ABOUT CURRENT CONNECT

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

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

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

Team KSG

Contents

Polity

Social Issues

Economy

S. No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
GS – I	Culture-Art Literature Architecture ancient to modern times.	Forms, and history from significant events, National personalities, issues and the Freedom Struggle	Post independence Issues, National boundary and disputes	Indian society features, issues, globalization and diversity	Women - and Urbanization – problems and remedies		Distribution of industries andresources – India and world	Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc			
GS – II	Indian constitution- Amendments, and bills.	Legislative, executive and judicial processes.	Constitutional, non-constitutional, quasi-judicial, administrative and other types of bodies.	Federal structure and local bodies. Their powers and functions.	Government policies and various governance Issues like transparency, accountability and – governance	Committees and schemes.	Non-government sections of our society and social sector issues, self-help groups and various initiatives.	Vulnerable sections of society India and other countries and International institutions.	International Relation- India and other countries, various Indian and international agreements, effects of 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 infrastructu re-their growth and investment model	Space and technology, IT biotechnol-ogy and human welfare	Disease, robotics space, and computer	Innovations, intellectual property, Awards, POI and other import ant aspects of S&T	Environment; government initiatives, pollution, degradation and conservatio n efforts	Disaster & Disaster Managemen t	Challenges to internal security, Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate. Cybersecurity; moneylaunderi-ng and its prevention.
GS – IV	Ethics	Issues	Related laws and rules	Governance/e- Governance	Ethics in interna- tional Issues	Personalities and their teaching s	Other import ant topics				
Mis.	Ethical Issues related to family society, education, Corruptionprivate etc.	Ethics in public and private administrati on									

Contempt of Court 1971

News Excerpt

The state government of Kerala risks being in contempt of court if it sticks to its decision to not let women of the prohibited age categories from entering the temple till such time the larger bench decides the reference.The **government's move is in stark contrast to its response in 2018, when it firmly stood by the** Supreme Court judgment.

Pre-Connect

- The first Indian statue on the law of contempt i.e., the Contempt of Courts Act was passed in 1926. It was enacted to define and limit the powers of certain courts in punishing contempt of courts.

- State enactments of the Indian States and the Contempt of Courts Act, 1926 were replaced by the Contempt of Courts Act, 1952 (32 of 1952).

- An attempt was made in 1960 to consolidate and amend the law relating to Contempt of Courts.

- A Committee was set up in 1961 and it submitted its report in 1963 to define and limit the powers of certain courts in punishing contempt of courts and to regulate their procedure in relation thereto.

- The Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 (70 of 1971) was passed by the Parliament in December 1971 and it came into force w.e.f. 1971.

Civil Contempt vs. Criminal Contempt

- ❖ Contempt of court can be of two types, civil or criminal depending on the nature of the case, i.e. Civil contempt (section 2 b) and Criminal contempt (section 2 c).
- ❖ Civil Contempt: Under Section 2(b) of the Contempt of Courts Act of 1971, civil contempt has been defined as wilful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other process of a court or wilful breach of an undertaking given to a court.
- ❖ Criminal Contempt: Under Section 2(c) of the Contempt of Courts Act of 1971, criminal contempt has been defined as 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:
  - ▪ Scandalises or tends to scandalise, or lowers or tends to lower the authority of, any court, or
  - ▪ Prejudices, or interferes or tends to interfere with the due course of any judicial proceeding, or
  - ▪ Interferes or tends to interfere with, or obstructs or tends to obstruct, the administration of justice in any other manner.

Analytica

> High Court (Under Article 215) and Supreme Court (Article 129) are bestowed with the power to punish for contempt of the court. Under Section 12 of Contempt of Court

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Contempt of Court (Cauveri), Article 25 and 14 Vs article 26, Haji Ali Dargah verdict, Article 142

Act, 1971, a contempt of court can be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to two thousand rupees, or with both.

> The orders of the Courts are the law of the land. It is the duty of the executive to implement this Law. The action of not following the order of Supreme Court by the government of the state of Kerala sets a bad example of defiance of Duty.

> It is the duty of the state to protect the Fundamental Rights of its citizens. The Supreme **Court's decision was in line with the mandate but the state government of Kerala has been** found deficient in its duty to protect the fundamental rights of women in the state.

> On the other hand, the decision by the Supreme Court is an imposed order as it neglects the cultural particularities and popular demand of the local population. As Justice Indu Malhotra pronounced in the judgement, Notions of rationality cannot be invoked in matters of religion by courts.

Way Forward

✓ Judiciary is a key pillar of the Indian democracy and the guardian of the constitution. Its orders need to be implemented in its true spirit.

✓ However, the courts need to exercise some restraint in passing judgments without due consideration to the ground realities.

✓ As argued by Justice Malhotra, such type of orders can become a cause of divide in the society and will affect the prestige of the judiciary.

✓ A balance between fundamental rights and cultural rights needs to be struck. Social reforms should be a grassroot demand rather than imposed morality. Power to punish contempt of the court is important for judiciary to make its power felt when other organs of the state fail to keep the mandate of the constitution.

250th session of Rajya Sabha

News Excerpt

With the landmark 250th session of Rajya Sabha commencing on 18th of **November 2019, A publication on the 'Journey of Rajya Sabha since 1952'** which gives a glimpse of the functioning of the House so far, was released by the Rajya Sabha Chairman. A commemorative stamp and coin was also released on the occasion.

Pre-connect

• The Upper House of the Indian Parliament traces its direct history to the first bicameral legislature introduced in British India in 1919 as a consequence of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms.

• Article 80 of the Constitution lays down the maximum strength of Rajya Sabha as 250(238 elected and 12 nominated by president). Presently the house has 233 elected members and 12 nominated members taking the total to 245 members.

• The Fourth Schedule to the Constitution provides for the allocation of seats to the States and Union Territories in Rajya Sabha on the bases of population.

A JOURNEY SINCE 1952

Total members so far 2,282 (including 208 women and 137 nominated members)

Longest-serving members: Mahendra Prasad, serving the 7th term, followed by Manmohan Singh serving 6th term

Representation of women in Rajya Sabha increased from 15 (6.94%) in 1952 to 31 (12.76%) in 2014. It is currently 26, or 10.83%, of the strength of the House

120 Bills passed by Lok Sabha and amended by Rajya Sabha

Total sittings of the House till 249th session	Total number of bills introduced in Rajya Sabha	Number of bills withdrawn	Number of bills pending in Rajya Sabha	Total number of bills passed by Rajya Sabha	Number of bills passed by RS that lapsed due to dissolution of LS
5,466	944	104	38	3,817	60

Analytica

➢ The Rajya Sabha since it came into has passed 3,817 bills till the end of the 249th session.

➢ The upper house of our parliament is laid upon the responsibility of maintaining checks and balances and thus it is imperative to hold deliberations in the upper house. The lower house cannot take arbitrary policy decisions. It acts as the conscience-keeper of the constitution and imposes caution on the ruling party.

➢ **The bicameral nature of the Indian Parliament is to be interpreted as a "basic structure" of** the Indian Constitution, rendering it incapable of being amended.

➢ 12 of the total members in Rajya Sabha are appointed from the field of art, literature, science and social services. It adds to the quality of deliberations with the contribution of experts of different fields. It acts as a representation of states in the Union government.

➢ Members are elected by an electoral college made up of state legislators. The mode of indirect elections allows the most popular leaders to reach the upper house who are

thought to be capable enough to deliberate on issues of nation's concerns.

➢ Many parties are now using the Rajya Sabha as a backdoor to get members elected, most of whom will not be able to win a Lok Sabha election as seen in recent trends.

Is the Rajya Sabha Necessary Today

"Men are mortal. So are ideas. An idea needs propagation as much as a plant needs watering. Otherwise both will wither and die," B.R. Ambedkar

✓ The contemporary argument against it comes from two primary angles. The first one suggests that a Lok Sabha that has representation from several regional parties more than adequately represents a federal country.

✓ The second argument charges that the Rajya Sabha has become a haven for losers in elections, crony capitalists, compromised journalists and party fundraisers. Far from being deliberative, the Rajya Sabha appears to have descended into the same fickleness and passion as the Lok Sabha and has shown a disconcerting trend away from the decorum expected from it.

✓ Now for the reality check. It is virtually impossible to abolish the Rajya Sabha without adopting a new Indian Constitution. It is much more practical to try and reform the Rajya Sabha than seeking to abolish it.

> ### Relation between Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha
> ❖ Under article 75(3) of the Constitution, the Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to Lok Sabha but not Rajya Sabha
> ❖ Issues in joint sitting are decided by a majority of the total number of members of both Houses present and voting and the sitting is presided over by the Speaker of Lok Sabha.
> ❖ In the case of a Money Bill, Lok Sabha clearly enjoys pre-eminence over Rajya Sabha in financial matters.
> ❖ With regard to powers, privileges and immunities of the Houses of Parliament, their members and committees thereof, the two Houses are placed absolutely on equal footing by the Constitution.
> ❖ Except in the case of collective responsibility of the Council of Ministers and certain financial matters, which fall in the domain of Lok Sabha only, both Houses enjoy equal powers.

✓ One useful reform step would be to have members of the Rajya Sabha be directly elected by the citizens of a state. This will reduce cronyism and patronage appointments. This step should be combined with equal representation for each state. This streamlined Rajya Sabha should remain deliberative, but there should be deadlines set for responding to bills initiated in the Lok Sabha.

> ### PEPPER IT WITH
> Rules of proceedings, Single transferable voting system, ADR report on criminalization of politics

Way Forward

▪ Absenteeism of members in the meetings of the Department Related Standing Committees should be reduced to effectively examine and report on various subjects selected and Bills referred in a bipartisan and detailed manner on behalf of the Parliament for which the Committees were envisaged.

▪ Rajya Sabha should remain deliberative, but there should be deadlines set for responding to bills initiated in the Lok Sabha.

▪ For the Rajya Sabha to be more effective, all States must be given an equal number of seats. This would truly represent the diversity of the nation and the needs of each state would be acknowledged.

▪ There has to be a mechanism to ensure that qualified people reflecting the diversity of our country are represented in the Rajya Sabha. At best, the Elders can facilitate the smooth functioning of our democracy and be the spokespersons for the marginalized.

▪ The reforms suggested by Vice president should be implemented like pre and post **legislative impact assessment, longer tenure for DRSC's, women reserv**ation bill, roster system to ensure minimum 50% attendance, etc.

India Justice Report 2019

News Excerpt

Recently, India Justice Report 2019 by Tata Trusts, a philanthropic organisation, undertaken in partnership with several civil society organisations and think tanks was released. The findings highlight very serious lacunae in the justice delivery system.

Pre-Connect

- The Charter of Charles II in 1661 can be treated as the first provision enabling the Company to exercise judicial powers on the Indian soil.

- In the year 1726, a Mayor's Court each at Madras, Bombay and Fort William (Calcutta) were established. The Charter of 1726 is referred to as the first judicial charter.

- The Privy Council remained the last court of appeal for India for more than two hundred years. The effective contribution of the Privy Council in developing Indian Law and establishing sound precedent for Indian judiciary is unparalleled.

- The Regulating Act in 1773 replaced **the Mayor's court at Fort Williams by a** Supreme Court.

> ### First Code of Law under Hasting (1772-93)
> 1) The first British Indian law code, in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, was introduced during Hastings period.
> 2) Two courts viz the Fajudariadalat and the Dewaniadalat were introduced. The Fajudariadalat dealt with criminal cases and the Dewaniadalat dealt with Civil cases.
> 3) Besides that the SadarDewaniadalat, as court of appeal in civil cases, and the SadarNizamatadalat as criminal cases appeallate court, were established in Calcutta.

- Under the Government of India Act 1935, the attempt to initiate a federal policy in India necessitated the creation of a federal court and thus Federal Court was established in 1937.

- The beginning of modern Indian public law appeared in 1833 with the creation of the Indian law commission which in due time (1861) produced the Indian penal code and later the codes of criminal and civil procedure.

- Since India became a republic after independence the Supreme Court of India has been established as the highest court in the country. It has replaced the combined jurisdiction and authority of its predecessors, the Federal Court and the Privy Council.

- India ranks 68th **in World Justice Project's** Rule of Law Index among 126 countries which measures rule of law adherence.

Key Highlights of the Report

➢ Vacancy: One common pitfall is vacancy that is an issue across pillars of the police, prisons and the judiciary.Thecountryhas about 23 per cent sanctioned posts vacant.24 states currently have a shortage in court halls against sanctioned judges.

➢ Gender Disparity: Women are poorly represented across the Justice system. They account for 7 per cent of the Police (2017), 10 per cent of prison staff (2016) and about 26.5 per cent of all judges in high courts and subordinate courts (2017-18).

➢ Over Burdened Prisons: Prisons are over-occupied at 114 per cent, where 68 per cent are under trials awaiting investigation, inquiry or trial.There is only one sanctioned correctional staff in UP for over 90,000 inmates. In 19 states/ UTs prison occupancy exceeds 100 per cent.

➢ Budget deficit: India's per capita spend on free legal aid, for which 80 per cent of the population is eligible is 75 paise per annum.Judiciary expenditures in all states except Punjab were not increasing at a pace higher than the increase in overall state expenditure (FY 2012-2016). Also the allocated amount is not utilized fully in most of the states.

➢ Leading state:Maharashtra has topped the list of states in delivering justice to people

followed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana.

➢ **Problems of system:** a The report has thrown light upon the problems of our system like there are over 28% cases pending in Indian subordinate courts, whereas over 67% of Indian prison population was under trail and only 6.4% of police force has been provided in-service training. More than 90% of the police force deals with public without any up to date training.

➢ **Economic loss:** An inability to deliver justice or maintain the rule of law has led to an increase in violence that has exacted a cost equivalent **to 9% of India's GDP.**

Analytica

✓ The report ranks states by their performance in four aspects: police, the state judiciary, prisons and legal aid. These are the pillars of our judicial system which collate together to strengthen the system of justice delivery.

✓ The indicators, across the pillars, covered the themes like infrastructure, human resources, diversity (gender, SC/ST/OBC), budgets, workload and trends over the last five years.

✓ The findings of the report put forth the privation in the system of justice delivery in our nation. It is an endeavor to mainstream the issues in our system of justice which affects all the other aspects of our life like governance, society, economy, etc.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Malimath Committee, 230th report of Law commission on Justice Reforms, Commonwealth Human rights initiative

✓ The ranking is an initiative of Tata Trusts in collaboration with Centre for Social Justice, Common Cause, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, DAKSH, TISS- Prayas and Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. Thus it is a collaborated effort of various associates

✓ The states were ranked on the index on the basis of 78 indicators measuring their performance on infrastructure, human resources, diversity, budgets, workload, and improvement over time giving a holistic report about the situation.

Way forward

▪ These above mentioned findings should be taken a note of and should be worked upon fervently.

▪ The states should analyse the lacunae plaguing their system and make headway to reduce the gaps in proper management of police, prisons, forensics, justice delivery, legal aid and filling up the vacancies.

▪ In India, the Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill was floated in 2010, but eventually lapsed.

▪ A permanent disciplinary committee should be set up at the central level to deal with complaints against judges.

▪ Any new law on this should come with appropriate safeguards.It is necessary to set right the independence-accountability skew.

▪ Manipulation by advocates should be reduced and the processes should be minimalistic to avoid delayed justice and to reduce cost escalations.

▪ Alternative Dispute resolution system should be strengthened to fasten the delivery of Justice.

Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime (GCTOC) Act

News Excerpt

Recently the Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime Bill (GCTOC) has received the assent of the President of India. The new law would be enforced from December 1, 2019.
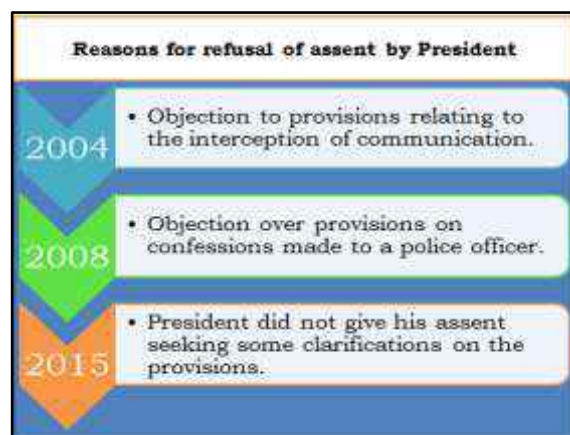
Pre-Connect

• The Gujarat Control of Organised Crime (GUJCOC) Bill as then called was first introduced in 2003 in Gujarat Legislative Assembly.

• The present bill was passed by the state assembly in 2015 and was waiting for assent from

the president of India to become law since then.

- Similar bills: A Bill by Madhya Pradesh legislative assembly is yet to get approval. The Karnataka Control of Organised Crime Bill, now a law, was not granted approval for amendments in 2009. After the Andhra Pradesh Control of Organised Crime Act (APCOCA) lapsed, the state government sought to reintroduce the law in 2006 but it did not get the **President's assent.**

- Among state laws that got Presidential assent, the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) was the first. Enacted in 1999, it was extended to the National Capital Territory in 2002 by the Home Ministry. Then **Karnataka's Bill was passed in 2000. In 2006,** the Chhattisgarh Vishesh Jan Suraksha Adhiniyam (Special Public Security Act), 2005 **received the President's assent.**

Reasons for refusal of assent by President

- 2004 • Objection to provisions relating to the interception of communication.
- 2008 • Objection over provisions on confessions made to a police officer.
- 2015 • President did not give his assent seeking some clarifications on the provisions.

Central Laws Against Terror

➢ The first legislative effort by the Union government to define and counter-terrorist activities in India was the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987. It was formulated with the backdrop of militancy in Punjab. Criticised by various human rights organisations and political parties, TADA was allowed to lapse in 1995.

➢ The Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), 2002, came in the wake of the 1999 IC-814 hijack and 2001 Parliament attack. Under its provisions, a suspect could be detained for up to 180 days by a special court. The Act was repealed in 2004, after reports of misuse by some state governments surfaced.

➢ Before these laws, the only legal framework against terrorist activities was the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, which was amended in 2004, 2008 and most recently, in **2012. The definition of "terrorist act" was expanded to include offences that threaten** economic security, counterfeiting Indian currency, and procurement of weapons, etc.

Analytica

✓ Definition of terrorist: The new law **defines a terrorist act as "an act committed with the intention to disturb law and order or public order or threaten the unity, integrity and security of the state", apart from economic offences.**

✓ Clash among the state and centre: According to the article 254 (2)of the constitution, if there is a clash between a law made by parliament and a state lawon a matter enumerated in the concurrent list, the state law prevails in the state, if it had been reserved and received presidential assent. This would create administrative confusion and inefficiencies when certain provision will clash with central UAPA 1967.

✓ Risk of Coercive confession: The act makes custodial confessions legal and admissible as evidence. It makes the convict vulnerable to be pressurized for admitting of the offence and unjustified punishment. It can be noted that despite 180 custodial deaths being recorded in Gujarat recently, not a single policeman has been convicted. This act can further worsen the situation.

✓ Convenient evidence collection: The intercepted telephonic conversations would now be considered as legitimate evidence; it would prove to be crucial in dealing with organised crimes and easier collection of evidence. However, it can be dangerous for the right to privacy, now a fundamental right under article 21.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> POTA act, NIA act, UAPA act

✓ Faster justice delivery: This bill also provides for creation of a special court as well as appointment of special public prosecutors. It would ensure speedy trial for quick delivery of justice. However, already overburdened high courts and subordinate courts with over 3cr pending cases need to be taken into account before making more courts without sufficient judicial cadre to man the courts.

✓ Provision of Bail: Person in custody under this Act cannot be released on bail unless the

public prosecutor has been given an opportunity to oppose it. The special court can grant bail if satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to believe the accused is not guilty and will not commit any offence while on bail. However this would take a lot of time and the innocent might unnecessarily be harassed on the basis of doubt alone.

Way forward

The administrative and judicial machinery should be well oiled for the effective implementation of the act. A better coordinating mechanism should be established to clarify frictions between state and central legislations. Faster appointments in sufficient amount need to be made in courts. A better balance should be established between the concern of security and infringement of privacy of an individual.

Office of Profit

News Excerpt

The petition seeking the disqualification of 11 AamAadmi Party (AAP) MLAs on charges that they were occupying offices of profit by serving as chairpersons in district disaster management agencies was rejected by the President accepting the opinion of the Election Commission.

Pre-Connect

- India adopted the concept of office of profit from British law where the concept evolved as early as 18th century.It is essential as it states no person receiving profit from the crown is capable of serving as a member of the legislature.

- Under the provisions of Article 102 (1) and Article 191 (1) of the Indian Constitution, an MP or an MLA (or an MLC) respectively is barred from holding any office of profit under the central or state government.

- Provisions of Articles 102 and 191 also protect a legislator occupying a government position if the office in question has been made immune to disqualification by law.

- Parliament has also enacted the Parliament (Prevention of Disqualification) Act, 1959, which has been amended several times to expand the exempted list.

- In 2017, a petition was filed before the President seeking disqualification of the lawmakers claiming that they were enjoying office of profit by being co-chairpersons of district disaster management authorities in 11 districts of Delhi.

Grounds of Disqualification under RPA Act 1951
A person shall be disqualified:
- ❖ If convicted of an offence punishable and sentenced to imprisonment for not less than two years.
- ❖ Who having held an office under the Government of India or any State has been dismissed for corruption or for disloyalty.
- ❖ Who failed to lodge account of election expenses
- ❖ If found having any interest in government contracts, works or services
- ❖ If he is a director or managing agent or hold an office of profit in a corporation in which the government has at least 25 per cent share.
- ❖ Who have been convicted for promoting enmity between different groups or for the offence of bribery
- ❖ Who have been punished for preaching and practising social crimes such as untouchability, dowry and sati.

The Election Commission may, for reasons to be recorded, remove any disqualification under sub-section (1) of section 11A.

Analytica

➢ The law does not clearly define what constitutes an office of profit but the definition has evolved over the years with interpretations made in various Supreme Court judgments such as Jaya Bachhan case. Court enumerated following criteria to judge whether a position falls under office of profit:
  a) Whether the government is the appointing authority,
  b) Whether the government has the power to terminate the appointment

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Page 12

c) Whether the government determines the remuneration
d) The source of remuneration
e) The power that comes with the position.

➢ The provision of office of profit is essential to maintain the democratic character of the country as it serves as an effective safeguard against the political appeasement of the members of legislature to bypass the parliamentary scrutiny of the executive.

➢ This provision helps in maintaining separation of power and prevents political interference by restricting the interest of a person to only one position making it conducive for better and objective decision making for the position holder.

➢ Checks and balances form the base of our system. The provision helps in maintaining checks and balances by providing clear distinction between the roles of different position holders. Thus, segregation of power facilitates checks and balances among various offices.

➢ Handing over the responsibilities of two offices to one person may result in neglect of duties. There are particular and different roles to be played by different position holders which should be performed proficiently by a competent professional with complete objectivity and integrity.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Schedule 10, Parliamentary secretaries, RPA Act 1950

➢ However, undefined nature of the office of the profit leads to confusion and multiple petitions in the courts consuming the valuable time of the judiciary.

➢ It opens up possibilities for the politicization of a legislative issue eating up the time of which could be better devoted for developmental policymaking.

Way Forward

It would be in the interest of Indian democracy and political system to define the concept of office of profit through a statue rather than relying on judicial interpretations. Suitable amendments can be made from time to time for including and excluding posts as and when required.

Haryana Panchayati Raj Bill, 2019

News Excerpt

The legislative assembly of Haryana has recently passed Haryana Panchayati Raj Bill, 2019, to bring an amendment in Section 31 of the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 allowing devolution of powers to the Gram Sabha to ban liquor within the local area of a Gram Panchayat among others like revision of house allowance, implementation of Goods and services tax, etc.

Pre-Connect

• **According to the state government's official release, there had been instances where Gram** Panchayats are unwilling to prohibit the opening of intoxicating liquor vends in the local area, while there is a popular demand of local residents who constitute the Gram Sabha that such liquor vends should not be opened in their Sabha area.

• At present, there is a provision in sections 66 and 126 of the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 that talks about how every Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad shall meet at least six times in a year for the transaction of its

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Article 243I, PESA act, State election commission, Autonomous Council

business. However, it has often come to light that debates conducted in these meetings do not give fruitful results due to various reasons and often no conclusions can be reached whatsoever.

Analytica

➢ This legislation will bring about such changes in the Act as it would help to give precedence to the views of one-tenth members of Gram Sabha, over and above the opinion of the Gram Panchayat. It would, in true sense decentralize authority to the grassroot level. The decision has supported democratization by giving citizens, or their representatives, more influence in the formulation and implementation of policies on Gandhian ideological lines.

➢ The decision making at the local level would be quicker following the change introduced in

the bill.

➢ Liquor founts many of the offences committed. The decision would reduce the incidents of alcohol driven cases also may reduce alcohol consumption.

➢ This will lead to reduction in domestic violence in society because according to WHO most of the domestic violence related crimes were done under the influence of alcohol.

➢ Though liquor gives significant revenue to the state government but the social drawbacks of alcohol cost more in terms of loss of revenue indirectly.

➢ Liquor ban is in line with the Gandhian principles. According to Gandhi a man ceases to be a man for the time being. He argued one thing most deplorable next to untouchability is the drinking curse. The act would help attain his idea of swaraj, freedom of evil within oneself.

➢ Article 47 of the Indian constitution says that the State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health. Haryana government has taken the action in facilitating the provision under the article.

Way Forward

✓ To enhance socio-economic and political situation in our country, democracy as a form of government in which the supreme power is retained by the people is instrumental.

✓ True democratization is achieved by strengthening the governance system at the grassroot level i.e. at the Panchayat level. The local government in the entire country should be strengthened to ensure the participation of the citizenry in policy making and devolution of power.

✓ **The participation of Gram Sabha's across th**e country should be increased for framing the policies according to the local needs in a bottom up format.

✓ Also, the participation of women should be increased for better societal development with the essential ingredients of morality and inclusivity to uplift the society as a whole. Accountability of the gram panchayat must be fixed and it needs to be made sure that demands of gram sabha are not neglected by the panchayats.

Entry law for visitors in Meghalaya

News Excerpt

In a bid to protect the interest of tribals in the state, the Meghalaya government approved the amendment to an act that seeks mandatory registration of outsiders for entering the State.

Pre-Connect

• It originally prohibited British subjects from entering the protected areas, which was then replaced by Citizens of India after independence when the Inner line permit concept was retained to protect the tribal culture.

• It was extended to Lushai hills (present day Mizoram) in the 1930s. Currently Inner line permit is operational in Nagaland, Arunachal and Mizoram.

Highlights of the amendment

➢ Meghalaya Residents, Safety and Security Act, 2016 is now being amended to introduce inner line permit in Meghalaya.

➢ The government approved the amendment to the Act amid demands for an inner line permit (ILP) system to stop illegal immigration into the state.

➢ Any person who is not a resident of Meghalaya and intend to stay more than 24 hours in the State will have to furnish documents to the government. This act was previously applicable only to tenants.

➢ Employees of the Centre, State and District Councils are exempted from the purview of the Act.

➢ Any person who willfully fails to furnish the information or provide false document, will be liable to be punished under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

> There was an increasing demand to enhance vigil against influx of non-indigenous people in the hill state, following the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam.

Analytica

✓ It is important to protect the tribal culture of the state from the unwanted migration that can change the demographic profile in the hills. Hence such an amendment is a welcome step.

✓ In the light of Citizenship amendment bill it becomes all the more important to take proactive steps by the state government to strike a balance between the national and state interests.

Inner Line Permit (ILP)

❖ The ILP is a document issued by the Centre to Indians visiting a protected area for a limited period.

❖ However, unlike ILP, Meghalaya's new entry requirement will be implemented by the state government.

❖ The concept of ILP comes from the colonial area. Under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act, 1873, the British framed regulations restricting the entry and regulating the stay of outsiders in designated areas.

❖ **In 1950, the Indian government replaced "British subjects" with "Citizen of India". This was to address** concerns about protecting the interests of the indigenous people from outsiders belonging to other Indian states.

✓ The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill aims to make it easier for persecuted minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to obtain Indian citizenship. If it is implemented with provisions for excluding from its ambit the states under the ILP regime, it means that beneficiaries under CAB will become Indian citizens but will not be able to settle in these three states.

✓ Also, the issue of NRC makes it fairly urgent to establish a mechanism to deal with the possibility of migration of 19 lakh people who have been excluded from the NRC to the immediate neighbouring states.

Way Forward

In order to prevent any law and order related clashes Meghalaya government's step is welcome but **government should strike a balance between the interest of tribal's and Article 19(1)(d) and** (e) of the Indian Constitution which guarantees to every citizen of India right to move freely throughout the territory of India and to reside and settle in any part of the Territory of India. It is important to take proactive steps in other parts of the country as well to protect the rich tribal diversity of India.

Reforms in Panchayat elections

News Excerpt

The Chhattisgarh Cabinet has approved the nomination of at least one differently abled member to each panchayat, if not elected, making it the only State to have such members in all panchayats. The Cabinet also decided to drop the educational qualifications eligibility criterion for contesting panchayat elections.

Pre-Connect

• Panchayat raj institutions are the third level of the government envisaged for devolution of authority and distribution of power

• PRIs are in line with Gandhian principles of swaraj and are manifestations of Gandhian inspired DPSP under Article 40

• PRIs are a given constitutional status under 73rd constitutional amendment act where 33% percent seats are reserved for women. Provisions for reservations are also provided for schedule caste and scheduled tribe communities. However, there are no provisions for nomination or reservations for persons with disabilities as of now.

Highlights

➢ Differently able people constitute 6% of the population of Chhattisgarh.

➢ Every panchayat will now have differently able members, either elected or nominated.

➢ If differently able members are not elected through the electoral process, then one member, either male or female, would be nominated as a panch.

➢ And as for janpads and zilla panchayats, the State government would nominate two such members, one male and one female, to them.

➢ Earlier, it was mandatory for a contestant for the position of a panch to be at least a Class V pass, and above that Class VIII pass. Now, only being literate would be enough to contest panchayat elections.

Analytica

✓ The provision would greatly help in achieving the constitutional goals of justice in social political and economic sphere as envisaged under the preamble.

✓ It will empower people with disabilities to raise their genuine concerns and will help in achieving an inclusive developmental process.

✓ However, without proper capacity building the reservation/nomination of physically disabled person to the panchayat might lead to inefficiencies.

✓ Sufficient infrastructure support is crucial for proper working of such members in absence of which they would fully depend on other members for doing their duties.

✓ There is a need for acceptance of people with disabilities as members of panchayat at the ground level. A society like Indian where social stigma is attached to any kind of disability would make it difficult for people to accept leadership of such a person.

Other reforms in Panchayat elections in India

▪ Educational criteria: The previous government in Rajasthan had introduced education criteria to contest panchayat elections in 2015. However, the present Rajasthan government ended the minimum educational qualification for contesting the local body elections in the state. Similarly, other states such as Haryana, Chhattisgarh, had introduced educational criteria for contesting panchayat elections. However, just like Rajasthan, the new Chhattisgarh too did away with the educational criteria. Recently, Uttarakhand has introduced educational criteria to contest panchayat elections.

Salient features of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act

❖ Gram Sabha: The act provides for a Gram Sabha as the foundation of the Panchayati Raj system.

❖ Three-tier system: The act provides for a three-tier system of panchayati raj in every state: village, intermediate, and district.

❖ Election of Members and Chairpersons: All the members of panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels shall be elected directly by the people.

❖ Reservation of Seats: The act provides for the reservation of seats for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and women in every panchayat.

❖ Duration of Panchayats: The act provides for a five-year term of office to the panchayat at every level.

❖ State Election Commission: The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of all elections to the panchayats shall be vested in the state election commission.

❖ Bar to Interference by Courts in Electoral Matters: The act bars the interference by courts in the electoral matters of panchayats.

▪ Two-child policy: Some states such as Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Gujarat implemented the two-child policy for local body elections. Some of these states later discontinued with the policy. Recently, Uttarakhand Assembly passed a bill that bars anyone having more than two children from contesting panchayat elections.

▪ Reservation: Odisha government has made 50% reservation for women in Panchayat Raj institutions to achieve gender equality in the representation in panchayati raj bodies. It also

provided reservation of seats and offices of chairpersons for two terms instead of a single term as it was felt that the operation of single term did not attract more candidates to participate in elections.

Way forward

State needs to create a positive enabling environment for the success of such a revolutionary reform in the panchayats. PWD members need to be assisted in every manner by providing staff, technology, skill building, and accessible infrastructure. There is a need for a sustained social campaign at the grassroot levels to make people sensitive to demands of such subaltern sections of the society.

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) as the foundation of India's political system as they represent a decentralized form of government where each village is responsible for its own development. The importance of PRI elections is embedded in the fact that the election of able candidates as members of these institutions can ensure efficient delivery of services that can further translate into inclusive development of the nation as a whole.

Process of Review petition in SC

News Excerpt

A number of review petitions have been filed recently in the Supreme Court such as review of the recently delivered Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi verdict, telecom revenue verdicts, and Sabarimala verdict.

What is a review petition?

- A judgment of the Supreme Court becomes the law of the land.
- However, the Constitution itself gives, under Article 137, Supreme Court the power to review any of its judgments or orders.
- When a review takes place, **the goal is to correct "grave errors" that have resulted in the** miscarriage of justice.
- It is rare for the Supreme Court to admit reviews.
- The provision under Supreme Court rules 1966 allows that a review petition can be filed within 30 days of the judgement. It is then circulated among the bench who passed the judgement originally.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions Related to Review Petition

- ➤ Constitution of India, under art 137 provides that subject to provisions of any law and rules made under Article 145, the Supreme Court can review any of its own judgment/orders.
- ➤ Under Article 145(e), the Supreme Court is authorized to make rules as to the conditions subject to which the court may review any judgement or order.
- ➤ In order to rectify an error and prevent the gross miscarriage of justice, a provision for review has been laid down under the Section 114 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

What if a Review Petition Fails?

In Roopa Hurra v Ashok Hurra (2002), the court itself evolved the concept of a curative petition, which can be heard after a review is dismissed to prevent abuse of its process. A curative petition is also entertained on very narrow grounds like a review petition, and is generally not granted an oral hearing.

On what grounds can a review petition of an SC verdict be sought?

In a 2013 ruling, the Supreme Court itself laid down three grounds for seeking a review of a verdict it has delivered —

- the discovery of new and important matter or evidence
- mistake or error apparent on the face of the record; or
- **Any other sufficient reason. The court specified that "any sufficient reason" means a** reason that is analogous to the other two grounds.

- In another ruling, the court said that a review is by no means an appeal in disguise whereby an erroneous decision is reheard and corrected but lies only for patent error.
- It added that the mere possibility of two views on the subject cannot be a ground for review.

Analytica

✓ As a popular saying quotes Justice cannot just be seen, it must be felt. Mistake once done has to be given a chance for fixing as well. Thus, Supreme Court, which is the paramount of justice, has also been given this chance.

✓ A case gets transferred from a trial court to the High Court and then to the Supreme Court. In this process, the superior courts get ample amount of chances to rectify errors. Thus, it would have been really unnecessary if all the courts were given the power to review.

✓ However, it has to be noted that review is not substituting a judgment. A judgment cannot be unsettled when declared. It is only reconsidering when the Supreme Court feels that something of grave nature has gone wrong in the judgment.

✓ However, in some cases like Rape and other heinous offences such a provision also results in delayed justice. Suitable changes need to be made in the process for such offences where it is necessary to execute the judgement as fast as possible.

Conclusion

A review petition and curative petition is the last resort to correct and error and a tool to preserve the principles of natural justice and achieve the constitutional goal for providing justice to the victim. However, it also needs to be seen if such provisions are resulting in justice getting delayed to present the abuse of such provision which can result in to justice denied.

Finance Act of 2017

News Excerpt

Recently, the Supreme Court passed an order that said appointments to tribunals would be on the basis of existing laws governing the relevant sectors, and not on the basis of rules framed under the Finance Act of 2017.

