

ABOUT CURRENT CONNECT

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

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

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

Team KSG

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GS - I	Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.	Indian history significant events, personalities, issues and the Freedom Struggle	Post independence issues, National boundary and disputes	Indian society features, issues, globalization and diversity	Women - issues and developments	Urbanization – problems and remedies	Distribution of industries and resources – India and world	Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc			
GS - II	Indian constitution- Amendments, acts and bills.	Legislative, executive and judicial processes.	Constitutional, non-constitutional, judicial, quasi-judicial, administrative and other types of bodies.	Federal structure and local bodies. Their powers and functions.	Government policies and various governance issues like transparency, accountability and – governance	Committees and schemes.	Non-government issues, self-help groups and role of civil society	Vulnerable sections of our society and social sector issues and initiatives.	International Relation- India and other countries, various Indian and international agreements, effects of other countries on India and international institutions.		
GS - III	Various measures to boost Indian economy- planning, policies, management.	Government budgeting and issues related to budget.	Agriculture, animal husbandry and transport	Food security- measures to boost food security and food processing. Issues related to land- land reforms	Industries and infrastructure e-their growth and investment model	Space and technology, IT space, robotics and computer	Disease, biotechnology and human welfare	Innovations, intellectual property, Awards, POI and other import and aspects of S&T	Environment; government initiatives, various judgments, pollution, degradation and conservation efforts	Disaster & Management	Challenges to internal security, Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate. Cybersecurity; money/laundring and its prevention.
GS - IV	Ethical issues related to family society, education, Corruption etc.	Ethics in public and private administration	Issues	Related laws and rules	Governance/e-Governance	Ethics in international issues	Person alities and their teachings	Other important topics			
Mis.											

Motor vehicle (Amendment) Act, 2019.

News Excerpt

A significant number of State Government have decided not to implement the newly enacted Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act 2019. The reason cited by majority of the states was stringent monetary penalties imposed under the act.

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Pre-Connect

- The Motor Vehicles Act, passed in the year 1988 by the Indian Parliament, regulates almost all aspects of road transport vehicles. It has provisions for traffic regulations, vehicle insurance, registration of motor vehicles, controlling permits and penalties.
- The act was amended in 2017 under The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2017, which was passed by parliament in 2017. The act was amended with consultation of state transport ministers.

Key Highlights

- It makes Aadhaar mandatory for getting a driving licence and vehicle registration.
- For deaths in hit-and-run cases, the government will provide a compensation of Rs 2 lakh or more to the victim's family. Currently, the amount is just Rs 25,000.
- In traffic violations by juveniles, the guardians or owner of the vehicle would be held responsible, unless they prove the offence was committed without their knowledge or they tried to prevent it.
- The minimum fine for drunk driving has been increased from Rs 2,000 to Rs 10,000.
- It mandates automated fitness testing for vehicles.
- It also allows the central government to order for recall of motor vehicles if a defect in the vehicle may cause damage to the environment, or the driver, or other road users
- It provides for a **National Road Safety Board**, to be created by the central government through a notification. It will advise the central and state governments on all aspects of road safety and traffic management, including standards of motor vehicles, registration and licensing of vehicles, standards for road safety, and promotion of new vehicle technology.
- It provides for a scheme for cashless treatment of road accident victims during golden hour. The golden hour is defined as the time period of up to one **hour** following a traumatic injury, **during** which the likelihood of preventing death through prompt medical care is the highest

Facts and Data

- 2,99,091 deaths due to road accidents in 2017 were reported by the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways.
- The annual economic loss suffered by India due to road accidents is **Rs 4.3 lakh crore**.
- India, as a signatory to the **Brasilia declaration**, intends to reduce road accidents and traffic fatalities by 50% by 2022.
- While highways (both national and state) comprise about 5% of the total road network, they witness 52% of the accidents.
- 31.5% of the people killed in crashes in 2015 involved two-wheelers.
- 43.7% of the road accidents in India are caused due to over speeding.

Analytica

Stakeholders of Road safety in India

Road-

- The roads in India are highly congested, steps should be taken to address the issue.
- The management of traffic has multifaceted problems which need to be looked upon.
- One of the major issues is Malfunctioning of Traffic signals.
- Corruption in traffic police is the biggest concern.

Driver-

- Commercial Drivers:** Simplification and rationalisation needs to be done as most of the driver are not well verse of the rules and regulations due to their complex nature.
- Private/Personal drivers:** Behavioural change is necessary to streamline the concern of road safety in people's mind. Perception of people towards traffic police is only pernicious. A sense of cooperation needs to be induced in people to prompt harmony in Traffic management.

Rules and Regulations

- ✓ With the increase in Penalties, there are chances of Collusive corruption taking place. Therefore, effective monitoring system to keep a check is indispensable.
- ✓ Rationalization of rules and regulation should be done to increase compliance.
- ✓ Awareness about traffic rules among people should be spread through campaigning.

Centre State Tussle Over the New Rules

- Despite the data and the good intentions behind stricter penalties, states such as West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Jharkhand and Maharashtra denied imposing stricter fines to boost road discipline.
- Meanwhile, other states like Karnataka, Dehradun, Gujarat, and Kerala decided to reduce the rates that have been stated in the amended act. There are some that still deliberating before final implementation.
- Provisions such as **section 88A**, which allows the Central Government to “make schemes for national, multi-modal and inter-state transportation of goods or passengers,” have been opposed vehemently. **Inter-state agreements can now be superseded by central schemes by the new amendment.**
- **Section 74 of the new law** allows the RTO to waive any statutory conditions for contract carriage permits to certain vehicles as specified by the centre. Such an issue is subject to regional factors thus centre should not take unilateral decision.
- License to aggregators such as Uber and Ola can be issued by the state government, but only according to the guidelines issued by the central government, as per changes to **Section 93**. Blanket regulations or guidelines are again seen as a move to infringe on the powers of the state and legislate on matters that may vary from state to state.

PEPPER IT WITH

Sundar Committee Report,
Black Spot, Good Samaritan,
National Road Safety Policy,
Driving Training Centre

Way Forward

- **Infrastructure capacity**- The roads in India are overburdened, there should be increase in connectivity of roads for better convenience.
- **Technological Advancement**- Road building should be technically advanced to ensure less damages which in turn would reduce the accidents. The designing and construction should be more scientific and advanced.
- A robust monitoring system needs to be placed with effective checks and balances.
- Central government should hold deliberations with state governments to reach a consensus.
- A rapid grievance redressal mechanism should be established to look into the cases and redtapism from the procedures should be removed.

International Migrant Stock 2019

News Excerpt

Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) has recently released the International Migrant Stock 2019.

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Pre-Connect

- The global number of international migrants reached an estimated 272 million in 2019, an increase of 51 million since 2010.
- Currently, international migrants comprise 3.5 per cent of the global population, compared to 2.8 per cent in the year 2000.

Key Highlights

- The global number of international migrants has grown faster than the world's population
- Forced displacements across international borders have continued to rise
- Most of the world's migrants live in a relatively small number of countries
- Over two fifths of all international migrants worldwide in 2019 had been born in Europe (61 million) or in Central and Southern Asia (50 million)
- Most international migrants move between countries located within the same region.

- One-third of all international migrants originate in only ten countries. In 2019, India was the leading country of origin of international migrants, with 17.5 million persons living abroad
- In 2019, women comprise slightly less than half of all international migrants
- One out of every seven international migrant is below the age of 20 years
- Three out of every four international migrants are of working age (20-64 years)

Analytica

- ✓ The rise in international migration is due to increased political instability in various regions of the world. Due to absence of consensus on treatment of such migrants, it may lead to more international conflicts among countries.
- ✓ Rise of forced displacement shows there is increased instance of conflicts like civil war in Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan. It may result in grave human right violations endangering the human security. According to various estimates, 8000 to 13000 people died in Yemen during the crisis.
- ✓ The demographic profile of migrants suggests that women and younger population in the age group of 15-29 are facing the maximum brunt of migration. It results in opportunity cost both for the countries and the migrants themselves.
- ✓ Increased migration rates to foreign countries leads to rise of Right wing ultra nationalist arguments which ultimately leads to a fragmented international structure where countries try to secure themselves from the refugee brunt rather than collectively working for the resolution of the root problem. Example – Brexit(one of the major reasons were increased migrants from eastern Europe)
- ✓ Migrants become vulnerable in host countries in terms of no recognition of their basic rights, ethnic cleansing events, hunger, poverty etc which reduce them to a level of subsistence at any cost.

Conventions Related to Migrants Rights

- ❖ **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families:** It was adopted by General Assembly resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990. Objective of the Convention is to foster respect for migrants' human rights.
- ❖ **Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97):** Requires ratifying states to facilitate international migration for employment by establishing and maintaining a free assistance and information service for migrant workers and taking measures against misleading propaganda relating to emigration and immigration.
- ❖ **Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143):** Provides for measures to combat clandestine and illegal migration while at the same time setting forth the general obligation to respect the basic human rights of all migrant workers.

PEPPER IT WITH

UDHR, ICERD, 7 UN Human Rights bodies

Way Forward

Countries should collectively work for the solution of the root problems like proxy wars, civil wars, poverty etc in country of origin. International community should stay committed to International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Also, increased support to migrants will go a long way in achieving a sustainable development around the globe.

Jan Soochna Portal

News Excerpt

The first-ever portal for quick access to information on government departments; Jan soochna portal was recently launched by the State government of Rajasthan.

Pre-Connect

- The seeds of the RTI movement were sown in Rajasthan itself so it was a peremptory requisite for the state to make a move in this direction. It is a pioneering step in the true spirit of the Right to Information Act.

