which among the following is their homeland?
   (a) Myanmar (b) China
   (c) Bangladesh (d) Sri Lanka

9. Which among the following is/are correct?
   1. External Commercial Borrowing (ECB) is a form of foreign capital
   2. ECB is basically a loan taken by a non-resident Indian who is residing in India

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

10. Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners are appointed by the president on the recommendation of a committee which consists of which among the following
    1. Prime minister of India
    2. Leader of opposition in both the houses
    3. A union cabinet minister appointed by the prime minister

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

11. Aber is a digital currency of which among the following
    (a) Saudi Arabia
    (b) United Arab Emirates
    (c) Turkey
    (d) Both a and b

12. Pakke Hornbill festival is the state festival of
    (a) Arunachal Pradesh
    (b) Tripura
    (c) Manipur
    (d) Nagaland

13. Which among the following are related to Anti-Defection Law?
    1. 52nd amendment of the constitution of India
    2. 91st amendment of the constitution of India
    3. 10th schedule of the constitution of India
    4. Article 102 and Article 191 of the constitution of India

    Code:
    (a) 1,2,3 and 4 only
    (b) 1,3 and 4 only
    (c) 1,2 and 4 only
    (d) All of the above

14. Consider the following statements about MUDRA cards
    1. It is RuPay debit card
    2. It can be operated across the country

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3. It cannot be used at the point of sale machines

Which among the following are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above

15. National Agriculture Higher Education Project (NAHEP) has been formulated by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in partnership with which among the following
(a) World Bank
(b) International Monetary Fund
(c) Asian Development Bank and World Trade Organisation
(d) BRICS Bank

16. Which among the following is/are correct about the regional council of NITI Aayog?
1. It can only be chaired by the chairperson of the NITI Aayog
2. It can be formed to address specific issues impacting more than one state
3. The regional council is formed for a specified tenure

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

17. Consider the following statements about the definition of micro small and medium enterprises and choose the correct one/ones
1. Micro enterprises of manufacturing sector are those whose investment in plant and machinery does not exceed 25 lakhs
2. Medium enterprises of services sector are those whose investment in equipment does not exceed 5 crore rupees but is more than 2 crore rupees
3. Medium enterprises of manufacturing sector are those whose investment in plant and machinery are more than 5 crore rupees but less than 10 crore rupees
4. Small enterprises of services sector are those whose investment in equipment is more than 10 lakhs but is less than 2 crore rupees

Code:
(a) 1,2 and 3 only
(b) 2,4 and 5 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above

18. Which among the following are correct about Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)?
1. It is an international survey held every 3 years
2. PISA covers a sample of 12-year old students representing all form of schooling
3. It is held by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Code:
(a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) Only 1
(d) All of the above

19. Renuka Dam is built on which river
(a) Baspa river
(b) Bhaga river
(c) Giri river
(d) Chandra river

20. A decrease in tax to GDP ratio of a country indicates which of the following (UPSC-2015)?
1. Slowing economic growth rates
2. Less equitable distribution of national income

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

21. What can be the impact of excessive/inappropriate use of nitrogenous fertilizers in agriculture (UPSC-2015)?
1. Proliferation of nitrogen-fixing microorganisms in soil can occur
2. Increase in the acidity of soil can take place
3. Leaching of nitrate to the ground-water can occur

Select the correct answer using the code given below.
(a) 1 and 3 only (b) 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1,2 and 3

22. With reference to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which of the following statements is/are correct (UPSC-2015)?
1. IUCN is an organ of the United Nations and CITES is an

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international agreement between governments
2. IUCN runs thousands of field projects around the world to better manage natural environments.
3. CITES is legally binding on the States that have joined it, but this Convention does not take the place of national laws.

Select the correct using the code given below.
(a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

23. With reference to Rowlatt Satyagraha, which of the following statements is/are correct (UPSC-2015)?
1. The Rowlatt Act was based on the recommendations of the 'Sedition Committee'
2. In Rowlatt Satyagraha Gandhiji tried to use the Home Rule League
3. Demonstrations against the Simon Commission coincided with the Rowlatt Satyagraha

Code:
(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

24. With reference to 'Near Field Communication (NFC) Technology', which of the following statements is/are correct (UPSC-2015)?
1. It is a contactless communication technology that uses electromagnetic radio fields
2. NFC is designed for use by devices which can be at a distance of even a metre from each other
3. NFC can use encryption when sending sensitive information.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.
(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1,2 and 3

25. Trsihna Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in
(a) Assam (b) Meghalaya
(c) Nagaland (d) Tripura

26. Which among the following is/are the locations of Kumbh Mela?
1. Ujjain
2. Haridwar
3. Prayagraj (Allahabad)
4. Nashik

Code:
(a) 1,2 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1,3 and 4 only
(d) All of the above

27. Consider the following statements about Monkey Fever and choose the INCORRECT one/ones
1. It affects both primate and human
2. It is a bacterial disease which is transmitted via hard ticks
3. Monkey fever is also known as Kyasanur Forest Disease

Code:
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) Only 2
(d) None of the above

28. Government of India recently launched National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). Consider the following statements about it and choose the correct one/ones?
1. It is a fiver year, mid-term action plan
2. It focuses on all sources of pollution

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

29. Which among the following policy initiatives have led to positive macroeconomic environment in India
1. Make in India
2. Easing of Foreign Direct Investment
3. Digital India
4. Smart Cities Mission
5. Goods and Services Tax

Code:
(a) 1,2,3 and 4 only
(b) 2,3,4 and 5 only
(c) 1,2,3 and 5 only
(d) All of the above

30. Which among the following are correct about Polar Vortex which was recently in news?
1. It is a high-pressure area in the polar regions
2. During summer the polar vortex at the north poles

Code:
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) Only 2
(d) None of the above

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