Pre-Connect

- A petition on which the apex court gave the interim order contends that since the Finance Act 2017 included rules on appointments to 19 different tribunals, it should not have been passed as a Money Bill.
- It is alleged that knowing well that the Finance Act would not get passed in the Parliament due to lack of numbers in the Rajya Sabha, the government classified it as a Money Bill so as to prevent voting in the Rajya Sabha.
- Part XIV of the Finance Act 2017 had amended various Acts to provide for new rules and appointments to various tribunals such as National Green Tribunal, Armed Forces Tribunal, and appellate tribunals for sectors such as telecom.
- The Section 184 of the Act gave the Central government the powers to frame rules regarding the tribunals.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Money Bill, Finance Bill I and II, Appointment of CIC

- The Finance Act 2017 also introduced electoral bonds and made Aadhaar compulsory for income-tax filing.

Highlights

➢ The five-judge Constitution Bench ordered that the validity of the passage of the Finance Act 2017 as Money Bill should be decided by a larger Bench.

➢ While the Bench upheld the Section itself, it struck down the rules formulated under it.

➢ The Bench ordered the government to reframe the rules and said existing laws would govern the tribunals until then.

Analytica

✓ **The government's argument is that a challenge to the passing of Finance Act 2017 as** Money Bill cannot be selective and be restricted to parts of the Act dealing with tribunal appointments alone. If there was a challenge, it should be on the entire Act.

- ✓ The petitioners have, however, argued that mere certification of a Bill to be a Money Bill by the Speaker will not render the legislation immune from judicial scrutiny if it goes against the ethos of the Constitution.
- ✓ Finance Bills are Money Bills as mandated by the Constitution. If the SC refers the validity to another Bench, and if that Bench rules that the Bill is not Money Bill, then all the tax announcements in that Budget will be deemed illegal.
- ✓ Further the centralization of power in the hands of central government to appoint the members of the tribunals would open the possibility of political misuse of these tribunals in the favor of the government of the day. It will hamper the independent working of these tribunals.
- ✓ It would amount to disturbing separation of power, as tribunals are quasi judicial bodies and executive being able to appoint tribunal members would hamper delivery of justice.

Way Forward

The issue needs to be discussed in details and guidelines must be clearly laid out for the future appointments to the tribunals. The executive must exercise restraint in centralizing the power and disturbing the principle of separation of power. On the issue of finance act being passed as the money bill, it must be dealt by the judiciary in a comprehensive manner, as this would have a significant impact on the capabilities of parliament to exercise control on the executive.

The office of Chief Justice of India under the ambit of RTI

News Excerpt

After a decade, the Supreme Court has recently accepted the Delhi High Court **ruling that the office of the Chief Justice of India is a 'public authority'**. Hence, the assets and acts of the judiciary will be subject to public scrutiny under the Right to Information Act, 2005.

Pre-Connect

- Right to information act was passed in 2005 to usher in the era of good governance. Citizens of India enjoys right to information as a fundamental right under art 19(1).It creates transparency and public trust in the organs of the state.
- Supreme Court of India v. Subhash Chandra Agarwal: In November 2007, the Applicant asked the CPIO to provide (i) a copy of the 1997 Full Court Resolution which required every judge to declare his/her assets to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (CJI); and (ii) **information relating to the declaration of the Chief Justices' assets.**
- **While the first part of the Applicant's request was satisfied, access to** information regarding **asset declarations was denied on the grounds that it "was not held by or under the control of the Registry of the Supreme Court" in November 2007 itself.**
- **The applicant reached the CIC and it asked SC to disclose information on Judges'** assets on **the ground that CJI's office comes within the ambit of RTI Act. The Delhi High Court stays** CIC order.

Analytica

- ➤ Judiciary in India is a major pillar of democracy. It enjoys high public trust and acts as the guardian of the constitution. It is imperative for the judiciary to function in a transparent manner to continue this trust.
- ➤ Recent judgement have held that supreme court of India is a public authority under sec 2(h) of the RTI act 2005 and office of the Chief justice of India is a part of Supreme court and hence comes under the ambit of the RTI act.
- ➤ It also held judiciary cannot work in isolation. It is often said that sunlight is the best disinfectant and hence, RTI can act as a disinfectant in removing the judicial corruption from the highest echelons of judiciary.
- ➤ However, bringing office of CJI under RTI must be discussed in its entirety. Judges holds the judiciary together and when judges are in fear of being persecuted for their decision it can result in judicial paralyses in the same way it led to decision paralyses in bureaucracy.
- ➤ It can reduce judicial activism of the supreme court which is a tool for achieving the constitutional promise of justice for all.

➢ Disclosure of Personal information could lead to an unwarranted invasion of privacy right of the judge. Hence, the application must be scrutinized well before action being taken on it.

Way Forward

Right to information should not be allowed to be used as a tool of surveillance. An application to reveal the personal information of the judge must be scrutinized by a competent committee which should include members of judiciary and executive both. Only such information which is highly relevant to the case should be disclosed.

Rehabilitation of BruRefugees

News Excerpt

Recently the latest initiative to send Bru refugees living in relief camps in North Tripura back to Mizoram failed, as only 171 families of the targeted 4,447 returned to their homeland. Also, Supreme Court lawyer representing Bru refugees in Tripura has issued a legal notice to six officials of the Tripura government for stopping ration supplies to the internally displaced persons since October 1.

Pre-Connect

- The Bru community is spread over Tripura, Mizoram and parts of southern Assam. In Tripura, where the Brus are the most populous tribe after the Tripuris, they are known as Reangs, and were almost 2 lakh strong during the 2011 Census. In Mizoram, they are largely referred to by other tribes as 'Tuikuk'.

- About half the Bru population in Mizoram fled to Tripura in 1997 following ethnic clashes with the Mizos.That year, Bru leaders had demanded an Autonomous District Council (ADC) for the tribe under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution in the western areas of Mizoram, where they were present in sizable numbers but where Mizos formed the majority.

Constitutional Provisions for Tribes:
❖ 342: Scheduled Tribes
❖ 15: Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth
❖ 46: Promotion of Educational and Economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections
❖ 335: Claims of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to services and posts
❖ 330: Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People
❖ 332: Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the States
❖ 334: Reservation of seats and special representation to cease after sixty years
❖ 243D: Reservation of seats (in Panchayats)
❖ 338A: National Commission for Scheduled Tribe

- An attempt at repatriation began in 2010, nearly 5000 Bru refugees were repatriated to Mizoram in eight phases since then.

Analytica

PEPPER IT WITH
Schedule VI, PVTG, Hojagiri Festival

➢ The lives of these displaced families are being sabotaged in the refugee camps. Despite being the citizens of the country, they are being denied of their rights they are entitled to.

➢ The demand for cluster villages by the Brus is justified as they might feel insecure in Mizo-dominated areas. But the demand has been termed unreasonable by the government of Mizoram.

➢ The mistrust between the community and the government would widen if the rehabilitation process is not finished soon. It would further worsen their condition after rehabilitation.

➢ These brawls cause disruption in the development process of the state and are laying an extra burden on the already meek financial condition of the state government of Mizoram.

➢ The commotion may cause altercation in public and displace the trust of the entire

population.

➤ The demand for an autonomous council was impractical but satisfactory compensation is necessary to help them lead a normal life as before.

➤ The inmates have been living in refugee camps for a long time. It might have taken a toll on their physical and mental capabilities.

➤ Northeastern regions already suffer from problems like immigration, insurgency and innumerable hurdles in the development process like difficult terrain, lack of approachability and dearth of educational facilities. In such conditions, such ethnic conflicts add to the problems and further retrograde the development of people and state.

➤ The Brus have traditionally followed an animistic religion, worshipping rivers and trees but over the years they have been converted to Christianity. It implies the imposition of majoritarianism. It is important to maintain their distinct identity and cultural practices.
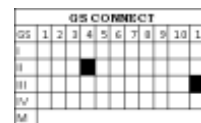
Way Forward

✓ The process should be speeded up to rehabilitate the displaced as soon as possible to start their lives normally and contribute to the development of the state and country.

✓ They should be imparted skill training to help them easily earn their livelihood. This would also make them a useful resource of the state.

✓ They should be provided cluster villages to make them feel secure as well as to protect their identity and culture.

✓ A satisfying compensation should be provided to address the discontent and make conditions conducive for their better life.

✓ The community should come together to conciliate with the state to come on a reasonable solution and the decision should be enforced as soon as possible. But no decision should be hastened without extensive deliberations.

Bodoland Border Dispute

News Excerpt

The Home Ministry has recently declared the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) along with all its groups, factions, and front organizations as **an "unlawful association" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.**

Pre-Connect

• The Bodos have had a long history of separatist demands, marked by armed struggle.

• In 1966-67, the demand for a separate state called Bodoland was raised under the banner of the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA), a political outfit.

• **In 1987, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) renewed the demand. "Divide Assam fifty-fifty," was a call given by the ABSU's then leader, Upendra** Nath Brahma.

• The unrest was a fallout of the Assam Movement (1979-85), whose culmination — the Assam Accord — **addressed the demands of protection and safeguards for the "Assamese people", leading the Bodos to launch a movement to protect their own identit**y.

• In October 1986, the prominent group Bodo Security Force (BdSF) was formed by Ranjan Daimary. The BdSF subsequently renamed itself as the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), an organization that is known to be involved in attacks, killings, and extortions.

• The UAPA 1967 is an act which provides powers to the government to take steps to protect the sovereignty and ensure the security of the nation. The government can ban an organisation under this act on the grounds of it being a threat to the security of the nation.

Analytica

➤ Bodos are the single largest tribal community in Assam, making up over 5-6 percent of the **state's population. The four districts in Assam —** Kokrajhar, Baksa, Udalguri, and Chirang — that constitute the Bodo Territorial Area District (BTAD), are home to several ethnic groups.

➤ The Bodos, under the leadership of All Bodo Students" Union (ABSU) launched a movement **for a separate homeland namely "Bodoland". A section of Bodo militant outfits -** National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) have raised

secessionist demands and the creation of sovereign state of Bodoland. This had led to the subversive activities by militant organizations of the Bodos involving the fratricidal killings, bomb blasts, kidnapping, rail blockades and activities of sabotage affecting the neighboring states like Bhutan, Bangladesh, besides, the entire country.

➢ NDFB-S remains in an armed struggle with the national and regional governments and is recognized by security forces as one of the most lethal militant outfits currently operating inside Assam. That's because the group is increasingly funding its activities through extortion, particularly along the Bhutan-Assam border. In addition, the NDFB-S also makes demands for a share of development projects in BTAD areas, and also 'collects taxes' from tea estate owners.

➢ Assessing the various phases of the Bodo movement, it seems that the movement is not a sudden outcome, but a result of genuine aged old grievances. It is a movement for autonomy and all-round development.

➢ The Bodo movement, in the contemporary period, had emerged as a powerful autonomy movement in Assam that has engaged long-standing deliberations and negotiations with the federal state on the issue of autonomy.

➢ The state has been affected by the devolution of power to the mobilized Bodos of Assam through the creation

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About Bodo Tribe

❖ Bodo Tribal Community has changed significantly and has accepted Hinduism as their main religion. They practice a Culture known as Bathouism.

❖ The plant called Siju is worshipped as a symbol of Bathou Symbol. To worship, a clean ground near the home or the courtyard of the home is chosen. One pair of Betelnut called Goi betel leaf called pathwi is offered. The offering even included rice, milk, and sugar. For the Kherai Puja, a titlear is placed in the rice field.

❖ The Bodos do not practice the dowry and caste system as per their rules of Brahma Dharma.

❖ The famous folk dances of Bodo Tribe such as Bardaichikhla and Bagurumba are extremely colorful.

❖ The Bodo Tribal community follows a common system of marriage in all villages. Elders in the village fix the bride. Bride money is paid and they do not marry from other communities.

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of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) in 1993. As the BAC failed to satisfy the grievances of the Bodo people, the union government after long deliberations made necessary amendments in the relevant provisions of the constitution of India and granted sixth schedule status to the Bodos of Assam.

➢ The BAC was abolished with the formation of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) in 2003 with a view to reduce ethnic tension and violence in the tribal-dominated areas of Assam and to secure better community representation in the political process by conferring more institutional and political autonomy on the BTC. The formation of BTC under the sixth schedule has provided the Bodos wider context towards empowerment and advancement.

➢ Many enlightened Bodos think that the creation of BTC will help to fulfill their aspiration, provided the government and the Bodo leaders are sincere to the cause of Bodo people. It is worth mentioning here that, it seems that the formation of BTC has not fully satisfied the grievances of the Bodos. It is observed that nothing short of a separate state could satisfy the Bodos.

Way Forward

✓ A more sagacious and pragmatic stand is required from the Bodo leaders. The Bodos can never dream to have one language homogeneous society.

✓ Besides, non-tribals like the KochRajbongshi, a large of schedule caste, caste Hindus, Muslims both original and immigrants, the Santhals, Mundas and Nepalese are also residing in the BTC areas since time immemorial.

✓ In the long run, if the majority of Non-Bodo population have to lose their political rights and social status, it may be that common interest and motive will unite them all, irrespective of their castes, religion and creed and may be induced to adopt insurgency activities, as the Bodos have done in the past against the Non-Bodo establishment.

✓ The government should speed up the talks with not just the Bodo leaders but also with the other residents of the area. A common ground of negotiation should be found in order to get the law and order as well as the development process back on track.

National Health Profile

News Excerpt

The Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI) recently released its annual publication "National Health Profile (NHP)".

Pre-Connect

The NHP is prepared by the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI) and covers demography, socioeconomic health status, health finance indicators, health infrastructure and health of human resources in the country. The ministry has been releasing the publication since 2005.

About

The current situation: The cost of treatment has been on rise in India and it has led to inequity in

> CBHI is a national Nodal Agency for Health Intelligence under ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

access to health care services. Per capita public expenditure on health in nominal terms has gone up.

States

> Family clinics in Brazil and polyclinics and offices in Cuba are examples of systems with nationwide coverage. Cuba has one of the most effective primary healthcare systems in the world, whose centrepiece is the community-based polyclinic, each of which serves a catchment area hosting between 30,000 and 60,000 people.

- NHP points out that there are wide disparities in the health spend of states.
- The Northeastern states had the highest and the Empowered Action Group (EAG) states plus Assam had the lowest average per capita public expenditure on health in 2015-16.
- EAG states are the eight socio-economically backward states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.
- Among the big states erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir leads with a 2.6% GSDP spend on healthcare which is nearest to ideal spend.
- In NE states Mizoram leads in the health spend with 4.20% GSPD spend and Arunachal Pradesh with 3.29%.

India and World

India's Domestic general government health expenditure stood at $16 per capita. The highest per capita spender is the United States at $8078.

Other findings

➢ The NHP also notes the change in disease profile of the country with a shift towards the non-communicable disease from communicable ones.

➢ The NHP has also noted that medical education infrastructure has shown rapid growth over the past few years.

➢ Average life expectancy in India rose marginally to 68.7 years in the 2012-16.

➢ There has been consistent decrease in the birth rate, death rate and natural growth rate in India from 1991 to 2017.

WHAT INDIA SPENT ON HEALTH

Year	Actual spend (₹ crore)	Per capita spend	% of GDP
2009-10	72,536	621	1.12
2010-11	83,101	701	1.07
2011-12	96,221	802	1.1
2012-13	1,08,236	890	1.09
2013-14	1,12,270	913	1.00
2014-15	1,21,600.23	973	0.98
2015-16	1,40,054.55	1112	1.02
2016-17 (RE)	1,78,875.63	1397	1.17
2017-18 (BE)	2,13,719.58	1657	1.28

Source: Health Ministry via National Health Profile 2019

About Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

▪ UHC, according to the World Health Organization, **means that "all people and communities** can use the promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services they need, of sufficient quality to be effective, while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user **to financial hardship."**

- This definition includes three related objectives:
  - equity in access to health services;
  - quality of health services should be good enough to improve the health of those receiving them;
  - People should be protected against financial-risk, ensuring that the cost of using services does not put people at risk of financial harm.
- UHC is firmly based on the WHO constitution of 1948 declaring health a fundamental human right and on the Health for All agenda set by the Alma Ata declaration in 1978. UHC cuts across all of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and brings hope of better health and protection for the world's poorest.

Way Forward

o India as a nation does figure at the very bottom of the ranking of health systems. So, there is an urgent need for increase in the health investment by India.

o Government (central government and states combined) should increase public expenditures on health from the current level of 1.2% of GDP to at least 2.5%. by the year 2022.

o For strengthening health system, government should focus on availability, accessibility, and capacity of health workers to deliver quality people-centred integrated care.

o Good governance, sound systems of procurement and supply of medicines and health technologies and well-functioning health information systems are other critical elements.

o Expansion of service package from selective care to comprehensive model of health care.

o Use of a horizontal approach instead of a vertical approach towards achieving UHC will be bonus.

Fact Sheet

❖ India has registered a 26.9 per cent reduction in Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) since 2013.

❖ Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have already met the sustainable development goals target of 70 per 100,000 MMR

❖ According to UN IGME2018:
  - Under 5 Chid mortality rate is 39 per 1000 live births.
  - Infant Mortality Rate is 32 per 1000 live births.
  - Neonatal mortality rate is 24 per 1000 live births.

PEPPER IT WITH
Ayushman Bharat, NSSO, Empowered Action Group (EAG), DALYs, Mohalla Clinic, Astana Declaration

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CMIE Report on Joblessness

News Excerpt

The recent data released by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) reflects the impact of slowdown in the economy. India's unemployment rate in October rose to 8.5 per cent, the highest since August 2016, and up from 7.2 per cent in September.

Pre-Connect

Unemployment is the result of various factors like recession whereby as economic growth slows, companies generate less revenue and ensues, where increased unemployment leads to a drop in consumer spending, slowing growth even further, which forces businesses to lay off more workers.

Key Highlights of the Report

- Tripura and Haryana saw unemployment levels of more than 20% (the highest).
- The unemployment was the lowest in Tamil Nadu at 1.1%. Rajasthan saw its unemployment rate double between September and October 2019.
- Employment estimates that between 2011-12 and 2017-18, employment declined by an unprecedented nine million jobs (a 2% drop), with agricultural employment declining by 11.5%.lay off workers to cut costs.
- Employment in the service sector increased by 13.4%, while manufacturing employment

dipped by 5.7%.

What is Unemployment?

Unemployment occurs when a person who is actively searching for employment is unable to find work. It is often used as a measure of the health of the economy. The most frequent measure of unemployment is the unemployment rate, which is the number of unemployed people divided by the number of people in the labour force.

Types of Unemployment:

Frictional Unemployment- Frictional unemployment arises when a person is in between jobs. After a person leaves a company, it naturally takes time to find another job, searching for new job, recruiting new workers, and matching the right worker to the right jobs all take time and effort to do resulting in frictional unemployment.

Cyclical Unemployment- Cyclical unemployment is the variation in the number of unemployed workers over the course of economic upturns and downturns. Unemployment rises during recessionary periods and declines during period of economic growth.

Structural Unemployment- Structural unemployment comes about through technological change in structure of economy like change in automation of manufacturing or replacement of horse-drawn transport by automobiles, lead to unemployment among workers displaced from jobs that are no longer needed.

Institutional Unemployment-Institutional unemployment is unemployment that results from long term or permanent institutional factors and incentives in the economy. Government policies such as high minimum wage floors, generous social benefits programs, and restrictive occupational licensing laws; labour market phenomena such as efficiency wages and discriminatory hiring; and labour market institutions such as high rates of unionization can all contribute to institutional unemployment.

Disguised or Hidden Unemployment: It exists where part of the labour force is either left without work or is working in a redundant manner where worker productivity is essentially zero. It is unemployment that does not affect aggregate output. An economy demonstrates disguised unemployment when productivity is low and too many workers are filling too few jobs. It is a frequent phenomenon in developing countries.

What Periodic Labour Force Survey says?

1. The unemployment rate in both rural and urban India is at its highest.
2. Since 2011-12, Unemployment rates among men is more than twice and has increased twice among women in urban areas.
3. The unemployment rates in urban areas are higher than those in rural areas.
4. Since 2011-2012, the unemployment rates among youth between 15 and 29 years has risen sharply.

Recessions & Unemployment

❖ A recession occurs when there are two or more consecutive quarters of negative economic growth.

❖ When an economy is facing recession, business sales and revenues decrease, which cause businesses to stop expanding.

❖ As companies struggle with less cash and revenue, they first try to reduce their cost by lowering wages or ceasing to hire new workers, which can stop employment growth.

❖ When there are layoffs and no new jobs being created consumers tend to save money or spend less.

❖ With less consumer and business spending there is less money which results in decrease in demand of goods and leads the growth rate for companies.

❖ Negative economic growth due to lower consumer and business spending and decline in bank lending results in massive layoffs the also increases the unemployment.

Way Forward

- Re-skill for digital interventions-The first and foremost step towards effectively combating the rising unemployment would be to acknowledge the impact of artificial

intelligence (AI) and automation. **Adapting to an inevitable digital intervention is India's only hope at beating a long-standing job crisis.** To do so, focus on quality education and better skill development is fundamental.
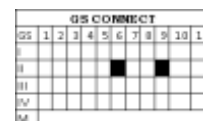
- Seek opportunities in automation- The effects of digital transformation are not limited to the IT sector alone. Almost every sector, be it finance, healthcare, manufacturing or public, can be seen undergoing a paradigm shift to embrace the trends of industry 4.0.For that to happen, not only will the government have to focus on improving digital infrastructure and policy but also implement radical education reforms. The long-term solution for job growth hinges on harnessing of quality talent in the country.

- Upgrade and Upscale- Incorporating new specifications for certification standards can help create a workforce capable of staying relevant and productive.This, in turn, would save the employer thousands of crores spent on fresher training and onboarding. The same resources can then be re-allocated for re-skilling and up-skilling existing employees.

- Leverage opportunities offered by start-ups- Start-ups have also heralded the beginning of a **'gig economy'**, where people are taking up contractual and freelance projects or online assignments, as opposed to the traditional office-based jobs.

- India must nurture its own version of the German *Mittelstand*, if it hopes to someday overcome the job deficit.

- Market reforms- A responsive public-private partnership model that can channelise investments for skill-building to create a demand-supply balance can be an effective way to achieve this.

- If India wants to lend real impetus to its job growth initiative, it needs to start by slicing and analysing sector-wise data to understand where economic growth has not been matched by an increase in job creation.

SkillsBuild Platform in Collaboration with IBM

News Excerpt

Technology major IBM recently launched a platform in collaboration with the Directorate General of Training to offer diplomas in IT, networking and cloud computing at Industrial Training Institutes and National Skill Training Institutes.

About the Programme

- The platform will train ITI and NSTI faculty on AI skills for future of work. The platform, SkillsBuild, offers digital learning content from IBM and partners.

- IBM in collaboration with MSDE will help the next-gen to compete in the global economy. Skills are the new currency and this program will address **industries' constant struggle** for job-ready individuals.

- The platform will help students develop the technical and professional skills needed for competitive **"new collar" jobs.**

- The platform is deployed with the support of leading NGOs like Unnati and

Euro Skills 2018
EuroSkills is the European Championship of young professionals, a promotion of latest skill development around Europe. It was held at Budapest, Hungary, in 2018 and had more than 28 countries participating in the competition out of which India was one of the guest countries.

World Talent Ranking 2019
India slipped 6 places to 59th rank on a global annual list of 63 countries, due to low quality of life and expenditure on education, according to the latest edition of IMD World Talent Ranking, which was topped by Switzerland.

The ranking, which is based on the performance in three main categories -- investment and development, appeal and readiness, noted that India is also lagging behind fellow BRICs countries - China ranked 42nd on the list, Russia (47th) and South Africa (50th).

Edunet Foundation.

Analytica

National Skill Development Mission:

It was launched in 2015. The main goal is to create opportunities, space and scope for the development of the talents of the Indian youth and to develop more of those sectors which have already been put under skill development for the last so many years and also to identify new sectors for skill development. The new programme aims at providing training and skill development to 500 million youth of our country by 2020, covering each and every village. Various schemes are also proposed to achieve this objective like UDAAN, ESDM etc.

Programs/Initiatives under NSDA:

1. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

2. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKK).

3. National Apprentice Promotion Scheme (NAPS)

4. Establishing Academic Equivalence

5. Capacity building in long term skill development.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> MyInnerGenius, PMKVY, PMKK, NAPS, Establishing Academic Equivalence, NSDC and NAPS

Work done till now:

➢ Over 10.09 lakh people out of 33.93 lakh trained under skill India mission's PMKVY have hot jobs.

➢ UP, MP, Haryana Rajasthan and TN reporting highest placement.

➢ Lakhs of student have been trained under short term training, Recognition of Prior Learning and Special projects and candidate also get the certificate.

➢ Training centres/training providers are mandated to organise placement/rozgar melas every six month with the support of Sector Skill Council.

➢ 34 sectors/sub-sectors is estimated at 126.87 million for the period 2017-2022. Out of this, 38.87 million is estimated to be required for 14 broad manufacturing sectors/sub-sectors.
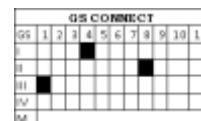
Conclusion:

The idea is to raise confidence, improve productivity and give direction through proper skill development. Skill development will enable the youths to get blue-collar jobs. Development of skills, at an young age, right at the school level, is very essential to channelize them for proper job opportunities. There should be a balanced growth in all the sectors and all jobs should be given equal importance. Every job aspirant would be given training in soft skills to lead a proper and decent life. Skill development would reach the rural and remote areas also. Corporate educational institutions, non-government organizations, Government, academic institutions, and society would help in the development of skills of the youths so that better results are achieved in the shortest time possible.

Draft Code on Social Security

News Excerpt

The labour ministry will rework the draft social security code again, after the **Prime Minister's Office (PMO) pulled it up over** the proposals that did not meet the objective of unifying all social security benefits under an umbrella scheme.

Pre-Connect

The draft code on social security subsumes eight existing law covering provident fund, maternity benefits and pension. A draft of the social security code, one of the four codes that **are part of the Centre's labour reforms agenda, was published** in September for public comments and suggestions till October 25.

Why the Draft Code on Social Security is Facing Criticism?

According to some activists, **Draft is 'a weak cut**-and-**paste' of existing social security laws**.

For ex. **Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh has "rejected" the draft on Social Security Code and termed it 'totally disappointing' for the workers in the country**It gives the following reason:

- Creates Class division:Unlike the wage code it is not universal & did not aim the last worker to be benefited by all the benefits. It creates a class division of privileged employees, workers and unfortunate wage workers with different sets of benefits.

- Powers arbitrarily retained: The power under the code are arbitrarily retained for executive decisions including power to exempt the law to establishment or arbitrarily reducing the rate of contribution to social security funds.
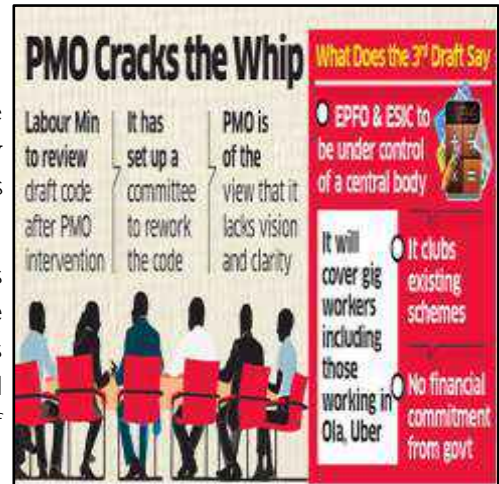
Analytica

Changes need to be done in Code on Social Security:

➢ Insurance, PF, life cover for unorganized sector employees- The states may formulate and notify suitable initiative for unorganized workers, including schemes relating to provident fund, employment injury benefit, housing, educational scheme for their children, old age and funeral assistance.

Generally, India's social security schemes cover the following types of social insurances:
- ❖ Pension
- ❖ Health Insurance and Medical Benefit
- ❖ Disability Benefit
- ❖ Maternity Benefit
- ❖ Gratuity

PEPPER IT WITH
MGNREGA, ESIC, Employees' Compensation Act, 1923, Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972, Cine Workers Welfare Fund Act and Social Security Act, 2008, 100 years of ILO, Pressure Groups (BMS)

➢ Corporatization of EPFO and ESIC- The pension, insurance and retirement saving bodies including EPFO and ESIC should be made corporate bodies. There will be appointment of CEOs in these organizations indicating that the labour minister, labour secretary, the central PF commissioner and Director General of ESIC may not be by default the head of such organizations. Due to this EPFO will become a more structural national body.

➢ Benefits for Gig workers: Central Government may formulate and notify time to time suitable social security schemes for Gig workers and platform workers. Such schemes encompass issues like life and disability cover, health and maternity benefits, old age protection and any other benefits.

➢ Maternity Benefit: The average daily wage means the average of the woman's wages payable to her for the days on which she has worked during the period of three calendar months immediately preceding the date from which she absents herself on account of maternity, subject to the minimum rate of wage fixed or revised under the Code on Wages, 2019.

> Existing labour laws that the code will merge: The Code on Social Security, 2019 once in place will merge eight exiting labour laws including Employees' Compensation Act, 1923; **Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948, Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous** Provisions Act, 1952; Maternity Benefit Act, 1961; Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972; Cine Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1981; Building and Other Construction Workers Cess Act, 1996 **and Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008**.

Factsheet

1. Article 41, 42 and 43 of the Constitution of India levies responsibility on the State to provide social security to citizens of the country. Also,
2. The Concurrent List of the Constitution of India mentions issues like-
   o Social Security and insurance, employment and unemployment.
   o Welfare of Labour including conditions of work, provident funds, employers' liability, workmen's compensation, invalidity and old age pension and maternity benefits.
3. India ratified the ILO convention on social security in 1964.
4. A social security division has also been set up under the Ministry of Labour and Employment which mainly focuses on framing policies for social security for the workers of organized sector.
5. There is **UnorganizedWorkers' Social Security Act, 2008**, which targets at extending social security measures to unorganized sector workers.
6. The Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), is the flagship of all ILO social security Conventions, as it is the only international instrument, based on basic social security principles, that establishes worldwide-agreed minimum standards for all nine branches of social security. These branches are: (i) medical care; (ii) sickness benefit; (iii) unemployment benefit; (iv) old-age benefit; (v) employment injury benefit; (vi) family benefit; (vii) maternity benefit; (viii) invalidity benefit; and (ix) survivors' benefit.

Patent Prosecution Highway Programme

News Excerpt

The Union Cabinet recently approved the proposal for adoption of Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) programme by the Indian Patent Office (IPO) under the Controller General of Patents, Designs &Trade Marks, India (CGPDTM) with patent offices of various other interest countries or regions.

About

The programme will initially commence between Japan Patent Office (JPO) and Indian Patent Office on pilot basis for a period of three years only. Under this Pilot programme, Indian Patent Office may receive patent applications in certain specified technical fields only, namely, Electrical, Electronics, Computer Science, Information Technology, Physics, Civil, Mechanical, Textiles, Automobiles and Metallurgywhile JPO may receive applications in all fields of technology.

PPH programme would lead to the following benefits for the Indian IP office:

- Education in time to dispose patent applications.

- Reduction in pendency of patent applications.

- Improvement in quality of search and examination of patent applications.

- An opportunity for Indian inventors including MSMEs and Start-ups of India to get accelerated examination of their patent applications in Japan.

Analytica

➢ **The ministry's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)deals with** intellectual property matters.

➢ The deal would allow a patent application to demand fast tracking of his patent application by showing that the product or process has already been granted a patent in Japan.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> CGPDTM, Patent Cooperation Treaty, International Searching Authority, International Preliminary Examining Authority (ISA/IPEA) and World Intellectual Property Organization

➢ Although PPH only facilitates speedy examination of a patent application in India without guaranteeing the grant of a patent in India, there is clear danger here.

➢ There is worry **that PPH trend could lead to the harmonisation of India's patent laws with** those of Japan as the Indian Patent Act is very nearly a one of its kind legislation, which has served as a model for other developing countries because it lays down strict patentability criteria that list what cannot be patented. These are sections in the law which drug multinationals have found difficult to circumvent in their quest to extend or even double the term of their patents through **"evergreening" strategies.**

NISHTHA Scheme

News Excerpt

Recently, the Central government has extended the NISHTHA scheme in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir with the target to train a total of 86000 Elementary teachers of Government Schools. NISHTHA is a pioneer scheme launched across the country in August 2019.

About

NISHTHA is a capacity building programme for "Improving Quality of School Education through Integrated Teacher Training". It aims to build competencies among all the teachers and school principals at the elementary stage. NISHTHA is the world's largest teachers' training programme of its kind. The basic objective of this massive training programme is to motivate and equip teachers to encourage and foster critical thinking in students. The initiative is first of its kind wherein standardized training modules are developed at national level for all States and UTs.

For further information, please refer to current connect of August.

ICEDASH and ATITHI

News Excerpt

Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs recently unveiled two new IT initiatives **–** ICEDASH and ATITHI **–** for improved monitoring and pace of Customs clearance of imported goods and facilitating arriving international passengers by electronic filing of Customs baggage and currency declarations.

About ICEDASH AND ATITHI

> PEPPER IT WITH
> CBIC, EOBD and NIC

• The measures are taken by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) to leverage technology for providing better taxpayer services.

• These initiatives also facilitate arriving international passengers with e-filing of baggage and currency declarations.

- Both ICEDASH and ATITHI would be key drivers for further improvement especially as they reduce interface and increase transparency of customs functioning.

ICEDASH	• ICEDASH is an Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) monitoring dashboard of the Indian customs helping public see the daily Customs clearance times of import cargo at various ports and airports. • Indian customs has taken a lead globally to provide an effective tool that helps the businesses compare clearance time across ports and plan their logistics accordingly. This dashboard has been developed by CBIC in collaboration with NIC.
ATITHI	• ATITHI is a mobile app for international travellers to file the Customs declaration in advance. • Particular create a tech-savvy image of India's customs and would encourage tourism and business travel to India. • Passengers can use this app to file declaration of dutiable items and currency with the Indian Customs even before boarding the flight to India. It will facilitate hassle free and faster clearance by customs at the airport.

"Project Zero" by Amazon

News Excerpt

Recently, Global ecommerce Major Amazon announced the launch of its Project Zero initiative in India, a programme to eliminate counterfeit products.

Pre-connect

Project zero was launched earlier this year in the US, Europe – the UK, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and Japan. The programme ensures that customers always receive authentic products when shopping on Amazon.

About

- "Project Zero" introduces additional proactive mechanisms and powerful tools to identify, block and remove counterfeits.It do so through three powerful tools: Automated protections, self-service counterfeit removal tool and product serialization.

- Project zero combines Amazon advance technology and innovation with the sophisticated and how best to detect counterfeits of their products.

- Automated protections: **Powered by Amazon's machine learning expertise, automated** protections continuously scan stores and proactively remove suspected counterfeits.

- Self-service counterfeit removal tool: This tool provides brands with the ability to remove counterfeit listings themselves. Previously, brands would need to report a counterfeit to Amazon.

- Product serialization: Product serialization is a service that allows Amazon to individually **scan and confirm the authenticity of every one of a brand's products that are purchased in Amazon's stores. The product serialization service provides a unique code for** every unit that is manufactured, and the brand puts these codes on its products as part of its manufacturing process.

Project zero has brought relief to brand owners and workers in a seamless manner.

Shaala Darpan Portal

News Excerpt

Recently, Minister of State for Human Resource Development launched the Shaala Darpan portal, an E-Governance school automation and management system for Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS). This single integrated platform has been developed for information sharing and knowledge dissemination across schools and offices of Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti.

Pre-Connect

The **"Shaala Darpan Project"** for theKendriyaVidyalayas was launched in 2015. The objective of this project was to provide services based on School Management Systems to Students, Parents and Communities.

The School Information Services includes School Profile Management, Student Profile Management, Employee Information, Student Attendance, Leave Management, Report Cards, Curriculum Tracking Custom, SMS Alerts for Parents / Administrators on student & teacher attendance.

About Shaala Darpan

Shaala Darpan is an end to end e-Governance school automation and management system. It has been implemented at Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti as the first major initiative to enable automation of all activities of the country's largest residential schooling system through a single umbrella - 636 schools, 8 Regional Offices, 8 NLIs and Head Quarter.