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- Right to Information is an indispensable part of our right to make choices and right to freedom in true sense but the journey to get this right granted was not easy.
- In 1986, the Supreme Court in the **Mr. Kulwal Vs. Jaipur Municipal Corporation** gave a clear directive that the freedom of speech and expression provided under article 19 of the constitution clearly implies Right to Information as without information, freedom of speech and expression cannot be fulfilled.
- In 1990's, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan laid the foundation of campaign for RTI in the rural areas of the state of Rajasthan, demanding access to government information on behalf of the wage workers and small farmers who were often deprived of their rightful wages or their just benefits under government schemes.
- In response to the **National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI)** the Government of India set up a committee, known as the **Shourie Committee** which was given the responsibility of examining the draft right to information bill.
- **The Freedom of Information Act**, as passed by Parliament in 2002, in August 2004, the National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI), formulated a set of suggested amendments to the 2002 Freedom of Information Act
- The Right to Information Bill, as amended, was passed by both houses of the Indian Parliament in May 2005 and became fully operational from 13 October 2005.

Key Features of the Portal

- A public information portal in which 23-24 types of information will be made available from 13 departments
- The portal has been developed by the information and technology department of the state government.
- It is inspired by the very spirit of **Section 4 (2) of Right to Information act 2015**, i.e. Proactive Disclosure of Information,"
- It has been launched under the Rajasthan Innovation Vision (RAJIV) campaign and Rajasthan Social Accountability Bill, 2019.
- The information will also be available on self-service 'E-Mitras' and CSC's in urban and rural areas.

Impacts

- ✓ As the State government has collaborated with the civil society groups to develop the portal, the very essence of democracy is reflected in the initiative. This kind of information can facilitate a progressive partnership between government and citizens for a cleaner society.
- ✓ It would inspire other States to follow the suit.
- ✓ The State government will set up information kiosks in village panchayats and self-service e-mitra centres in the towns. This would enable the people to access the information useful for them both in rural and urban areas.
- ✓ The portal would eventually turn out to be an effective medium for **"digital dialogue"** with the people as well as a strong instrument for ensuring transparency in governance.
- ✓ It also provides details about pollution and environment clearances to keep a vigil on environmental concerns.

PEPPER IT WITH

Right to information act, Bharatnet, Common service centres, CIC

Key challenges

- There are huge challenges with regard to maintenance issues and ensuring that there is no let-up in the availability of information.
- There is a huge digital divide in our nation which presents an obstacle in the success of any scheme which includes electronic service delivery.
- There is a lack of awareness among the people about the availability of such facility at the common service centres.
- Lack of internet penetration and frequent disruptions in the network connectivity pose a challenge in the service delivery.
- Electricity cuts are frequent in the rural areas which makes seamless delivery of service difficult.

Way Forward

- Digital divide is indeed a serious problem in India. To bridge this, care should be taken to ensure that access points are open and free.
- Proper dissemination of information through schools, community centres, mandis, gram sabhas, etc should be done to make people aware of this facility available to them.
- Solar panels should be installed at the kiosks and common service centres so the delivery of the service is not hampered due to electricity cut.
- Internet connectivity can be boost by using national optical fibre network i.e Bharatnet.

National Recruitment Agency

News Excerpt

Recently the Finance Ministry has approved a proposal to set up a new National Recruitment Agency (NRA) to streamline recruitment of Group-B (non-gazetted), Group-C (non-technical) and clerical posts in the government along with various other equivalent recruitment in public sector banks.

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Pre-Connect

- Under the existing system, different arms of the government such as the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and the Railway Board among others conduct different exams to fill in the vacancies.
- According to an estimate, more than 2.5 crore candidates sit for these prelims, most of them conducted by SSC, the cycle of recruitment takes up to 18-20 months.
- Multiplicity in application forms and requirement of huge resources prevents these agencies from focusing on improving the recruitment process further.

Key Highlights

- The NRA would conduct a one-stop Common Eligibility Test (CET) exam for all the non-gazetted Group B and Group C posts, which currently have close to 1.5 lakh vacancies, as per government estimates.
- The proposed agency, however, will not be in charge of recruitment of Probationary Officers (PO) in banks
- The new system will ensure that the recruitment time is compressed to three months.
- **The score secured in the exam will be valid for three years** and the candidate will have the option to improve the score anytime.
- A common criterion would be set for the posts, the recruiting agencies will then be able to decide separate cut-offs for separate posts and recruit people accordingly.
- The NRA will subsequently forward the list of qualifying candidates to the respective recruiting agencies to conduct the mains examinations.
- The SSC and IBPS will not be disbanded for now and will conduct the mains examinations as usual.

Analytica

- ✓ The single exam would reduce the overlap in applications received by the government.
- ✓ The move would also save applicants the trouble of taking several exams.
- ✓ Recruitment process on subordinate-rank posts in the government would be streamlined through this move.
- ✓ It would reduce the burden over SSC and IBPS to free up the resources to be dedicated for faster completion of later stages of the exam.
- ✓ It would reduce the resource stress which is dedicated to conducting multiple exams.

Staff Selection Committee

The Staff Selection Commission is an attached office of the Department of Personnel and Training and comprises of Chairman, two Members and a Secretary-cum-Controller of Examinations who are appointed on such terms and conditions as may be prescribed by the Central Government from time to time

The Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS)

It is an autonomous body registered under societies registration act 1860 and also as a public trust under Bombay Public trust act 1950. It conducts various exams for selection of banking personnel for various client organisations.

Challenges

- Huge Infrastructure is required to conduct these exams on such a large scale.
- Human resource training is required to conduct exams.
- There are no clear guidelines over setting up of the agency.
- It may render the existing agencies redundant.

PEPPER IT WITH

National testing agency, University Grants Commission (UGC), UPSC, State PSC

Way Forward

There must be clearly spelt out guidelines for setting up of the agency. Sufficient human resource training along with adequate infrastructure with proper funding guidelines should be provided. Also, reforms in existing agencies are required with clear distinction between the roles and responsibilities of existing and the new agency.

Association of World Election Bodies

News Excerpt

Recently the Chief Election Commissioner of India (ECI) assumed Chairmanship of Association of World Election Bodies (AWEB) for the term 2019-21 taking over the Chair from Romania at the 4th General Assembly of Association of World Election Bodies held at Bengaluru.

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Pre-Connect

- The Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) is the largest association of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) worldwide.
- It was established in 2013 in Song-do, South Korea and its permanent secretariat is located at Seoul.
- A-WEB's vision is to foster efficiency and effectiveness in conducting free, fair, transparent and participative elections worldwide. It was founded with the shared vision among its members of achieving sustainable democracy around the world.
- Its activities are guided by its mission to identify latest trends, challenges and developments in democratic electoral management and electoral processes and to facilitate appropriate exchange of experience and expertise among members with the objective of strengthening electoral democracy worldwide.

Analytica

- A-WEB aims at strengthening the processes of election management in member countries and it has become the largest global organisation of Election Management bodies providing momentum to the spread of electoral democracy.
- Election Commission of India has been very closely associated with the process of formation of A-WEB since 2011-12. ECI has been its Executive Board Member since AWEB's inception in for two consecutive terms (2013-15 and 2015-17).
- Convening the General Assembly as the new Chairman of AWEB would exhibit India as a responsible democracy which would galvanize its soft power and would place India at a better position on the international forum.
- Such an interaction can help sharing of best practices across the world.
- It would provide an impetus to the Electoral reforms in our country as being the chairman of A-WEB, It is our moral responsibility to fabricate a credible electoral process and develop a coherent democracy.

Highlights of the Meeting

- ❖ An AWEB Centre of Training, Research and Documentation to be set up at the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management, New Delhi.
- ❖ ECI launched its quarterly magazine-**'VOICE International'** which shares best practices from more than 25 Countries.
- ❖ The International Conference on "Initiatives and Challenges of Social Media and Information Technology in Elections" was also held on the concluding day.

Conclusion

- ✓ **Codifying the Common values:** There are a few common values that every democracy has;

these common values can be codified to bring out the best from all across the world.

- ✓ **Target setting:** A strategy paper can be prepared setting targets for years to come to reform the electoral procedures in the member countries and well as strengthening their democratic processes.
- ✓ **Nudging non democracies to adopt democratic practices:** The non-democracies should be nudged to adopt democratic practices by divulging in front of them the merits of democracy.
- ✓ **Interface among citizens:** The member countries should indulge their citizens in discourses to share ideas with each other.

PEPPER IT WITH

Election commission of India, Types of Elections, Association of Asian Election Authorities (AAEA)

Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR)

News Excerpt

Union Minister for Communications, Electronics & Information Technology recently launched a web portal for reporting of stolen mobile phones. The new portal will also help one in tracing back the lost phones. **The pilot project has been launched in Maharashtra in collaboration with BSNL.**

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Pre-Connect

- India has over 120 crore wireless subscribers with the telecom sector dominated by major players like Reliance Jio, Vodafone Idea, Bharti Airtel and BSNL.
- **IMEI is the 15-digit unique number** that identifies mobile devices. Both single and double SIM mobile phones are programmed with either one or two IMEI numbers.
- The present system includes registering a police complaint for the lost/theft of the mobile or other device having an IMEI number.
- The IMEI number is tracked to locate the lost or stolen devices, its location depends on the device being switched on again and reused in order to locate it making the process complicated and tedious.
- Miscreants reprogram the IMEI number and clone it, causing multiple handsets with same IMEI number. There are many cases of duplicated IMEI handsets in the network making the process of tracking difficult.

Key Highlights

- The CEIR will have access to GSMA's global IMEI database, allowing it to identify counterfeit IMEI devices from the global body's huge database.
- The Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) connects to the database of IMEIs of all the mobile operators
- The CEIR will act as a central system for all telcos to share blacklisted mobile devices.
- A formal complaint can be made to the Department of Telecommunication after filing a FIR.

Analytica

- ✓ The CEIR database will contain the information of all the devices that are registered with mobile operators. It will categorise and record the IMEI status accordingly to differentiate between genuine and cloned device.
- ✓ This would make way for international cooperation in matters of mobile theft.
- ✓ The blacklisted phones will not work in another network even if the SIM card in the handset is changed. This would effectively make the phone redundant and curtail the use of counterfeit mobile devices.
- ✓ It will help in solving the cases of theft by locating the device quickly.
- ✓ It will create a supportive ecosystem to fight emerging threats of cybercrimes and other organised crimes like terrorism, Trafficking etc.

PEPPER IT WITH

GSMA, Type Allocation Code, 3GPP, Indian Mobile Congress, Cellular Operator Association of India

Conclusion

According to various statistics India have over 800 million mobile phone users in 2019. It becomes imperative for the government to take proactive steps to tackle the changing nature of crimes and for faster resolutions of the complaints by the citizens. It will act as a deterrence for increasing criminal instances.

Debate Over National Language

News Excerpt

Recently there was a debate of making Hindi, the national language; this has triggered the debate of one nation one language which is construed as threat to the linguistic diversity.

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- **Article 343 of the Constitution** prescribes Hindi written in Devanagari script as the official language of the government along with English.
- **The Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights of the Constituent Assembly** recommended that "Hindustani, written either in Devanagari or the Persian script at the option of the citizen, shall, as the national language, be the first official language of the Union.
- The **Munshi-Ayyangar formula** was incorporated in the Constitution under Part XVII, Chapter I. It provided for Hindi in Devanagari Script as the Official Language of the Union (central government). However, the use of English for the first 15 years was allowed (with an option of a further extension) for a smooth transition.
- There was a demand from different regions, mainly South India, for reorganization of States on linguistic basis. Consequently, commissions were set up to study the feasibility of organizing states on Linguistic basis.
- **Dhar Commission** rejected the linguistic basis of reorganization of States and recommended the following criterias:
 1. Geographical contiguity
 2. Financial self-reliance
 3. Administrative viability
 4. Potential for development
- In the Jaipur session of 1948, Congress appointed a three-member committee (JVP Committee: Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya) to consider the recommendations of Dhar Commission. This committee also rejected the linguistic factor of reorganization of the states and recommended the reorganization of States on the basis of security, unity and economic prosperity of the nation.

Analytica

What is the Importance of a Language?

- Language is not simply a tool for communication but is a central and defining feature of identity as all human thoughts are conceptualized through a language and all human values are pronounced and perceived through it.
- It follows that since language is a significant factor in building one's identity, it must be preserved.
- It is the most important tool of participation in the polity of the state and not being able to speak in the dominant language (or languages) of a state can have a serious impact on an individual's employment, educational and recreational opportunities.

Can India have One language as a "National Language"?

- A National Language in India is quite not possible as the data from 2011 census points out that there are more than 1300 mother tongues in the country. Further, the whole idea of "One Nation One Language" is originated and developed in Europe which runs contrary to the idea on which India is founded which is "Unity in Diversity". Hence the idea of One Language as national language is not complementary with multilingual Indian society.
- Though the idea given behind making one language as national language is administrative and economic efficiency for India it could prove to be disastrous as in India on an average 30-40% population migrates for daily work. This makes Indian major towns as multilingual spaces and making them monolingual habitat is not a pragmatic approach. It will slow down migration and reduce the ease of capital flow.
- A progressive nation not only learns from its past but also from the others, India must learn from the experience of Pakistan, the language movement against the **imposition of Urdu on Bengali** speakers was a key driver of Pakistan **splitting into two nations**.

Fallouts of making One Nation-One Language

- Various policies on language have been framed both by the central and state governments that have been termed as forms of linguistic chauvinism. These include making Bengali compulsory in school of West Bengal and a pitch of making Marathi compulsory in all schools in Maharashtra. Another controversial policy was the three-language formula in the South.
- The dangers of imposing a language are manifold. It can affect the learning ability of non-native speakers thereby affecting their self-confidence. It can also endanger other languages and dialects and reduce diversity. National integration cannot come at the cost of people's linguistic identities. Language is integral to culture and therefore privileging Hindi over all other languages spoken in India takes away from its diversity.
- Such policies threaten the diversity and federalism of India. The states' fear of the central government's ideology of monopolizing faith, education, and language will adversely affect the Indian political system, which is based on pluralism and accommodation. The policies of the center as well as states should be viewed with precaution as they further advance the politics of majoritarianism.

PEPPER IT WITH

Official languages of India, Eighth schedule, the Official Languages Act, 1963

What are the alternatives to achieve National Unity?

There several other ways of achieving National unity such as:

- * Common Market which has single simplified tax structure- this India has achieved through implementation of GST. The need to hour is to simplify and make GST more progressive.
- * Effort must be made towards creation of Single Labor Market.

Conclusion

National integration in a multilingual country does not require the imposition of one official language on the country, especially when the language selected for the purpose is one of its many regional languages even if it happens to be that of the largest linguistic group in the country.

At the same time, the convenience, in fact the necessity, of having one or more languages as the official (not national, as all languages spoken in a country can claim to be national) language or languages for center-state and inter-state communication for political, economic, legal and even social reasons cannot be disputed.

Appointment and Transfer of Judges

News Excerpt

The unusual transfer of the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court to Meghalaya High Court has caused understandable disquiet among lawyers.

Pre-Connect

- **Article 217** gives the procedure for Appointment and conditions of the office of a Judge of a High Court
- Transfer of a judge from one High Court to another is governed by **Article 222**.
- Articles 233-237 deal with the subordinate courts.
- Proposal for the appointment of CJ would be initiated by the Chief Justice of India.
- High court has complete authority and control over Subordinate court.

Thematic-Connect

The judiciary has check over executive and legislature but is independent of any check to a large degree on itself. The importance of transparency in Judicial affairs stems from the fact that judiciary is the guardian of the constitution and protector of the fundamental rights of the citizens.

Currently the Collegium system is used for appointments and transfers of judges. Chief Justice of India and a forum of four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court recommend appointments and transfers of judges to SC. While the transfer and appointments to the high courts are recommended by a collegium consisting of CJI and 2 senior most judges of the SC.

The system was evolved through Supreme Court judgments in the Three Judges Cases:

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- **S.P. Gupta case (December 30, 1981) or the First Judges Case:** “primacy” of the CJI’s recommendation on judicial appointments and transfers can be refused for “cogent reasons.” The ruling gave the Executive primacy over the Judiciary for 12 years.
- **Supreme Court Advocates-on Record Association vs Union of India – 1993 or the Second Judges Case (October 6, 1993):** The verdict gave back CJI’s power over judicial appointments and transfers but the CJI need to consult two senior-most judges.
- **In Special Reference 1 of 1998 or the Third Judges Case (October 28, 1998):** CJI should consult with a plurality of four senior-most Supreme Court judges to form his opinion on judicial appointments and transfers.

Ways to Enhance Accountability

- ❖ Courts should be brought under the ambit of RTI
- ❖ Contempt of court should not be used as a shield from criticism.
- ❖ Impeachment is the only mechanism for removal and is very cumbersome and lengthy. Rather the degree of punishment should vary according to the degree of offence by the judges.
- ❖ Media should aid in investigation procedures of judicial cases.
- ❖ Remuneration of Judges should be hiked to check bribery and other corrupt practices.
- ❖ Private arbitration by a qualified arbitrator should be allowed if the parties agree to no further appeal after resolution, etc.

Analytica

- The present system of collegium is non transparent, and there is no defined criteria for the appointment and transfer of judges. Nor is any information regarding discussions of the collegium is put in public domain.
- This can lead to arbitrary decisions and unavailability of any forum to redress the grievances of the judges. Also, it may lead hampering the delivery of justice as due to absence of a defined merit-based criteria appointment of less competent judges can be made to important positions.
- There is a need for greater transparency and a defined criterion to maintain the trust in judicial appointment. However, **the transparency should not hamper the independence of the judiciary.**
- Judicial independence is the part of basic structure of the constitution and it is important to maintain the separation of power. Also, transparency in judiciary is necessary to carry out its moral obligation to the society.
- Earlier, there was an attempt to modify the appointment process through NJAC (National judicial appointment council) – 99th CAA, 2014. However, it was struck down by judiciary **in Supreme Court Advocates-on Record Association vs Union of India 2015** to maintain the judicial independence in appointments.

Way Forward

Maintaining judicial independence and transparency requires a fine balance between the both. The collegium system with certain modifications like defining an objective merit based criteria and involvement of executive like law minister while maintaining the supremacy of judicial members would be a way to improve its functioning.

The Idea of Regional Supreme Court Benches

News Excerpt

Recently, the Vice President of India suggested setting up of four regional benches of the Supreme Court of India due to the concern over inordinate delay in justice delivery.

Background

Constitutional provisions: As per the article 130 of Indian Constitution, the seat of Supreme Court is in Delhi; however the Chief justice of India has the power to either shift the seat to other place or to make seats of Supreme Court at different places with the prior approval of President.

- India has only 19 judges per 10 lakh people on an average, according to a Law Ministry data whereas there is an average of 50 judges per one million population in developed

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countries and 35-40 in some other developing countries.

- Financial experts have said that delay in justice delivery wastes around 2% of the GDP as it creates hostile environment for investment and enhances corruption.

Argument for Multiple Benches

- Under DPSP, article 39A, the state has to promote equality of justice to all its citizens. Travelling to New Delhi is not feasible for many people from the remote corners.
- In the early decades of Independence, the Supreme Court used to deliver 70-80 judgments every year. However, the number has come down to 10-12 in recent times.