Benefits of the system

- More efficient processes:Reduced time for information searching. Timely information intimations like absence of students in class, movement of students outside the campus, any important notifications from management to officers.
- Ease of stakeholders:Responsive GUI helps user to access the system on hand held devices mobile and tablets. Easy navigation and information access for citizens.
- Increased transparency: One-Go Dash-Board to see the information of every aspect of the project, thus aiding faster and evidence based decision making.
- Structured and Efficient way of working: Automated alerts and reminders for informing users of any actions that is required at their end.Process transparency both for individual users and management.
- **In line with the Government's manifesto on Education**: Online Assignments, Improvised Projects with students from different classes, streamlined monitoring, etc. via School Information System thus reworking the work culture of teacher training institutions with a goal to prepare committed performing teachers.

Atal Tinkering Lab Marathon

News Excerpt

Recently, a group of selected student innovators of the Atal Tinkering Lab Marathon 2018 were called on by the President of India at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Pre-Connect

- In an effort to identify India's best student innovators, Atal Tinkering Labs of the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) of NITI Aayog, organized an Atal Tinkering Marathon, a six month long nationwide challenge across six different thematic areas, namely, clean energy, water resources, waste management, healthcare, smart mobility and agri-tech.
- With a vision to 'Cultivate one Million children in India as Neoteric Innovators',Atal Innovation Mission has established Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATLs) in schools across India.
- The objective of this scheme is to foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds and inculcate skills such as design mind set, computational thinking, adaptive

learning, physical computing etc.

Key Features of ATL

➢ ALT is a work space where young minds can give shape to their ideas through hand on do-it yourself mode and learn innovation.

➢ Young children will get a chance to work with tools and equipment to understand the concepts of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).

➢ In order to foster inventiveness among students, ATL can conduct different activities ranging from regional and national level competitions, exhibitions, workshops on problem solving, designing and fabrication of products, lecture series etc. at periodic intervals.

> Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)is Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country. AIM's objective is to develop new programmes and policies for fostering innovation in different sectors of the economy, provide platform and collaboration opportunities for different stakeholders create awareness and create an umbrella structure to oversee innovation ecosystem of the country.

Nadu NeduProgramme (Andhra Pradesh)

News Excerpt

Andhra Pradesh government recently **launched the 'Nadu-Nedu'** programme to introduce English medium from classes 1 to 6 in state-run schools.

About

Under the scheme, all government schools in the state will be provided necessary infrastructure, including setting up of English lab.

Analytica

Merits

➢ It will provide a level playing field for the marginalized sections of society.

➢ This step will affect the monopoly of Private English medium schools of Andhra Pradesh

➢ Most of the people link the economic success and job opportunities with the English **Language. That's why they sen**d their children to attend English medium private schools and pay a good amount of money as fee. This scheme will provide the peoples with tight pockets to have their child enrolled in government schools and save money.

Demerits

➢ There are mountains of evidence which suggests that children learn more if they're taught in their mother tongue.

➢ India's craze for English-medium schools is depriving many children of a real education.

➢ Besides, many teachers barely know the language of instruction.

Conclusion

✓ This step has been taken to create a level playing field for the marginalized section of society as the lack of command over English becomes a hurdle for growth in professional life.

✓ Learning a language is only about gaining a skill that is necessary to gain an education, **it's not an education in itself. Moreover**, if it is done badly, it deprives a child of a proper education. Success of the Programme depends on its proper implementation.

✓ One major hurdle for its implementation is the proper training of the teachers to enable them to express their idea and knowledge in English.

The Kerala Fibre Optic Network (KFON)

News Excerpt

Recently, the Kerala Cabinet has approved Rs 1,548-crore fiber-optic network project to provide free high-speed internet connection to around 2 million families in the state.

Key Highlights

- The Kerala government has already promised to make internet access **a 'citizen's right'**.
- This project will link the government offices and schools with high speed network. Internet service providers and cable television operators can also join the optic-fibre network project to provide their services.
- The Kerala Fibre Optic Network (KFON) project is a collaborative initiative of the state's power utility Kerala State Electricity Board and Kerala State IT Infrastructure Ltd.
- The fibre-optic network project was expected to he**lp the country's IT industry and open** major opportunities in the fields of artificial intelligence, block chain, and start-ups.

Analytica

Merits

- **The UN declaration also went on to affirm "**the importance of applying a comprehensive human rights-based approach in providing and in expanding access to Internet**".**
- **The Kerala High Court's ruling that the** right to access the Internet is a fundamental **right has expanded the scope of citizens' freedom as defined in the Constitution** and recognised the role of Internet as an enabler and an important tool of empowerment. The court held that it is part of the right to privacy under Article 21 and of the right to education.
- This right will help in providing sound business environment for all sections of society on permanent basis as the discontinuity of internet becomes a basis of huge loss to the society.

Demerits

- A closer observation suggests that it primarily focused on imploring states to refrain from **taking any measure that disrupts citizens' access to the Internet.**
- Declaring internet **access a 'citizen's right'** enables the holder of the right to claim a good or a service against the state or someone else. These rights—or entitlements—require fiscal allocations and hence are subject to budgetary constraints.

Way forward

- The need to protect individual freedoms is important. But these rights must be exercised with wisdom and responsibility.
- The state ought to frame guidelines or laws to govern Internet disruptions and shutdowns in accordance with liberal interpretation of the freedoms it bestows upon individuals.
- Such a policy should curb the powers of the state and Internet service providers to implement Internet blackouts.
- Simultaneously, Centre should formulate guidelines to regulate social media as it has been developing in the way which can be dangerous in near future.

TheSAANS campaign

News Excerpt

The union health ministry recently inaugurated the Sixth National Summit on Good, Replicable Practices and Innovations at Gandhinagar (Gujarat)and launched The 'Social Awareness and Action to Neutralise Pneumonia Successfully' (SAANS) campaign to reduce child mortality due to pneumonia.

Pre-Connect

Pneumonia is an infection in one or both lungs. Bacteria, viruses, and fungi cause it. The infection causes inflammation in the air sacs in your lungs, which are called alveoli. The alveoli

fill with fluid or pus, making it difficult to breathe.

Key Highlights

- Under the campaign, a child suffering from pneumonia can be treated with pre-referral dose of anti-biotic amoxicillin by ASHA workers, and health and wellness centres can use pulse oximeter (device to monitor oxygen saturation).
- This campaign also aims to create mass awareness about the most effective solutions for pneumonia prevention like breast feeding, age appropriate complementary feeding, immunization, good quality air etc.
- The web portal for home based care of children including newborn visited by ASHA, was also launched at the Summit. This portal has all the resource materials (training materials, IEC videos, audios, banners, posters etc.) for the home visits of ASHAs.
- The government aims to become more competent in the fight against malaria by 2022 and to eliminate TB from the country by 2025.

Analytica

- India continues to have the highest burden of pneumonia and diarrhoea child deaths in the world, with 158,176 pneumonia and 102,813 diarrhoea deaths in 2016.
- As per data from the Health Management Information System (HMIS), a digital initiative by National Health Mission, out of 1000 live births in India, 37 children under five die. Of these, 5.3 deaths are caused due to pneumonia.

- The HMIS data for 2018-19 ranked Gujarat 2nd among 37 states and union territories in the number of child deaths due to pneumonia, after Madhya Pradesh.

- The Integrated Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD) sets forth an integrated framework of key interventions proven to effectively **protect children's health, prevent** disease and appropriately treat children who do fall ill with diarrhoea and pneumonia.
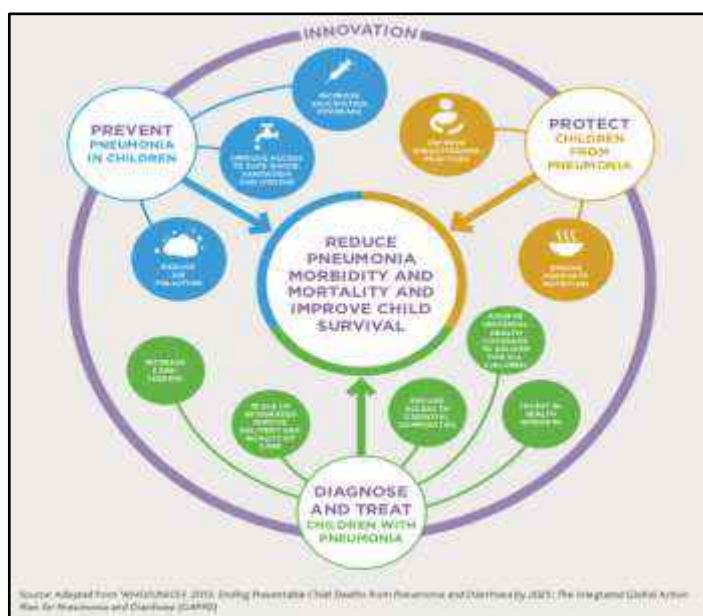
  o Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 month of life (without additional foods or liquids, including water) projects infants from disease and guarantees them a food source that is safe, clean, accessible and perfectly tailored to their needs.

  o Adequate complementary feeding and continued breastfeeding: From 6 months to 2 years of age, adequate complementary feeding – providing children with adequate quantities of safe, nutritious and age-appropriate foods alongside continued breastfeeding – can reduce child deaths, including those due to pneumonia and diarrhoea.

  o Vitamin A Supplementation: High-dose vitamin A supplementation helps maintain strong immune systems and can reduce all-cause mortality by 24 per cent and cases of diarrhea by 15 per cent.

  o Immunization: The Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and pneumococcal conjugate vaccines (PCV) are effective in preventing the two most common bacterial causes of childhood pneumonia and the rotavirus vaccine provides protection against one of the most common causes of childhood diarrhoea-related death.

  o Safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: Almost 60 per cent of deaths due to diarrhoea worldwide are attributable to unsafe drinking water and poor hygiene and
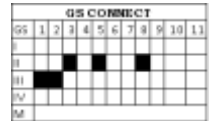
sanitation. Clean home environment and good hygiene are important for preventing the spread of both pneumonia and diarrhoea.

o HIV prevention: Preventing HIV and treating HIV infections with antiretroviral drugs helps maintain the immune system and reduce the risk of contracting pneumonia. Co-trimoxazole prophylaxis provides further pneumonia-related protection for HIV-infected and exposed children and can reduce AIDS deaths by 33 per cent.

Labour Reforms in India

News Excerpt

Labour and employment minister recently introduced the Labour Code on Industrial Relations bill in the Lok Sabha, which aims to improve the business environment in the country largely by reducing the labour compliance burden of industries.

Pre-Connect

- Union Finance Minister in 2019 Budget announced that the government has proposed streamlining multiple labour laws into a set of four labour codes to ensure that process of registration and filing of returns gets standardised.

- Present Government has bracketed 44 labour laws into four major codes - wages, industrial safety and welfare, social security and industrial relations.

- The Labour Code on Industrial Relations Bill **is the third Code in the government's proposed** codification of central labour laws into four Codes. It proposes to amalgamate The Trade Unions Act, 1926, The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, and The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

Analytica

Why Does India Need Labour Reforms?

- The recent SBI research Report stated that the Centre and state governments need to pursue labour law reforms as these are necessary for improving investment and generating employment. Unemployment in India reached a 45-year high in 2018 which highlights the urgency of the reforms.

- In an economy like India, which has a large workforce, it is important to improve employment and employability, streamline labour issues and develop adequate means to absorb the labour in the economy.

- According to the International Labour Organization, the man-days lost in India were staggering 23.34 lakh as compared with 1.7 lakh in the UK and 7.4 lakh in the US with Russia at a low of only 10,000.

- The investors look out for stability and sustainability. Land and labour resources are critical for them to firm up their investment plans.

- Increasing wages and lifting incomes can also help fuel demand for goods, boosting industrial growth in the domestic market.

- India's tough labour laws have been blamed for keeping manufacturing businesses small and hindering job creation.

Significance of the Bill

- The code allows fixed-term employment of workers (with all the benefits of a regular employee), and termination after the fixed term won't be considered retrenchment. This is meant to make requirement-based hiring easier.

- The government has also redefined "strike" to bring "mass casual leave" within its ambit and made it mandatory to give a 14-day notice before any strike or lockout.

- The move to include it in a central law will help in wider reach and uniformity across India.

- A union would be recognised only if it has the support of 75% or more workers and in its absence, a "negotiating council" will be formed. While the code has retained the employee threshold (for permission before closure, retrenchment etc) at 100, it has given powers to the government to reduce or increase the threshold. The measures are meant to promote setting up of more enterprises and create jobs.

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Page 36

- The bill provides for setting up of a two-member tribunal (in place of one-member), thus introducing a concept that some of the important cases will be adjudicated jointly and the rest by a single-member resulting speedier disposal of cases.
- It also provides for vesting of powers with the government officers for adjudication of disputes involving penalty as fines, thereby lessening the burden on the tribunal.

Arguments in Favour

- It aims to streamline industrial relations and help India improve on the Ease of Doing Business Index.
- Flexibility in retrenchment: For more employment in the organised sector, industry demands flexibility which has been fulfilled in the bill.
- Streamlining the 44 labour laws into 4 labour codes leads to simplification of the process and gives less scope for multiple interpretations.
- If India wants to compete with the global players, it has to have a level playing field. Protection of employment is important but commercial viability must also be considered at the same time. The bill tries to address both the aspects.

Arguments Against

- Trade unions have opposed the reduction in compensation to retrenched workers to 15 days of average pay for every year of completed service as against 45 days of average pay for every year of completed service proposed in the earlier version of the bill.
- Discretionary powers in law leads to uncertainty, lack of clarity, discriminatory implementation, and provides scope for unnecessary usage.
- Fixed-term employment needs to be introduced with adequate safeguards, otherwise it runs the risk of encouraging conversion of permanent employment into fixed-term employment.

Other Labour Codes

➢ Labour Code on Wages, 2019

For Further information on Labour code wages please visit CC July (Page no 10)

➢ The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019
- ✓ The Code applies to establishments employing at least 10 workers, and to all mines and docks. It does not apply to apprentices. Further, it makes special provisions for certain types of establishments and classes of employees, such as factories, mines, and building and construction workers.
- ✓ The Code repeals and replaces 13 labour laws relating to safety, health and working conditions. These include the Factories Act, 1948, the Mines Act, 1952, and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970.
- ✓ The employer is required to provide a hygienic work environment with ventilation, comfortable temperature and humidity, sufficient space, clean drinking water, and latrine and urinal accommodations.
- ✓ Other welfare facilities may be provided as per standards prescribed by the central government. These facilities may include separate bathing places and locker rooms for male, female and transgender employees, canteens, first aid boxes, and creches.
- ✓ Presently, the code is being examined by the Standing Committee.
- ➢ Draft Labour Code on Social Security
  Please refer to Page no: 27

Initiatives by the Indian Government

- Shram Suvidha Portal:The Ministry of Labour & Employment has developed a unified Web Portal 'Shram Suvidha Portal', to bring transparency and accountability in enforcement of labour laws and ease complexity of compliance.
- Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017- Increased paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks and has benefited 18 Lakh women employees.
- Recently, Indian Government signed MoU among BRICS Nationsregarding Cooperation in the Social and Labour Sphere. It provides a mechanism for cooperation, collaboration and maximum synergy amongst BRICS member countries with the common objective of inclusive growth and shared prosperity in the new industrial revolution.

- Under the provisions of the Mines Act 1952, Permissions, exemptions, relaxations and approvals etc.; were earlier being issued on submission of offline applications by the stakeholders. In view of the Digital India initiative, various software modules have been introduced to bring in more transparency & accountability and speedy disposal of works.
- Under Pradhan Mantri RojgarProtsahan Yojana (PMRPY), the Government of India is now paying full employer's contribution (EPF and EPS both) with effect from 1st April, 2018 for a period of three years to the new employees as well as to the existing beneficiaries for their remaining period of three years.
- Atal BimitVyakti Kalyan Yojana: Considering the change in employment pattern and the current scenario of employment in India which has transformed from a long term employment to short term engagement in form of contract and temping, the ESI Corporation has approved a Scheme named "**Atal BimitVyakti Kalyan Yojana**" for Insured Persons (IPs) covered under the Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948. This scheme is a relief payable in cash directly to their Bank Account in case of unemployment and while they search for new engagement.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> ILO, LIN Number for Labours, PM Shram Yogi MandhanYoajana

- National Career Service (NCS): National Career Service Project brings employers, trainers and unemployed on single platform. The NCS provides a variety of employment related services like job matching, career counselling, information on skill development courses, apprenticeship, internships etc. The NCS Portal also facilitates organization of job fairs where both employers and job seekers can interact.

Conclusion

Ambitious labour reforms initiatives have a potential to reduce the complexity in compliance due to multiplicity of labour laws and facilitate setting up of enterprises and thus creating the environment for development of business and industry in the country and generating employment opportunities without diluting basic aspects of safety, security and health of workers.

But at the same, it must be ensured that there is involvement of the all stakeholders in bringing out these reforms so as to increase its acceptability. Timely implementation and efficient administrative machinery to implement reforms are also essential to percolate their impacts at the ground level.

World Congress on Rural and Agricultural Finance

News Excerpt

Recently, the 6th World Congress on Rural and Agriculture Finance was held in New Delhi.

Pre-Connect

- The Congress aims at bringing together stakeholders of rural and agricultural finance all over the world.
- It is held in every three years.
- The first Congress was held in 2005 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the last one was held in Dakar, Senegal in 2016.

Highlights

- The 6th World Congress is jointly organised by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and Asia-Pacific Rural Agricultural and Credit Association (APRACA).
- The Finance Ministry made several announcements at the Congress:
  o Formation of 10,000 farmer producer organisations to ensure that farmers get the correct price for their produce.
  o It urged states to dismantle Agriculture Produce Marketing Committees (APMC) and switch to National Agriculture Market (eNAM).
  o It asked farmers to produce oilseeds in place of other crops as India particularly imports edible oil and palm oil.

Analytica

Need for Rural and Agricultural Finance in India

➢ **Low Income of the farmers:** The low income of the agriculturist naturally results in low savings, low investment, low productivity, low income and keep them in the vicious circle of poverty.

➢ **Uncertain Income:** Not only the income is very low in agriculture but also highly uncertain. Agricultural is susceptible to natural calamities and in countries like India, it is still depending on the vagaries of monsoon. Enormous risk in the form of uncertain income, bad weather, drought, flood, cyclone, pest attack, low prices, etc., have hampered agriculture. The operations of a farm enterprise are not as protected as in the case of commercial and industrial enterprises.

➢ **Increase in Expenditure:** The cost of cultivation has been increasing due to the adoption of modem methods of cultivation, which is highly capital intensive. The adoption of new technology in agriculture also has a substantial influence on the demand for credit.

➢ **Typical Production Pattern:** Agriculture being a seasonal activity, the farmer cannot start cultivating the land when he has funds but he has to spend for various agricultural activities during the particular season.

> **APRACA**
> - ❖ The Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA) is a non-government international organization composed mainly of central banks, agricultural banks, development banks, commercial banks, financial institutions, and non-government institutions in the Asia Pacific region involved directly in agricultural credit and rural development.
> - ❖ APRACA was established in 1977 on the occasion of its First General Assembly held in New Delhi, India.
> - ❖ Its main goal is to alleviate poverty in the Asia Pacific Region through rural and agricultural finance by facilitating cooperation as well as exchange of information and expertise among its member institutions.
> - ❖ Its headquarters is in Bangkok, Thailand.

➢ **Inability to raise funds through other sources:** The farmers cannot raise funds for development by floating shares, as it is possible in other non-agricultural enterprises. Under the given conditions of poverty, the meagre savings of the farmers cannot finance their requirements. The major investments in agriculture are usually in the form of sunk capital which cannot be marketed so easily though a farmer wishes in times of emergency.

➢ **Stabilization of Income:** The farmers must be able to increase their income. Therefore, they have to carry on allied activities like dairy, poultry, petty business in the villages etc, along with agriculture for which they need finance. They can stabilise the income with such allied activities.

➢ **Diversification and commercialisation of agriculture:** Indian agriculture has been experiencing diversification and commercialization over the past several decades. The scope for diversification of food grains with vegetables, fruits and flowers continues to be immense in terms of farm profitability and employment of labour. Agricultural credit could become a powerful instrument for stimulating this change and making agriculture as a viable sector.

➢ **Actors along the value chain:** Agriculture entails a sequence of interlinked activities, transactions in a chain that starts from the supply of seeds and fertilizers and finishes in the mouth of the consumers. Finance is needed to strengthen these links between the actors along the value chain.

➢ **Rural Infrastructure:** The sector depends heavily on infrastructure such as rural transport systems, irrigation systems, water supply, sanitation, electricity, storage and telecommunication facilities. These projects are costly and require large amounts of financing.

➢ **Research and Development:** The generation of agricultural technology and new technical

knowledge about products, processes and services for the sector needs financial support.

Challenges in Agricultural Financing

✓ Transaction costs in rural areas are higher than in urban areas due to a more dispersed population with weak infrastructure.

✓ The risk factors inherent in agriculture often inhibit financial institutions from lending.

✓ The financial sector is mostly not sophisticated enough in developing countries like India.

✓ The availability and innovationon sector-specific financial instruments and services is usually poor.

✓ Although financial services may be available, they may not be suitable for all types of agricultural activities, which will have diverse needs with respect to timing for disbursements, amounts and risks, among others.

✓ The lack of records and statistics on farming in developing countries makes assessment of credit suitability challenging for financial providers.

Government Initiatives

▪ Pradhan Mantri FasalBima Yojana (PMFBY): It provides a comprehensive insurance cover against failure of insured crops due to non-preventable natural risks, thus providing financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/ damage arising out of unforeseen events and stabilizing the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming.

▪ Kisan Credit Card Scheme : It was introduced in 1998-99 in order to ensure that all eligible farmers are provided with hassle free and timely credit for their agricultural operation.

▪ Interest Subvention Scheme: To ensure availability of agriculture credit at a reduced interest rate of 7% p.a. to farmers. For short term crop loans up to Rs. 3.00 lakh. Additional subvention of 3% is given to those farmers who repay their short-term crop loan in time, thereby reducing the effective rate of interest to 4% p.a. for such farmers.

▪ Farm Loan Waivers: In 2018, 11 states announced schemes to waive outstanding farm loans. Though this move has divided opinion, the motive of lending a helping hand to farmers in distress needs appreciation.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium, Rural Haats, SHGs, E-NAM, Sunk Capital

▪ PM-KISAN Scheme: It has a provision to extend Rs. 6000 per year benefit to all 14.5 crore farmers, irrespective of the size of their landholding.

Conclusion

An effort must be made to take a holistic approach to consider, among others, food security, poverty reduction and mainstreaming marginalized groups. Any strategy aimed at welfare of agriculture sector should include all interested parties including the different ministries or **agencies, as well as farmers' organ**izations and financial institutions to create a win-win-win agricultural financing system. Only patient, sustainable and inclusive approach can make agriculture a profitable venture.

Alternative Investment Fund for Housing Projects

News Excerpt

The Finance Minister hasrecentlydeclaredthat the government would set up an alternative investment fund (AIF) worth Rs 25,000 crore to provide relief to developers with unfinished projects to ensure delivery of homes to buyers.

Highlights

• The potential size of the fund is Rs 25,000 crore.

• Government has earmarked Rs 10,000 crore towards the fund.

• Life Insurance Corporation of India and State Bank of India would also infuse money along with other such

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Shadow banks, Escrow account, NPA, NCLT, Angel Fund, Debt Fund, Fund of Funds

institutions.

- The fund is not capped at ₹25,000 crore and will likely grow as a lot of sovereign funds have shown interest.
- Only those projects will be considered for funding, where unit price is less than Rs2 crore in case of Mumbai, units price are less than Rs1.5 crore in case of cities like Delhi, Kolkata, Pune, Hyderabad and units price are less than Rs1 crore for all other cities.
- The project has to be registered under Real estate (regulation and development) Act.
- Even those projects which had been declared non-performing assets (NPAs) will get funded.

Impact of the AIF

➢ Around 4.58 lakh housing units are stuck in India with over 1,600 realty projects stalled.

➢ The AIF will provide relief to developers with unfinished projects and ensure delivery of homes to buyers.

➢ AIF for Housing projects is expected to start the revival of real estate sector as well the Indian economy.

➢ It will restore the homebuyers sentiment as well as delivering homes to buyers who have already paid the money.

➢ More buyers will buy these projects since a government fund is attached to them.

➢ The move is also expected to generate employment for unskilled labourers and have a cascading impact on other allied industries such as steel, cement, transport etc

➢ To make the scheme effective the size of the fund would need to be scaled up constantly.
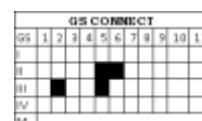
Alternative Investment Fund

- ❖ It refers to any privately pooled investment fund, (whether from Indian or foreign sources), in the form of a trust or a company or a body corporate or a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP).
- ❖ Hence, in India, AIFs are private funds which are otherwise not coming under the jurisdiction of any regulatory agency in India.
- ❖ Categories of AIF:
  - o Category I: Mainly invests in start- ups, SME's or any other sector which Govt. considers economically and socially viable. Ex. Venture Capital Funds, SME Funds.
  - Category II: These include Alternative Investment Funds such as private equity funds or debt funds for which no specific incentives or concessions are given by the government or any other Regulator. The AIF for housing projects announced by the GOI is a category II AIF.
  - o Category III: These funds trade with a view to make short term returns or such other funds which are open ended and for which no specific incentives or concessions are given by the government or any other Regulator. Ex. Hedge Funds.
- ❖ Advantages of AIF:
  - o More flexibility in choice of investments
  - o Smaller fund size compared to mutual funds allows high conviction bets
  - o Fewer number of investors for focused strategy and better market risk predictions.

Credit linked Subsidy Services Awas Portal

News Excerpt

Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs has recently launched Credit-linked Subsidy Services Awas Portal, CLAP.

Highlights

- The portal provides a transparent and robust real-time web-based monitoring system for credit-linked Subsidy Services (CLSS) and beneficiaries.

- Through CLAP, people seeking to avail housing subsidy under the Pradhan Mantri AwasYojna (PMAY)-Urban will be able to track their application.

- CLAP may prove instrumental in addressing the grievances of beneficiaries in a much comprehensive and organized manner.

Analytica
What is CLSS?

➢ Credit Link Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) on home loans for the Middle Income Group (MIG) under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) was launched originally for 12 months till December 31, 2017. Now, it has been extended till March 2020.

➢ Under CLSS, the Centre provides interest subsidy of up to around Rs 2.67 lakh on home loans to individuals, which reduces the principal outstanding amount of the loan.

➢ CLSS covers beneficiaries seeking housing loans for acquisition or construction of houses (including re-purchase) from banks, housing finance companies and other such notified institutions.

➢ Under the CLSS, the MIG beneficiaries with an annual income of above Rs 6 lakh and up to Rs 12 lakh would get an interest subsidy of four per cent on a 20-year loan component of Rs 9 lakh.

➢ Those with an annual income exceeding Rs 12 lakh and up to Rs 18 lakh would get interest subsidy of three per cent.

The Real Estate Sector in India

o The real estate sector is one of the most globally recognized sectors. Real estate sector comprises four sub sectors - housing, retail, hospitality, and commercial.

o Real estate sector in India is expected to reach a market size of US$ 1 trillion by 2030 from **US$ 120 billion in 2017 and contribute 13 per cent of the country's GDP by 2025.**

o Retail, hospitality and commercial real estate are also growing significantly, providing the much-needed infrastructure for India's growing needs.

o According to data released by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), the construction development sector in India has received Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) equity inflows to the tune of US$ 25.04 billion in the period April 2000-March 2019.

o Foreign investors are keen to invest in the Indian real estate sector because of the easy and cheap availability of skilled workforce and the considerably low cost of operations.

o The liberalization policies of the government of India have simplified the investment process by reducing the need for permissions and licenses for starting any large construction project. The government thus opened the doors for foreign investment in the real estate sector of India, which gave a further push to the development of the real estate industry in India.
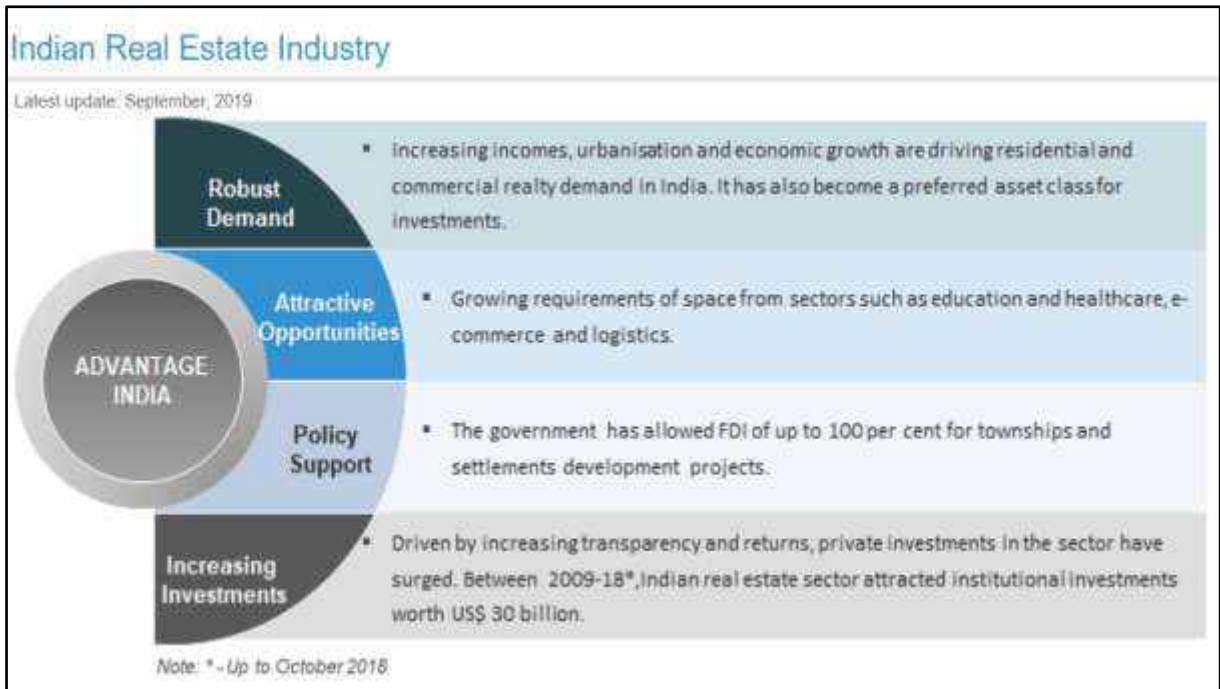
Challenges of Real Estate Sector in India

o Unattractive returns on investments (ROIs): ROIs in residential real estate have dropped from two or even three-digit values to low single-digit or, in many locations, even negative returns over the last few years.

o The Economic Slowdown: This has a direct correlation to employment creation and job security in India. It has also resulted into slowing consumption.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), Floor Space Index (FSI), National Building Code
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o In earlier years, real estate was the preferred means for parking unaccounted wealth (read black money).The possibility of involving large cash components was a big factor that drove housing sales to investors. Unfortunately, demonetization has not eliminated this practice as intended.

o Growing Awareness of Other Investment Options: Ex. Mutual funds provide good returns and the entry level is low enough to be affordable to many.

o Unending Project Delays:

Problem: For a housing project in a metro city, a developer needs over 40 regulatory approvals for starting construction. It takes anywhere from several months to a year or even more. It not only delays a project but also increases the cost of the property by 10-20% for both buyers and developers.

Solution: While RERA has addressed the issue of right usage of funds, the sector certainly needs a single-window clearance system to streamline and fasten the approval mechanism.

o High property prices:

Problem: Property prices in Indian markets have gone way beyond the buying capacity of the common man. Until 2016, taxes accounted for almost 25-30% of the total cost of a property. With the Goods and Service Tax (GST), the tax on under-construction properties has come down to 12%. However, the stamp duty and registration charges are not subsumed into GST.

Solution: Government and developers must join hands to develop necessary social and physical infrastructure simultaneously with the project.

o Land availability:

Problem: At present, there are several ongoing infrastructure projects in the country that are expected to change the dynamics of real estate in India. These include the Metro Rail in major cities and infrastructure projects such as road widening or expansion. However, acquiring land for such projects is a herculean task.

Solution: The government should revise the Land Acquisition Resettlement and Rehabilitation Act 2013.

Unlocking land parcels is also essential for affordable housing. At present, substantial land parcels are reserved by central and state government entities such as the railways, ports, and defence authorities.

Recent government initiatives

✓ The Smart City Project, where there is a plan to build 100 smart cities, is a prime opportunity for the real estate sector.

✓ For addressing the housing demand of more than 10 million houses by 2022, Government of India launched Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban, in June 2015.

✓ To accomplish Housing For All Mission, Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC-India) was launched to get globally acclaimed, alternate and proven construction technologies for speedier and cost-effective construction of affordable housing.

✓ In February 2018, creation of National Urban Housing Fund was approved with an outlay of Rs 60,000 crore (US$ 9.27 billion).

✓ **Model Tenancy Act, 2019, aims to promote rental housing and 'balance the interests' of** landowners and tenant.

✓ Alternate Investment Fund (AIF) will provide funding for stalled housing projects in some of the major metros in the country

✓ The Prime Minister declared 2019-**2020 as 'Construction Technology Year'.**

Conclusion

The real estate sector in India by riding the back of the overall economic growth of the county is witnessing an unparalleled growth and has brought about several regulatory changes. High industrial growth, favourable demographics, rising purchasing power of people, easier financing options, a sharp increase in global liquidity, looser credit policies, a greater availability of leverage, an increase in mortgage lending, a selective capital account, and consistent growth in equity markets have resulted in an upturn in the real estate investment sector. These along with the government's relaxation of FDI policies have made the Indian real estate industry an attractive investment option.

Developing Country Status

News Excerpt

US President recently asked the World Trade Organisation to define how it designates developing-country status. This move is apparently aimed at singling out countries like China, Turkey and India which are getting 'lenient treatment' under global trade rules.

Who Are the Developing Countries in the WTO?

• Developing countries comprise a majority of the WTO membership.

• **They are grouped as "developing countries" and "least developed countries".**

• **There are no WTO definitions of "developed" and "developing" countries.**

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> UNSC Reforms, Strategy for New India@75

• Members announce for themselves whet**her they are "developed" or "developing" countries.**

• However, other members can challenge the decision of a member to make use of provisions available to developing countries.

• Developing country status in the WTO brings certain rights. Ex. provisions in some WTO Agreements which provide developing countries with longer transition periods before they are required to fully implement the agreement and developing countries can receive technical assistance.

• If a WTO member announces itself as a developing country, it does not automatically mean that it will benefit from the unilateral preference schemes of some of the developed country members such as the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). In practice, it is the preference giving country which decides the list of developing countries that will benefit

from the preferences. Ex. US recently terminated GSP Status given by it to India.

Perspective of USA

➢ India and China have "**already grown**" and it is unfair of them to take advantage of the "**developing countries**" tag by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

➢ WTO's **'developing nation'** tag for India and China put the US to disadvantage.

➢ Known for championing **'America First' policy'**, US President Donald Trump has been a vocal critic of India for levying "**tremendously high**" duties on US products and has described the country as a "**tariff king**".

➢ The US is presently locked in a rough trade war with China after Trump slapped punitive tariffs on Chinese goods and Beijing retaliated.

Why equating india with others is flawed

	India	China	S Korea	Singapore	US
GNI* (Per capita, 2017, in $)	1,800	8,690	28,380	54,530	58,270
HDI (Rank, 2017)	130	86	22	9	13
World Hunger Index (Rank, 2018)	103	25	NA	NA	NA
Poverty (%)	21.2	7.9	0.2	NA	1
Undernourishment (%)	14.8	8.7	2.5	NA	2.5
Agri employment (% of workforce)	41.6	16.4	4.8	0.1	1.6
B2C e-commerce (Rank, 2017)	83	65	5	18	26

*Atlas method; Sources: World Bank (for poverty, undernourishment), UNDP (HDI); ILO (farm employment); Unctad (e-commerce)

➢ In a memorandum, Trump empowered the US Trade Representative (USTR) to start taking punitive actions if any country i.e. advanced economies are inappropriately taking benefits of the WTO loopholes.

➢ **Unimpressed by the justification in support of "Developing Country" status by some** countries (Ex. India), US declared that it will unilaterally stop treating some countries as developing country if such countries fail to positively make any progress in this matter within three months.

➢ A few days back, South Korea capitulated to this pressure and gave up **its 'developing country' status**.