Arguments Against

"The apex court has already rejected proposals for Regional benches four times -in 2001, 2004, 2006 and 2010. "A full court (a meeting of all judges) of the Supreme Court had rejected the demand saying it would affect the country's unitary character

Analysis

Along with the demand of regional benches of Supreme Court, there has also been demand of setting up National Court of Appeals to diverge the appeals coming from High Court orders. It has been argued that Supreme Court's work should be confined to matters of constitutional matters while the National Court of Appeal should look on general matters. It would help to expedite justice. However, many legal experts and Former Supreme Court judges has expressed concern that it may dilute the position of Supreme Court as well as threat to integrated judicial system.

Recommendations

- ✓ The Law Commission in its 125th and 229th report has recommended that "a Constitution Bench be set up at Delhi to deal with constitutional and other allied issues", and "four Cassation Benches be set up in the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western region to deal with all appellate work arising out of the orders/judgments of the High Courts of the particular region"
- ✓ The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice, has every now and then recommended in its respective reports, that for wide access to justice and for diminishing the build-up, keeping in mind the end goal to advance rapid justice, seats of the Supreme Court must be set up in the North-Eastern, Western and Southern parts of the nation.

Way Forward

- As much as there is a need of setting up of regional supreme benches, there is a need to strengthen the justice delivery system.
- The idea of National Court of Appeal should also be pondered upon along with regional benches of Supreme court
- Through Special Leave Petitions and PILs the number of cases in Supreme Court has increased exorbitantly. There is a need of rationalizing the admittance of such cases at the apex level.
- At multiple times the different benches of SC has given contradictory views. There is a need to bring coherence in Supreme Court Judgements.

Conclusion

The idea of regional benches of Supreme Court is aimed at delivering the equality of Justice to all, bringing efficiency in justice delivery system to attain the larger goal of socio-economic development. At the same time it should maintain the position of apex court and uphold its independence.

WHAT IS NCA?

National Court of Appeal (NCA) calls for regional benches of the SC, in major cities, to decide appeals against HC orders. It was first suggested by the SC in 1986 & later recommended by the law commission in 1998 & 2009. NCA can unburden the apex court which is bogged down by 70,000 cases.

PEPPER IT WITH

Articles, SC Decision, Important Judgement, NJAC

Right to Internet is a Basic Right

News Excerpt

Recently, in **Faheema Shirin v. State of Kerala**, the Kerala High Court declared the right to Internet access as a fundamental right forming a part of the right to privacy and the right to education under Article 21 of the Constitution.

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Pre-Connect

The recent verdict came on a petition filed by a Kozhikode college student challenging her expulsion for not adhering to restrictions on the use of mobile phone. As per the rules of the girls' hostel, inmates were restrained from using mobile phones from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. every day. She, along with a few other inmates, had protested against the restriction, as it was hampering their learning process.

Earlier in April 2017, the Supreme Court of India had observed that Citizens have the right to access the Internet to gain information, wisdom and knowledge and their right cannot be curtailed unless it encroaches into the boundary of illegality. Regarding banning of online information about pre-natal sex determination, it had ruled that a general prohibition on all online content will curtail the fundamental right to know of a genuine information-seeker.

Analytica

- The fundamental right of expression includes the right to be informed and the right to know and the feeling of protection of expansive connectivity that the Internet offers on the click of a button. The internet accessible through mobile phones or laptops, provide an avenue for the students to gather knowledge.
- As per the SC, the restriction on the use of mobile phones amount to the violation of fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution and the action of the college authorities infringed the fundamental freedom as well as privacy and would adversely affect the future and career of students who want to acquire knowledge and compete with their peers.
- The court while citing the observations of the Supreme Court in the S.Rengarajan and others v. P. Jagjivan Ram (1989) case said that the fundamental freedom under Article 19(1)(a) can be reasonably restricted only for the purposes mentioned in Article 19(2) of the constitution and the restriction must be justified on the anvil of necessity and not the quiksand of convenience or expediency.
- The Human Rights Council of the United Nations has found that the right of access to Internet is a fundamental freedom and a tool to ensure right to education. Thus, any rule or instruction which impairs the said right cannot be permitted to stand in the eye of law.
- While this is a welcome move, it is important to recognise the right to Internet access as an independent right.

PEPPER IT WITH

Right to Privacy, Aadhaar, Net neutrality, Digital Inequality, BharatNet

The Importance of Digital Literacy

Internet access and digital literacy have implications beyond access to government services. Digital literacy allows people to access information and services, collaborate, and navigate socio-cultural networks. In fact, the definition of literacy today must include the ability to access and act upon resources and information found online. While the Kerala High Court judgment acknowledges the role of the right to access Internet in accessing other fundamental rights, it is imperative that the right to Internet access and digital literacy be recognised as a right in itself.

The benefits that would accrue from such recognition-

- Create a positive obligation for the state to create infrastructure for a minimum standard and quality of Internet access as well as capacity-building measures which would allow all citizens to be digitally literate
- Creation of a negative obligation prohibiting the state from engaging in conduct that impedes, obstructs or violates such a right.
- Recognising the right to internet access and digital literacy will also make it easier to demand accountability from the state, as well as encourage the legislature and the executive to take a more proactive role in furthering this right.
- Wider interpretation of Article 21: The courts have always interpreted Article 21 as a

broad spectrum of rights considered incidental and/or integral to the right to life.

- (v) A right to Internet access would also further provisions given under Articles 38(2) and 39 of the Constitution. It has now become settled judicial practice to read fundamental rights along with directive principles with a view to defining the scope and ambit of the former.

We are living in an 'information society'. Unequal access to the Internet creates and reproduces socio-economic exclusions. It is important to recognise the right to Internet access and digital literacy to alleviate this situation, and allow citizens increased access to information, services, and the creation of better livelihood opportunities.

Worker Safety Laws in India: Need for Reforms

News Excerpt

A tragedy occurred at a firecracker factory in Batala, Punjab that killed nearly two dozen people. Recently, a fire at the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation gas facility in Navi Mumbai had also caused deaths of four people, including a senior officer.

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Pre-Connect

The compression of 44 labour laws into four 'codes' or broad categories — wages, social security, industrial relations and occupational health and safety — forms a central aspect of the Centre's labour reforms push since 2015.

Analytica

- The proposed legislations have faced protests from the opposition parties that the move was being made at the behest of employers and not trade unions.
- Organised unions have vociferously opposed changes proposed in the Industrial Relations code, especially the proviso to increase the limit for prior government permission for lay-off, retrenchment and closure from 100 workers as it is currently, to 300. The right to form unions and accord them powers of representation have been severely curtailed. This can be both anti-democratic and economically counterproductive. An approach that regards workers as partners in production is likely to promote industrial harmony. Shutting out legitimate avenues of expression can lead to violent outbursts.
- The Code on Wages has some positive proposals, such as extending the minimum wage law to all activities, not just the 45 'scheduled' ones. A benchmark national minimum wage will set a floor. However, the definition of worker is not clear. The calculation of the level of minimum wage by an expert committee is at variance with ILO parameters. A lean inspector regime is all very well, but it must monitor workplace safety.
- On revision of minimum wages, the Code stipulates that it must be done every five years, while the Standing Committee suggested that this should be replaced by a provision that allows for a revision at an interval not exceeding five years, meaning that it could be done earlier too.
- On the fixing of a national wage by the Centre for the States, the Committee had serious reservations. It recommended that State governments ought to be consulted before the fixing of a national wage by the government and that the Central government should obtain the advice of the Central Advisory Board as well as State Advisory Boards.
- The composition of the Central Advisory Board itself was bereft of any State government representatives and the Standing Committee recommended that at least five representatives of State governments be nominated to the Central Board by the Central government.
- Ease of doing business is one of the primary motives behind the introduction of the Codes, and that is reflected in the features in the Codes introduced in Parliament. The Code on Wages allows for various deductions by an employer from employees' wages without any corresponding obligation to deposit, or penalty for failure to deposit in the appropriate fund.
- In keeping with the spirit of "ease of doing business", the Codes underplay the role of labour inspectors. The inspectors would be called facilitators and as per the Code on Wages, they would carry out inspections and provide information to employers and employees for better compliance. The Standing Committee rejected outright the use of the term "facilitator" and said it should be replaced by "inspector". However, the term has not been dropped in either of the two Codes introduced in Parliament.

- The Code on Wages Bill has been formulated without looking at the history of wage fixation or Supreme Court judgments. Interestingly, all these issues were reiterated in the 44th, 45th and 46th ILCs, the last one inaugurated by the Prime Minister himself in 2015. No ILC has been held since then.
- The Code has exempted start-up establishments from such inspections. Instead, as per the Code, a panel of empanelled experts appointed by the Central government would conduct third-party audit and certification of such establishments. The panel would submit reports to employers and the Inspector-cum-Facilitator for compliance. This is again in keeping with the spirit of “ease of compliance and ease of doing business”, with little or no benefit to the worker.
- The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code bill, 2019 makes a provision that the employer will provide free of cost annual health checks-up for employees. It also makes it mandatory to issue appointment letter to every employee and framing of rules on women working in night shifts. While the Code is about occupational safety, health and working conditions, the provision of welfare facilities such as canteens, creches, first aid, welfare officer is not guaranteed and would be provided as far as “practically feasible”.



Reality check

The merger of more than 40 labour laws into four codes is an essential move, but it lacks in terms of scope.

Pros

- ▶ It merges 13 laws into one cohesive code
- ▶ Industries say it will curb inspector raj and improve productivity
- ▶ Talks about curbing unregulated growth of manpower suppliers, firms



Cons

- ▶ Does not cover the unorganized sector workers
- ▶ IT sector employees are outside its ambit
- ▶ Apprentices and administrative staff in firms were not considered as employees



41%

of India workers feel they are not **paid well**

48%

workers feel their **job is vulnerable**



31% of workers are working in **unhealthy conditions**



Approximately **48,000** people die due to **accidents** at workplaces



28.25%

male workers work more than **48 hours a week**

13.32%

female workers work more than **48 hours a week**

Source: ILO, British Council of Safety, labour bureau

Way Forward

Simplification and consolidation of labour laws apart, the government must focus on the key issue of job creation. The Periodic Labour Force Survey that was finally made public in late May 2019 clearly pointed to the dire situation in job creation in recent years. While the proportion of workers in regular employment has increased, unemployment has reached a 45-year high. The worker participation rate has also declined between surveys held in 2011-12 and 2017-18.

In such a situation, the government should be better off building a broader consensus on any major rule changes to existing worker rights rather than rushing through them for the sake of simplification. The consolidated code bills should be thoroughly discussed in Parliament and also with labour unions before being enacted. Union avoidance and busting and failures of such stipulation cause extreme concern for decent work. A safe work environment is a basic right and it should be recognized by all players.

PEPPER IT WITH

ILO, Labour Law Amendment Bill

Public Safety Act

News Excerpt

Former Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah was detained under the **State's Public Safety Act** on September 16, for 12 days. This was hours before the Supreme Court was due to hear Rajya Sabha Member Vaiko's habeus corpus petition, seeking the J&K government to produce him in court and release him from detention.

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Highlights:

What it is?

Introduced in 1978, this act was brought in to prevent timber smuggling, and keep the smugglers in prison. This is a **preventive detention law** that allows the State government to detain a person (above the age of 18 as amended in 2011) up to two years without a trial. It is similar to the **National Security Act**, but this was enacted two years before the NSA came into being.

The Effect:

Within **four weeks of passing** the detention order, the government has to refer the case to an Advisory Board. This Advisory Board will have to give its recommendations within eight weeks of the order. If the Board thinks that there is cause for preventive detention, the government can hold the **person up to two years**.

How it is different from Normal Detention?

When a person is arrested under the PSA, they **do not have the rights** to legal representation and challenging the arrest before the Advisory Board unless sufficient grounds can be established that the detention is illegal. According to **Section 13(2)**, the detaining authority **need not even inform** the detained individual as to the reason for the action, if it decides that it goes against public interest.

Analytica

Such acts are more potent to be misused rather than just be genuinely used.

Political Adventurism: Repeatedly employed against political opponents by consecutive governments until 1990.

Vague words like: “in the case of persons acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the State”, provides more unrestricted power in the hands of authorities.

Protection against action: Section 22 of the Act provides protection for any action taken “in good faith” under the Act.

Opacity: Global human rights organisations such as Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) and Amnesty International have noted in their reports that responses by various government authorities to applications filed under the **Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005** suggest that no Rules have so far been framed to lay down procedures for the implementation of the provisions of the PSA.

Extension: After the 2018 amendment Individuals could be detained under the PSA even outside the state.

Usefulness: After the emergence of militancy, the J&K government frequently invoked the PSA to crack down on separatists.

Way Forward

In a vibrant democracy like India, such acts could curb the right to dissent. These acts have a chilling effect on Right to Speech. But, in order to ensure national security and integrity such acts sometimes become a necessity. The need of the hour is to apply this act only to fulfill the broader purposes and not mere local and political aspirations. Article 22(1) of the Constitution says an arrested person cannot be denied the right to consult, and to be defended by, a legal practitioner of his choice.

History of Such Laws

- ❖ Bengal Regulation III of 1818 was enacted to empower the government to arrest anyone for defence or maintenance of public order
- ❖ The Rowlatt Acts of 1919 that allowed confinement of a suspect without trial
- ❖ Post-independence India got its first preventive detention rule when the government of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru enacted the Preventive Detention Act of 1950. The NSA is a close iteration of the 1950 Act.

National Population Register (NPR)

News Excerpt

The government has decided to prepare a National Population Register (NPR) to lay the foundation for rolling out a usual citizens' register across the country.

Completion of NPR may form the basis for preparing the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC), a pan-India version of Assam's National Register of Citizens (NRC) and will give the way to “one nation, one card”. It has come in the backdrop of the NRC excluding

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19 lakh people in Assam.

Pre-Connect

- The data for National Population Register was firstly collected in 2010 along with the house- listing phase of Census of India 2011.
- The updation of this data was done in 2015. The digitization of the updated information has been completed.
- Now the government plans to update the National Population Register along with the House listing phase of Census 2021 during April to September 2020 in all the States/UTs except Assam.

The National Population Register (NPR)

- It is a Register of usual residents of the country.
- It is being prepared under the provisions of the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003
- The database would contain demographic as well as biometric particulars.
- It is mandatory for every usual resident of India to register in the NPR. A usual resident is a person who has resided in a local area for the past 6 months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next 6 months or more.
- This decennial Census is conducted by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India under Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

National Register of Citizens (NRC)

- ❖ The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is a register containing names of all genuine Indian citizens. At present, only Assam has such a register.
- ❖ The citizens' register sets out to identify foreign nationals in the state that borders Bangladesh.
- ❖ The basic criterion was that the names of applicant's family members should either be in the first NRC prepared in 1951 or in the electoral rolls up to March 24, 1971.

Analytica

- ✓ It will create a comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country.
- ✓ It will help the government formulate its policies better and would also aid national security.
- ✓ It intends to collect a much larger amount of personal data on residents of India which includes the Aadhaar, PAN card, Driving Licence, Voter ID card and passport which will create a comprehensive database
- ✓ It will help in identifying illegal immigrants giving a clear picture of our demographic composition.
- ✓ The resources of the government would be streamlined for the actual beneficiaries.

Way Forward

- The maintenance of NPR should be in a manner that there is no data deficit in future.
- Plans should be carried out in such a way that no genuine citizen is left out of the register.
- There should be an effective grievance redressal mechanism to redress the grievances of the people
- Accuracy of the data should be focused upon so that the data proves to be useful.

Delhi Land Pooling Policy

News Excerpt

The Land Pooling Policy Portal was launched by the Housing Ministry in February this year for inviting Expression of Willingness for participation in the land pooling policy. The portal was scheduled to be open for six months, but due to a weak response, it had extended the date to September 6. More than 6000 hectares registered under the portal by September 6.

Land pooling policy

- Under this scheme, multiple owners pool their land, as per the prescribed norms and

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guidelines and hand it over to government authority to develop civic infrastructure.

- The original land owners also have the stake in this development and will get more than half of their land back in different locations i.e. 60% of pooled land in different location.
- Parts of this land parcel will be sold by the government to recover the cost of developing infrastructure and public spaces.
- Minimum 70% of contiguous land of the developable area within the sector, free of hindrances, is required to be pooled to make the sector eligible for development.
- Special Provision for EWS Housing.
- External Development Charges (EDC) shall be applicable on the entire area of pooled land to cover the actual cost of providing city-level infrastructure.
- Landowners/ group of landowners with minimum 2 hectares of pooled land can choose to work as separate Developer Entities. Developer Entity can be individual, group of individuals and developers.
- It is based on public private partnership.

Analytica

- It is an important matter for the society as a whole as it is providing 2 -2.5 million housing opportunities for over 8 million people. Land Pooling Policy covers the greenfield areas in five zones coming under the Master Plan of Delhi-2021.
- Online Single Window System would ensure timely and transparent implementation of the scheme.
- The system will replace the process of land acquisition, wherein the government acquired land by giving a fixed compensation and the ownership changed hands. With complaints of low compensation and forceful acquisition, the system became unpopular in the last few years.
- Landowners with any size of land may come for pooling making the scheme feasible on the ground level.
- Special Provision for EWS Housing would be a positive step in the social welfare of the downtrodden by providing them with shelter.
- Planned investment will increase the value of land along with proper utilization of resources
- The floor area ratio (FAR) has been reduced from 400 to 200, it may defeat the whole purpose of providing housing to all in Delhi which is already expensive and is in short supply. Reduction in supply will make properties more expensive.
- Public private partnership would corroborate both the spirit of welfare and at the same time efficiency and time bound delivery.

PEPPER IT WITH
EWS category, Smart City programme

Way forward

- ✓ Key issues pertaining to development of Delhi should be deliberated over to address them.
- ✓ The plan should cover all aspects to ensure integrated development of the area being developed.
- ✓ Experts should be consulted to ensure maximum utilization of resources and speedy progress
- ✓ The maintenance should also have civic participation to sensitize people to protect the newly built infrastructure and use it wisely.

Impeachment of the President in USA and India

News Excerpt

Recently, US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced that the House would launch an impeachment inquiry against President Donald Trump, over his alleged efforts to put pressure on Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden, Trump's potential rival in the 2020 elections.

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Analytica

Process of Impeachment of President in India

- The President can be removed from office by a process of impeachment for 'violation of the Constitution'. However, the Constitution does not define the meaning of the phrase

- violation of the Constitution’.
- The impeachment charges can be initiated by either House of Parliament. These charges should be signed by one-fourth members of the House (that framed the charges), and a 14 days’ notice should be given to the President. After the impeachment resolution is passed by a majority of two-thirds of the total membership of that House, it is sent to the other House, which should investigate the charges. The President has the right to appear and to be represented at such investigation. If the other House also sustains the charges and passes the impeachment resolution by a majority of two-thirds of the total membership, then the President stands removed from his office from the date on which the bill is so passed.
 - Thus, an impeachment is a quasi-judicial procedure in the Parliament. In this context, two things should be noted: (a) the nominated members of either House of Parliament can participate in the impeachment of the President though they do not participate in his election; (b) the elected members of the legislative assemblies of states and the Union Territories of Delhi and Puducherry do not participate in the impeachment of the President though they participate in his election. No President has so far been impeached.