India's Stand

India has rightly countered the U.S.'s argument. In a paper submitted to the WTO, it gave several numbers to show that it is still a poor country and thus requires Special & Differential Treatment provisions. For example, the paper showed that-

✓ **India's GDP per capita is very low;**

✓ India has 364 million people living in multidimensional poverty;

✓ The domestic subsidies provided to per farmer is a meagre $227;

✓ India has a very low research and development capacity.
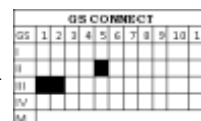
Conclusion

Any unilateral action by the U.S. would be a violation of international law and yet another onslaught on trade multilateralism. At the same time, the Indian political leadership also needs to refrain from being on a publicity overdrive about **India's development.**

Financial Firms Under IBC

News Excerpt

The Union Government recently issued rules that provide a framework for **bringing 'systemically important financial service providers under the purview** of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

What are the New Rules?

• According to Ministry of Corporate Affairs, financial services providers, or classes of such entities, will be covered by a special window under the bankruptcy code, which will be notified from time to time.

- Only a regulator will be allowed to refer a non-bank lender or housing financier to a bankruptcy tribunal, unlike in the case of companies that can approach a tribunal on their own, or can be dragged into one either by lenders or operational creditors such as material suppliers.

- The bankruptcy tribunal will appoint an administrator who will try to stitch together a turnaround plan. The administrator will be nominated by the regulator, such as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in the case of non-bank lenders and housing financiers.

- The registration or the licence of the financial services provider will not be suspended or cancelled during the bankruptcy resolution process. In case a turnaround of the financial institution is not possible, before deciding to liquidate it, the tribunal will listen to the views of the regulator.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

- ❖ The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 provides a time-bound process to resolve insolvency among companies and individuals.
- ❖ Insolvency is a situation where an individual or company is unable to repay their outstanding debt.
- ❖ IBC attempts to create a formal insolvency resolution process (IRP) for businesses, either by coming up with a viable survival mechanism or by ensuring their speedy liquidation.
- ❖ It envisages a new regulator i.e the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India.
- ❖ IBC vests the insolvency professionals tasked with the job, with substantial powers. Criminal charges are applicable if they notice any asset stripping by the promoters or responsible parties.
- ❖ Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill, 2018 clarifies that allottees under a real estate project should be treated as financial creditors.
- ❖ Amendment Bill reduces the voting threshold for committee of creditors required for taking decisions from 75% to 51% and allows the withdrawal of a resolution application submitted to the National Company Law Tribunal under the Code.

- The rules were issued under Section 227 of the IBC, which allows the Central government to notify FSPs or categories of FSPs for the purpose of insolvency and liquidation proceedings.

- Section 227 of the [Insolvency and Bankruptcy] Code enables the Central government to notify, in consultation with the financial sector regulators, financial service providers (FSPs) or categories of FSPs for the purpose of insolvency and liquidation proceedings, in such manner as may be prescribed.

Impact of the Move

➢ The new rules address an important regulatory gap by bringing in certain classes of financial institutions under the scope of IBC.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Mission Indradhanush, BASEL Norms, NCLT

➢ The new rules under IBC is a timely step for resolution of financial services providers, permitting an interplay between regulators, creditors and the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for appropriate actions.

➢ The government is planning to introduce the Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill in parliament in the winter session of 2019.

➢ According to experts, the framework will likely bring more interest in the resolution of distressed NBFCs such as DHFL.

➢ Framework will provide potential players interested in acquiring stressed assets immunity from potential liabilities arising from investigations by government agencies.

LCR Norms by RBI

News Excerpt

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently tightened the liquidity management framework for non-banking financial firms to strengthen their asset-liability management following the liquidity crisis faced by these firms in

the past year.

What is Liquidity Coverage Ratio?

- The liquidity coverage ratio (LCR) refers to the proportion of highly liquid assets held by financial institutions, to ensure their ongoing ability to meet short-term obligations.

- This ratio is essentially a generic stress test that aims to anticipate market-wide shocks and make sure that financial institutions possess suitable capital preservation, to ride out any short-term liquidity disruptions, that may plague the market.

- LCR is a requirement under Basel III whereby banks are required to hold an amount of high-quality liquid assets that's enough to fund cash outflows for 30 days.

Limitations of LCR

- ❖ A limitation of the LCR is that it requires banks to hold more cash and might lead to fewer loans issued to consumers and businesses.
- ❖ One could argue that if banks issue a fewer number of loans, it could lead to slower economic growth since companies that need access to debt to fund their operations and expansion would not have access to capital.
- ❖ On the other hand, another limitation is that we won't know until the next financial crisis if the LCR provides enough of a financial cushion for banks or if its insufficient to fund cash outflows for 30 days.

- The LCR applies to all banking institutions that have more than $250 billion in total consolidated assets or more than $10 billion in on-balance sheet foreign exposure. Such **banks are also referred to as "Systematically Important Financial Institutions" (SIFIs).**

- SIFIs are required to maintain a 100% LCR, which means holding an amount of highly liquid assets that are equal or greater than its net cash flow, over a 30-day stress period. Highly liquid assets can include cash, Treasury bonds or corporate debt.

Highlights

- ➢ The central bank has prescribed a specific cap on negative asset liability mismatches for particular liquidity buckets and also mandated them to maintain liquidity coverage ratios (LCR).

- ➢ The guidelines are applicable to all non-deposit taking NBFCs with an asset size of ₹100 crore and above, systemically important Core Investment Companies and all deposit-taking NBFCs irrespective of their asset size.

- ➢ According to RBI, LCR will promote resilience of NBFCs to potential liquidity disruptions by ensuring that they have sufficient High-Quality Liquid Assets (HQLA) to survive any acute liquidity stress scenario lasting for 30 days.

- ➢ The LCR requirement will be binding on NBFCs from December 1, 2020, with the minimum HQLAs to be held being 50% of the LCR, progressively reaching up to the required level of 100% by December 1, 2024.

- ➢ According to RBI, NBFCs with assets of ₹10,000 crore and above will have to maintain a minimum of 50% of LCR as high quality liquid assets (HQLA), while those with assets of ₹5000-10,000 crore will have to maintain 30% LCR.

- ➢ Core Investment Companies, Type 1 NBFC-NDs, Non-Operating Financial Holding Companies and Standalone Primary Dealers are exempt from the applicability of LCR norms.

- ➢ The RBI guidelines propose to introduce a stock approach to liquidity as opposed to a cash flow approach in order to ensure asset adequacy to repay debt.

- ➢ The RBI also asked NBFCs to adopt liquidity risk monitoring tools to capture any possible liquidity stress.

Impact of the move

- ✓ It will put pressure on margins and returns of NBFCs over the medium term as they would have to carry low yielding assets to meet the HQLA requirement.

- ✓ There is likely to be consolidation because NBFCs with higher liabilities and lesser liquid

assets will have to consolidate in order to meet the regulatory requirement.

✓ It should help improve the creditworthiness of the NBFCs and ensure that they are able to meet their liabilities.

Global Microscope on Financial Inclusion Report

News Excerpt

According to The Economist Intelligence Unit's 2019 Global Microscope on Financial Inclusion report, the overall environment for financial inclusion has improved globally.

Highlights

- According to the report, India, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay and Mexico having the most favourable conditions for inclusive finance.
- India is placed among the top nations with the most conducive environment for financial inclusion in terms of allowing non-banks to issue e-money, proportionate customer due diligence and effective consumer protection.
- For promoting digital financial inclusion, the report identified four basic enablers –
  o allowing non-banks to issue e-money,
  o presence of financial service agents,
  o proportionate customer due diligence and
  o effective financial consumer protection.
- Only four countries - Colombia, India, Jamaica and Uruguay - scored perfectly across all four parameters.
- South Africa, India, Mexico, Tanzania and Uruguay were among the top countries that safeguard e-money via some sort of deposit insurance or protection.

Financial inclusion

➢ Financial inclusion refers to efforts to make financial products and services accessible and affordable to all individuals and businesses, regardless of their personal net worth or company size. Financial inclusion strives to remove the barriers that exclude people from participating in the financial sector and using these services to improve their lives. It is also called inclusive finance.

➢ It includes not only banking products but also other financial services such as insurance and equity products.

➢ Financial inclusion as a policy initiative entered the banking lexicon only after the recommendations of the Rangarajan Committee in 2008.

➢ As per census 2011, only 58.7% of households are availing banking services in the country.

Measure Taken for Financial Inclusion

✓ National Strategy for Financial Inclusion: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has prepared a draft National St**rategy for Financial Inclusion to deepen financial services' coverage in** the country. It is expected to be finalised in 2019 and will cover a five-year period.

✓ Framework for Regulatory Sandbox: In August 2019, the RBI released the Enabling Framework for Regulatory Sandbox (RS), which creates the basis for a regulatory sandbox that will allow fintech start-ups to live-test innovative products and service.

✓ FI Index- **For measurement of Financial Inclusion, India's first FI index was launched in** 2013 based on four critical dimensions:
  o branch penetration,
  o deposit penetration,
  o credit penetration, and
  o insurance penetration.

✓ Some financial inclusion initiatives that have been taken by government are:
  o Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana

- o Financial Literacy Centres (FLCs)
- o Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs), Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and Local Area Banks (LABs)
- o Kisan Credit Cards (KCC)
- o SHG-Bank Linkage
- o separate category of NBFCs as NBFC-MFIs
- o Bank Credit to MSME,
- o Business Correspondents,
- o Digital India initiative,
- o payment banks, and small finance banks, etc.

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PEPPER IT WITH
12thFive  Year  Plan,  Planning
Commission
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Conclusion

If financial inclusion efforts are to be fully harnessed and taken forward, the regulator and banks will have to work in cohesion with local government agencies to educate masses on a large scale, highlighting rights and responsibilities.

While India is aiming to achieve the 5 trillion economy status, financial inclusion can be rightly considered as the base to achieve the dream.

Stricter Rules for Core Investment Companies

News excerpt

A working group set up by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently submitted its recommendations for the regulation of core investment companies. The group is led by former Corporate Affairs Secretary Tapan Ray.

Pre-Connect

- The need for the review of CIC guidelines was felt ever since the defaults by the Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services Ltd (IL&FS), a large systemically important core investment company.
- Currently, corporate governance guidelines are not explicitly made applicable to CICs.
- Unlike NBFCs which are required to constitute board level committees, no such standards are mandated for CICs. The same director could be part of boards of multiple companies in a group, including CICs.
- According to recent data, there are 63 CICs registered with RBI. The total asset size of the CICs was ₹2.63 trillion and they had approximately ₹87,048 crore of borrowings. The borrowing mix consists of debentures (55%), commercial papers (CPs) (16%), financial institutions (FIs) other corporates (16%) and bank borrowings (13%).

Core Investment Companies (CICs)

- ❖ Core Investment Companies, (CIC) are those companies which have their assets predominantly as investments in shares for holding stake in group companies but not for trading, and also do not carry on any other financial activity.
- ❖ These companies a minimum 90% of their assets in the group concerns either in the form of equity, preference shares or convertibles bonds or loans. Further the component of equity holdings should not be less than 60% of their assets.
- ❖ It is now decided by RBI that only those CICs having an asset size of Rs.100 crore and above would be treated as systemically important core investment companies.

Key Recommendations by Tapan Ray Committee

- ➢ Capital contribution by a CIC in a step-down CIC, over and above 10% of its owned funds, should be deducted from its Adjusted Net worth, as applicable to other NBFCs. Further, step-down CICs may not be permitted to invest in any other CIC, while allowing them to invest freely in other group companies;
- ➢ The number of layers of CICs in a group should be restricted to two. As such, any CIC within a group shall not make investment through more than a total of two layers of CICs,

including itself;

➢ Every Group having a CIC should have a Group Risk Management Committee (GRMC);

➢ Constitution of the Board level committees viz., Audit Committee and Nomination and Remuneration Committee should be mandated ;

➢ Offsite returns may be designed by the Reserve Bank and may be prescribed for the CICs on the lines of other NBFCs. Annual submission of Statutory Auditors Certificates may also be mandated; and

➢ Onsite inspection of CICs may be conducted periodically.

Corporate governance in India

✓ The need for corporate governance has arisen because of the increasing concern about the non-compliance of standards of financial reporting and accountability by boards of directors and management of corporate inflicting heavy losses on investors.

✓ The importance of good corporate governance lies in the fact that it will enable the corporate firms to (1) attract capital and (2) perform efficiently. This will help in winning **investor' confidence.**

✓ SEBI constituted a series of committees — Kumar Mangalam Birla Committee in 2000, Narayana Murthy Committee in 2003, Adi Godrej Committee in 2012, and the Uday Kotak committee in 2017 — to come up with more elaborate governance norms.

✓ Governance norms for Indian listed companies are set out in the Companies Act.

✓ **Today, India's corporate governance framework requires listed companies to have** independent directors manning one-third of their Board, appoint audit and nomination committees, and require the CEO and CFO to sign off on the governance norms. Minority shareholders with 10 per cent voting rights also have the right to drag companies to Court for mismanagement.

✓ The situation involving the Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services Limited (IL&FS) has raised a number of questions revolving around corporate governance.

Way Forward

To improve Corporate Governance, following steps can be taken:

1. Increase Diversity: Corporate boards suffer from a serious lack of diversity. Women make up only 16 percent of the directors of the Fortune 500 companies. This lack of diversity has been pervasive even though there are many studies which show that diversity in the boardroom improves company performance.

2. Appoint Competent Board Members: The Nominating Committee should devote adequate time to identify board members who have the skills and

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Financial Stability Report, IL&FS Crisis, Step Down CICs

industry knowledge to assist the board. There should be a balance between those board members who know the organization, those board members who have a helpful expertise and those that offer a fresh perspective.

3. Ensure Timely Information: Timely information results in better decision-making. Interactions between senior managers and the board are critical to ensuring that adequate information is provided to the board.

4. Prioritize Risk Management: Every board should establish an effective system for risk oversight and management. Effective risk management leads to better decision-making and accurate cost-benefit or risk-reward decisions.

5. Evaluate Board Performance: The evaluation process should be used to identify weaknesses in board performance, and adopt reforms needed to improve board performance. The evaluation should be broad, cut across all issues and personnel and include senior management interactions with board members.

Insurance Cover on Bank Deposits

News Excerpt

Recently, Union Finance Minister stated that the government is planning to bring legislations on raising insurance cover on bank deposits from the current Rs 1 lakh and regulating multi-state cooperative banks.

Pre-Connect

- Deposit insurance is static at Rs 1 lakh since 1993. As much as 90 per cent of the accounts had that much or less amount when this limit was raised to Rs 1 lakh.
- The Raghuram Rajan Committee on Financial Sector Reforms 2009 had recommended strengthening the capacity of the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation, a more explicit system of prompt, corrective action, and making deposit insurance premia more risk-based.

Analytica
Need for Strengthening the Insurance Cover

- ➢ Denying people, the right over their hard-earned money is a colossal hazard for the financial system, which runs on the trust of depositors.
- ➢ Already, trust in banks seems to be declining as in FY18, growth in bank deposits fell to a five-decade low.
- ➢ The seriousness of government regarding the formal financial inclusion in India is seen through reformative measures such as Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana. However, it must be realised that an immediate availability of funds as well as the insurance coverage of funds are necessary to increase the confidence of citizens in the banking system.
- ➢ The lack of DICGC coverage for deposits at NBFCs (many of whom the RBI regulates) and primary cooperative societies is one of the major issues. These entities often serve vulnerable sections and their depositors must not be left in the lurch in case of a crisis.
- ➢ Compared to other BRICS nations, India today has the lowest deposit insurance cover to per capita income ratio, at 0.9 times.
- ➢ Hence, it must take purposeful strides in expanding and rectifying the deposit insurance scheme as a safety net of the financial system.
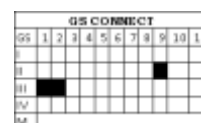
What needs to be done?

- ✓ The 'freezes' in withdrawal directed by the RBI as in the case of PMC Bank essentially cut the depositor's access to his money. Hence, during such periods, at least the statutory amount should be released. This will go a long way in preventing bank runs, which could be triggered when customers get alarmed about the ability of banks to repay their deposits.
- ✓ Currently the DICGC charges a flat 0.1% insurance premium on the deposits of banks. However, as suggested by an RBI panel in 2015, premium should be based on differential risk based on the lending practices of the bank, among other things.
- ✓ The DICGC must draw inspiration from standard insurance practices and charge higher premiums from banks with a past history of higher claims, so that public sector banks (PSBs) which have made zero claims so far need not foot the bill for someone else's mistake. This will also provide a level-playing field for PSBs which are often disadvantaged due to tight government control and inflexibility.
- ✓ Bringing private sector insurers and re-insurers into the deposit insurance segment, which could drive down premium prices.
- ✓ Customers who want more coverage than the statutory cover on their deposits should be able to purchase this by paying additional premium. This option should be extended directly to banks that wish to increase the coverage of deposits to above the statutory requirements.

Moody's Ratings

News Excerpt

Recently, ratings agency Moody's has lowered India's outlook from stable to negative because of what it has assessed as risks to economic growth, prospects of a more entrenched slowdown, weak job creation, and a credit squeeze being faced by Non-Banking Finance Companies.

Pre-Connect

- Credit ratings agencies rate on a scale the financials and business models of companies, as well as economic management by sovereign governments, after analysing official and other

data and interacting with government officials, business leaders, and economists.

- These agencies then rate instruments such as bonds, debentures, commercial papers, deposits, and other debt offerings of companies or governments to help investors make informed decisions.
- **From a company's or a government's perspective, a better rating helps raise** funds at a cheaper rate.

Analytica
Factors Responsible for Rate Cut

➢ Moody's projected fiscal deficit of 3.7 per cent of gross domestic product in the year **through March 2020, a breach of the government's target of 3.3% as slower growth and a** surprise corporate tax cut curbs revenue.

➢ India's growth outlook has deteriorated sharply this year, with a crunch that started out in the non-banking financial institutions (NBFIs) spreading to retail businesses, car makers, home sales and heavy industries.

➢ Moody's said the outlook partly reflects policy ineffectiveness in addressing economic weakness, which led to an increase in debt burden which is already at high levels.

➢ India's economy grew by 5 per cent between April and June, its weakest pace since 2013, as consumer demand and government spending slowed amid global trade frictions.

Impact of the Rate Cut

✓ **A country's credit rating will matter in cases where the country is seeking to borrow from** international bond markets.

✓ **As such, in India's case, it may not matter** much as India has no significant history of issuing bonds or raising funds from international markets. However, the ratings may have more of an impact for privately owned or state-owned enterprises seeking to raise funds in foreign currencies.

✓ The credibility of such rating agencies has also suffered significantly since the global recession in 2008. Credit rating agencies were held to blame for issuing high ratings to banks and other financial institutions, many of which either sank or required government bail outs.

Conclusion

- Though the downgraded ratings may not have significant impact, it is indeed a reality that the prolonged period of slower economic growth would dampen income growth and the pace of improvements in living standards, and potentially constrain the policy options to drive sustained high investment growth over the medium to long term.

- The government has maintained the stand that the fundamentals of India's economy remain "quite robust" and the recent series of reforms (Ex. Corporate Tax Cut) would stimulate investments and strengthen the economy. India needs more such reforms with adequate focus on its time bound and efficient implementation at the ground level in order to pull the economy out of the crisis it is undergoing present day.

Exchange Traded funds

News Excerpt

The government is soon expected to launch India's first fixed income Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) (also called debt ETF) comprising debt securities of about a dozen state-owned companies.

Pre-Connect

- In the Union Budget 2018-19, the government had announced the plan to come out with a debt ETF, which will help government companies better plan their capital expenditure and borrowing needs.

- While there are a number of equity and gold ETFs in the Indian market, there are no debt ETFs, barring the two government securities-based ETF that have not generated much investor interest.

- In 2018-19, the Centre launched Bharat-22 ETF and CPSE ETF.

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Page 52

Highlights

- The fixed income ETF /debt ETF is expected to have a size of Rs 15,000 crore to Rs 20,000 crore.
- The fund will comprise only AAA-rated papers of the PSU companies.
- Compared with bank fixed deposits that generate a post-tax return of around 5.5 per cent, this product could generate a return of over 7 per cent for the investors.
- Tax treatment of the debt ETF will be same as that of debt mutual funds.
- The proposed debt ETF will be **India's first large fund that** provides retail investors the convenience to invest in a fixed income product comprising a basket of securities, without the need to study individual bond issues.

What is an ETF?

- ❖ An ETF is a fund that comprises a group of stocks that are listed on an exchange and can be simply traded like any other listed security.
- ❖ An ETF is bought and sold like a company stock during the day when the stock exchanges are open.
- ❖ Unlike a company stock, the number of shares outstanding of an ETF can change daily because of the continuous creation of new shares and the redemption of existing shares.
- ❖ The government is increasingly using the exchange-traded fund (ETF) route for disinvestment.

Advantages of the fixed income ETF

- It will provide a safe investment option, alongside high liquidity.
- It will deepen the corporate bond market.
- It will allow PSUs to borrow from the market.
- Investors can expect higher yield than on fixed deposits.
- It will enhance investor base.
- It is a low cost instrument with added tax advantages.

Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS)

- ❖ As a subscriber to the International **Monetary Fund's Special Dat**a Dissemination Standard (SDDS), India is obliged to follow good practices in four areas in disseminating macroeconomic statistics to the public.
- ❖ These comprise the coverage, periodicity, and timeliness of data; public access to those data; data integrity; and data quality.
- ❖ **With the IMF's 'Annual Observance Report'** for 2018 already having flagged concerns **about India's delays in releasing economic** data, the country risks falling afoul of its SDDS obligations.

Challenges

- ETFs are not popular in India. There were just around 47 equity ETFs listed on Indian exchanges(as of 2017), compared with more than 1,000 ETFs listed on the New York Stock Exchange, and London Stock Exchange

PEPPER IT WITH
Bharat-22 ETF, CPSE ETF.

- The reason why ETFs are not popular is because mutual funds do not make any special effort to market them.
- Distributors also do not promote them aggressively since they seldom get commission on selling ETFs.
- ETFs need both trading account and demat account which is also considered as deterrent by some experts.

Conclusion

Though Indian ETFs are still at an emerging stage, they are expected to replicate some of the asset classes that are offered globally, with gold ETFs the likely leader. Hence, being one of the safest investment options, measures for the promotion of ETFs as source of funding should be

carried out proactively given the gloomy situation of the current state of economy

Consumer Expenditure Survey

News Excerpt

Recently, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation in view of alleged data quality issues has decided not to release the results of the all-India Household Consumer Expenditure Survey conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) during 2017-2018.

Highlights

- The results have been withheld due to the alleged adverse findings in the survey which showed consumer spending was falling. According to the survey consumer demand declined in 2017-18 for the first time in more than 40 years.
- The government may conduct the next Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) in 2020-2021 and 2021-22 after incorporating all data quality refinements in the survey process.

What is CES?

➤ The CES is traditionally a quinquennial (recurring every five years) survey conducted by the **government's National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).**

➤ It is designed to collect information on the consumption spending patterns of households across the country, both urban and rural.

➤ The data gathered in this exercise reveals the average expenditure on goods (food and non-food) and services and helps generate estimates of household Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE) as well as the distribution of households and persons over the MPCE classes.

Utility of CES

The estimates of monthly per capita consumption spending help in:

✓ Gauging the demand dynamics of the economy

✓ Understanding the shifting priorities in terms of baskets of goods and services,

✓ Assessing living standards and growth trends.

✓ Helping policymakers address structural anomalies

✓ Providing pointers to producers of goods and providers of services,

✓ Used by the government in rebasing the GDP and other macro-economic indicators.

Analytica

Why the government's move is facing criticism?

- **The government's decision to withhold the survey's findings deprives policymakers of** invaluable contemporary consumption data that would have helped drive their intervention strategies.
- With the Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics also having separately recommended that 2017-18 would not be used as an appropriate year for rebasing of the GDP series, the very credibility of GDP data going forward could come under greater scrutiny.
- The suppression of essential data is terrible for accountability and for ensuring that citizens have the benefit of official data collection that is paid for with their taxes.
- It is also counterproductive for the government, which may be kept in the dark about actual trends in the economy and therefore not be able to devise appropriate policies.

▪ Undermining the objectivity and credibility of an independent statistical system is fundamentally against the national interest.
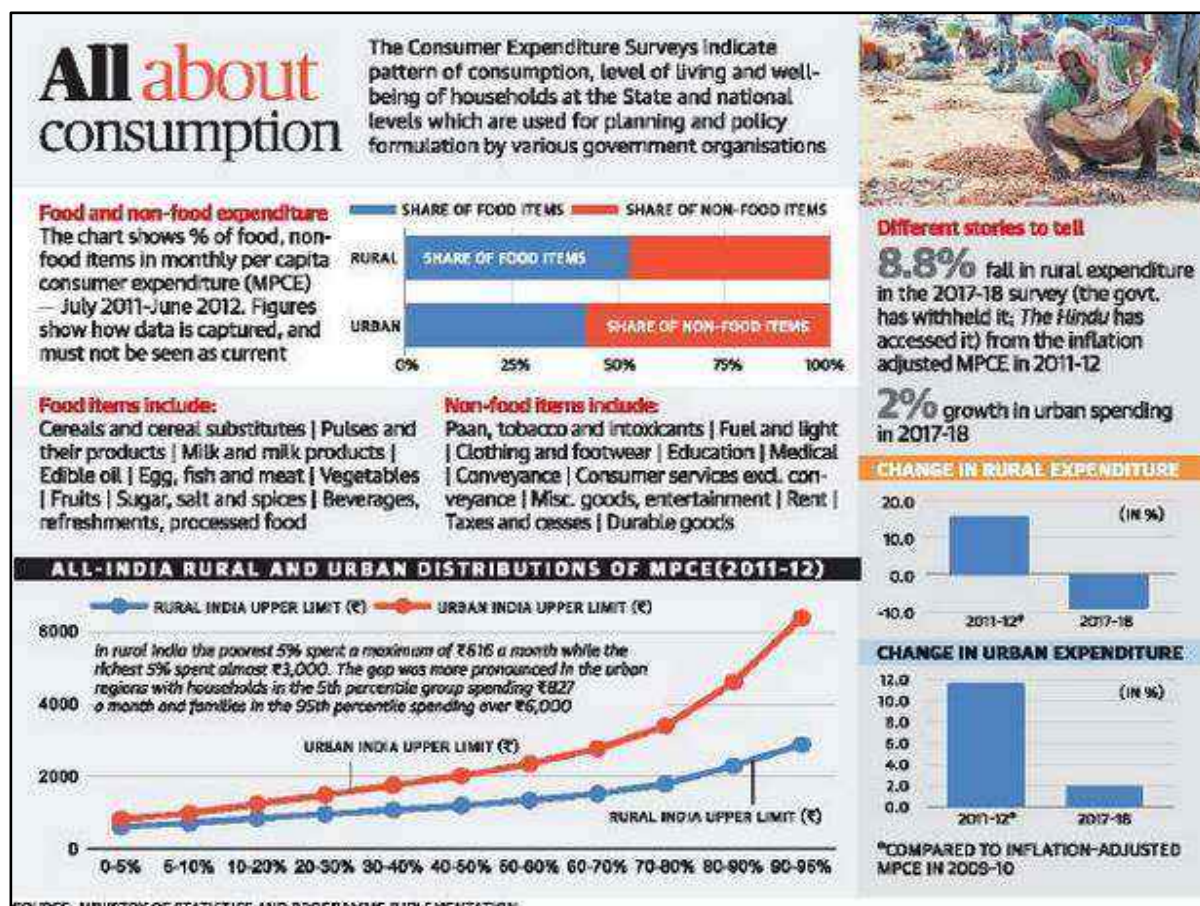
Conclusion

It is of fundamental importance for the nation that statistical institutions are kept independent of political interference and are allowed to release all data independently. True trends of the economy can be observed and analyzed only when such institutions are given leverage to function on their own though within constitutional limits.

Adjusted Gross Revenue

News Excerpt

Recently, the **Supreme Court upheld the Department of Telecommunications'** (DoT) definition of adjusted gross revenue (AGR)and ordered the telecom companies to pay Rs 92000 crores to the government within three months.

What is AGR?

Telecom operators are required to pay license fee and spectrum charges in the form of 'revenue share' to the Centre. The revenue amount used to calculate this revenue share is termed as the AGR.

Pre-Connect

• The contest between DoT and the telecom companies has been on since 2005, when the Cellular Operators Association of India — the lobby group for players such as Airtel and Vodafone Idea **— challenged the DoT's definition for AGR calculation.**

• According to the DoT, the calculations should incorporate all revenues earned by a telecom company – including from non-telecom sources such as deposit interests and sale of assets.

• The companies, however, have been of the view that AGR should comprise the revenues generated from telecom services only and non-telecom revenues should be kept out of it.

- Subsequently, in 2015, the TDSAT ruled that the AGR included all receipts, except capital receipts and revenue from non-core sources such as rent, profit on the sale of fixed assets, dividend, interest and miscellaneous income, etc.
- Appeals against the TDSAT order were heard before the Supreme Court which upheld the definition of AGR calculation as stipulated by the DoT.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> TDSAT, FICCI bilateral investment treaties (BITs)

Impact of Supreme Court's verdict

➢ The apex court's ruling took a toll on the telcos' balance sheets.

➢ **Two of India's only three remaining private sector telcos** -- Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel - posted their highest-ever quarterly losses since inception.

➢ Telecom operators have hiked mobile tariffs by up to 42%in an attempt to increase revenue following the recent SC AGR verdict.

Government's stand after the verdict

✓ Government has made it clear that it was up to the mobile phone companies to move court to seek a review of the order to get relief, or if they want more time to pay up the dues.

✓ The government has set up a panel of secretaries, headed by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, to suggest ways to restore the health of the telecom sector.

Analytica

▪ The impact of the Supreme Court order on the definition of adjusted gross revenue (AGR) may not be restricted to telecom companies. It could also have an impact on any entity that has taken telecom service licence, such as internet service providers (ISPs), satellite communications providers, cable operators, etc.

▪ The AGR judgment could potentially again raise the spectra of claims by foreign investors under bilateral investment treaties (BITs) in view of loss of shareholder value.

▪ Free talk time, late fee waivers and rebates on pre-paid vouchers for telecom consumers could be a t**hing of the past following the Supreme Court's ruling on Adjusted Gross Revenue.**

Way forward

o The apex court's latest ruling has in a way added to legal and policy confusion prevailing in the telecom sector. It needs to be reviewed by a larger bench of the Supreme Court.

o Key sectors must be strengthened that will give a fillip and a boost. It is important that industry is in a position to raise resources and discharge debt, to help India become a $5 trillion economy.

o Critical infrastructure sectors should not be open to such large-scale impact by court judgments and a more consolidated stable statutory regime governing critical infrastructure sectors should be established, which can reduce the scope for courts or tribunals in exercising their discretion.

ASEAN Summit

News Excerpt

35th ASEAN Summit was recently organized at Bangkok on the sidelines of the summit 16th India-ASEAN summit. ASEAN **appreciated India's growing role** in the Indo-Pacific region andvowed to further broadbase strategic ties and deal with major challenges like of terrorism collectively. Issue of South China Sea was also raised in the forum.

Pre-Connect

India-ASEAN

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the Founding Fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Later Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam Lao PDR, Myanmar and Cambodia on joined the grouping respectively thereby making up the ten Member States of ASEAN.
- **ASEAN represents the world's third largest market after** China and India and the world's

third largest labour force with 630 million people (or nine percent of the World's population).

- ASEAN is expected to become the **world's fourth largest economy by 2030** (current GDP at USD 2.7 trillion).
- ASEAN is **the world's third largest recipient of foreign direct investment (FDI).**
- ASEAN's share of global exports has also risen, from only 2 percent in 1967 to 7 percent by 2016, indicating the rising importance of trade to ASEAN's economic prospects.
- The ASEAN Single Aviation Market and Open Skies policies have increased its transport and connectivity potential.
- ASEAN forms the central **portion of India's Act East Policy.**
- India has a separate Mission to ASEAN and the EAS in Jakartawith a dedicated Ambassador to strengthen engagement with ASEAN and ASEAN-centric processes.
- India and ASEAN signed Strategic Partnership in 2012, consequently in 2017 India and the ASEAN leaders jointly adopted the Delhi Declaration. This made cooperation in the Maritime Domain as the key area of cooperation under the ASEAN-India strategic partnership.

India-ASEAN Summit: Key Highlights

- ➢ Both sides decided to enhance cooperation in field of Maritime Security and Blue Economy, Trade and Investment, connectivity, science and technology and innovation.
- ➢ Focus was on the enhanced people-to-people connectivity, cultural exchanges, humanitarian aid, and tourism.
- ➢ Strengthening of mutual coordination between India's vision of the Indo-Pacific region and ASEAN Outlook for maintaining strategic balance in the region, which has been witnessing growing Chinese assertiveness.

On sideline of this summit other bilateral summits were held:

India-Myanmar

- ➢ The emphasis was on bringing a stable and peaceful border along with improved physical connectivity through building roads, ports and expansion of air connectivity.
- ➢ India supported capacity expansion **of Myanmar's** police, military and civil servants.
- ➢ India also hosted business event for the CLMV countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam) in Yangon at the end of November 2019.

India-Indonesia

- ➢ India shares a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Indonesia.
- ➢ Both nations decided to ensure peace, security, and prosperity in order to achieve their shared vision on maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.
- ➢ India needs greater market access for Indian commodities in Indonesia including, pharmaceutical, automotive and agricultural products.
- ➢ India and Indonesia commemorate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of

Why ASEAN is Important for India?

- ❖ ASEAN criticality lies in the Culture, Connectivity and Commerce.
- ❖ **It forms important part of India's connectivity** initiatives in the North Eastern Indian State.
- ❖ ASEAN is **central to India's idea of the Indo**-Pacific region.
- ❖ Maritime cooperation between India and ASEAN has gained currency.
- ❖ India and ASEAN can collaborate to combat terror financing, cyber security etc.
- ❖ Both nations can help in establishing and achieving a rule based regional security architecture.
- ❖ ASEAN is most successful organization next only to EU.
- ❖ To counter balance China in Indo-Pacific, ASEAN is the key.
- ❖ Many of the members of the ASEAN perceive India as a much-needed counter-balance to China.

diplomatic relations in the year 2019.

India-Thailand

> Both nations laid emphasis to enhance connectivity between the two countries, including in the areas of physical and digital connectivity.
> Thailand 4.0 initiative of transforming Thailand into a value-based economy is **complementary to India's priorities Digital India, Skill India, Swachh Bharat Mission,** Smart Cities, Jal Jeevan Mission, etc.
> **India's Act East policy is complemented by Thailand's Look West policy** which has made the relationship deep, robust and multifaceted.

Analytica

India-ASEAN Relations

Economic Cooperation:

✓ For India, ASEAN is the fourth largest trading partner. It accounts for 10.6% of **India'soverall trade**. Bilateral trade has crossed $80 billion mark.

✓ Out of total exports of India, 11.28% is send to ASEAN.

✓ ASEAN India-Business Council (AIBC) was set up in 2003 to bring key private sector players from India and the ASEAN countries on a single platform.

✓ Financial Assistance to ASEAN countries through funds:
  o ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund
  o ASEAN-India S&T Development Fund
  o ASEAN-India Green Fund

Social Cooperation:

✓ India has proposed setting up of an ASEAN-India Network of Universities (AINU) to enhance our educational ties.

Connectivity:

✓ India has made considerable progress in implementing the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multimodal Project.

✓ A possible extension to India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam is also under consideration.

✓ A consensus on finalizing the proposed protocol of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Motor Vehicle Agreement (IMT MVA) has been reached. This agreement will have a critical role in realizing seamless movement of passenger, personal and cargo vehicles along roads linking India, Myanmar and Thailand.

✓ India has announced a Line of Credit of US$ 1 billion to promote projects that support physical and digital connectivity between India and ASEAN.