Process of impeachment of President in USA

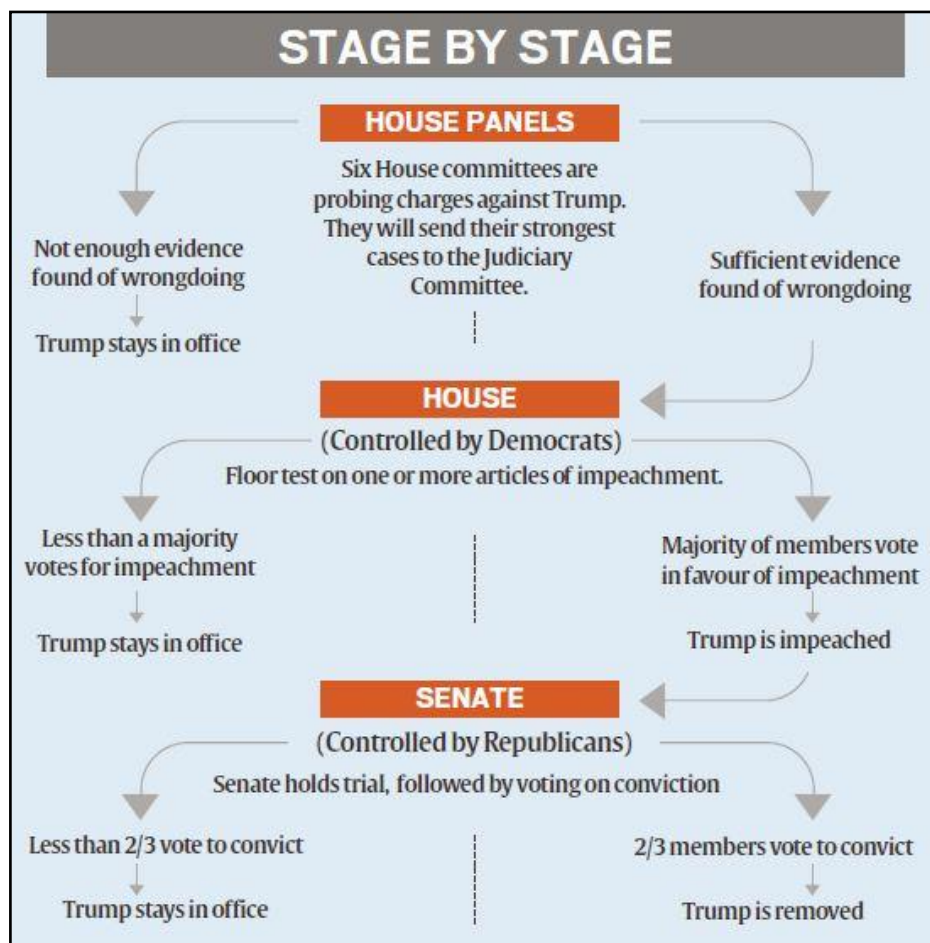
Issue

Recently, the talk of impeachment of US President Donald Trump is doing media rounds because of a whistle-blower complaint which highlighted a quid-pro-quo deal between US President and Ukrainian President Zelensky. This deal could result in foreign intervention in the upcoming US presidential election.

What is impeachment?

Impeachment is the process by which a standing US official is formally charged with “Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors”, according to **Article Two of the United States Constitution**.

How does impeachment work?



Eat Right Movement

News Excerpt

Recently POSHAN Maah 2019 was launched to affirm the government's commitment towards eradicating all forms of malnutrition. A year-long social and mass media campaign on the Eat Right India movement was also launched on 5 September 2019.

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Pre-Connect

- The country is in need of a movement on preventive health for all in the backdrop of the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension and heart diseases, widespread deficiencies of vitamins and minerals and rampant food-borne illnesses.
- India has been ranked at the 103rd position among 119 countries on the Global Hunger Index, says a report.
- According to the report, prepared by Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide, India is among the 45 countries that have "serious levels of hunger".
- There has been a shift in the cause of mortality from communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and cancer, not only in India, but also across the world.

PoshanMaah

- ❖ PoshanMaah or National Nutrition Month addresses the malnutrition challenges and sensitizes our countrymen regarding the importance of holistic nutrition.
- ❖ It is aimed at making people aware of the importance of nutrition & giving individual access to government services to support supplement nutrition for their children & pregnant women /lactating mothers.

Key Highlights

- FSSAI have put in place regulatory measures under three major pillars: Eat Safe, Eat Health and Eat Sustainably for the programme.
- FSSAI has prescribed a limit for Total Polar Compounds (TPC) at 25% in cooking oil to avoid the harmful effects of reused cooking oil.
- Government also launched the new Eat Right India logo that represents a healthy plate, an online Eat Right Quiz, the Eat Right Online Course for frontline health workers and the Eat Right India Store, featuring merchandise to nudge right eating habits
- The tagline of 'har ghar, poshantyohar' was given to refresh the focus on nutrition.

PEPPER IT WITH

Integrated Child Development Services Scheme, Mid-day meal Programs, Special Nutrition Programs, Wheat Based Nutrition Programs, Applied Nutrition Programs

Analytica

- ✓ The Eat Right India movement is a crucial preventive healthcare measure to trigger social and behavioural change through a judicious mix of regulatory measures, combined with soft interventions for ensuring awareness and capacity building of food businesses and citizens alike.
- ✓ This movement is aligned with the government's flagship public health programmes such as POSHAN Abhiyaan, AnemiaMukt Bharat, Ayushman Bharat Yojana and Swachh Bharat Mission making the efforts comprehensive.
- ✓ Eat Right India takes a holistic approach to food habits that promote health and sustainability.
- ✓ Like Green Good Deeds, the Eat Right India movement is also poised to become a global best practice with the support of national and international stakeholders.

Way Forward

- The message of 'Eat Right' should be promoted everywhere. Citizens should choose healthy food and the food industry should manufacture healthy food.
- Policy Strengthening **by adopting and adapting evidence-based success stories in regions that need more support**, Use financial levers for maximum impact, Restricting advertising and marketing of unhealthy and unsustainable foods targeted towards children, youth and other vulnerable groups

- Address logistic challenges by maintaining Convergence and coordination among the participant ministries, optimum utilisation of funds, planning better and maximal use of data being collected under national programs and schemes
- Improved monitoring and surveillance with the use of technology must be effectively implemented
- The silos of thinking and action should be harmonised to create platforms to work collaboratively on all forms of malnutrition

Project Bal Basera

News Excerpt

Bal Basera, a project for the welfare of Children of Construction Workers deployed at AIIMS Rishikesh was inaugurated where a creche or 'Bal Basera' was built with the support of CPWD.

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- There are such 8.5 million workers engaged in building and other construction activities in India.
- They constitute the most vulnerable segment amongst the unorganised workforce as there is neither a fixed working hour, nor any documentation (like an employee register, attendance, etc.) maintained by the employers due to the temporary nature of assignment.
- The risk to life and limb is manifold and they do not get any proper medical facility and any statutory grievance mechanism is also totally absent for them.
- Most of the construction workers are migrant labourers and landless labourers from U.P, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and other economically weaker regions of India.
- Most of the children of construction workers are deprived of nutrition and education and in most of the cases were forced to adopt the same job due to various financial constraints.

Constitutional Provisions Prohibiting and Regulating Employment of Children

- **Article 39.** The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing—
 - (e) that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength;
 - (f) that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.
- **Article 42.** The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.
- **Article 21 A:** Right to Education: The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6 to 14 years in such manner as the State, by law, may determine.
- **Article 24:** Prohibition of employment of children in factories, etc.: No child below the age fourteen years shall be employed in work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment.

Legislative Provisions Prohibiting and Regulating Employment of Children

- ✓ As per the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 "child" means a person who has not completed is 14th year of age.
- ✓ The Act prohibits employment of children in 13 occupations and 57 processes contained in Part A & B of the Schedule to the Act (Section 3).
- ✓ Under the Act, a Technical Advisory Committee is constituted to advice for inclusion of further occupations & processes in the Schedule.
- ✓ The Act regulates the condition of employment's in all occupations and processes not prohibited under the Act (Part III).
- ✓ Any person who employs any child in contravention of the provisions of section 3 of the Act is liable for punishment with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than three months but which may extend to one year or with fine which shall not be less than Rs 10,000 but which may extend to Rs 20,000 or both. ((Section 14).

Other Schemes and provisions for Labour welfare

- ✓ CPWD has also signed a MoU with CPWD Officers' Wives Association for organising health

camps and managing crèches at construction sites in a formal and organised manner on large scale and on pan India basis so that workers and their children could lead a healthy and productive life.

- ✓ The Ministry of Labor and Employment has formulated a **model welfare scheme for Building and Other Construction (BOC) workers** which, inter alia, envisages following maternity benefit, out of the BOCW welfare cess fund, for those BOC workers who are not covered under Ayushman Bharat.
 1. Paid maternity leave to registered construction workers ranging from 90 days to 26 weeks for up to two deliveries.
 2. Rs.6000/-per delivery for up to two deliveries to the wife of the registered construction workers, which will be in addition to any other benefit received from any Government Scheme in this regard.
- ✓ The **Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996** provides safety, health and welfare measures for the building and other construction workers. For the purposes of the above said Act, a cess is levied and collected at the rate of 1% of the cost of construction by the State Governments under the Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Cess Act, 1996.
- ✓ The Government of India initiated the "**Pre-Matric Scholarship to the Children of those engaged in 'Unclean' Occupations**", a centrally sponsored scheme dedicated to children of those who are engaged in occupations involving cleaning and prone to health hazards in 1977-78 under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Later, a series of changes were made to the scheme and was renamed as '**Pre-Matric Scholarships to the Children of those engaged in occupations involving Cleaning and Prone to Health Hazards**'.
- ✓ India has ratified six out of the eight core/fundamental International Labor Organisation (ILO) Conventions which are as follows.
 1. Forced Labor Convention (No. 29)
 2. Abolition of Forced Labor Convention (No.105)
 3. Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100)
 4. Discrimination (Employment Occupation) Convention (No.111)
 5. Freedom of Association and Protection of Right to Organised Convention (No.87) **Not Signed yet**
 6. Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No.98) **Not Signed yet**
 7. **Minimum Age Convention (No.138)**
 8. **Worst forms of Child Labor Convention (No.182)**

Report on Malnutrition (India state level disease burden initiative)

News Excerpt

Recently the first comprehensive estimates of disease burden due to child and maternal malnutrition and the trends of its indicators in every state of India from 1990 was published on September 18, 2019 in The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health by the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative.

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- The India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative was launched in October 2015. It is a collaboration between the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), and senior experts and stakeholders currently from about 100 institutions across India.
- India is facing a major malnutrition crisis as it holds almost a third of the world's burden for stunting, according to a global nutrition report. With 46.6 million children who are stunted, India tops the list of countries, the Global Nutrition Report 2018 said.

- India spends far less than necessary to address its high levels of malnutrition, according to a new World Bank report, Wasting Away: The Crisis of Malnutrition in India.
- Malnutrition rates remain alarming: stunting is declining too slowly while wasting still impacts the lives of far too many young children. Nearly half of all deaths in children under 5 are attributable to undernutrition; undernutrition puts children at greater risk of dying from common infections, increases the frequency and severity of such infections, and delays recovery as per UNICEF report.

Report Highlights

- The report states that the disability-adjusted life year (DALY) rate attributable to malnutrition in children varies 7-fold among the States and is highest in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Nagaland and Tripura.
- The report says the overall under-five death rate and the death rate due to malnutrition has decreased substantially from 1990 to 2017, but malnutrition is still the leading risk factor for death in children under five years, and is also the leading risk factor for disease burden for all ages considered together in most States.
- The malnutrition trends over about three decades reported in this paper utilised all available data sources from India, which enable more robust estimates than the estimates based on single sources that may have more biases.
- The study reports that malnutrition has reduced in India but continues to be the predominant risk factor for child deaths, underscoring its importance in addressing child mortality. "It reveals that while it is important to address the gaps in all malnutrition indicators, low birth weight needs particular policy attention in India as it is the biggest contributor to child death among all malnutrition indications and its rate of decline is among the lowest.
- The study findings have highlighted where efforts need to be intensified "for substantial improvements across the malnutrition indicators.

Way Forward

States will need to implement an integrated nutrition policy to effectively address the broader determinants of under-nutrition across the life cycle. Focus will be needed on major determinants like provision of clean drinking water, reducing rates of open defecation, improving women's educational status, and food and nutrition security for the most vulnerable families. The ASHA worker should get feedback on the children in her village and the anganwadi worker should get feedback on babies she has looked after. Clean drinking water, reduction of open defecation and promotion of proper sanitation, improvement in women's status, food security, and promotion of nutrition sensitive agriculture can help eradicate these predicaments.

National Pension Scheme for Traders and Self Employed Persons

News Excerpt

Recently the government has launched the National Pension Scheme for Shopkeeper's, Retail traders and Self Employed persons is a voluntary and contributory scheme, in which the government will also make a matching contribution.

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The other social welfare schemes like Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan Dhan Yojana are:

- The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) which came into effect from 15th August, 1995 aims at ensuring minimum national standard for social assistance in addition to the benefits that states are currently providing or might provide in future. NSAP at present comprises of Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS),

Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS), Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS), National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) and Annapurna.

- The Atal Pension Yojana (APY) was launched on 9th May 2015, to address the longevity risks among the workers in unorganized sector. The APY is focused on all citizens in the unorganized sector, who join the National Pension System (NPS) administered by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).
- With a view to augment the income of the Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs), “Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)” was launched. It aims to supplement the financial needs of the SMFs in procuring various inputs to ensure proper crop health and appropriate yields, commensurate with the anticipated farm income at the end of each crop cycle.

Highlights of the scheme

- It is a pension scheme for the traders (shopkeepers/retail traders and self-employed persons) with annual turnover not exceeding Rs 1.5 crores.
- The facility for enrolment under the scheme has been made available to the prospective beneficiaries through 3.50 lakh Common Service Centre (CSCs) across the country.
- People can also self-enrol by visiting the portal www.maandhan.in/vyapari.
- The beneficiary is required to have an Aadhaar card and a saving bank/ Jan-dhan Account passbook only.
- It is available to 18 to 40 years of age group only.
- The enrolment under the scheme is free of cost
- The enrolment is based upon self-certification.
- The provision is for minimum assured pension of Rs 3,000/- monthly on attaining the age of 60 years.
- The beneficiary should not be income taxpayer and also not a member of EPFO/ESIC/NPS (Govt.)/PM-SYM
- The Central Government shall give 50 % share of the monthly contribution and remaining 50% contribution shall be made by the beneficiary.
- Government will establish a pension fund to run the scheme. The Life Insurance Corporation of India has been chosen as pension fund manager

Analytica

- ✓ It is a significant step towards the fulfilment of the Directive Principles in Article 41 of the Constitution.
- ✓ An estimated 3 crores traders in the country are expected to be benefitted under the pension scheme.
- ✓ The burden of traders is shouldered by the Central government, as it is a contributory pension scheme on a 50:50 basis where a prescribed age-specific contribution shall be made by the beneficiary and a matching contribution by central government.
- ✓ To make it easier for the trading community, minimal documentation is required to avail the scheme. It would increase the accessibility of the scheme to more traders.
- ✓ It is a step forward to build the architecture for a robust social security system in our country.
- ✓ Monthly contribution of Rs 55 to Rs 200 makes it affordable for the small traders to ensure future security easily.

PEPPER IT WITH
Article 41, National pension scheme

Way Forward

Though the government is being lauded for the efforts for traders, the age bracket of 41 to 55 years should be brought under the ambit of the scheme to enlarge the coverage of beneficiaries under the gamut of social welfare, for the fulfilment of government's obligations under the DPSP's.

NIRVIK (Niryat Rin Vikas Yojna) scheme

News Excerpt

Recently Ministry of Commerce & Industry through Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) has introduced a new Export Credit Insurance Scheme (ECIS) called NIRVIK to enhance loan availability and ease the lending process for small, medium and large exporters.

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Key features of the NIRVIK scheme

- Growth of the trade sector** – The primary motive of the central government is to offer the much-needed boost to the export and business sectors. Estimates suggest with the implementation of this project, export credit will shoot up by 30%.
- Easy loan application** – Under this scheme, exporters will also get the opportunity to apply for loan from financial institutions. The scheme also ensures that the business credit application mode will be simplified. The banks will also be able to distribute the loans easily.
- Rate of interest on the loans** – If any small exporter applies for a business loan under this scheme, then he/she will be charged at 7.6% interest rate on a yearly basis.
- Coverage principal and interest amounts** – With the launch of this new central government scheme, small exporters will be entitled to receive a whopping 90% coverage, both on the principal and the interest sums from the central authority.
- Refunding bank losses** – An important statement sheds light on the fact that banks will no longer suffer due to non-payment of loans. It will be the responsibility of the ECGC to refund the banks in case an exporter fails to repay the credit amount.
- Reduction in insurance premium rates** – It is mandatory for small and big exporters to opt for insurance policies. As per the guidelines of the new scheme, the yearly insurance premium has been slashed from 0.72% to 0.60%. This facility will be given to a specific section of exporters only.
- Tenure of the scheme** – The respective minister has declared that once the scheme is officially launched, it will run for five successive years.
- Bank refund span** – Sometimes, the small exporters face financial losses, and fail to repay the bank loan. The scheme ensure the banks that they will get 50% of the credited amount if they claim the damages. The sum will be transferred to the bank within 30 working days.
- Encourage banks to give loans** – As the scheme safeguards the banks as well, these financial institutions will not feel the urge to turn down the loan application, made by a small exporter.

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- The gap between India's export and import has been growing bigger and bigger in the past decade. It crossed the \$100 billion mark in 2008-09 and has remained above that since, clocking \$184 billion in 2018-19.
- Higher the negative trade balance, higher the current account deficit (CAD) and higher the drag on foreign exchange reserves. This has been a cause of prolonged anxiety.
- When looked from the global perspective, India's export growth does not look as bad. In 2018 (financial year), India's export growth was 8.8% against the global growth of 9.8% in US dollar terms.
- The US-China trade war presents a big opportunity for India to boost its exports significantly to the US and elsewhere.
- India's products have established their quality but are not yet competitive. According to experts factors are holding India's export back are as follows-
 - High cost of credit to Indian exporters - 6-7% interest rate for Indian exporters while it is

nil or negligible for Chinese and Vietnams.

- India provides 3-5% of interest equalisation for the MSMEs which should be available for all exporters to bring down cost.
- Inputs like steel should be provided at competitive/export prices that are offered to international buyers by steel mills to all exporters, not just the MSMEs as is being contemplated by the government now.
- Electricity duty, taxes and duties on petroleum products etc. are not yet refunded through the GST mechanism for the exporters. The government should offset the cost disadvantage arising out of these duties and levies.

Initiatives by Indian government for export promotion:

- The Government of India has launched a scheme namely, **Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES)** from FY 2017-18 with the objective to assist Central and State Government Agencies for creation of appropriate infrastructure for growth of exports from the States.
- **The Agriculture Export Policy** was launched in 2018 to harness export potential of Indian agriculture, through suitable policy instruments, to make India global power in agriculture and raise farmers' income.
- **Section 10AA of the Income-tax Act, 1961** provides for deduction of profits and gains derived from the export of articles or things or from services in respect of newly established Units in Special Economic Zones.
- Under the **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP)**, DGFT operates various Export promotion schemes such as **Advance Authorization, Duty Free Import Authorization, Export Promotion of Capital Goods, Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) and Services Exports from India Scheme (SEIS)**. To give effect to these schemes, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs has issued various exemption notifications.
- The Government of India strives to ensure **a continuous dialogue with the State Governments and Union Territories** on measures for promoting exports and for providing an international trade enabling environment in the States, and to create a framework for making the States active partners in boosting exports from India.