Other provisions:

✓ Delhi Dialogue: Annual Track 1.5 event for discussing politico-security and economic

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ADDM Plus

❖ It is a platform for ASEAN and its eight dialogue partners to strengthen security and defence cooperation.Especially, in face of transnational security challenge

❖ It covers areas such as
  o Maritime Security
  o Counter Terrorism
  o Humanitarian Assistance
  o Disaster Relief
  o Peacekeeping and Military medicine
  o Humanitarian mine action

❖ Objectives of Initiative
  o Enhance capacity building and address security challenges of participating nations.
  o Promotion of Mutual trust and confidence.
  o Greater dialogue and transparency
  o Enhancement of regional peace and stability
  o Fulfilment of Bali Concord which stipulated ASEAN security community.
  o Facilitate implementation of the Vientiane Action Programme
  o Provide ASEAN for greater outward-looking external relation

issues between ASEAN and India.

✓ ASEAN-India Centre (AIC): To undertake policy research, advocacy and networking activities with organizations and think-tanks in India and ASEAN.

✓ Political Security Cooperation: India places ASEAN at the centre of its Indo-Pacific vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region.

Issues

ASEAN as a unified block

Though ASEAN contends as a single block, it lacks unity and faces regional imbalances in economic and Social status e.g.

- Mix polity: Partnering nations have mix political system with democratic and authoritarian state in same groups
- Economic Divide: Income gap between rich and poor in ASEAN is very large, so while on one hand there is Singapore which has high per capita GDP of $53000 and on the other hand there are countries like Cambodia with per capita GDP of just $1300.
- Lack of Coordination: Most of the ASEAN initiatives do**n't** form part of national plans of member countries due to resource constrains.
- Absence of Central Mechanism: There is no central mechanism to ensure compliance. Also, inefficient dispute-settlement mechanism of ASEAN is one of the problems.
- China Card: **Despite having reservations over the China's strategy in the South China Sea,** ASEAN nations are unable to push back China collectively. This is primarily because of the fact thatmany ASEAN countries/economies are totally dependent on China.

How far India can rely on ASEAN on Security?

- **Though ASEAN's "Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" document** is in line with the India**'s Act East** Policy managing China would require a more coherent strategy and ASEAN has not been able to present a unified front when it comes to China. This division within ASEAN will likely only get deeper as Beijing becomes more muscular.
- In the face of **China's extensive economic linkages with the region,** ASEAN has found it harder to take strong positions against China. While it has been particularly hard for smaller countries like Cambodia and Laos, even bigger players such as Malaysia cannot afford to confront China.
- In such situation India needs to strengthen its engagement with the region through other but associated platforms such as the East Asia Summit which includes key Indo-Pacific powers such as Australia, Japan and the United States.

Way-Forward

As India and ASEAN embark on the next phase of their strategic partnership, five areas hold the promise of impact.

- Align existing and ambitious infrastructure goals aimed at increasing trade and connectivity, with efforts to reduce non-tariff barriers to trade. For India and ASEAN to realise the full potential of these infrastructure investments, and trade agreements, addressing non-tariff barriers will be crucial.
- India and ASEAN stand to benefit substantially from the blue economy as a source of growth and employment. India and ASEAN should complement security initiatives in the Indian Ocean Region with collaborative efforts for ocean-centred economic development.
- In the context of rapid technological change and digitalisation, India and ASEAN must leverage existing institutional mechanisms to enhance inclusive growth and cyber security.
- ASEAN and India stand to benefit significantly from increased migration. Bilateral and multilateral approaches need to be enhanced to increase the mobility of workers. Policies must aim to fill skills-gaps and address skills mismatches, address employment gaps and over-supply, and ensure the wellbeing and safety of workers while abroad.
- Given an increasingly uncertain geopolitical and security architecture in the region, ASEAN and India ought to seek to define a collective soft-power strategy for ensuring a rules-based order in the region.

Conclusion

The "Act East" policy needs to be acted upon with a sense of purpose and priority before India can become a reliable and strategic partner of ASEAN. India needs to do a more convincing job as a beneficial strategic partner of ASEAN by boosting its domestic economic reforms agenda, enhancing connectivity within the region, and increasing its presence in regional institutions.

East Asia Summit

News Excerpt

14th East Asia Summit was organized on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit. EAS member nations vowed to scale up efforts to deal with terrorism, radicalization and transnational crimes including by ramping up coordination with anti-terror watchdog FATF and relevant UN agencies.

Pre-Connect

East Asia Summit

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

- The concept of an East Asia Grouping was first promoted in 1991 by the then Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir bin Mohamad.

- The final report of the East Asian Study Group in 2002, established by the ASEAN+3 countries (i.e. China, Japan and ROK).

- Later in 2005, its scope was extended by including Australia, India and New Zealand, in the first East Asia Summit. USA and the Russian Federation were formally included as members of the EAS at the 6th EAS held in 2011.

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

- EAS, **representing nearly 50 per cent of the world's population and over 20 per cent** of global trade, is a mega gathering and is a testimony to the rise of Asia.

- It is considered the third pole of world economy after the US and Europe.

- Financial and monetary cooperation between EAS countries could be an area of fruitful cooperation in view of the fact that their combined foreign exchange reserves exceed

$ 3 trillion.

India and EAS

➢ Nalanda University: The idea of revival of Nalanda University was first mooted by late Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. In the 4th EAS the EAS Leaders endorsed the proposal for the revival of Nalanda University. It provides number of Scholarships to deserving students from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV countries) as also Bhutan.

➢ Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases:Australia and India are co-chairs of the Task Force for Access to Quality Medicines and other Technologies Task Force (AQMTF).

➢ Disaster Management: India has also contributed in the area of Natural Disaster Management. It hosts a Virtual Knowledge Portal (VKP). The portal is a web-based tool to share knowledge and best practices related to natural disaster risk assessment, mitigation and response among EAS countries. It is hosted by Natural Institute of Disaster Management.

Analytica

What are the challenges with the EAS?

✓ Big Power Rivalry: There is power tussle between big powers such as China, Japan, and India for both economic and strategic depth.

✓ Lack of Institutionalization- EAS even after 14 years of its establishment remains an ASEAN driven organization.

✓ Agenda issues: EAS has adopted a very wide agenda which might not materialize the way they were conceived. For e.g. within the economic agenda the focus is on building pan-Asian free trade area.

✓ Confusing relationship: Relations of EAS with other sub-regional groups is hazy and even confusing. How it can retain independent relation with ASEAN is also in question.

Significance of EAS vis-à-vis APEC

✓ The declarations and statements of APEC are not binding similar to EAS. Therefore, even when there is willingness of members to participate in the process, there is no real importance.

✓ APEC includes countries other than east Asia and hence it is not possible to concentrate on issues specific to it.

✓ APEC is more of a trans-pacific in nature rather than inter-Asian process.

Why EAS matters for India?

✓ Serves as alternative to the APEC

✓ **Recognition of India's economic and political** clout

✓ **Crucial for India's Act East Policy of India**

✓ **Critical for India's external sector growth of** India

✓ Projects India as an alternative to China

✓ Enhance area of cooperation with friendly power such as Japan in the group.

✓ Provide support to Indian Infrastructure

✓ Enhancement of Connectivity

✓ New prospects for Indian defence private sectors

✓ Enhance scope for joint military exercises

✓ Culture and people to people contact

> ## Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025
> This master plan focuses on five strategic areas, which are sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, seamless logistics, regulatory excellence, and people mobility. These five areas are mutually reinforcing.

Way Forward

▪ India has much to offer to EAS such as areas like maritime security, terrorism, non-proliferation, irregular migration. Hence, this growing partnership represents a win-win equation for both countries.

▪ The Act East policy that India has been pursuing is entering a crucial phase after it helped build multi-faceted relations with ASEAN and other multilateral fora, and strengthen bilateral relations throughout the region encompassing political, defence/strategic and

economic aspects. Public pronouncement about an ASEAN-centric policy notwithstanding, it is time for India to look beyond ASEAN.

▪ **East Asia is the world's most dynamic economic region as well as one of its most** challenging security environments. Maintaining regional integrity through cultural connectivity is crucial. The other initiatives could include creation of an Asian currency unit as a unit of account to facilitate intra-regional trade and production networking.

▪ Bilateral relations are crucial and often tend to be more effective. By taking advantage of its growing political and economic significance, India should firm up its ties with the region, especially with Japan and qualitatively improve its relations with countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam. With some diplomatic adroitness, India can achieve this while pursuing improved relations with China.

Conclusion

While India has been consistently emphasising "inclusiveness" in the Indo-Pacific framework, it must balance diverse alliances as it strengthens its East Asia pivot.

India-Germany Ties

News Excerpt

Recently, German Chancellor visited India for the fifth round of Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC).Key issues in the discussions included development of digital transformationespecially artificial intelligence, sustainable economic growth by cooperating on climate change, increase mobility and people to people contact and contributing to a reliable international order by strengthening and updating multilateral institutions.

Pre-Connect

• Bilateral relations between India and Germany are founded on common democratic principles and are marked by a high degree of trust and mutual respect.

• India was the first country to end the state of war with Germany in 1951, and therefore was among the first countries to grant the Federal Republic of Germany diplomatic recognition.

• Germany established its Consulate General in Mumbai in 1951, leading to the establishment of a full-fledged Embassy in New Delhi in 1952.

• Despite Cold War considerations, West **Germany contributed significantly to India's military development,** and relations only diversified between a unified Germany and an economically liberalized India after the Cold War

• Relations grew significantly following the end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany.

• **In May 2000, both countries adopted the '**Agenda for the Indo-German Partnership in the 21st Century**', which includes regular meetings of both Heads of Government as well** as annual meetings of the Foreign Minister

• India-Germany signed a 'Strategic Partnership' in 2001, which has been further

strengthened with the Intergovernmental Consultations (IGC) at the level of Head of Governments which allows for a comprehensive review of cooperation and identification of fresh areas of engagement.

- India and Germany have a long tradition of academic and cultural exchange. Max Mueller was the first scholar of Indo-European languages who translated and published Upanishads and Rigveda.
- The Indian diaspora mainly comprises of professionals, technocrats, businessmen/traders and nurses. There has been an increase in the last few years in the number of qualified Indian professionals in the fields of IT, banking, finance, etc.

Key Highlights

Technical Cooperation
- o Cooperation in theAI sector for societal benefit.
- o "Digital Experts Group" for Research Institutions and private enterprisesmutual cooperation of both countries.

Defence Cooperation
- o India has invited Germany to cooperate in defence sector. It invited Germany to participate in defence corridors set up in the States of Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. Also, Maritime projects between the Indian and German naval industries (e.g. submarines) are encouraged in view of the shared interest in the stability of the Indian Ocean region
- o Both sides welcomed the "Implementing Arrangement concerning Bilateral Defence Co-operation.
- o Both countries decided to conduct regular dialogue between the Defence Ministers of the two countries, alternately in India and in Germany, at least once every two years.
- o The countries agreed to work on bilateral and multilateral platforms to counter terrorism and extremism.

Economic Relations
- o Both sides agreed to deepen efforts to restart negotiations between the EU and India on the Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement.
- o Both sides reiterated their strong support for a rules-based international trading system with the WTO at its center.

Climate Change
- o For Green Urban Mobility, Germany will provide 1 billion Euros which will strengthen capacities of national, state and local institutions to design and implement sustainable, inclusive and smart mobility solutions in Indian cities.

Global Cooperation
- o Both sides reiterated their strong support for a rules-based international trading system with the WTO at its Centre.
- o Both sides decided to press for the reform the WTO without undermining its fundamental principles such as Special and Differential Treatment, consensus-based decision making and development objectives
- o Both sides stressed on the reforms of UNSC.
- o Both sides underlined the importance of unimpeded commerce and freedom of navigation in accordance with International Law, notably the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982.
- o Both sides decided to have a Track 1.5 Strategic Dialogue that will enable key stakeholders to engage annually in an open exchange of views and ideas to enhance mutual understanding on policy areas.

Analytica

Challenges in India- German Ties
- ➢ Different Priorities:
  - ✓ In post-Cold war era, both countries have different priorities, India is preoccupied with

external security relating primarily to China and Pakistan.

- ✓ Germany traditionally adopted an even-handed approach to India-Pakistan affairs,andemphasis on human rights has not always gone over well in India.
- ✓ After the revocation of Article 370, Germany is concerned about Kashmir lockdown.
- ✓ Germany public comment on the unsustainability of the current situation in Kashmir is an appropriate example.
- ➢ Strategic divergence:
  - ✓ For Germany, security involves a considerable degree of cooperation with other European and transatlantic partners, whether through NATO or the European Union.
  - ✓ India on the other hand prefers bilateral security arrangements, although it is gradually moving towards greater trilateral coordination, particularly with like-minded partners.
  - ✓ **India's presence** outside U.S.-led

Why Germany is Important for India?

- ❖ Germany is India's largest trading partner in Europe. Indian exports to Germany focus on the textile sector, followed by chemical products, electrical engineering products, metal and leather goods and foodstuffs.
- ❖ Germany is the 7th largest foreign direct investor in India since January 2000.
- ❖ **India has special "**The Make in India Mittelstand**"** (MIIM) which allows German, MSME sector to invest in India.
- ❖ Germanysupports **India's early accession to the** Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).
- ❖ Germany supports finalization and adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) in March 2020.
- ❖ India and Germany are members of G-4 along with Brazil and Japan. The G4 nations support each **other's bids for permanent seats on** the United Nations Security Council.
- ❖ Germany is one of the most important global partners for S&T cooperation. **It is India's second** most important research partner worldwide, after the United States. This is reflected in the large number of joint Indo-German scientific publications.
- ❖ Germany is one of the largest solar power producers across the globe. It can play an active role in India led International Solar Alliance.

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alliance structures and lack of institutionalized contacts with NATO **–** even on areas of overlapping interest **–** has so far prevented more fruitful security cooperation and coordination with Germany.

- ✓ This has been particularly applicable to matters relating to Afghanistan. Both Germany and India have shared similar objectives concerning Afghan stability and reconstruction, but found themselves often working at cross-purposes, with Germany occasionally deferring to Pakistani sensitivities.

- ➢ Mismatched Capabilities
  - ✓ Differences between the two economies can lead to complementarities and, as such, greater opportunities for cooperation. However, different capabilities in the security sphere often prove unnecessarily complicating.
  - ✓ **India's military has had to grapple with a range of scenarios** from nuclear conflict to counterinsurgencies. Its army is extraordinarily large volunteer force, its air force has to maintain air superiority in its region, and its navy is gradually growing in resources and reach.
  - ✓ **Germany's military remains comparativel**y small, featured conscription until 2011, and is operationally limited.
  - ✓ The mismatch further complicates joint exercises and military to military contacts, as well as the possibility of joint operations. These factors are unlikely to change given that public opinion in Germany remains predominantly pacifist.

➤ Technical Issues in Trade Regulation:
- ✓ India had recently celebrated remarkable improvements in the ease of doing business, indicating its willingness to remove bureaucratic hurdles.
- ✓ However, technical regulations in trade like testing requirement are real burden for German Companies.

Way Forward

- A true strategic relationship will, naturally, have to move beyond the bounds of the narrow confines of security.
- It will require deepening trade relations, for example, which remain rather underwhelming in case of India and Germany.
- Strategic convergence will also require cooperating on the future of energy, an area in which Germany possesses considerable strengths and where India has possibly the highest future demand of any country.
- It also requires consolidating people-to-people relations.

Conclusion

Sharing lessons learned on counter-terrorism, maritime security, and cyber security are all ongoing. But by elevating their importance and highlighting these areas of convergence, the countries may be able to better set an agenda for a stronger strategic relationship.

Israel-Palestine Conflict

News Excerpt

Recently, the government of the U.S. announced that it will no longer consider Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be illegal under international law. This **formalizes the Trump administration's treatment of** the West Bank and shifts decades of U.S. policy.

Pre-Connect

A brief timeline of Israel-Palestine Conflict

- In 1799, Napoleon offered Palestine as a Homeland to Jews as a result Rishon Le Zion as a major Zionist settlement is established in Palestine in 1882.
- In 1908, Palestinian for the first time opposed the Zionist Colonization.
- In 1916, Sykes-Picot agreement was signed dividing the middle east between the French and British.

Palestinian Loss of Land 1947 to Present

- In 1917, through Balfour Declaration**, Britain promised a "Jewish National Home" on Arab** land.
- In 1922, the League of Nations approves the British Mandate for Palestine and its purpose of helping establishment of a Jewish Homeland.
- In 1929, in name of Al-Buraq uprising, first mass protests against increased Jewish Immigration to Palestine took place.
- In 1935, Peel commission recommends the Partition of Palestine and transfer of Palestinians from land allocated to a Jewish state. This was opposed by Palestine through

protest which were curbed by armed Zionist group.

- During the Second World War Jews fleeing persecution in Europe wanted to establish a national homeland in what was then an Arab- and Muslim-majority territory in the Ottoman and later British Empire. The Arabs resisted, seeing the land as rightfully theirs.

- In 1947, UN adopts Resolution 181, which call for Partition of the Palestine. This was rejected by Palestinians.

- In 1948, after the withdrawal of the British, Jewish National council established the state of Israel. This led to a war with other Arab nations. Jews defended their position and the state of Israel was established after the armistice agreements are reached between Israel and Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. Israel increased area under its control.

- In 1949, UN establishesUNRWA, an agency for Palestinian refugees. While, Israel's government, with Chaim Weizmann as president and David Ben-Gurion as prime minister, is admitted to the UN.After the tumultuous events of 1948, 150,000 Palestinians remained in Israel and were eventually granted citizenship. However, they were subjected to military rule until 1966

- In 1964, Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)was formed.

- In 1967, The Arab-Israeli War of 1967 begins as Israel launches an air attack on Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in response to the request by Egyptian president Nasser that the UN withdraw its forces from Egyptian territory and the buildup of Arab armies along Israel's borders. A cease-fire is declared and Israel occupies the Sinai Peninsula, Golan Heights, Gaza Strip and West Bank. In response, the UNSC passes resolution 242 calling on Israel to withdraw from territories it occupied in 1967.

- Following Israel's occupation of the rest of historic Palestine, it began building settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In these colonies, Jewish settlers are allowed to carry weapons under the protection of the Israeli army.

- In 1974, The Arab League recognizes the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative body of the Palestinian people

- In 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat makes a historic visit to Jerusalem to discuss a peace agreement and address the Knesset.In 1979, Egypt and Israel sign a formal peace treaty, which ends 30 years of war and establishes diplomatic and commercial relations.

HAMAS

Hamas is a Palestinian Islamist political organization and militant group that has **waged war on Israel since the group's** 1987 founding, most notably through suicide bombings and rocket attacks. It seeks to replace Israel with a Palestinian state. It also governs Gaza independently of the Palestinian Authority.

In 2006, Hamas won a slight majority of the seats in the Palestinian Authority legislative elections. This would have put Hamas in a commanding position for both the West Bank and Gaza, but there was a problem: Hamas refused to accept previous deals that the PA had made with Israel. Unity talks between Hamas and the PLO have broken down repeatedly, which means there is no unified Palestinian authority, complicating peace talks significantly.

- In1982, Israel invaded the Lebanon owing to the continues Palestinian guerrillas staging raids on Israel from Lebanese territory. Later, after the UN Security Council creates a 6,000-man peacekeeping force for the area called UNIFIL.

- In 1983, A U.S.-brokered accord is reached between Israel and Lebanon. As part of the agreement, Israel agrees to withdraw from Lebanon.

- In 1987, Palestinians living on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip begin riots, known as the intifada (uprising), against Israeli rule.

- In 1988, the PLO accepts UN resolutions 242 and 338, recognizing the state of Israel.

- In 1991, The U.S. and Soviet Union organized the Madrid Conference, in which Israeli, Lebanese, Jordanian, Syrian, and Palestinian leaders met to establish a framework for peace negotiations.
- In 1993, The PLO and Israel sign the declaration of principles on interim self-government arrangements (Oslo I).
- In 1995, The PLO and Israel sign an interim agreement granting the Palestinians some autonomy in certain parts of the west bank and Gaza strip (Oslo II).
- In 1997, The PLO and ISRAEL sign an agreement that requires Israeli forces to partially withdraw from Hebron.
- In 2002, Israel reoccupies Palestinian cities in the west bank in the wake of the second intifada.
- In 2008, Israel attacks the Gaza strip in what it calls **"operation cast lead"**
- In 2012,Israel attacks Gaza once more, **in what it calls "**operation pillar of **defense"**
- In 2014, Israel launches the biggest assault on Gaza since 1967, **"ope**ration protective edge**"**.

Two State Solution vs One State Solution

The **"two-state solution"** would create an independent Israel and Palestine, and is the mainstream approach to resolving the conflict. Because neither side can get what it wants in a joined state, the only possible solution that satisfies everyone involves separating Palestinians and Israelis.

The **"one**-st**ate solution"** would merge Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip into one big country. It comes in two versions. One, favored by some leftists and Palestinians, would create a single democratic country. Arab Muslims would outnumber Jews, thus ending Israel as a Jewish state. The other version, favored by some rightists and Israelis, would involve Israel annexing the West Bank and either forcing out Palestinians or denying them the right to vote. Virtually the entire world, including most Zionists, rejects this option as an unacceptable human rights violation.

Analytica

Role of USA in Israel-Palestine Conflicts

➤ USA being the global superpower was looked upon as a balanced mediator by both Israel and Palestine.

➤ However, as the Cold War set in, and with that USA started viewing Israel as a key buffer against Soviet influence in the Middle East and supported it accordingly.

➤ The ties between Israel and USA became strenuous after American support to JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) with Iran.

Ties under Trump

➤ Under President Trump, USA ties with Israel had grown significantly with US shifting more towards the interest of Israel in the region

➤ In 2018, US shifted its embassy from Tel Aviv to the controversial Jerusalem- city which is claimed by the both sides. This step was significant in nature as it cemented the Israel position on the Jerusalem.

➤ Further in 2018, USA decided to withdraw its financial support from UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees)reversing a policy of support by America.UNRWA acted as a **cornerstone of America's support for stability in the Middle East** and flagship of our values to provide for the most vulnerable.

➤ In March 2019, US even recognized the sovereignty of Israel over the occupied Golan heights

Implication

➤ Decision taken by the USA will dilute its status as the neutral interlocuter in the historic conflict between the Israel and Palestine.

➤ It will justify the gross human rights violation of Israel against the Palestinians. Further it will dilute the probability of creation of Two state solution.

➤ There are chances that other global power like Russia and China meddle in the volatile middle east and which can further destabilize the region.

Indian stand on the conflict

➢ India has long supported the Palestinian cause with Mahatma Gandhi openly supporting it.

➢ In 1947, India even voted against the Partition Plan of Palestine at the UNGA. It was the only Non-Arab country which took this stand. It was also the first non-Arab country to recognize PLO.

➢ India traditionally believes in the 2-state solution and supports the establishment of a sovereign independent and a viable state of Palestine.

India's Growing ties with Israel

➢ Since 2014, India has decided to de-hyphen its policy towards Israel and Palestine. Hence, **India's rela**tionship with Israel would stand on its own merits, independent and separate **from India's relationship with the Palestinians. It would no longer be India's relationship** with Israel-**Palestine, but India's relationship with Israel, and India's relationship w**ith the Palestinians.

➢ **India's defence and security partnership with Israel has already proven useful to its** security and military modernization drive. In 1998, Israel provided India with valuable intelligence on Pakistani positions during the Kargil war.

➢ India and Israel have collaborated on a $777 million project to develop a maritime version of the Barak-8, a surface-to-air missile that India successfully tested.

➢ India has also reportedly agreed to purchase 54 HAROP attack drones for the Indian Air Force and two airborne warning and control systems (AWACS) worth over $800 million from Israel. Due to its technological sophistication and warm relations, Israel has become **one of India's top suppliers of military technology.**

What Should India do?

➢ Given limited resources and lack of leverages with major stake holders it is advisable that India limits its current policy of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people and political support in international institutions for the promotion of a two-state solution while continuing to improve strategic and economic relations with Israel.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Oslo Accord I and II

➢ India should leverage its growing influence in the world to counsel Israel to exercise restraint and move towards a two-state solution.

➢ It should continue to use it voice in the United Nations and work with major sates in the world towards that end without directly participating in the peace process.

➢ India is a victim of terrorism as is Israel, but there is an important **difference. Israel's occupation of** Palestinian lands has been questioned by not only the Palestinian people but also by the Arab and Muslim world as well as the larger international community. Israel is quick to use excessive force and treat the Palestinian population with contempt. It has often shown utter disregard to human rights violations. India cannot and should not imitate Israeli counter-terrorism practice.

Why India Supports Palestine?

❖ India has a significant number Muslim population which is sensitive towards the Palestine cause. There it is important to conserve minority sentiments.

❖ A large number of Indian diaspora is present in the Arab countries, they are good source of forex reserve whose interest must be preserved.

❖ India is dependent hugely on the Arab Nations to ensure its energy security.

❖ India is dependent on the Arab nations for its larger oil imports.

❖ India faces a difficult situation in Kashmir and it often accused of Human Rights Violation by various players with vested interest. It is important for it to show solidarity towards Palestine cause.

❖ Further, India wants a peaceful resolution as any kind of violent action on the part of Palestinians might encourage anti-social elements in Jammu and Kashmir.

➢ India has an evolved and unique approach to the menace of terrorism. It is better served by sticking to its first principles - deliberate use of force, democratic co-option, operate within the bounds of law, and use time and patience as strategic tools.

> India has a long-standing political position on the Palestinian question. Any dilution of **India's historical stand will be detrimental to its interes**ts, larger aspirations and its self image as an inclusive democracy.

Opinion of Other Regional Powers

Iran: The Iranian government believes Israel is fundamentally illegitimate and supports the most hard-line anti-Israeli Arab factions. Israel sees Iran as a direct and existential threat, as it has provided significant military and financial backing to Hezbollah, Hamas, and Syria — the so-**called" Axis of Resistance" to Israeli and Western interests in the Middle East.**

Saudi Arabia: The kingdom donates hundreds of millions of dollars to the Palestinian Authority and is the driving force behind an Arab League peace plan floated as an alternative to traditional Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Though Saudi Arabia has yet to recognize Israel, the **two nations'** mutual hostility toward Iran has led to an unprecedented working relationship between the Saudi and Israeli governments. Even the Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman has opined that Israel has right to exists.

Chagos Island Dispute

News Excerpt

Mauritius has recently called the UK **an "illegal colonial occupier"** after it missed a UN mandated deadline to return the Chagos Islands, a small archipelago in the Indian Ocean, to Mauritius. The United Nations had given UK six months to process the transfer, a move the UK and the US have bitterly resisted.

Pre-Connect

- British Colonizers in 1965 broke the both Mauritius and Seychelles. From Seychelles it took away the islands of Aldabra, Farquhar, and Desrocheswhile form Mauritius it took away Chagos Islands. These were created as British Indian Ocean Territory.

- While after independence in 1976 Seychelles gained the control of the Island, same was denied to Mauritius in 1968.

- Mauritius filed petitions against the UK in the Permanent Court of Arbitration. In reply of this petition UK commented that it required Chagos Island to accommodate United States desire to use certain islands in the Indian ocean for defence purposes.

- Largest Island in the grouping is Diego Garcia which is used by the US and UK to operate a large military base. This base is used by US in its Afghanistan and Iraq affairs. It is also used by CIA as an interrogation site.

- The U.K. depopulated Diego Garcia by expelling all its inhabitants, to facilitate the building of the military base, paying just £4 million as compensation to Mauritius.

- Mauritius then proposed an exchange allowing the UK to let the US use the Chagos Islands for defence purposes till those needs ceased, in exchange for increasing the quota of sugar imports into the US, a move that w**ould contribute to Mauritius' economy. The UK rejected** the proposal stating that the US could not be involved in any treaty despite using the islands themselves.

- The UK in conjunction with the US embarked on a six-year long forced depopulation of the Chagos Islands. To accommodate the military base where UK and US military personnel live and work, native inhabitants of the land were forcefully removed and subsequent denials were issued by the UK claiming that the displaced people did not belong to the Chagos Islands.

- In 2015, Mauritius initiated legal proceedings in these matters against the United Kingdom in the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague in the Netherlands. The UK made **several attempts to resist Mauritius' attempts** to take the matter to international court by claiming that the issue was a bilateral matter.

What happened at the Permanent Court of Arbitration?

➢ PCA had rebuked the UK government and held it in charge of violator of Mauritius rights as well the UN convention on the Law of the Sea.

➢ **It declared that its "Marine Protected Area"** around the islands is illegal and held that it was created as a deliberative attempt to prevent the original inhabitants from being able to return.

➢ This was seen as gross human right violation and hence those who used to wage their fingers at developing countries on human rights violations and now find themselves in the dock for the same at the UN.

What happened at the UN General Assembly?

✓ In 2017, UNGA passed a resolution which sought an advisory opinion on the legal status of the Chagos Islands from the International Court of Justice in the Hague.

✓ Ironically, many EU countries abstained from the voting. The vote was a signal that the UN was unlikely to support continued colonization of territories or colonial legacies of which occupiers were unwilling to divest control.

What happened at the International Court of Justice?

▪ **In February 2019, ICJ ordered UK to return the Chagos Islands to Mauritus "as rapidly as possible".**

▪ The Occupation of Island was in breach of UN resolution 1514 that was passed in 1960, which specifically banned the breakup of colonies before independence.

▪ UK termed this ruling as **"an advisory opinion, not a judgment"** and claimed that **"the** defence facilities on the British Indian Ocean Territory helped to protect people here in Britain and around the world from terrorist threats, organised crime and piracy.

What happens now after UK missed the UN deadline to return Chagos Islands?

o UK has found itself in the diplomatic muddle which is deepening and with the shambles of the Brexit, UK is isolated.

o For now, the UK might possibly be searching for reassurance in the fact that the ICJ ruling is not binding and no immediate sanctions or adverse actions will be taken against it.

o The next step at the UN General Assembly in 2020 would be the question of resettlement of and potential compensation for the displaced Chagos Islanders who faced homelessness, poverty and associated hardships after being forcefully removed from their homeland by the UK and the US.

Analytica

Role of India

✚ India being a close partner of Mauritius supported its stand **given India's active role in decolonisation.**

✚ Also, India is likely to play a significant role in working out a modus vivendi of the agreement which would be signed between Mauritius and the UK.

✚ India was a strident critic of military bases in the Indian Ocean during the Cold War but geo-strategic changes in the last three decades have thrown up new challenges.

✚ Rise of China in the Indian ocean had led to countervailing measures in the
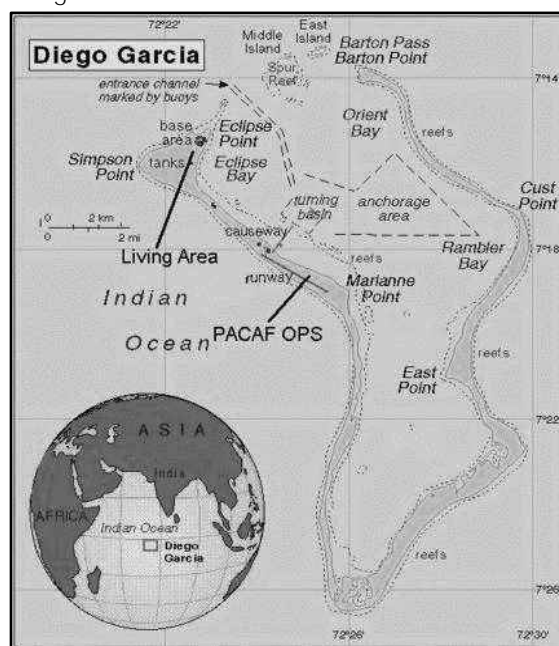
formation of the Quad, a loose formation of Australia, Japan, India and the U.S., and **the renaming of the U.S.'s Pacific Command as the Indo**-Pacific Command.

✤ India is also dependent on Deigo Garcia due to the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement, which facilitates encrypted communication between the India and US.

Way Forward

↔ Eventually, the issue of sovereignty will have to be finessed by agreements that allow continuation of the military base at Diego Garcia with guarantees that Mauritius will retain sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago.

↔ Mauritius will agree to lease out the island for a long period to the U.S. for maintaining the military base. **The U.K.'s role is more problematic in the aftermath of the ICJ ruling** and the UN resolution.

↔ It would be best for UK to step back and hand over sovereignty to Mauritius and simultaneously work out the leasing arrangement with the U.S. India can play a pivotal role in bringing such an agreement to fruition.

Feni River

News Excerpt

Union Cabinet has recently approved the ex-post facto (retrospective effect) approval for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Bangladesh on the issue of withdrawal of 1.82 cusec of water from the Feni River.

India-Bangladesh Relations

- India played a crucial role in the foundation of Bangladesh and established diplomatic relations in the year 1971 itself.
- With Bangladesh India shares its longest land boundary of 4096.7 km.
- In 2015, both sides singed Land Border Agreement which settled the issue of pockets of enclaves.
- Other areas of cooperation include
  - o Joint river commission which looks after 54 common rivers and maintain liaison between the two countries to maximize benefits from common river systems.
  - o **Bangladesh is also India's largest trade partner India's exports to Bangladesh for** financial year 2018-19 (April-March) stood at US $ 9.21 bn and imports from Bangladesh for the same period stood at US $ 1.22 bn.
  - o Bangladesh also imports 1160 MW power from India.
  - o Both sides conduct joint exercises which are
    - ▪ Sampriti-Army
    - ▪ Milan-Navy

Feni river and dispute

- The Feni river, which forms part of the India-Bangladesh border, originates in the South Tripura district, passes through Sabroom town on the Indian side, and meets the Bay of Bengal after it flows into Bangladesh.
- There has been no water-sharing agreement between the countries on the Feni previously.
- The dispute over the river sharing was taken up between India and Pakistan in 1958
- Water has long been drawn from the Feni river through small pumps on the Indian side.

Importance of India-Bangladesh MoU

- India and Bangladesh held a water secretary-level meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) where it was agreed to collect data and prepare water-sharing agreements for seven rivers — Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla, and Feni of Tripura and Dudhkumar of West Bengal

- The MoU will benefit Sabroom town on the southern tip of Tripura.

Other projects on the Feni

- In Tripura, a 150-metre long, 4-lane bridge across the Feni is being built between India and Bangladesh, where the river forms the border between the two countries. It is expected to be completed by March 2020.
- The bridge would connect Tripura with Chittagong port in Bangladesh, which is only 70 km away from the Indo-Bangla border, and would play an important role in the proposed economic corridor through India, Bangladesh, China and Myanmar.
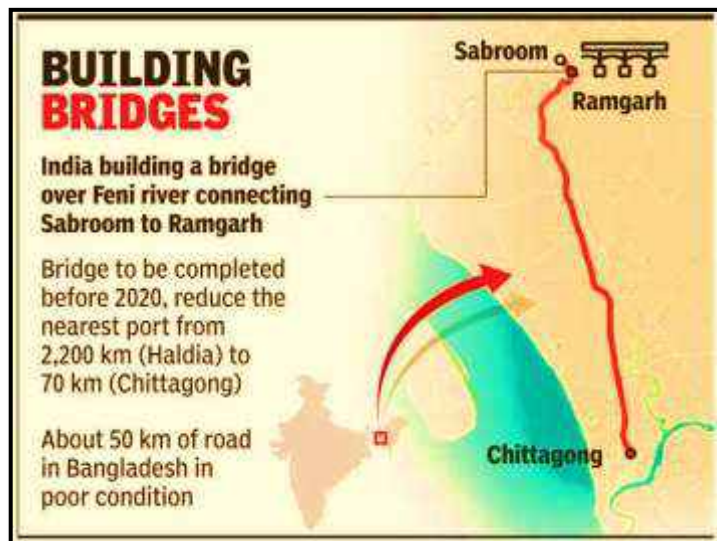
- Sabroom is expected to transform into the largest transit hub in the Northeast after the bridge is ready.

Other Important Projects

- Connectivity
  - o Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement and Bilateral India-Bangladesh Motor Vehicles Agreement
  - o Chittagong and Mongla ports in Bangaldesh to be utilized for movement of goods and services to and from India, particularly from Northeastern India.
  - o Daudkanti (Bangladesh)-Sonamura (Tripura) inland water trade route are part of Protocol of the Inland Water Transit and Trade.
  - o Ganga-Padma barrage project
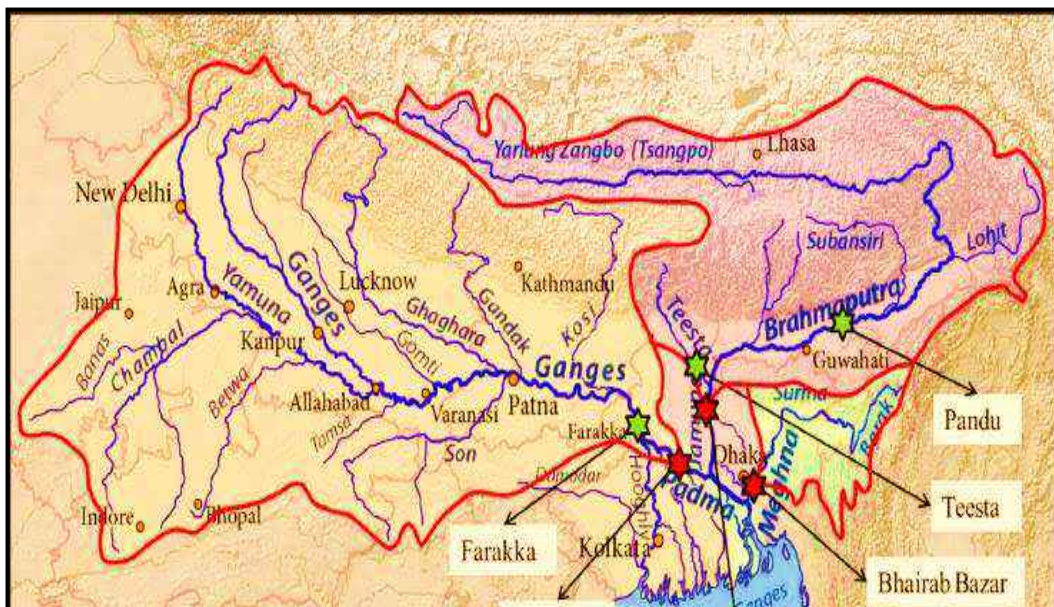
- Economic
  - o Line of Credit were given to Bangladesh
  - o 12 Border Haats
  - o Bangladesh-India Professional Skill Development Institute (BIPSDI)

- Defence
  - o Establishment of Coastal Surveillance Radar System in Bangladesh by India. India has provided such systems to Mauritius, Seychelles, Maldives and planned to provide one to Myanmar.

Other Water Disputes

Farakka Barrage

➢ It was created to increase flow of Bhagirathi-Hooghly river during the lean period as without this Kolkata port is prone to siltation.

➢ The increased upland supply from Ganga at Farakka into Bhagirathi reduces salinity and ensures Potable water supply to Kolkata and surrounding areas.

➢ The river system, the feeder canal and the navigation lock at Farakka form part of the Haldia-Allahabad inland waterway.

➢ The barrage in West Bengal, with an overhead railway line and a road, also serves the Northeast as a lifeline to its economic activities.

➢ The root cause of the conflict is the unviability of water during the lean season to meet the demand of both nations.

➢ The concern in Bangladesh is that the reduced flow of water threatens the agriculture, industry and ecology in the basin in the country.

➢ In recent times this problem has grown and viewed as upstream-downstream dispute.

➢ The Barrage has been accused of being faulty in design and had caused several problems such as
  - o Salinity Ingression and drying of the Sundarbans delta.
  - o **Sediment accumulation in upstream destroys the capacity of river's "Sediment Flushing".**
  - o Sedimentation of barrage act as obstruction causing flooding in Malda District of West Bengal.
  - o Punctured the Soil formation process in the downstream.

➢ Should it be removed?
  - o It would not be advisable as Barrage is critical for water supply in the growing Kolkata and has also ensured groundwater recharge.

  - o The basic problem is the flawed design of the barrage, which did not consider the sediment variable.
  - o Therefore, there is need of the design which helps in flood control, and also uses the peak flow to use the sediments effectively for downstream floodplain cultivation.
  - o River basin commissions with powers above the federal states should be set up to avoid escalation of inter-state river conflicts.
  - o A new technological and institutional arrangement in managing our rivers is called for.

Teesta River

- Teesta River originated from Sikkim and flows to the Northern part of West Bengal

before entering Bangladesh. The river covers nearly the entire floodplains of Sikkim, while draining 2,800 sq km of Bangladesh.

- It merges with the Brahmaputra river which is also known as Jamuna River.
- In 1983, Government of India and Bangladesh signed an ad-hoc water sharing agreement under which both countries were allocated 39% and 36% of the water flow respectively.
- The Government of West Bengal opposed the arrangement in 2011, by which India would get 42.5% and Bangladesh 37.5% of the water during the lean season, and the plan was shelved.
- Solution is embedded in the construction of giant artificial reservoirs, where the monsoon water can be stored for the lean season. The reservoirs need to be built in India as the country has some mountain-induced sites favourable to hosting dams with reservoirs, unlike Bangladesh.

Way Forward

➢ Freshwater is a precious commodity, and alsoa strategic one. Its role as a strategic asset or a national vulnerability (depending on demand and supply) cannot be underestimated.

➢ So, need of the hour is to use the institutional mechanism at disposal viz. the Joint Rivers Commission – to create a set of norms and guidelines to regulate the use of not just the Teesta but all transboundary rivers shared with Bangladesh

➢ Both nations should promote sustainable conservation, develop better ways to combat pollution, and manage existing water supply and resources better in order to manage this and future disputes.

EU declares climate emergency

News Excerpt

European Union (EU) has recently become the first multilateral bloc to declare climate emergency, as its legislatures voted in a favour of a resolution for the same.

Threat of Climate Change

- The Earth's climate has changed throughout history. The current warming trend is of particular significance because most of it is extremely likely (greater than 95 percent probability) to be the result of human activity since the mid-20th century.
- The heat-trapping nature of carbon dioxide and other gases was demonstrated in the mid-19th century. In the same manner, increased levels of greenhouse gases are causing the Earth to warm in response.
- Ice cores drawn from Greenland, Antarctica, and tropical mountain glaciers show that the **Earth's climate responds to changes in greenhouse gas levels.**
- The Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets have decreased in mass.The rate of Antarctica ice mass loss has tripled in the last decade.
- Global sea level rose about 8 inches in the last century. The rate in the last two decades, however, is nearly double that of the last century and is accelerating slightly every year
- Ancient evidence can also be found in tree rings, ocean sediments, coral reefs, and layers of sedimentary rocks. This ancient, or paleoclimate, evidence reveals that current warming is occurring roughly ten times faster than the average rate of ice-age-recovery warming.
- In 2018, the world emitted a record high of 55.3 gigatonnes of CO2-equivalent of greenhouse gases (GHG), up from the previous record of 54 gigatonnes set in 2017.

Climate Emergency- An inevitable truth

➢ The announcement comes days after the **UN Environment's annual Emissions Gap** *report*, which warns the world must cut annual emissions by 7.6 per cent till 2030 to meet 1.5°C target.

➢ **The EU's current target under the** *Paris Agreement mandate* a 40% cut in emissions by 2030 over 1990 levels and this symbolic vote does not change that.

➢ Various studies suggest that even a 55% emissions cut by 2030 will still not put the EU's plans on track to limit the global mean temperature rise to 2 °C, let alone 1.5 °C.

➢ The bloc has only recently come on track to meet this target, with UNEP's recently released Emissions Gap Report estimating that it is on track to cutting emissions by 45% in 2030.

➢ Majority of the legislators voted in favour of the declaration that calls on EU to cut emissions by 55 per cent by 2030 and become climate neutral by 2050. While the **dissenting lawmakers objected to the word "***emergency***" and pushed for the word "***urgency***".**

➢ Given the climate and environmental emergency, it is essential to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 55 per cent in 2030. It also sends a clear and timely message to the Commission a few weeks before the publication of the Communication on the Green Deal.

➢ The move is expected to pressurise countries to act ahead of the United Nations summit on climate change that will happen in December in Spain.

Global Efforts to Combat Climate Change

✓ In 1992, the international community adopted the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)*, marking the start of a global effort to confront the problem of climate change.

✓ The UNFCCC framework outlines actions to stabilize and reduce the amount of heat-trapping gases—known as greenhouse gases—released into the atmosphere and causing the planet to warm.

✓ In 2015, 195 countries came together to sign *the Paris Agreement*, to address the climate crisis. The unprecedented pact is a single, sweeping agreement where each signatory contributes to efforts to keep *global warming well below 2°C.*

✓ *Global Warming of 1.5 °C :* An IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty.

✓ *The Climate and Clean Air Coalition* is a voluntary partnership of governments and other organizations committed to protecting the climate and improving air quality through actions to reduce short-lived climate pollutants.

✓ The Coalition uses four principal strategies – catalyze ambitious action, mobilize robust support, leverage finance at scale, and enhance science and knowledge – that in combination produce the two ingredients needed for action: political will and the capacity to deliver.

✓ *The Global Environment Facility (GEF)* was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit **to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems including** Climate change and Global Warming.

✓ Through its *Small Grants Programme*, the GEF has provided support to nearly 24,000 civil society which also include climate refugees.

✓ *The Green climate Fund* is a unique global platform to respond to climate change by investing in low-emission and climate-resilient development.

✓ *The Adaptation Fund* was established under the Kyoto Protocol of the UNFCCC to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

Way forward

The time is past when humankind thought it could selfishly draw on exhaustible resources. We know now the world is not a commodity. It is time for us to realise that climate change is no longer some far-off problem; it is happening here, it is happening now. We have a single mission: Sustainable Development.

UNEP Emission Gap Report

News Excerpt

Recently, in its annual *Emissions Gap Report*, the UNEP has said that the **promises made by 194 countries in Paris in 2015, called 'nationally determined contributions' or NDCs, are not enough to close the 'emissions gap'.**

Pre-Connect

- UNEP DTU Partnership (UDP) is a leading international research and advisory institution on energy, climate and sustainable development which manages production of the Emissions Gap Report since 2011.

Fig: Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions Data
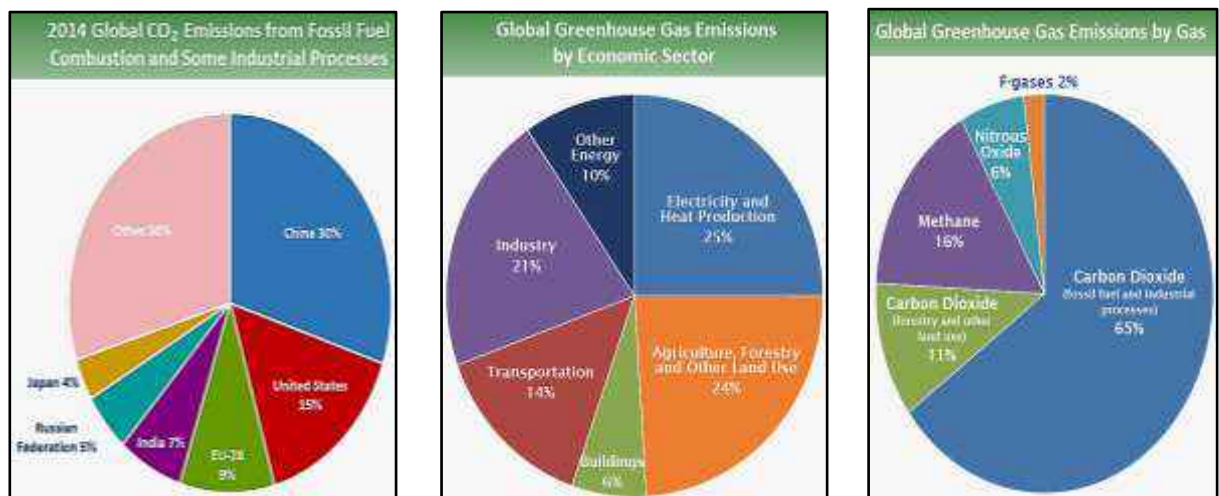
- The annual UN Environment Emissions Gap Report presents an assessment of current national mitigation efforts and the ambitions countries have presented in their Nationally Determined Contributions, which form the foundation of the Paris Agreement.
- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. It is Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya

The Paris Agreement

- ❖ This UN climate agreement of *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)* was adopted at COP21 in 2015, demonstrating a collective willingness of the world to take urgent action.
- ❖ The unprecedented pact urges nations to pursue every effort to limit global temperature increase to well below 2°C—and aiming for 1.5°C—to stave off some of the worst impacts of climate change.
- ❖ Importantly, it creates the incentive for nations to continuously strengthen their climate actions over time.

Highlights of the Report

- The world is on track to produce about 50% more fossil fuels in 2030 than would be consistent with limiting warming to 2°C and 120% more than would be consistent with limiting warming to 1.5°C.

- This production gap is largest for coal. Countries plan to produce 150% more coal in 2030 than would be consistent with limiting warming to 2°C, and 280% more than would be consistent with limiting warming to 1.5°C.

- Oil and gas are also on track to exceed carbon budgets, with continued investment and infrastructure locking in use of these fuels, until countries are producing between 40% and 50% more oil and gas by 2040 than would be consistent with limiting warming to 2°C.

- National projections suggest that countries are planning on 17% more coal, 10% more oil and 5% more gas production in 2030 than consistent with NDC implementation (which itself is not enough to limit warming to 1.5°C or 2°C).

- In quantitative terms, the UN report estimates that there would have to be a 2.7% average annual cut in emissions from 2020 to 2030 for temperature rise to be contained at 2°C, while the more ambitious 1.5° C target would require a 7.6% reduction.

- But countries with large emissions, such as the U.S., China, the European Union (EU) nations and India, will face more challenging demands if corrective measures to decarbonise are not implemented now.

Way Forward

- Countries have numerous options for closing the production gap, including limiting exploration and extraction, removing subsidies, and aligning future production plans with climate goals.

- Countries can use the opportunity to integrate strategies to manage fossil fuel production into their NDCs – which in turn will help them reach emission reduction goals.

- The *Talanoa Dialogue* at the COP 23 provides an opportunity for governments to discuss status of NDC implementation and options for enhanced ambition and action by 2020. The *UN 2019 Climate Summit* will provide a crucial opportunity to continue this dialogue.

> ### Green Climate Fund
> ❖ It was set up by the 194 countries who are parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2010, as part of the **Convention's financial mechanism.**
> ❖ It is a new global fund created to support the efforts of developing countries to respond to the challenge of climate change. GCF helps developing countries limit or reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapt to climate change.
> ❖ It seeks to promote a paradigm shift to low-emission and climate-resilient development, taking into account the needs of nations that are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts.
> ❖ GCF aims to catalyse a flow of climate finance to invest in low-emission and climate-resilient development, driving a paradigm shift in the global response to climate change.

Climate Resilience in Coastal State

News Excerpt

India recently kicked-off a USD 43 million project to boost climate resilience in three coastal states in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It may positively impact over 10 million people living on the coastline.

Significance of the Project

> ### What is emission gap?
> It is the gap between what the world would end up being and where it would need to be in the year 2030, in terms of greenhouse gas emissions.

- The project is funded by the Green Climate Fund, established within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to assist developing countries.

- According to UNDP, the six-year project will build climate-resilient livelihoods for 1.7 million people in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Odisha, offset 3.5 million tonnes of carbon, protect vulnerable ecosystems, and benefit another 10 million people with improved shoreline protection.

- **India's coastal areas are quite vulnerable to climate change and in the last five years, we** have seen increased floods and cyclones in these regions.

- This pace-setting new initiative will help enhance resilience and adaptability, reduce

emissions and support sustainable livelihoods.

- It aligns well with the priorities of the National Action Plan on Climate Change, the State Action Plans, and the nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. According to UNDP, it establishes India as a leader on climate action.

- The project will work with communities in restoring ecosystems and promoting climate-resilient livelihood options, such as the sustainable farming of mud crabs.

- To protect life on land and below water as outlined in the 2030 Agenda, project activities will focus on restoration and conservation of over 15,000 hectares of mangroves, coral reefs, seagrasses and saltmarshes. Communities, including the local youth, will be trained to work with scientists in monitoring ecosystem health and coastal ecology.

- To strengthen climate risk-informed coastal management and infrastructure planning, the innovative project will create an online decision-support tool available via mobile phone for use by government officers, academic institutions, community members and scientists.

- The project will also

SURAT | GUJARAT

Older projections suggested that sea level rise of even a couple of metres would shift the tidal zone towards the diamond and textiles hub. The latest projection shows that a vast chunk of the city, home to about 5 million people, faces the risk of annual floods

KOLKATA | WEST BENGAL

Hundreds of towns along the Hooghly river and its tributaries are at risk of annual flooding by 2050. That includes Kolkata and its surrounding areas, which have a growing population that currently stands at 1.5 crore

MUMBAI | MAHARASHTRA

Home to about 18 million people, Mumbai is at risk of being virtually swept away by coastal flooding. The city stands on low-lying land re-claimed from the sea and it has been suggested that even if the target of limiting global warming to below 2 degrees celsius above pre-industrial levels is achieved, tropical floods will continue to pose a big threat

ODISHA

Communities all along the Odisha coast fall within the risk zone with more than half a million people especially vulnerable to coastal flooding

KERALA

Floods last year in Kerala displaced about 1.4 million people. The new model shows that by 2050 large swathes of two districts — Alappuzha and Kottayam — could be in the annual coastal flood risk zone

CHENNAI | TN

Districts along the state's northern coast, including Chennai, Thiruvallur and Kanchipuram, are among Tamil Nadu's most vulnerable regions. Chennai alone is home to at least 70 lakh people

Benefits of Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

Disaster risk management (DRM) investments

1st primary objective

1st Dividend of Resilience: Avoided losses
Increased resilience reduces disaster losses by:
1. Saving lives
2. Reducing infrastructure damages
3. Reducing economic losses

Benefits when disaster strikes

2nd primary objective

2nd Dividend of Resilience: Development
Increased resilience unlocks suppressed economic potential and stimulates economic activity by:
1. Encouraging households to save and build assets
2. Promoting entrepreneurship
3. Stimulating firms to invest and innovate

Benefits Regardless of disaster

Secondary objective

3rd Dividend of Resilience: Co-benefits
Beyond increasing resilience, DRM projects also yield positive economic, social and environmental side effects (co-benefits)

Cost of DRM:
1. Cost of project implement
2. Potential adverse effects of DRM policies & investments*

* e.g. Rising land prices due to land use restrictions may harm poor

build local knowledge of climate change and the associated risks via training and public education programmes.

Climate Vulnerability of Coastal States.

✓ India is the third worst-affected country due to climate- induced natural disasters.

✓ **The country's coastal regions, in particular, are highly vu**lnerable because of rapid urbanisation, high population densities and related economic activities such as agriculture, aquaculture, tourism, industries and trade.

✓ The 7,517-km-long coastline is home to one- **third of India's population who are perennially** exposed to climate variabilities and extreme weather events.

✓ Majority of the largest and most dense coastal urban agglomerations such as Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, and Vishakhapatnam are hubs of critical infrastructure and assets that contribute to the nat**ion's economy and growth in significant manner.**

✓ Development gains, however, are being threatened by the impacts of climate change including sea-level rise, floodings, storm surges and cyclones.

✓ An increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, predominantly from the economic activities, is projected to aggravate the impacts of climate change and the vulnerability of coastal ecosystems.

✓ Warming oceans leading to sea-level rise provide a source of thermal expansion of sea water, contributing to more intense and frequent storm surges and cyclones in the coastal regions.

✓ **India today is projected to be at 'very high' risk levels in terms of intensity of cyclones.** The mangroves ecosystem along the coastal regions that act as a natural barrier against cyclones and coastal erosion have become severely degraded and face even worse decline due to the cumulative climate change impacts.

✓ **While the upgrade of disaster preparedness mechanisms in many of India's coastal states** has led to significant reduction in the mortality rate, the number of people affected and the impacts on physical assets have remained unchanged.

✓ The greatest impact of the extreme weather events are increasingly being felt in terms of the **loss and damage to the critical infrastructure in India's co**astal regions.

✓ **India's coastline has already been affected by the sea level rise (SLR) that has been recorded** at a rate of 2.5 mm per year since the 1950s. It results in the submergence of coastal areas, floodings and an increase in tropical cyclones and storm surges, thereby threatening infrastructure. Gujarat and West Bengal are projected to be the most severely affected, with a loss of 1 metre land area to SLR.

✓ According to data from the Central Water Commission (CWC), the cost of damages from climate-related extreme weather events on infrastructure and housing has been three **percent of India's GDP.**

✓ Poor or inadequate infrastructure such as drainage capacity of rivers, unplanned regulation and failure of flood control structures to withstand the climate impact, will further add to the vulnerability of coastal regions.

Steps Taken by the Government

▪ The environment and sustainability concerns have begun to be mainstreamed in master and land use planning processes in the coastal cities. National government schemes like the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) since re-introduced as Atal Mission on Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) have been channelling financial resources for urban infrastructure development.

- The MoEFCC had launched an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project by establishing a Society of Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM).

- India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) outlines a strategy that aims to enable the country adapt to climate change and enhances the ecological sustainability of our development path.

- The Indian tsunami early warning centre came into operation since October 2007. It has now become Regional Tsunami Service Provider (RTSP), and aims to provide advisories to the Indian Ocean Rim countries.

What Needs to be Done?

➢ The lack of enabling legislations or the absence of institutional frameworks prevents the implementation of climate-resilient development measures in coastal regions. The governments, both at the centre and states must formulate appropriate zoning regulations, building by-laws and land use restrictions to conserve the coastal ecosystems and protect its critical infrastructure from future climate impacts.

➢ Technical assessments through modelling of climate change impacts and vulnerability mapping is an extremely important tool that supports policy decision-making on infrastructure design, planning and locations.

Red Atlas Action Map

Recently, a Red Atlas Action Plan Map and 'Coastal Flood Warning System App (CFLOWS-Chennai)' has been released to aid Tamil Nadu government in effective flood mitigation in Chennai which witnessed the worst deluge in 2015.

Highlights:

❖ It has been prepared by the Ministry of earth science to aid the state government in effective flood mitigation.

❖ The atlas, with probable scenarios for different rainfall periods, aims at flood mitigation, preparedness, operations and management aspects.

❖ The manual provides information, including on corporation wards that are likely to be affected due to flooding, and the areas that may need evacuation in Chennai taking into account all historical datasets.

❖ The CFLOWS-Chennai is a complete web GIS-based decision support system that can be used both for mitigation planning operations before flooding and in real time to for aspects like relief work.

❖ CFLOWS is an integrated system that involves coupling models of regional weather forecasts, storm surges and captures about 796 flood scenarios.

➢ Climate-resilient coastal infrastructure development is a major challenge for India given the enormous funding requirements. The key is in examining the sources and modalities of financing. While low-cost public finance plays a vital role in the initial stages due to associated risks, mobilisation of private capital for investing in resilient infrastructure is extremely important.

➢ To protect the longevity and performance of India's coastal infrastructure from damage due to SLR and extreme weather, there is a need to adopt innovative measures that involve elevating road embankments, water treatment works, and enhancing design and

maintenance standards.

➢ Incorporating global standards on resilience and sustainability, that could assess environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance and impact of infrastructure projects is crucial to monitor resilience building.

➢ As communities are the direct and most valuable stakeholders of resilient infrastructure, there is a need to find a sense of local ownership that the infrastructure projects would attract.

➢ Sustainable and resilient infrastructure calls for integration of environmental, social and governance factors into the planning of projects. Therefore, stakeholder consultation process is important to assess the needs, identify the opportunities and ensure the inclusion of local communities.

Lancet report on countdown on Health and Climate Change

News Excerpt

Recently, the Lancet released its annual report on climate change and human health. The massive study looks at 41 indicators, including extreme weather like droughts, energy trends like fuel use, and agricultural impacts like changing growing conditions.

Highlights

• The report notes that as temperatures rise, infants will bear the greatest burden of malnutrition and rising food prices — average yield potential of maize and rice has declined almost 2% in India since the 1960s, with malnutrition already responsible for two-thirds of under-5 deaths.

• Also, children will suffer most from the rise in infectious diseases — with climatic suitability for the Vibrio bacteria that cause cholera rising 3% a year in India since the early 1980s

• **Rising temperatures due to climate change and air pollution could undo India's hard**-earned public health gains of the last two decades.

• The report pointed out that extreme weather events will intensify into adulthood, with India seeing an additional 21 million people exposed to wildfires between 2001 and 2004, and 22 billion additional hours of work lost due to extreme heat since 2000 (12 billion in agriculture).

• In the last 30 years, the global yield potential of staple crops such as maize, winter wheat and rice, have all declined, putting infants and small children at heightened risk of malnutrition.

• The report warns that for the world to meet its UN climate goals and protect the health of the next generation, the energy landscape will have to change drastically, and soon.

• Nothing short of a 7.4% year-on-year cut in fossil CO_2 emissions from 2019 to 2050 will limit global warming to the more ambitious goal of 1.5°C.

Steps Taken by the Indian Government to tackle impact of Climate Change on Health
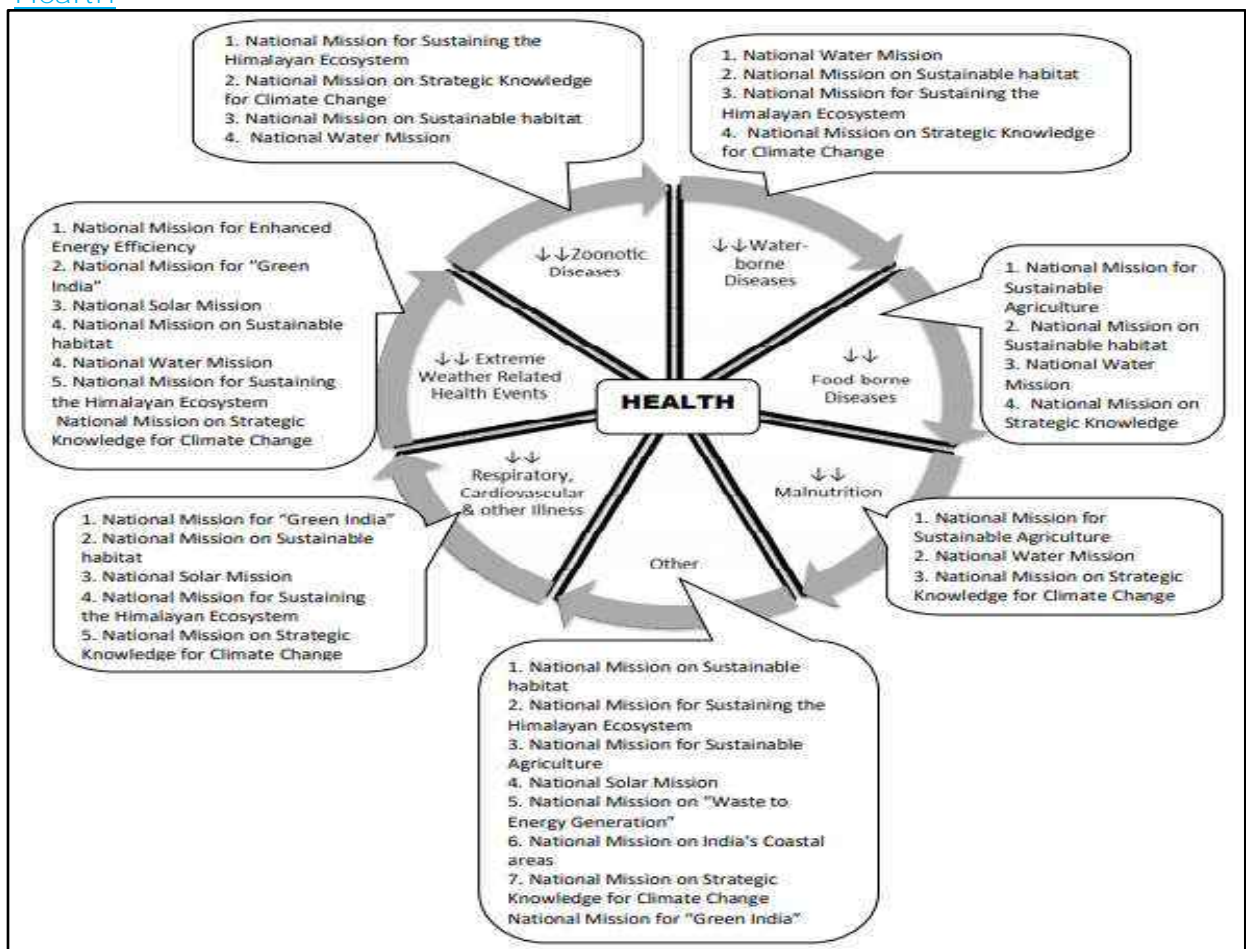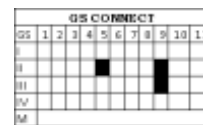

What Needs to be Done?

➢ To combat the health crisis, it is vital that those in positions of power understand the interconnected risks associated with a rapidly changing climate.

➢ National ambitions for health, economic growth, and environmental sustainability should be designed to complement one another, not as individual goals.

➢ Climate change negatively impacts human health, leading to higher levels of illness and disease and causing millions of working days to be lost annually. If long-lasting economic **growth is truly the country's goal, India should focus on achieving emissions reductions** alongside improvements to health services and infrastructure to avoid such unnecessary productivity losses.

➢ Serious action on health and climate change must be taken over the coming years. If effective measures are not implemented, the numbers of those suffering from easily treatable diseases could reach unprecedented levels with severe implications for countries like India.

➢ While India is joining the global shift towards renewable energy, it still overwhelmingly relies on coal for electricity, with an 11% increase in its energy from burning coal in 2016-2018, compared to less than a 1.5% rise in China. To dramatically reduce emissions by 2050, and to meet multiple Sustainable Development Goals, India must transition away from coal and towards renewable energy. It will also need to enhance public transport, increase use of cleaner fuels, and improve waste management and agricultural production practices.

Hong Kong convention

News Excerpt

Recently, the cabinet committee on economic affairs (CCEA) has approved **India's accession to the Hong Kong International Convention for** Ship Recycling, which will help provide a boost to the ship-wrecking industry in India.

About the Convention

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) adopted the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships in 2009, which is aimed at ensuring that ships being recycled after reaching the end of their operational lives do not pose any unnecessary risks to human health, safety and to the environment.

Why is ship recycling a matter of concern?

State	Location of ship recycling yards
Gujarat	Alang and Sosiya
Maharashtra	Darukhana, Mumbai
West Bengal	Kolkata
Kerala	Azheekkal and Beypore
Andhra Pradesh	Visakhapatnam

- The ship-recycling industry is a labour-intensive sector, but it is susceptible to concerns on environmental safety.

- India is the leader in the global ship recycling industry, with a share of over 30% of the market. As per UNCTAD report on Review of Maritime Transport, 2018, India had demolished 6323 tonnes in 2017, of known ship scrapping across the world.

- Currently, Ship Recycling involves the activity of complete or partial dismantling of a ship at a Ship Recycling Facility in order to recover components and materials for reprocessing and re-use, whilst taking care of hazardous and other materials, and includes associated operations such as storage and treatment of components and materials on site, but not their further processing or disposal in separate facilities.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Basel Convention, Stockholm Convention, Rotterdam Convention, Bamako Convention

- There is a need to address all the issues around ship recycling, including processing or disposal of hazardous substances such as asbestos, heavy metals, hydrocarbons, ozone depleting substances and others.

- There is a need to address concerns about working and environmental conditions in many of the world's ship recycling facilities.

What does the convention mandate now?

✓ By this accession, a greater importance to environment protection and workers' safety is ensured.

✓ Regulations in the new Convention cover:

1. The design, construction, operation and preparation of ships so as to facilitate safe and environmentally sound recycling, without compromising the safety and operational efficiency of ships;

2. The operation of ship recycling facilities in a safe and environmentally sound manner; and

3. The establishment of an appropriate enforcement mechanism for ship recycling, incorporating certification and reporting requirements.

✓ Ships to be sent for recycling will be required to carry an inventory of hazardous materials, which will be specific to each ship.

✓ Ships will be required to have an initial survey to verify the inventory of hazardous materials, renewal surveys during the life of the ship, and a final survey prior to recycling.

✓ Ship recycling yards will be required to provide a Ship Recycling Plan, to specify the manner in which each individual ship will be recycled, depending on its particulars and its inventory.

The Bill restricts and prohibits the use or installation of hazardous material, which applies irrespective of whether a ship is meant for recycling or not.	Ships shall be surveyed and certified on the inventory of hazardous material used in ships.
Highlights of the Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019	
Restriction or prohibition on use of hazardous material would not be applied to warships and non-commercial ships operated by Government.	For new ships, such restriction or prohibition on use of hazardous material will be immediate, that is, from the date the legislation comes into force, while existing ships shall have a period of five years for compliance.

Water Quality of Centre

News Excerpt

According to a report recently released by the Bureau of Indian Standard, the national body which frames quality standards, **Mumbai's tap water is** the best **and Delhi's worst among all metros and major state capitals in the country.**

Pre-Connect

- The objective of the study is to ensure quality tap water is provided to all.

- In case of Delhi, all the 11 samples picked from different parts of the national capital failed to meet the norms on a maximum of 19 parameters.

- Tests were conducted on various parameters such as organoleptic and physical tests, chemical test, toxic substances and bacteriological tests in the first stage.

Analytica
Factors Responsible for Poor Water Quality

✓ The gradual deterioration in the quality of water is because most of the last-mile pipeline networks are poorly maintained.

✓ In many cases, especially in the slums, pipelines are laid through open stormwater drains or in close proximity of municipal sewers.

✓ While Mumbai has taken much of its water supply underground in concrete trunk lines, they are laid beside the old and crumbling sewer network. Therefore, water contamination because of an inflow of raw sewage during non-supply hours cannot be ruled out.

✓ With intermittent water supply, pipes are fully pressurised for only a couple of hours daily. During the long no-supply periods, contaminated surrounding groundwater seeps in as the pressure in the pipes drops to zero. This contaminated water eventually flows out of the taps whenever the municipal water supply service is resumed.

✓ The combination of haphazard urbanisation, climate change and weak infrastructure leads to the rapid deterioration of urban water supply.

Status of Water Quality in India

▪ At the national level, the Composite Water Management Index (CWMI) of Niti Aayog has confirmed **that 70 percent of India's water supply is contaminated.**

▪ Globally, India is ranked 120th among 122 countries in **WaterAid's** water quality index.

- 84 percent of rural households in India still do not have piped water supply.
- Municipal water supply is set to gain immense significance over the next decade considering that 21 cities – as per the CWMI – are slated to run out of groundwater by 2020.
- According to the latest union health ministry data, at least 10,738 deaths were caused due to water-borne diseases--cholera, diarrhoea, typhoid and viral hepatitis-- over five years to 2017.

The steps taken by the Government

➢ Preparation of action plan for sewage management and restoration of water quality in aquatic resources by State Governments;

➢ Installation of Online Effluent Monitoring System to check the discharge of effluent directly into the rivers and water bodies;

➢ Setting up of monitoring network for assessment of water quality;

➢ Issuance of directions under Section 5 of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 to industries and under Section 18(1)(b) of Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974;

➢ Implementation of National Lake Conservation Plan (NLCP) and National Wetland Conservation Programme (NWCP) for conservation and management of identified lakes and wetlands in the country which have been merged in February, 2013 into an integrated scheme of National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Eco-systems (NPCA) to undertake various conservation activities including interception, diversion and treatment of waste water, pollution abatement, lake beautification, biodiversity conservation, education and awareness creation, community participation etc.

Bureau of Indian Standards

BIS is the National Standard Body of India established under the BIS Act 2016 for the harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods and for matters connected therewith. Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution is ex- officio president of the BIS Governing Council. BIS is involved in various activities as given below:

❖ Standards Formulation
❖ Product Certification Scheme
❖ Compulsory Registration Scheme
❖ Foreign Manufacturers Certification Scheme
❖ Hall Marking Scheme
❖ Laboratory Services
❖ Laboratory Recognition Scheme
❖ Sale of Indian Standards
❖ Consumer Affairs Activities
❖ Promotional Activities
❖ Training Services, National & International level
❖ Information Services

What Needs to be Done?

o **India's citie**s need to start with rudimentary measures to bring about extensive and transformative changes in their water distribution management.

o Some of these would ensure universal metering, bringing Non-Revenue Water levels to around 10 percent and maintaining a high level of cleanliness and hygiene in slums with the provision of effective sewage and solid waste management to minimise water contamination.

o The centre and state governments will have to ensure decentralisation of power to the municipal bodies and making them accountable as mandated in the 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India.

o Importantly, the state government will have to devolve funds via relevant finance commissions and address the financial deprivation of the municipal bodies by bridging the gap between municipal finances and functions.

Encouraging Ethanol Production

News Excerpt

Recently, the Ministry of Environment and Forests had announced that mills would not require separate environmental clearance to produce additional ethanol from B-heavy molasses.

Highlights

- Ethanol, or ethyl alcohol, is a liquid that has several uses. At 95% purity, it is called rectified spirit and is used as the intoxicating ingredient in alcoholic beverages. At 99%-plus purity, ethanol is used for blending with petrol.

- Pure ethanol is nontoxic and biodegradable, and it quickly breaks down into harmless substances if spilled. Chemical denaturants are added to ethanol to make fuel ethanol, and many of the denaturants are toxic.

- Sugar mills currently have all-time-high stocks of sugar, and this has resulted into the nonpayment of dues to the farmers. The reason behind their woes is excess production of sugar and fall in its price. Under the circumstances, ethanol is the only real savior- both for mills and cane growers.

- The Indian ethanol market is projected to grow from $2.50 billion in 2018 to $7.38 billion by 2024, exhibiting a CAGR of 14.50% during 2019-24, on the back of increasing ethanol use in applications such as fuel additives and beverages. Indian food processing industry is expanding exponentially thanks to changing dietary habits. Reduce import and save dollars.

Sources of Clean Fuels Other Than Ethanol

Biodiesel: It is derived from vegetable oil like soybean oil, palm oil, vegetable waste oil, by a biochemical process called transesterification. It can be used as an alternative to the conventional diesel fuel.

Biogas: It is produced by the anaerobic decomposition of inorganic matter like sewage from animals and humans. It is used in heating, electricity, and for automobiles.

Biobutanol: It is produced through the fermentation of starch. It is used in textile industry as a solvent and as a base in perfumes.

Bio hydrogen: It can be produced through pyrolysis, gasification or biological fermentation. It can be used as an alternative for fossil fuels.

Uses of Ethanol

➢ It is used extensively as a solvent in the manufacture of varnishes and perfumes.
➢ It can be used as a preservative for biological specimens.
➢ It helps in the preparation of essences and flavorings.
➢ It has use in many medicines and drugs.
➢ It can be used as a disinfectant and in tinctures (Example: tincture of iodine).
➢ It can be seen as fuel and gasoline additive. (Example: gasohol). Many U.S. automobiles manufactured since 1998 have been equipped to enable them to run on either gasoline or E85, a mixture of 85% ethanol and 15% gasoline.

PEPPER IT WITH
World Energy Outlook, Ethanol Blended Petrol Programme, Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana,

Disadvantages of Ethanol

✓ It is not widely available.
✓ It is a highly flammable liquid and must be transported carefully.
✓ It can be used to produce cheap alcohol whose concentration if exceeded 5% in the bloodstream might result in death.
✓ It can lead to behavioral changes, impairment of vision, or unconsciousness occurs at lower concentrations.

Steps taken by government in the direction

- National Policy on Biofuels-2018 approved by the Government envisages an indicative target of 20% blending of ethanol in petrol and 5% blending of bio-diesel in diesel by 2030.

- Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme: It seeks to achieve blending of Ethanol with

motor sprit with a view to reducing pollution, conserve foreign exchange and increase value addition in the sugar industry enabling them to clear cane price arrears of farmers. The Central Government has scaled up blending targets from 5% to 10% under the Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP).

- In September 2019, the government approved an increase in the price of ethanol to be procured by public sector oil marketing companies from sugar mills for blending with petrol for the 2019-20 supply year from December 1.

- The cabinet committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) also allowed conversion of old sugar into ethanol, which again is expected to help mills deal with the current overproduction in the sweetener and make timely payments to farmers for the cane delivered by them.

Conclusion

Ethanol blending in petrol is an effective way of increasing domestic petrol availability and for that, all-round efforts need to be made to increase the production of ethanol. Apart from Ethanol, use of other clean sources of energy should be promoted in order to curtail GHG emissions leading to Global Warming and thereby Climate Change.

Pamba-Achankovil-Vaippar River link project

News Excerpt

The Kerala government has been opposing the Pamba-Achankovil-Vaippar river link project (the 30th Component of Interlinking of River (ILR) programme), since it was proposed. It had expressed the same at the sixth special general meeting of the National Water Development Agency (NWDA).

What is River linking?

River Linking means linking two or more rivers by creating a network of manually created canals and providing land areas that otherwise does not have river water access. It is based on the assumptions that surplus water in some rivers can be diverted to deficit Rivers by creating a network of canals to interconnect the rivers.

River Linking & India- A Quick Recap

- ❖ Interlinking of rivers was conceived more than 125 years ago by *Sir Arthur Cotton*, mainly to facilitate trade and to resolve the issue of droughts in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa regions. But it was not implemented then.

- ❖ In the 1970s, Dr. K L Rao, dam designer and former irrigation minister had proposed "*National Water Grid*" and suggested that the surplus water of Brahmaputra and Ganga basins should be diverted to water deficit areas of central and south India

- ❖ In 1980, the Ministry of Water Resources came out with a report entitled "*National Perspectives for Water Resources Development*". This report had split the water development project in two parts – the Himalayan and Peninsular components.

- ❖ In 1982, a committee of nominated experts was set up through *National Water Development Agency* to complete detailed studies, surveys and investigations in respect of reservoirs, canals and all aspects of feasibility river interlinking.

- ❖ In 1999, the proposal was modified to *intra-basin development* as opposed to inter-basin water transfer.

- ❖ In 2012, the Supreme Court directed the Ministry of Water Resources to constitute an experts committee to pursue the matter with the respective state Governments in the implementation of Rivers Interlinking Project.

- ❖ In 2018, the "*National River Linking Project*" or *Interlinking of River (ILR) programme*, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, has been taken up on high priority.

Purpose

The basic idea behind interlinking of rivers is to deal with the problem of drought and floods afflicting different parts of the country, while
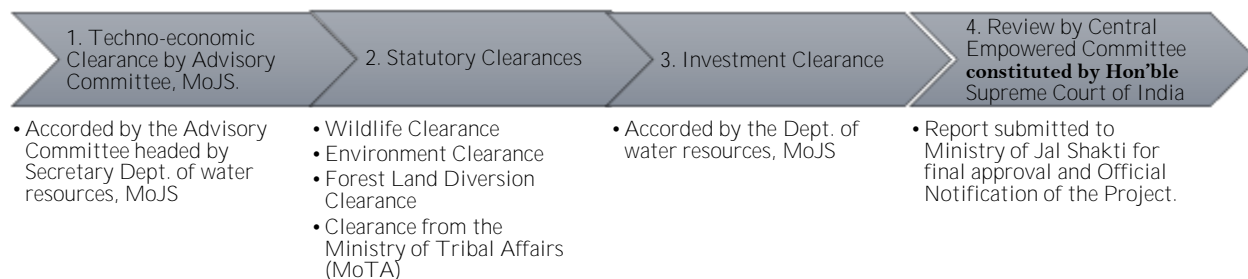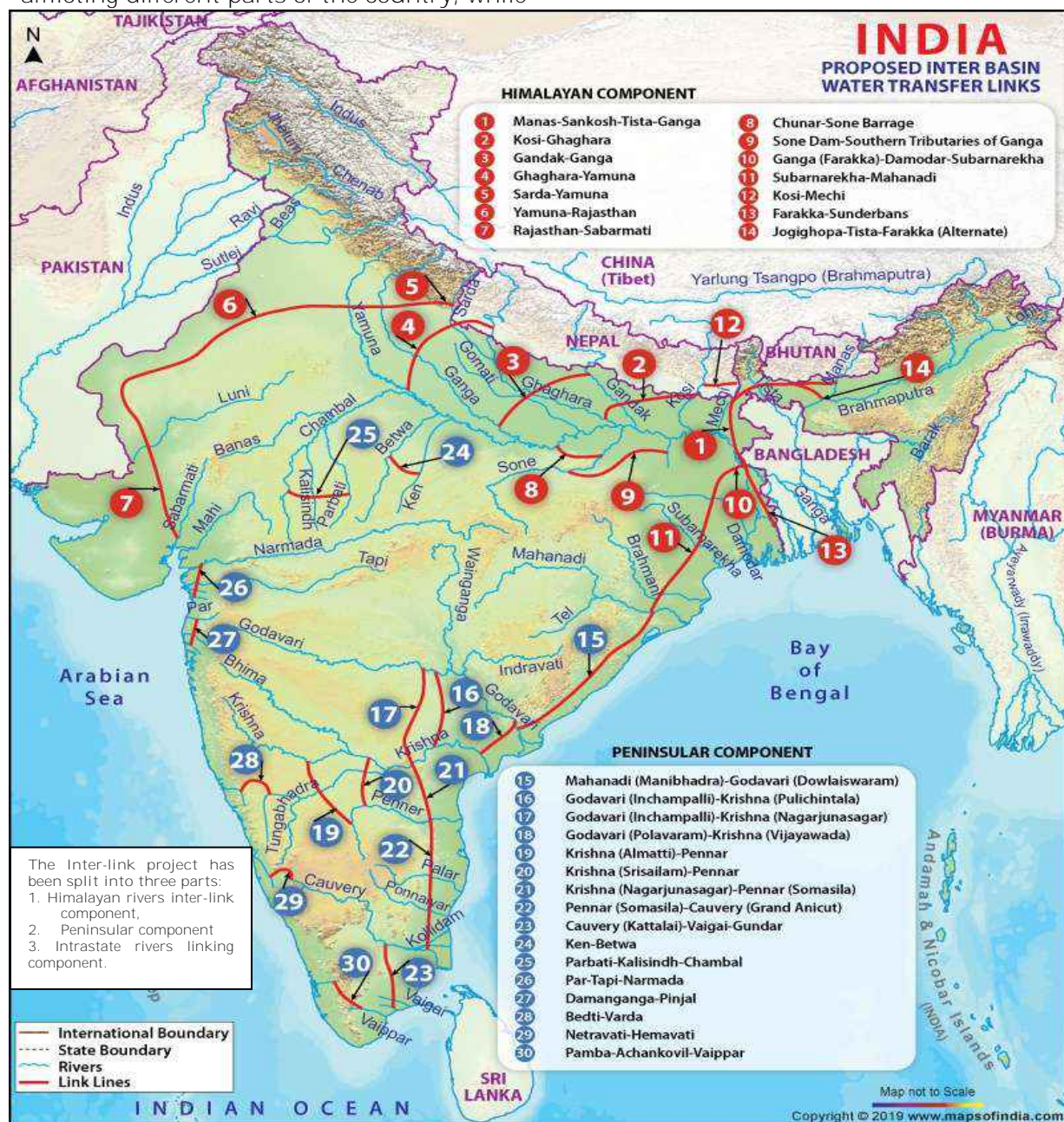

INDIA
PROPOSED INTER BASIN WATER TRANSFER LINKS

HIMALAYAN COMPONENT

1. Manas-Sankosh-Tista-Ganga
2. Kosi-Ghaghara
3. Gandak-Ganga
4. Ghaghara-Yamuna
5. Sarda-Yamuna
6. Yamuna-Rajasthan
7. Rajasthan-Sabarmati
8. Chunar-Sone Barrage
9. Sone Dam-Southern Tributaries of Ganga
10. Ganga (Farakka)-Damodar-Subarnarekha
11. Subarnarekha-Mahanadi
12. Kosi-Mechi
13. Farakka-Sunderbans
14. Jogighopa-Tista-Farakka (Alternate)

The Inter-link project has been split into three parts:
1. Himalayan rivers inter-link component,
2. Peninsular component
3. Intrastate rivers linking component.

PENINSULAR COMPONENT

15. Mahanadi (Manibhadra)-Godavari (Dowlaiswaram)
16. Godavari (Inchampalli)-Krishna (Pulichintala)
17. Godavari (Inchampalli)-Krishna (Nagarjunasagar)
18. Godavari (Polavaram)-Krishna (Vijayawada)
19. Krishna (Almatti)-Pennar
20. Krishna (Srisailam)-Pennar
21. Krishna (Nagarjunasagar)-Pennar (Somasila)
22. Pennar (Somasila)-Cauvery (Grand Anicut)
23. Cauvery (Kattalai)-Vaigai-Gundar
24. Ken-Betwa
25. Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal
26. Par-Tapi-Narmada
27. Damanganga-Pinjal
28. Bedti-Varda
29. Netravati-Hemavati
30. Pamba-Achankovil-Vaippar

— International Boundary
···· State Boundary
~~ Rivers
— Link Lines

Map not to Scale
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1. Techno-economic Clearance by Advisory Committee, MoJS.	2. Statutory Clearances	3. Investment Clearance	4. Review by Central Empowered Committee **constituted by Hon'ble** Supreme Court of India
• Accorded by the Advisory Committee headed by Secretary Dept. of water resources, MoJS	• Wildlife Clearance • Environment Clearance • Forest Land Diversion Clearance • Clearance from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)	• Accorded by the Dept. of water resources, MoJS	• Report submitted to Ministry of Jal Shakti for final approval and Official Notification of the Project.

Fig 1: Approval Procedure of River Linking Projects in India

decreasing farmers' dependency on uncertain monsoon rains.

The Inter-Linking of Rivers Programme

- Estimated cost of the project is Rs. 5, 60,000 Crore.

- The inter-linking of rivers is considered to be essential for addressing the twin problems of water scarcity and flooding in the country.

- The project is being managed by India's National Water Development Agency (NWDA), under the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti.

- NWDA has identified 30 links (16 under Peninsular Component & 14 under Himalayan Component) for preparation of Feasibility Reports.

- The mission of this programme is to ensure greater equity in the distribution of water by enhancing its availability in drought-prone and rainfed areas.

- **It also targets to decrease farmers' dependency on uncertain monsoon rains and bringing** millions of hectares of cultivatable land under irrigation.

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Arguments for and against

➢ The advocates of the project argue that the overall implementation of ILR programme would give benefits of 35 million hectares of irrigation and thereby addressing the agricultural distress and ensuring food security, generation of 34,000MW of power, apart from the incidental benefits of flood control, inland transport, water supply, fisheries, salinity and pollution control etc.

➢ However, ecologists and environmentalists have warned that the project is imprudent and dangerous, especially since there is little clarity on the ultimate impact on such a massive undertaking. Ex. Koyna Earthquake.

➢ Such river linking projects eventually lead to reduction of inflow in the rivers and thereby reduction in the valuable sediments deposited by the rivers in deltas. Ex. Shoreline losses in the Krishna, Godavari and Mahanadi rivers due to reduced inflows.

➢ Rare ecosystems and vital agricultural areas would become more vulnerable to storm surges, river flooding, and heightened salinity. Fertile deltas will be under threat, with coastal erosion expected to threaten the land and livelihoods of local economies that support 160 million people.

> ✓ *River Pamba*, originates from the Western Ghats and drains into the Vembanad Lake. The sandy banks of river Pamba witnessed the emergence and growth of many cultural and religious centres such Sabarimala temple.
> ✓ *River Achankovil* derives its name from the forest area, which is its catchment area. It finally joins with the Pamba River.
> ✓ *River Vaippar*, originates from the Varushanadu hills on Kerala-T.N border, flows through Virudhunagar and Tuticorin districts before entering the Gulf of Mannar. It is used for agriculture and also in making salt. It is also important for an event called Manal meduthiruvizha.

➢ Researchers supplemented data from the *National Water Development Agency* and have found that, on implementation, water discharge in 23 out of 29 rivers will reduce considerably.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> Interstate River Water Disputes Act, 1956, Water use and Inter State river water under Schedule VII, **India's** International river water treaties, Cauvery Water Management Authority

➢ The implementation also demands to clear large areas of forest lands threatening the livelihood and existence of dwellers and tribes of such forests and associated rehabilitation issues. Perhaps this was evident in the Ken-Betwa river link episode which disturbed the natural ecosystem of Panna tiger reserve.

➢ One group argues that the NRLP has the potential to reduce the Inter-state water disputes, while the other fears that it would aggravate such issues, as it involves the release of water from one state to another.

Way Forward

- As the Environmental resilience of the earth is reaching its saturation level, the need of the hour is to have an eco-centric approach in solving the water crisis rather than relying completely on the techno-centric approaches.
- Other sustainable long-term solutions such as ground water recharge through water harvesting, preventive measures such as regulated water use can help address such issues.

Lightning- A Natural Disaster?

News Excerpt

Analysis of lightning strikes in India by the private weather agency Skymet has recently revealed that Odisha hit by over nine lakh lightning strikes this year.

Highlights of the Study

- Lightning strikes in India are the most widespread killer among natural calamities with **most of them being instances of 'in-cloud' lightning (result from a friction in a cloud).**
- Five States accounted for half of the lightning strikes in India in 2019, led by Odisha with about 16% of the cloud-to-ground strikes.
- Temperatures are extremely hot during June, ranging from 32 degrees Celsius to 40 degrees Celsius. June saw the most lightning flashes during the first eight months of 2019, which is *when the monsoon sets in.* A rise in lightning activity begins in May, peaks in June and tapers by August.

Other Study Reports

➢ According to the *National Crime Records Bureau*, there were 8,684 deaths in the country **due to causes "attributable to forces of nature"** during 2016. Of them, 38.2% deaths were due to **"lightning".**

➢ A more recent report from the *Climate Resilient Observing Systems Promotion Council (CROPC)* revealed that Uttar Pradesh registered the maximum number of deaths (224), followed by Bihar (170), Odisha (129) and Jharkhand (118).

➢ The study also revealed that the number of lightning days (number of days when lightning strikes happened) across India has been increasing every month.

> *The Lightning Resilient India Campaign2019-2021*
> ✓ It is a joint initiative by the organizations that authored this report, and has support from many central and state government departments, academia, INGOs, local NGOs, media outlets and communities.
> ✓ It aims to reduce lightning deaths by 80% from 2019-2021 through a comprehensive, multi-pronged and innovative approach, as well as through collective action.

Climate Change and Lightning Strikes

- ✓ **Lightning strikes are not uncommon before the start of India's monsoon season, which** runs from June to September but as the world temperature is rising day by day, such strikes occur every now and then.
- ✓ Some scientists believe that global warming may be contributing to more active lightning storms. The combination of cold winds from the Arabian Sea and warmer air currents from northern India created an unusually large cloud cover, spanning 124 miles and inflating the risk of lightning storms.

Why should lightning be given a Natural Disaster status?

- The Current list of Natural Disasters by National Disaster Management Authority does not include Lightning and Thunder strikes as a separate natural disaster.
- Earlier, in Bangladesh, thunder and lightning were not regarded as a natural disasters. But considering the massive loss of life and property, the Bangladesh Government has recently announced it as a natural disaster so that if anyone dies from a lightning strike.
- Categorizing Lightning strikes as a Natural disaster would provide more scope for financial and policy backup as varied coping mechanisms and grades of infrastructure determine the level of casualty from lightning in the States.

- Also, it mandates Disaster management forces to frame and adopt a Separate Disaster Management plan with respect to Lightning strikes.

Way Forward

o State Governments should go for Microzonation and identify the villages and talukas that are vulnerable to lightning strikes which would help them to prevent loss of lives in those areas.

o Whether it attains Natural Disaster status or not, Coastal states should frame a comprehensive Disaster management plan for lightning strikes.

o A non-structural way is to create awareness among the people through warnings and safety measures.

Pliosaurs or Sea monsters

News Excerpts

Palaeontologists in Poland recently unearthed the jaws and teeth of a monstrous pliosaur, an ancient marine reptile with a bite more powerful than that of Tyrannosaurus rex.

About Pliosaurs

- Pliosaurs, the biggest of the Jurassic period ocean predators, lived around 150 million years ago.

- More than 100 million years ago, this mountainous region was an archipelago of islands surrounded by warm lagoons, but the variety of Jurassic marine species at the mountain site also suggested that this area was a "hub" where the habitats of different groups of marine reptiles overlapped.

- Ancient turtles and crocodile relatives are known from Mediterranean sites; they inhabited warm waters in the Tethys Ocean, a vast sea that lay between two ancient supercontinents — Gondawana in the south and Laurasia in the north during the Mesozoic period, 251 million to 65.5 million years ago.

- But pliosaurs, plesiosaurs and ichthyosaurs (another type of marine reptile with long, slender jaws) are more commonly found in cooler waters farther north.

- **Because the site in Krzyżanowice holds fossils from both warmer and cooler environments,** the researchers proposed that it represents a transitional zone that was once a unique ocean ecosystem.

Lymphatic Filariasis

News Excerpt

Recently, the Union Health ministry has declared to eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis by 2021.

What is Lymphatic Filariasis?

- Also known as elephantiasis.

- It is a parasitic infection spread by Culex mosquitoes. This mosquito grows in dirty accumulated water. The disease affects the poorest population in society.

- The most widespread LF infection is due to Wuchereriabancrofti (98%) and the remaining infection by Brugia Malaya (2%).

- It is usually contracted in childhood, often before the age of five.

- The lymphatic system is a network of vessels and specialized tissues that are essential to the maintaining the overall fluid balance and health of organs and limbs and are a major **component of the body's immune defense system.**

- The disease does not kill the affected people, but may cause permanent disfigurement, reduced productivity and social stigma.

- It is a neglected tropical disease. Infection is usually acquired in childhood causing hidden damage to the lymphatic system.

Government initiatives to deal with Lymphatic Filariasis

➢ India has highest burden of Lymphatic Filariasis.

➢ The government launched the Accelerated Plan for Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (APELF) in 2018.

➢ APELF: Under the APELF, strategies like the Triple Drug Therapy, community engagement for successful MDA implementation and use of DEC-medicated salt, house-to-house visit advocacy, are being deployed to strengthen the Lymphatic Filariasis elimination efforts.

> **PEPPER IT WITH**
> MDA, WuchereriaBancrofti, Culex, Neglected Tropical Disease

➢ Three drug therapy: The WHO has recommended an alternative three drug treatment instead of two drug regimen to accelerate the global elimination of lymphatic filariasis. The treatment, known as IDA, involves a combination of ivermectin, diethylcarbamazine citrate and albendazole. Adding ivermectin to the two drug regimen clears microfilaria more efficiently from the blood than the two-drug regimen and is equally safe.

Global Alliance to end Lymphatic Filariasis (GAELF)

✓ GAELF is an alliance of partners from 72 LF endemic national country programmes, NGOs, private sectors, academic and research institutes and international development agencies that assists WHO's Global Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis. `

✓ It was formed in the year 2000 and its meeting are held biennially.

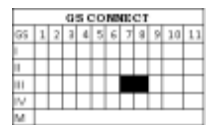✓ Its 2nd meeting 2002 and 10th in 2018 were held in India.

Can India eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis?

▪ Elimination of LF is no distant dream. It's been more than a decade since China and South Korea were declared filaria-free. Since 2016, a dozen more countries, including the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia, have accomplished this goal.

▪ There is no reason why India should continue to grapple with this debilitating disease.However, there are certain challenges such as:

  o People's knowledge of disease is poor

  o The treatment costs are high

  o Requirement of a diagnostic tool that could process large number of samples in a shorter period of time

  o Difficulty in differentiating the mosquitoes with infective stage larvae, an indicator of transmission, from mosquitoes with any-stage infection

  o Low drug distribution and consumption rates

Genome Sequencing

News Excerpt

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has done genome sequencing of 1,008 Indians from different populations across the country.

Highlights

• The initiative of genome-sequencing taken by CSIR is called Indi-Gen.

• It can help couples detect if they have any genetic issue that can imperil their offspring.

• The outcomes of the Indi-Gen initiative will have applications in a number of areas, including predictive and preventive medicine with faster and efficient diagnosis of rare genetic diseases.
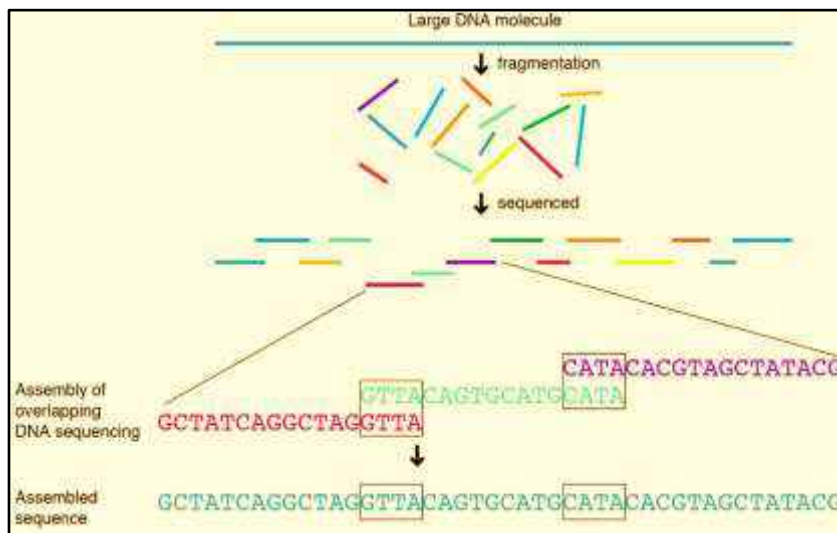
Meaning of genome sequencing

➢ Adenine always binds to thymine, while cytosine and guanine always bind to one another. This relationship is called complementary base paring. These complementary bases are bonded together via hydrogen bonds

➢ Genome sequencing is figuring out the order of DNA nucleotides, or bases, in a genome i.e. the order of As, Cs, Gs, and Ts that make up an organism's DNA.

➢ The human genome is made up of over 3 billion of these genetic letters i.e. A, T, C and G. Sequencing a genome is like reading a book one letter at a time to look for any spelling mistakes.

- ➢ It generally takes a couple months to **sequence a person's** genome.
- ➢ A genome sequence is simply a very long string of letters in a mysterious language.

Purpose of Genome Sequencing

- ✓ Scientists hope that being able to study the genome sequence will help them understand how the genome as a whole works—how genes work together to direct the growth, development and maintenance of an entire organism.
- ✓ It helps scientists find genes much more easily and quickly. A genome sequence does contain some clues about where genes are.
- ✓ Genes account for less than 25 percent of the DNA in the genome, and so knowing the entire genome sequence will help scientists study the parts of the genome outside the genes.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> Genome, junk DNA, rare genetic diseases

- ✓ This includes the regulatory regions that control how genes are turned on and off, as well as long stretches of "nonsense" or "junk" DNA—so called because we don't yet know what, if anything, it does.

National Registry of Voluntary Organ Donors

News Excerpt

A Committee of doctors from PGIMER, Chandigarh has pushed for a National Registry of Donors, and recommended a biometrics-based authentication of donors and recipients.

Highlights

- Recently, the Punjab and Haryana High Court directed the Centre and the states of Punjab and Haryana, as well as the Union Territory of Chandigarh, to implement **'The Transplant of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994** and to also consider the recommendations of the expert committee of doctors from PGIMER.

> PEPPER IT WITH
> NOTTO, Transplant of Human Organs and Tissues Act

- The Transplant of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994 governs the transplantation of human organs and tissues in India, including the donation of organs after death.
- In May 2019, the PGIMER was asked to constitute a committee of doctors for deliberations over the subject, and to submit a report containing measures to promote cadaver donations.

Recommendations of the Committee

- ➢ **The panel recommended the creation of a 'National Registry of Voluntary Organ Donors',** and said that it may be based on a unique national ID number given by the National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO).
- ➢ It said that a database of all surgeons and medical experts sanctioned for the transplantation should also be maintained.
- ➢ It recommended that the identity of the donor and the recipient be verified through a biometric system of authentication to prevent fabrication of identity or other fraud in the process.
- ➢ It also suggested that all hospitals engaged in transplantation procedures must invest in a biometric system linked to the national database of Aadhaar and PAN numbers.

> It has also said that mandatory informed consent should be taken in case of live donors after explaining to them the risks involved in donation surgery.

> It has suggested that a right be given to the donor to withdraw consent any time before the surgery.

Double Fortified Salt

News Excerpt

Iron Deficiency Day is observed on November 26 every year to raise awareness about the serious health consequences posed by its deficiency. One of the ways to counter the Iron deficiency is Double Fortified Salt (DFS) which is an innovative new fortified food product - delivering small but crucial amounts of iodine and iron to human beings through their diet.

Facts

- According to UNICEF 56 per cent of girls and 30 per cent of boys in the age group of 15-19 years in India are suffering from Anaemia.

- In India, due to lack of iodine in the soil and therefore in the diet, all1. 2 billion people are at risk of IDD (Iodine Deficiency Disorder) and around 264 million people are at high risk. India has the largest number of children born vulnerable to IDD.

- Iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) comprise of a range of disorders including goitre, hypothyroidism, cretinism, brain damage, intellectual disability, psychomotor defects, hearing and speech impairment, abortion and stillbirths

What is DFS?

> Double fortified salt is adequately iodized salt further fortified with iron either in the form for Ferrous Sulphate or encapsulated ferrous fumarate.

> Double Fortified Salt (DFS) is an innovative new fortified food product - delivering small but crucial amounts of iodine and iron to human beings through their diet.

> In general, DFS formulations are intended to provide 100% of daily dietary iodine requirement, and ~30 to 60% of daily dietary iron requirement.

> Dual fortification of salt with iodine and iron could be a sustainable approach to combat iodine and iron deficiencies.

> Double fortified salt is adequately iodized salt further fortified with iron either in the form for Ferrous Sulphate or encapsulated ferrous fumarate.

Why is salt a good vehicle for delivering nutrients and vitamins?

It is a staple food that is used by everyone. It offers an opportunity to integrate iron as a second nutrient to tackle both iron and iodine deficiencies.

Who can benefit from DFS?

✓ Anaemia (iron deficiency) and iodine deficiency are most often found in infants to young children under the age of 5 years and in women of childbearing age, predominantly in populations of developing countries.

✓ If taken on a regular/daily basis, these people would greatly benefit from a salt that is fortified with both iodine and iron.

What health/economic benefits can DFS provide?

- The use of DFS in developing countries would not only help in improving the general **population's diet, but would also help** reduce the health problems and health costs related to iodine and iron deficiencies.

- The DFS would be a benefitting component to the search for a solution to treat anaemia and iodine deficiency disorders at a very minimal increase in cost and in a simple, feasible manner.

Starlink Network Project and Space Internet

News Excerpt

Recently, Space X shot 60 satellites into orbit recently the satellites were carried into space by a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. **Starlink is SpaceX's** ambitious project to station a network of almost 12,000 satellites above the

Earth to provide remote parts of the world with fast internet.

By when will Starlink be able to provide its space-based Internet service?

- Starlink aims to star service in the northern United States and Canada in 2020, and expand to cover the whole worlds by 2021. The current plan is to deploy satellites in two constellations around 4400 and 7500.

- Once operational, space-based Internet network are expected to change the face of the Internet. Services such as autonomous car driving are expected to be revolutionised, and the Internet of Things (IoT) can be integrated into virtually every household, whether urban or rural.
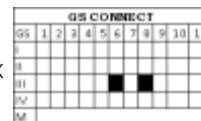
Concerns

- Three issues have been flagged- increased space debris, increased risk of collisions, and the concern of astronomers that these constellations of space Internet satellites will make it difficult to observe other space objects, and to detect their signals.

- To put things in perspective, there are fewer than 2,000 operational satellites at present, and fewer than 9,000 satellites have been launched into space since the beginning of the space age in 1957.

- **Astronomers and scientists have also complained about increased "light pollution" a** reference to light reflected from the man-made satellites that can interfere with and be mistaken for light coming from other heavenly bodies

Visual Positioning System

News Excerpt

Google has announced a revamped version of Maps that utilizes a complex visual positioning system (VPS) to offer improved navigation.

Google is "combining the power of the camera and computer vision with Streetview and Maps to reimagine walking navigation

About VPS

- **The VPS will use the phone's camera along with Google's extensive back**-end data to analyze the route. It will allow the camera to detect current location based on nearby shops, signboards, etc. and then will suggest the navigation path for the journey.

- VPS is predicted to be far more accurate than the Global Positioning System (GPS) and is designed to overcome the challenge of GPS. This technology is useful in urban areas where GPS is often blocked by skyscrapers.

- Vision Positioning Systems Market is valued at USD 5.35 billion in 2018 and expected to reach USD 10.47 billion by 2025 with the CAGR of 10.07% over the forecast period. There are multiple companies investing in this technology.
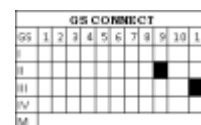
How Does VPS Works?

This works on the concept of visual navigation. When an individual turn on his camera and point to retrieve information related to that, he/she will see his/her surroundings with an overlay of Maps information for nearby business, arrows pointing the individual in the direction in the individual needs to go, with a small map at the bottom to remind the person where he/sheis headed. This is a powerful addition to Google Maps and Street View.

Exercise Him Vijay

News Excerpt

Recently Indian Army conducted its routine military exercise named HIM VIJAY in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam region of the country. The exercise was conducted by Integrated Battle Group (IBG).

Pre-Connect

About IBG

- These are carved out of 17th Mountain Strike Crops (Also known as the Brahmastra Crops-China specific Strike Crops)

- They are brigade-sized agile self-sufficient formation which can swiftly strike against any hostilities.

- The idea behind the formations of IBGs is to transform the army to reorganize its major corps into the IBGs.

- These will be tailor-made group based on Threat-Terrain-Task and will get resources on the same basis.

Analytica

Meaning of Exercise

➢ It reflects a major change in India's military posture vis-à-vis China, which has historically been of a wholly defensive orientation.

➢ The People's Liberation Army Ground Force (PLAGF) can no longer simply decide when and where to provoke the Indian Army, while being content with the belief that the best India could do was reinforce its position in the vicinity of the provocation.

Change in Indian Deterrence strategy

✓ The move signals change in the nature of the Indian deterrence from denial to Punishment. While in the earlier position India would not have taken a posture, which can incur high cost to the aggressor, In the later it is vice-versa.

✓ Earlier, China used to leverage its communication infrastructure on the Tibetan Plateau to intermittently provoke India with transgressions and even intrusions which serves as a blackmail to India.

✓ In response India used to forward deploy its forces scrambles to fix infrastructural gaps but defending every 'inch of soil' along a Himalayan frontier is a financially expensive and logistically cumbersome proposition.

✓ Therefore, it serves the message to Chinese troops that its adventurism won't be tolerated at all.

Utilizing Mountain Strike Corps (MSC) to an advantage

▪ MSC were created to counter Chinese threat through an offensive element that can deliver a 'riposte' by capturing a target of value in Tibet, which be used as a bargaining chip during a negotiation settlement on post-cessation of hostilities.

▪ But an MSC can be effective only when it has very peculiar characteristics in terms of structure, equipment pattern and employment concepts, which in turn have to be refined via operational training. Thus, Him Vijay holds huge significance.

▪ The positioning of the MSC's other division for eg the 72nd, all the way North in Pathankot, suggests that the MSC is not going to be an area-specific enterprise, which intends to make it difficult for Chinese planners to pre-empt an offensive by blocking possible axes of advance into Tibet.

Strategic Depth

o MSC has advantage over the PLAGF in the Chumbi Valley at foot of which lies Doklam plateau

o A credible MSC will undermine whatever psychologicalbulwark the PLAGF has been trying to gain by encroaching Doklam from the narrow confines of Chumbi.

o Not only is there a major Indian presence on the flanks of Chumbi, the MSC will also in due course confer upon the Indian Army the capability to occupy dominating positions closer to the head of the Chumbi Valley in Tibet.

o Indeed, the Chumbi Valley represents an ideal location in that the MSC elements will be capable of moving forward from launchpads secured by other Indian Army formations.

o Overall, this shift in the Indian posture, if sustained through resources and commitment, will likely lead to a change in the way the India-China border is managed.

Conclusion

Credible offensive capability will make it psychologically easier for India to move back troops from the LAC in certain areas and instead use reserves and remote surveillance to mark its presence, much like the Chinese do today. This shift can only work once adequate transport infrastructure is in place. Perhaps this is the real challenge India must overcome at the earliest.

SPG Cover

News Excerpt

Recently, government of India passed SPG amendment bill 2019 which intended to reduce the SPG cover only to the PM and his immediate kin, and ex-PM and his family for 5 years. The Act seeks to bring down the cost of maintaining the SPG security to the exchequer.

Pre-Connect

• After the assassination of Indian PM in 1984, Home Minister in 1985 set up the Birbal Nath Committee. It recommended raising a Special Protection Unit (SPU The SPU was then re-christened SPG and the post of Inspector General of Police was re-designated as director.

• For three years, SPG functioned under executive orders. In 1988, Parliament passed the SPG Act. Then, the Act did not include former prime ministers.

• Later, After the assassination of Ex-PM1991,the SPG Act was amended to offer protection to all former PMs and their families for at least 10 years.

• In 2003, the government again amended the SPG Act to bring the period of automatic **protection down from 10 years to "a period of one year from the date on which the former prime minister ceased to hold office" and beyond one year based on the level of threat as** decided by the government

• SPG make security arrangements in collaboration with the IB and State/ UT police forces.

• The elite force is highly trained in physical efficiency, marksmanship, combat and proximate protection tactics and is assisted by all central and state agencies to ensure foolproof security.

• SPG Special Agents assigned to the PM security detail wear black, Western-style formal business suits, with sunglasses, and carry a two-way encrypted communication earpiece, and concealed handguns.

Analytica

How does the government decide the level of protection an individual need?

➢ Home Ministry take inputs from intelligence agencies which includes IB and R&AW.

➢ They largely give subjective measure of threat to life or injury to a person from terrorist or any other group.

➢ Certain individuals were given security cover owing to their positions eg, Home Minister NSA etc.

➢ Since none of the intelligence agency in India is accountable to statutory body other than internal oversight- They are seen open to manipulation.

➢ There are allegations that these security covers are given for political reasons

What are the various protection levels?

- ✓ There are various kinds of cover within these levels. These include security of residence, mobile security, office security and inter-state security.
- ✓ Different VIPs are given different kinds of cover depending on threat perception.
- ✓ Then, different forces may be engaged for residence and mobile security.
- ✓ Many protectees get residence security from state police and mobile security from a Central Armed Police Force (CAPF).

And who are the National Security Guard?

- o The NSG was founded as a special commando unit for surgical strikes against organised terrorist attacks within the country. It was envisaged in the wake of high casualties and damage during Operation Blue Star in 1984.

Various Type of VIP Security

X

The X category on an average entails just one gunman protecting the individual

Y

Y has one gunman for mobile security and one (plus four on rotation) for static security

Y Plus

Y plus has two policemen on rotation for security and one (plus four on rotation) for residence security

Z:

Z has six gunmen for mobile security and two (plus eight) for residence security;

Z Plus:

Z plus has 10 security personnel for mobile security and two (plus eight) for residence security.

- o Yet its mandate of the force has been diluted over the years with the burden of VIP security. NSG has two groups of personnel and officers: Special Action Group (SAG) and Special Ranger Group (SRG). SAG is drawn from the Army and focuses on counter-terror training and action; SRG is used for VIP security.
- o NSG personnelhas become a status symbol and the government must take it off VIP security duties. That has not happened. NSG is not a protection unit; its core ability is in handling terror, hijacking etc.

How do these protection levels compare with VIP protection in other countries?

In the US, the security of the President and his family is handled by the Secret Service, which also looks after the safety of the vice president, his immediate family, former presidents, their spouses, and their minor children under age 16.

It also provides security to major presidential and vice-presidential candidates and their spouses, and foreign heads of state; security for the White House, the Treasury Department building, the vice president's residence, and foreign diplomatic missions in Washington, DC.

Naval Exercise

Naval Exercises November 2019

Samudra Shakti Exercise

What- Annual Bilateral Naval Exercise between Indonesia and India. First edition took place in 2018.

Participating Fleet: INS Kamorta

Other Exercises

GARUDA SHAKTI: It is an annual military exercise

IND-INDO CORPAT: It is a bi-annual coordinated patrol exercise along the International Maritime Boundary Line.

Exercise KOMODO: Multilateral Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise.

Advantage:

1. Indonesia is close to Malacca Strait from where majority of global oil supply pass. It will help in countering "String of Pearls "of China.
2. India is developing its maiden deep-sea port in Sabang which is not far away from Andaman and Nicobar Island. Port will act as key to India's Indo-Pacific strategy.

Zair Al Bahr

What? A bilateral maritime exercise **Za'ir-Al-Bahr** between **India and Qatar.**

Participating Fleet: INS Trikand and Patrol Aircraft P8-I

Advantage

1. Qatar is located to close to the Strait of Hormuz which in recent times has seen violent conflict due to ongoing Iran crisis.
2. Peace and Tranquility in the Strait of Hormoz is of critical for ensuring global energy security.
3. The rift between Saudi Arabia and Qatar is widening and in such situation India needs to perform the balancing act between the two warring factions to preserve its interest in the region
4. Region has significant Indian strategic presence in form of Chabahar and Duqm ports and hence such exercises strengthens India's operational capability in the region.

India-US New defence cooperation

News Excerpt

India and US have further deepened their security cooperation through two major events- Exercise Tiger Triumph and Indian Navy acquisition of MK-45 Guns.

Tiger Triumph

- First tri-Service exercise
- Organized under Integrated Defence Staff
- Focus is on large-scale amphibious Humanitarian Relief and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.
- Other major exercise includes- Malabar, Vijay Prahar(counter-terror) and YudhAbhyas.

MK-45 Guns

➢ U.S. Department of State has approved sale of up to 13 MK-45 5-inch (62-caliber)) naval guns to India.

➢ The MK-45 Gun System will provide the capability to conduct anti--surface warfare and anti-air defense missions while enhancing interoperability with U.S. and other allied forces.

➢ **India's submarine fleet also lags behind its surface warfare capabilities.**

➢ **A significant proportion of India's trade and energy needs are met through m**edium of ocean and hence its defence is important.

Dustlik 2019

News Excerpt

Recently, first ever joint military training exercise between India-Uzbekistan Joint Exercise was organized in the Tashkent.

Significance

- It will enable sharing of best practices and experiences and would lead to greater operational effectiveness.
- The primary focus will be on counterterrorism.
- It strengthens the **India's cooperation** the critical central Asian countries.
- India-Uzbekistan also participates in the SCO military exercise, thereby increasing operation **operability's of both** armies.

State Sponsored Espionage

News Excerpt

Recently WhatsApp's reported that 1,400 of its users were hacked using Pegasus, a spyware tool from Israeli firm NSO Group. A significant number of these include Indian journalists, academics, human rights and Dalit activists.

Pre-Connect

- Government surveillance over public communication and data is a widely known fact owing tonumerous incidents in the past decade exposing government exploits in public.
- Edward Snowden, a former employee for the CIA, became a whistle blower in 2013 and revealed to media the details of extensive internet and phone surveillance by American intelligence.
- Cambridge Analytica, a political data firm was allegedly hired by **President Donald Trump's** 2016 election campaign, gained access to information on 50 million Facebook users as a way to identify the preferences of American voters and influence their behavior.
- In the first six months of 2018, almost one billion records were compromised in Aadhaar data breach incident, including name, address and other personally identifiable information, according to a new report by digital security firm Gemalto.
- Any form of online interception, monitoring and decryption are well defined as per the provisions of the Information Technology Act 2008 (IT Act) and the concomitant rules set there, related to the provisions gazetted on October 27, 2009 and December 20, 2018.

Analytica

National Security and State Espionage:

➢ At a time when everything is digital, the safety of data and privacy has become very important. But at the same time the state surveillance is sometimes inevitable to ensure

national security.

➢ The use of social-media platforms by terrorist groups, domestic threats, foreign-intelligence services, and criminal organizations to further their illegal activity creates a demonstrated need for tools to properly identify the activity and react appropriately.

➢ However, unchecked and unaccounted data collection and examination, especially by government entities would lay the foundations of a dreaded police and surveillance state.

PEPPER IT WITH
Ransomware, Wannacry, Stuxnet, Cyberwar

➢ Data Surveillance moves in a web, where chain of relationships expands to covering almost each and every individual eventually. Most of the people however are unaware of this surveillance.

➢ Unrestricted state surveillance is a threat to democracies especially in societies like India where people are not very much aware about their privacy. This can be used to manipulate elections endangering the democratic credentials of the country.

➢ Also, after Puttaswamy judgement where supreme courts held that right to privacy is a fundamental right under art 21, it becomes important to gauge the threat of spying on the citizens.

➢ Recently, government gave powers to 10 security agencies to spy on individuals who are potential threats to the security, however, in absence of clear guidelines and a strict mechanism of holding the executive accountable to the abuse of power it becomes a clear threat.

➢ Government is justified in spying over its own citizens and foreign nations in case of maintaining actionable intelligence to preempt major internal and external security challenges. However, there is a need to achieve a balance between the rights of individual and national security in absence of which the social contract between the state and the citizens gets violated and the pillars of democracy get shaken.

Way Forward

✓ An independent watchdog institution should be created which should be answerable to a public authority like parliamentary committee with ample authority provided by constitution to oversee and ensure that any public or private organisation working with data, complies with stringent data privacy, protection and security regulations.

✓ It would be an ideal step to strike a balance between National security issues and privacy of the individuals. The recommendations of B.N Srikrishna committee and draft data protection law must be debated and implemented to secure the data of the citizens.

✓ It is important that India, a nation with one of the highest terror and cyber-threat perceptions, should look into any major legislative drafting from a national security perspective. But there should be public participation in the formation of such legislation so that the aspect of privacy of individual is not missing in the legislation.

SCOJTEX

News Excerpt

Shanghai Cooperation Organization has organized the Joint Exercise in India on the issue of Urban Earthquake Search & Rescue.

Key Highlights

* Exercise was hosted by National Disaster Response Force.
* The Aim of the exercise is to
  o Practice disaster response mechanism
  o Exchange of Knowledge and expertise
  o Technical Cooperation
  o Mutual Coordination
* All member countries of the SCO participated including Pakistan.

- It will allow for the testing the preparedness and resilience for inter-governmental interaction for immediate response in case of emergency.

Significance

➤ There is massive urbanization in all of the SCO countries. However, most of the countries are not ready for such scale of Urbanization.

➤ Most of the cities in the SCO countries lacks the capability to absorbs the flow of migration, and therefore the haphazard development leads to the greater loss in the case of any disaster stricken in the cities.

➤ Therefore, such exercises are necessary to reduce the response time in the Urban areas which have high vulnerabilities.

Thiruvalluvar

News Excerpt

Recently, there was a controversy associated with the ancient saint and Tamil Poet Thiruvalluvar.

About Thiruvalluvar

✓ Thiruvalluvar, also called Valluvar, (1st century BC or 6th century AD, India), Tamil poet-saint known as the author of the *Tirukkural* ("Sacred Couplets").

✓ He was considered as a masterpiece of human thought in India and has been compared in abroad to the Bible, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the works of Plato.

✓ He is regarded as a cultural and moral icon for Tamils across caste and religious lines. The period when he lived is debated, as is his religious identity.

✓ He was probably a Jain ascetic of humble origins who worked as a weaver. Both Buddhists and Shaivites, however, claim him as their own, and he is especially revered by those of low caste. He dismissed the caste system. However, Dravidian groups count him as a saint with no religious identifiers except his Dravidian roots.

Battle of Panipat

News Excerpt

Recently, there is a controversy over the movie Panipat based on the third battle of Panipat.

Third Battle of Panipat

- The Third Battle of Panipat was fought between Maratha forces and invading armies of

(DELHI VN) 9717380832, (DELHI RN) 9811293743, (JAIPUR) 8290800441, (BHOPAL) 7509975361, (PATNA) 7463950774, (INDORE) 7314977441, (BENGALURU) 7619166663, (RANCHI) 7463950774 www.ksgindia.com

Afghan general Ahmed Shah Abdali in 1761.

- They clashed in the plains of Panipat in present-day Haryana.
- The Maratha army, under the Bhao Sahib, uncle of the *peshwa* (chief minister), was trapped and destroyed by the Afghan chief **Aḥmad Shah Durrānī**.
- The Marathas were defeated in the battle, with **40,000 of their troops killed, while Abdali's army** is estimated to have suffered around 20,000 casualties.

> Ahmed Shah Abdali (also called Ahmad Shah Durrani), the Afghan general, who invaded India nine times between 1747 and 1769. Ahmed Shah Abdali is regarded as the founder of modern-dayAfghanistan.

- Apart from the Marathas and the Afghans, the battle and its prelude involved key roles by players in north India, including SurajmalJat of Bharatpur, Shujaud-Daula of Awadh, and the Rohillas. Court intrigue within the Peshwa household and disunity among Maratha **generals are believed to have contributed to the Marathas' defeat.**
- Two other major battles had been fought on the Panipat plains. The First Battle of Panipat, in 1526, laid the foundation of the Mughal Empire in India after its first ruler, Babur, ended the Delhi Sultanate, which at the time was led by the Lodi dynasty. The Second Battle of Panipat, in 1556, cemented Mughal rule when Akbar fought off a threat from the **king Hemu 'Vikramaditya'.**

Excavation in Gottiprolu

News Excerpt

The excavation by Archaeological Survey of IndiaatGottiprolu near Naidupeta in Nellore (now renamed as Sri Potti Sri Ramulu) district, Andhra Pradesh has discovered the remains of a huge settlement surrounded by a massive brick enclosure.

Highlights

- The site of Gottiprolu lies on the right bank of a distributary of river Swarnamukhi.
- The excavation revealed the presence of brick-built structures in different sizes and forms.
- The fortification is very much clear on the eastern and southern sides of the mound while its other arm seems to have been levelled as a result of modern settlements. The excavations revealed elliptical, circular and rectangular brick structures.
- The most outstanding discovery is of massive sized brick enclosure wall at the southern part of the mound. This structure is of baked bricks and runs in a curvilinear pattern towards the northern end of the mound.
- The small rectangular brick tank is also found near the inner lining of the curved brick structure.
- The available brick sizes (43 - 48 cms) are comparable with the Satavahana / Ikshvaku period structures in Krishna valley i.e. Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. On the basis of the brick size and associated findings they can be placed anywhere between 2nd – 1st century BCE or little later (nearly 2000 years old).
- Apart from the excavated remains, one of the most major find was the discovery of a buried Vishnu sculpture from the western part of the village.

Major Findings

➢ Stone Vishnu Idol
- Subsequent excavations conducted around the image revealed it to be a life size image of Vishnu measuring about 2 meters in height.
- It displays a four-armed Vishnu standing over a pedestal carrying chakra and conch in his upper right and left hands respectively.
- The lower right is in bestowing boon and the left hand in katihastha (resting on the hip) posture.
- The iconographical feature like the elaborate head gear, thick holy thread and decorative drapery dates it to Pallava period (circa 8th cent. CE).

- **Terracotta Female Figurine:**It is the molded female terracotta figurine with two hands lifted upwards.
- Interesting pottery finds are the base of conical jars placed at the eastern side of the structure. Such conical jars are widely distributed in Tamil Nadu and considered to be imitated variety of Roman Amphorae jars.
- Series of broken terracotta pipes fitted into one another revealed about the civic amenities maintained by the occupants of this site. The drainage system pattern is understood by the exposed remains of the drainage at the site.
- Other major retrieved antiquities unearthed are copper and lead coins, iron spear head, stone celts, terracotta beads, ear stud in semi precious stone and hopscotches. The ceramic assemblage of the site consisted of fine quality black and red ware collected from the lower levels, conical jars, rouletted sherds, russet coated ware etc. The extensively used goblet shaped ware indicates the typical table ware associated with the site.

Significance of the Site

- The findings of assorted stone tools of Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods from secondary contexts suggest that prehistoric people also occupied this area.
- These settlements could have been an important trade centre as indicated by the presence of imitated amphorae wares that were mostly used to transport liquid commodities.
- The proximity of the site to the seacoast suggests that the site could have served as a strategic settlement involved in maritime trade.
- The two fortified townships within the gap of 15kms during early historic times indicates the significant strategic location was preferred by the early historic people for trade in the region keeping in view of proximity of the sea, River and Lake (Pulicat).

Sisseri River bridge connecting Dibang Valley and Siang inAr. Pr

News Excerpt

Recently, the Sisseri River bridge at Lower Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh has been inaugurated by the Defense Minister.

Highlights

- It is 200-metre long bridge that will provide connectivity between Dibang Valley and Siang and would cut down the travel time from Pasighat to Roing by about five hours.
- The Sisseri River bridge provides connectivity to Tinsukia via Dhola-Sadia bridge. It was constructed by Project Brahmank of Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- This bridge will be a part of Trans Arunachal Highway. The bridge will play an important role in the overall development and would open more avenues in the fields of employment, trade & tourism.

> BADP is an important intervention of the Central Government to bring about development of border areas by supplementing the State Plan Funds to bridge the gaps in socio- economic infrastructure on one hand and improving the security environment in border areas on the other.

Analytica

- The Government has initiated numerous infrastructure projects in the state of Arunachal Pradesh which includes the proposed Bhalukpong – Tenga - Tawang railway line, operationalisation of Pasighat airport, nod to Hollongi airport and approval to construct **Sela Pass tunnel, reaffirming the Government's commitment to establish a strong and** efficient roadways, railways, airways, waterways and digital network in the region.
- **The Government's focus on the Act East Policy** would open new doors of rapid infrastructural development in the North-East, especially Arunachal Pradesh. The strong infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh would also act as bridge between India and South-East Asian countries.
- There are four projects of BRO in the state namely Vartak, Arunank, Brahmank and Udayak to meet the strategic requirement of the nation by building bridges and roads in difficult terrain and border areas and immensely contributing in the socio-economic

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Page 104

development of the region.

➤ The Central government has adopted the Border Area Development Programme (BADP) keeping in view the security of the people residing in the border areas.

Sowa Rigpa Medicine practice system of Himalayas

News Excerpt

The Union Cabinet has approved the setting up of the National Institute for Sowa-Rigpa (NISR) in Leh as an autonomous organization. It will be an autonomous national institute under the Ministry of AYUSH.

Highlights

- **"Sowa-Rigpa" commonly known as Tibetan system of medicine is one of the oldest, Living** and well documented medical tradition of the world. It has been originated from Tibet and popularly practiced in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Mongolia and Russia.

- The majority of theory and practice of Sowa-**Rigpa is similar to "Ayurveda".** Sowa-Rigpa is based on the principles of Jung-wa-nga (Skt: Panchamahabhutas) which means bodies of all the living beings and non-living objects of the universe are composed of Jung-wa-nga (Skt: Prithvi, Jal, Agni, Vayu and Akash) and the imbalance in the proportion of these elements results in the disorder.

- The fundamental text book 'Rgyud-Bzi' of Sowa Rigpa, composed by YuthogYontenGonpo who is believed to be the father of Sowa Rigpa, is believed to have been taught by Buddha himself and is closely linked with Buddhist philosophy.

- India being the birthplace of Buddha and Buddhism has always been favorite place for learning Buddhist art and culture for Tibetan students; lots of Indian scholars were also invited to Tibet for prorogation of Buddhism and other Indian art and sciences.

- This long association with India had resulted in translation and preservation of thousands of Indian literature on various subjects like religion, sciences, arts, culture and language etc. in Tibetan language. Out of these around twenty-five text related to medicine are also preserved in both canonical and non-canonical forms of Tibetan literatures.

- Much of this knowledge was further enriched in Tibet with the knowledge and skills of **neighboring countries and their own ethnic knowledge. "Sowa-Rigpa" (**Science of healing) is one of the classic examples of it. India has sought recognition of the ancient medicinal tradition as its "intangible cultural heritage.

The China Factor

India and China are at loggerheads over the legacy of one of the oldest systems of traditional medicine, known as Sowa-Rigpa, which has similarities with Ayurveda.The theory and practices of Sowa Rigpa are similar to that of Ayurveda and include a few principles of the traditional Chinese system of medicine.

MISCELLANEOUS

HS code for Khadi

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has recently allocated a separate Harmonised System (HS) code for Khadi.

Key Highlights

- The Harmonised System (HS) is a six-digit identification code developed by the World Customs Organization (WCO). Als**o known as the "universal economic language" for goods** is a multipurpose international product nomenclature.

- Over 200 countries use the system as a basis for their customs tariffs, gathering international trade statistics, making trade policies, and for monitoring goods.

- The HS contributes to the harmonization of Customs and trade procedures, and the non-documentary trade data interchange in connection with such procedures, thus reducing

the costs related to international trade.

Export Promotion Councils

➤ The Export Promotion Councils are registered as non-profit organizations under the Companies Act/ Societies Registration Act.

➤ The Councils perform both advisory and executive functions. The role and functions of these Councils are guided by the Foreign Trade Policy, 2009-14.

➤ Presently, there are fourteen EPCs under the administrative control of the Department of Commerce.

➤ The main role of the Export Promotion Councils is to project India's image abroad as a reliable supplier of high quality goods and services. In particular, the EPCs shall encourage and monitor the observance of international standards and specifications by exporters.

➤ The EPCs shall keep abreast of the trends and opportunities in international markets for goods and services and assist their members in taking advantage of such opportunities in order to expand and diversify exports.

> **The World Customs Organization (WCO)**
> It was established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations. Today, the WCO represents 183 Customs administrations across the globe that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade. The WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community. The Organisation has been pursuing correct and uniform application of the Harmonized System (HS), since its introduction in 1988.

Conclusion

Earlier, Khadi did not have its exclusive HS code. Now, it will be possible to keep a constant eye not only on our export figures, but it will also help us in planning our export strategies. It will also help in promoting the growth of rural sector by providing rural employment and creating demand for khadi and village industries based on rural areas.

BHIM UPI goes International

A pilot demo of BHIM UPI QR-based payments recently took place in Singapore with a live transaction at a merchant terminal at the FinTech Festival 2019.A memorandum of understanding between the Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI) and the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) was also signed to work towards access of TPCI dashboard to Business sans Borders (BSB) at the festival.

> **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**
> It is an umbrella organization for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India.Itis an initiative of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Indian **Banks'** Association (IBA) under the provisions of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, for creating a robust Payment & Settlement Infrastructure in India.NPCI has been incorporated as a **"Not for Profit"** Company under the provisions of Section 25 of Companies Act 1956 (now Section 8 of Companies Act 2013), with an intention to provide infrastructure to the entire Banking system in India for physical as well as electronic payment and settlement systems.

Key Highlights

➤ This QR code-based system would allow anyone with a BHIM app to scan the Singapore Quick Response Code (SGQR) at NETS terminals in Singapore for payments

➤ The project is being jointly developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and the Network for Electronic Transfers (NETS) of Singapore.

➤ This is the first time that BHIM app has gone international.

> BSB, a project conceived by MAS and the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), is an initiative for connecting various platforms domestically as well as internationally, covering trade, financial services and other essential SME (small and medium enterprises) services.

➢ It is targeted to go fully live by February 2020 and cover thousands of terminals in Singapore, after the Reserve Bank of India's approval.

➢ The government of India also launched the RuPay International card and SBI's UPI based remittance app in May 2018 in Singapore.

Rashtriya Ekta Diwas

- Prime Minister of India recently administered the National Unity DayPledge at Statue of Unity in Kevadia, on the occasion of Rashtriya Ekta Diwas on 31 October, 2019.

- Since 2014, 31st October is observed as Rashtriya Ekta Diwas which is the birth anniversary of Sardar Patel.

- **To celebrate the day, the 'Unifier of India' (Sardar Patel) was honored with the Statue of Unity, the world's tallest statue.**

- Dedicated to Sardar Patel, the statue is approximately 182 metres (597 ft) in height. On October 31, 2019, several places in India held Run for Unity event in order to celebrate the National Unity Day.

- The official statement for Rashtriya Ekta Diwas was provided by the Home Ministry of India **which cites that the National Unity Day "will provide an opportunity to re**-affirm the inherent strength and resilience of our nation to withstand the actual and potential threats to the unity, integrity and security of our country.**"**

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

- Sardar Patel is most popularly known as a founding father of the Republic of India. He played a significant role in integrating the independent provinces into a unified India just after the partition.

- **Under Jawarharlal Nehru's te**rm as Prime Minister, Sardar Patel served as the first Deputy Prime Minister of India.

- He was instrumental in making a united India from the 565 semi-autonomous princely states and British-era colonial provinces.

Winter Grade Diesel for Ladakh

- State-run Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC) has recently launched a special winter-grade diesel that remains unfrozen up to minus 33 degree Celsius.

- Highlights:

- All diesel fuel contains wax paraffins that give it high cetane number to enable efficient combustion. Ideally, these paraffins are a liquid and are dissolved in the diesel, but when the diesel gets cold enough, the molecules begin to form crystals and solidify. If the temperature drops enough, the crystals amalgamate and form large flat crystals which block the fuel filter. The absence of wax paraffins allows it to remain in liquid form during the winter months.

- Motorists in high-altitude sectors like Ladakh, Kargil, Kaza and Keylong face the problem of freezing of diesel in their vehicles when winter temperatures drop to as low as -30 degree Celsius.

- Indian Oil has introduced a special winter-grade diesel with a low pour-point of -33 degree Celsius, which does not lose its fluidity function even in extreme winter conditions. The winter grade diesel also meets BIS specification of BS-VI grade diesel.

- This fuel would help provide year-round access to snow-capped border regions, and is part of India's efforts to speed up strategic road connectivity.

- This new fuel will help Indian security forces to stock up on crucial supplies and ammunition that gets cut off due to bad weather in winters.

Janata Solar ATM

News Excerpt

Government of India had provided grant for the development of Solar ATM toNB Institute of Rural Technology (NBIRT). These are the devices which has a solar panel fixed on the top. No ATM card and pin number would be required to withdraw cash. The device would just require a user to have his or her Aadhar card to be linked with the **user's bank account.** It will help rural area population who are not generally accustomed to the use of card.

FINGERPRINT TO WITHDRAW CASH

What: Biometric registered solar power run ATM

➤ A user needs to have fingerprint scanned to withdraw cash
➤ There would be pictures of currency notes of ₹100, ₹500 and ₹2000
➤ People need to press one of the currency pictures multiple times to withdraw cash
➤ Each device costs around ₹3.5 lakh
➤ Ministry of science and technology had given a grant of ₹13 lakh

Close view of Janata Solar ATM

Concept Clearing Assignment

1. Indian film industry tends to fall foul of governments and citizens in neighbouring countries now and then. Critically evaluate in the light of recent developments. History could also include legends passed down from generation to generation and not just words on paper. Do you agree? Substantiate your views.

2. The memories of the tragedy at Jallianwala Bagh still stirs the conscience of India. Discuss with reference to the Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

3. Bringing judges within the ambit of RTI Act is a great step towards transparency and trust of people in justice system. Elucidate. Should Right to information be allowed to be used as a tool of surveillance?

4. It is time to identify causes of delays in our justice delivery system and provide meaningful solutions. Discuss.

5. The Rajya Sabha, since its inception in 1952 has come a long way contributing to the socio-economic transformation of the country but still h**as 'miles to go' towards proper** functioning. Discuss.

6. **Skill India needs a realignment if it is to meaningfully transform people's life chances.** Explain. Do you think that markets and industry need to play a large role in determining courses and curriculum for skill development to succeed?

7. India is not on track to reduce the child mortality rates and meet the target set under the Sustainable Development Goals. Discuss this statement in light of the recently launched SAANS campaign.

8. **India's relations with Sa**udi Arabia have been on an upswing over the last few years. Elaborate. Should India be eager about prying Saudi Arabia away from Pakistan?

9. **It is time to either expand the definition of 'office of profit' or remove the provision as** such as it has failed to achieve the desired goal of legislative independence. Critically examine.

10. **Critically analyse the key concerns articulated by the government in defending India's** withdrawal from the RCEP. What are the strategic and long-term economic imperatives for India to join the RCEP?

11. Lightning strikes have been emerging as one of the major natural calamities in India. Discuss. Also, explain the mechanism of lightning strikes.

12. Space and internet technologies are converging. Comment. What are the various issues with space based-internet networks?

13. Critically evaluate the potential of technology to address low learning levels in primary schools.

14. India must take corrective measures immediately to combat climate change. Discuss this statement in light of the climate emergency declared by the European Union.

15. India has been home to one of the longest and largest episodes of emigration since the ancient times. With reference to this, discuss the benefits the emigrant population has for India. How does the draft emigration bill assume significance in this regard?

P.T Oriented Questions

1. Consider the following Statements about office of profit.
   1. Under the provisions of Article 102 (1) a legislator is barred from holding any office of profit under the central or state government.
   2. Office of profit has not been defined by the constitution.
   Which of the following statements is/are correct?
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 only
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

2. Which of the following statements is/are correct?
   1. The concept of Inner Line Permit comes from the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act, 1873,
   2. The ILP is issued by the respective states to other Indians for visiting a protected area for a limited period.
   Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 only
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

3. Which of the following programs are covered under National skill development authority
   1. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKK).
   2. National Apprentice Promotion Scheme (NAPS)
   3. Establishing Academic Equivalence
   4. Capacity building in long term skill development
   5. skill sector councils
   Select the correct answer using the code below:
   (a) 1,2,3
   (b) 1,2,3,5
   (c) 1,2,3,4
   (d) 2,3,4,5

4. Recently Patent Prosecution Highway Program was seen in news. Consider the following statements about the same.
   1. It is a program in collaboration with Japanese patent office

2. India will receive patent request in all fields of technology while Japan will receive requests only in limited identified fields.
   Which of the following statements is/are correct?
   (a) Only 1
   (b) Only 2
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

5. NISHTHA program recently seen in news is related to
   (a) Capacity building program for students
   (b) Capacity building program for teachers
   (c) Train students in scientific leadership
   (d) Encourage teachers for scientific research

6. Consider the following statements:
   1. Sykes-Picot agreement is related to dividing south America between British and spain.
   2. Balfour Declaration gave the two state solution for Israel Palestine conflict.
   Which of the following statements is/are correct?
   (a) Only 1
   (b) Only 2
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

7. Consider the following statements regarding Chagos Islands:
   1. It was a part of Mauritius which was given on a lease to Britain.
   2. It lies in the south of Mauritius in Indian ocean
   Which of the following statements is/are correct?
   (a) Only 1
   (b) Only 2
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

8. Consider the following statements with respect to Indo–Bangladesh ties:
   1. Recently a water sharing agreement was signed on Feni river.
   2. Feni river is a transboundary river

originating from south Tripura and flows to Bay of Bengal

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

9. Consider the following statements regarding the Labour Code on Industrial Relations bill.
    1. The bill redefined strike and made it mandatory to give a 14-day notice before any strike.
    2. Fixed term employment leads to less jobs creation.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

10. Consider the following statements:
    1. More flexibility in choice of investments.
    2. Smaller fund size compared to mutual funds allows a very low conviction bets.
    3. Fewer number of investors for focused strategy and better market risk predictions.
Which of the statements given above is/are the advantage of Alternative Investment Fund?
(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 3
(c) 1 and 2
(d) 2 and 3

11. Consider the following statements regarding financial inclusion:
    1 The degree of the financial inclusion is proportional to the personal net worth or company size.
    2. Financial inclusion includes only banking products.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

12. Which of the following committee recently recommended that Core investment companies should not be permitted to invest in any other CIC?
(a) Mayaram Committee's.
(b) Tapan Ray Committee.
(c) Damodar Committee.
(d) BN Shri Krishna committee.

13. Consider the following statements regarding Debt Exchange trade funds:
    1. Debt ETF and debt mutual funds both are different in tax treatment.
    2. ETF allows PSUs to borrow from market only when the fund is comprised of AAA- rated paper.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

14. Consider the following statements regarding the Consumer Expenditure Survey:
    1. Recent Consumer Expenditure survey was conducted by National Sample Survey office (NSSO).
    2. The survey showed that consumer spending was falling for the first time since 1978.
    3. The data gathered in this survey used by the government in rebasing the GDP and other macro-economic indicators.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1 and 3 only

15. Consider the following statements regarding the Developing Countries in the WTO:
    1. There is a proper definition of both developed and developing countries.
    2. If a WTO member announces itself as a developing country then it will benefits by generalized system of preferences (GSP).
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

16. Zair- al- Bahar is a bilateral maritime exercise conducted by:
(a) India and Kazakhstan
(b) India and Oman
(c) India and Qatar
(d) India and Turkmenistan

17. Consider the following statements about DASTLIK 2019:
    1. It is the first ever joint military exercise conducted by India and Uzbekistan.

2. The primary focus of the exercise is to counter terrorism.
3. Both the countries are permanent members of sanghai cooperation organisation.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

18. Consider the following statements about the Green Climate Fund:
1. It was set up in 2010 as the financial mechanism of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
2. It helps only the developing countries in reducing their greenhouse emissions and adopt to climate change.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) None of the above

19. What is the purpose of the recently launched Red Atlas Action Plan Map?
(a) To counter terrorism in the border areas.
(b) To help the state governments in flood mitigations.
(c) To provide aid to the drought affecting states.
(d) To prevent crimes in border related to child trafficking.

20. Consider the following statements about Ethanol:
1. It is widely available and can be transported easily.
2. It can be used to produce alcohol that is comparatively less harmful health effects.
3. Government has approved National Policy on Biofuels-2018 that envisages an indicative target of 20% blending of ethanol in petrol and 5% blending of bio-diesel in diesel by 2030.
Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?
(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) None of the above

21. Consider the following statements about the iron deficiency:
1. India has the largest number of children vulnerable to iron deficiency.
2. Double fortified salts contain ferrous sulphate that can fight the deficiency.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2 only
(d) None of the above

22. Consider the following statements about lymphatic filariasis:
1. It is a neglected tropical disease that damages the lymphatic system.
2. It is a parasitic disease caused by the eastern equine encephalitis.
3. Three drug therapy has been recommended by the WHO to eradicate the disease.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 2 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

23. Recently, Space X shot 60 satellites were carried into space by a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket with the aim to:
(a) Promote the remote parts of the world with faster internet.
(b) Monitor and record India's climate and weather.
(c) Locate the zones rich in natural gas.
(d) Observe distant planets, galaxies, and other outer space objects.

24. Match the following items in list A (Type of Unemployment) with list B (Explanation)

List A	List B
1. Structural unemployment	a. Person shifts one job from another
2. Cyclical unemployment	b. change in the nature of the economy
3. Frictional unemployment	c. productivity of labour is zero
4. Hidden unemployment	d. upturn and downturn of the economy

Select the correct answer using the code below:
(a) 1-a,2-b,3-c,4-d
(b) 1-b,2-d,3-a,4-c
(c) 1-c,2-a,3-b,4-d
(d) 1-d,2-c,3-b,4-a

25. Consider the following statements:
    1. ICEDASH program is launched by Ministry of finance for improving ease of doing business in india.
    2. ATITHI program is launched by ministry of tourism for promoting ease of tourism in India

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

26. Which one of the following is the largest committee of the Parliaments? (CSE 2014)
    (a) The committee on Public account.
    (b) The committee on Estimates
    (c) The committee on the Public Undertaking
    (d) The committee on petitions

27. **International Labour Organization's** Convection 138 and 182 are related to- (UPSC 2018)
    (a) Child labour
    (b) Adaptation of agricultural practices to global climate change.
    (c) Regulation of food prices and food security.
    (d) Gender parity at the workplace.

28. Consider the following countries (UPSC 2018)
    1. Australia
    2. Canada
    3. China
    4. India
    5. Japan
    6. USA

    Which of the above are among the 'free trade partners' of ASEAN?
    (a) 1, 2, 4 and 5
    (b) 3, 4, 5 and 6
    (c) 1, 3, 4 and 5
    (d) 2, 3, 4 and 6

29. In India Judicial Review implies- (UPSC 2017)
    (a) The power of the Judiciary to pronounce upon the constitutionality of law and executive orders.
    (b) The power of the Judiciary to question the wisdom of the law enacted by the Legislatures
    (c) The power of the Judiciary to review all the legislative enactments before they are assented to by the President.
    (d) The power of the Judiciary to review its own judgements given earlier in similar or different cases.

30. The main objective 12th five-year plans is- (UPSC 2014)
    (a) Inclusive growth and poverty reduction
    (b) Inclusive and sustainable growth
    (c) Sustainable and inclusive growth to reduce unemployment
    (d) Faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth

Answer Key

1.	B	11.	A	21.	C		
2.	A	12.	B	22.	C		
3.	C	13.	B	23.	A		
4.	A	14.	D	24.	B		
5.	B	15.	D	25.	A		
6.	D	16.	C	26.	B		
7.	D	17.	D	27.	A		
8.	B	18.	C	28.	C		
9.	A	19.	B	29.	A		
10.	B	20.	B	30.	D		