PEPPER IT WITH
EXIM policy, MEIS, SEIS

Conclusion

To achieve the dream of \$5 trillion economy, export friendly environment is essential. Robust export mechanism can also help in mitigating the effects of domestic economic slowdown. Effective skilling programme, promotion of innovation and value chain efficiency for products and process can also help in giving a boost to our export sector. All we need is proactive attitude of government, time bound framework for implementation and sound financing mechanism to accelerate growth.

Participatory Guarantee Scheme (PGS)

News Excerpt

Recently, government officials stated that Ministry of Agriculture's participatory guarantee scheme will incentivise more farmers to grow organic food.

Pre-Connect

- PGS is a **process of certifying organic products**, which ensures that their production takes place in accordance with laid-down quality standards.
- The certification is in the form of a documented logo or a statement.
- PGS are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.

Four Pillars of PGS

The government's 2015 PGS manual underlines that the system in India is based on "**participatory approach, a shared vision, transparency and trust**".

PARTICIPATION: Stakeholders such as producers, consumers, retailers, traders, NGOs, Gram Panchayats, and government organisations and agencies are collectively responsible for designing, operating, and decision-making. Direct communication among the stakeholders

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helps create an integrity- and trust-based approach with transparency in decision-making, easy access to databases and, where possible, visits to farms by consumers.

SHARED VISION: Collective responsibility for implementation and decision making is driven by a common shared vision. Each stakeholder organisation or PGS group can adopt its own vision conforming to the overall vision and standards of the PGS-India programme.

TRANSPARENCY: At the grassroots level, transparency is maintained through the active participation of producers in the organic guarantee process, which can include information-sharing at meetings and workshops, peer reviews, and involvement in decision making.

TRUST: A fundamental premise of PGS is the idea that producers can be trusted, and that the organic guarantee system can be an expression and verification of this trust. The mechanisms for trustworthiness include a producer pledge made through a witnessed signing of a declaration, and written collective undertakings by the group to abide by the norms, principles and standards of PGS.

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According to 'Participatory Guarantee System for India [PGS-India]', an 'Operational Manual for Domestic Organic Certification' published in 2015 by the National Centre of Organic Farming, Ghaziabad, under the Ministry of Agriculture's Department of Agriculture and Co-operation, PGS is a "quality assurance initiative that is locally relevant, emphasizes the participation of stakeholders, including producers and consumers, and which operates outside the framework of third-party certification"

Advantages:

- PGS is expected to incentivise more farmers to grow organic food.
- Procedures are simple, documents are basic, and farmers understand the local language used.
- All members live close to each other and are known to each other. As practicing organic farmers themselves, they understand the processes well.
- Because peer appraisers live in the same village, they have better access to surveillance; peer appraisal instead of third-party inspections also reduces costs
- Mutual recognition and support between regional PGS groups ensures better networking for processing and marketing.
- Unlike the grower group certification system, PGS offers every farmer individual certificates, and the farmer is free to market his own produce independent of the group.

The Government of India is promoting organic farming through various schemes like

- ❖ National Project on Organic Farming (NPOF)
- ❖ National Horticulture Mission (NHM),
- ❖ Horticulture Mission for North East & Himalayan States (HMNEH)
- ❖ National Project on Management of Soil Health and Fertility (NPMSH&F)
- ❖ Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)
- ❖ Network Project on Organic Farming of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

Limitations:

- ✓ PGS certification is only for farmers or communities that can organise and perform as a group within a village or a cluster of contiguous villages, and is applicable only to farm activities such as crop production, processing, and livestock rearing, and off-farm processing "by PGS farmers of their direct products".
- ✓ **Individual farmers or group of farmers smaller than five members are not covered under PGS.** They either have to opt for third party certification or join the existing PGS local group.
- ✓ PGS ensures traceability until the product is in the custody of the PGS group, which makes PGS ideal for local direct sales and direct trade between producers and consumers.

PEPPER IT WITH

RFID technology, Jaivik Bharat, NOCA

Way forward

Participatory guarantee scheme must be made more comprehensive by allowing smaller group of farmers to avail the benefits. Also, state can create its own farmer community in every district where such farmers which are neither a part of existing groups and nor can find any group to join, can join the pool of farmers at the district level. The traceability of the product must be ensured from farm to market by means of tagging the products using **RFID technology**.

Privatization of Indian Railways

News Excerpt

Indian Railway Board has confirmed that Indian Railway is preparing the bidding document to allow the private train operators entry to promote new trainsets, state-of-the-art technology and innovative ways of providing passenger amenities and finding new luggage-handling solutions.

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- Indian Railways (IR) is the fourth-largest rail network in the world, after the US, China and Russia with the length of 66,000 km.
- It runs about 21,000 trains, two-thirds of which are passenger trains, carrying 23 million passengers and 3 million tonnes of freight per day.
- Indian railways is a labour intensive industry having a workforce of over 13.6 lakhs employees.

Problems Faced by the Indian Railways

- Old and Outdated tracks cause the serious railway accident. It also causes the speed restriction which results in delayed trains.
- Years of Underinvestment in the infrastructure has resulted in the non-tackling of the problem of unmanned level crossing, trains derailment and collisions. Huge unmet passenger demand due to scarcity of railway tracks is also due to underinvestment in the railway sector.
- Overstretched infrastructure - with more than 60% of routes being more than 100% utilized.
- Low passenger fares are compensated by high freight tariffs which put the Indian railways on disadvantage when compared to road transport.
- Indian Railway is unable to exploit the potential of E-Commerce due to lack of updated infrastructure.

Recent Government Initiatives to boost Indian Railways

- ❖ The Government of India is considering a **High Speed Rail Corridor project** between Mumbai and Nagpur.
- ❖ Indian Railways is planning to come out with a **new export policy** for railways.
- ❖ The Government of India is going to come up with a **'National Rail Plan'** which will enable the country to integrate its rail network with other modes of transport and develop a multi-modal transportation network.
- ❖ A **'New Online Vendor Registration System'** has been launched by the Research Designs & Standards Organisation (RDSO), which is the research arm of Indian Railways, in order to have digital and transparent systems and procedures.
- ❖ The Government of India has signed an agreement with the Government of Japan under which Japan will help India in the implementation of the **Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed rail corridor** along with a financial assistance that would cover 81 per cent of the total project cost.

Reforms Suggested by Various Committees in the Past

It mainly needs two types of reforms: administrative, to improve services, safety and efficiency; and engineering, to improve cost and environmental effectiveness.

- ✚ Report of the **Expert Group for Modernization of Indian Railways (2012)** headed by **Sam Pitroda** suggested that modernization of railways requires political will, organizational / management support, substantial funding, new direction, new thinking, mobilization of resources, innovative PPP and new business models, and a lot more.
- ✚ **High Level Safety Review Committee (2012)** by the eminent scientist Dr. Anil Kakodkar recommended the elimination of all level crossings, maintenance of safety related infrastructure and implementation of advance signaling system.
- ✚ To undertake the problem of underinvestment in railway sector, strategy of creative financing as suggested by **Montek Singh Ahluwalia Committee (2014)** should be used.

- ✚ **Bibek Debroy Committee 2015** on mobilization of resources and restructuring of Indian Railways advocated liberalization (not privatization) for entry of new operators into the railway operations.
- ✚ **Arvind Panagariya Committee (2016):** To fast track the Mumbai-Ahmedabad, High-Speed Rail Corridor, meant for connecting two cities with bullet trains.

Entry of Private Train Operators

- ✓ Considering the recommendations of **Bibek Debroy Committee 2015**, Indian Railway has decided to allow the entry of private train operators.
- ✓ To check the viability of private train operators, two luxurious trains named as **Tejas** have been handed over to IRCTC (a subsidiary of Indian Railway) which has made impressive innovations in providing amenities to passengers such as Rs 25 lakh insurance on every ticket, wheelchairs, home pick-up and delivery of luggage, etc
- ✓ Initially 150 trains are expected to be run by private train operators. These trains are expected to run on Delhi-Mumbai and Delhi-Howrah corridors and also in other viable stretches.

The report -The Future of Rail Opportunities for Energy

- * This report is prepared by the International Energy Agency in conjunction with the International Union of Railways "The Future of Rail" examines how the role of rail in global transport might be elevated as a means to reduce the energy use and environmental impacts associated with transport.
- * Railway is considered as one of the most efficient modes of transport. It carries 8% of the world's passengers and 7% of global freight transport but consumes only 2% of total transport energy demand. Most **conventional rail** networks today are located in North America, Europe, China, Russia, India, and Japan. These regions make up about 90% of global passenger movements on conventional rail with India leading at 39%, followed by China at 27%, Japan at 11% and the European Union at 9%.
- * This report states that Indian railways will comprise of 40% of total global rail activity by 2050 and the Investments in Indian urban rail infrastructure is estimated to reach nearly \$190bn by 2050. Along with the development of high-speed rail, fuel expenditures are estimated to reduce by nearly \$450bn as a result, India can save up to \$64bn on fuel expenses by that time.
- * Global activity in 2050 will be 2.7 times higher than current levels, the report concluded.

Pros of Privatization of Indian Railways

- **Improved Infrastructure** – It will lead to improved amenities for travellers.
- **Balancing quality of service and high fares-** Protagonists of privatization feel that problem will be solved when private players are allowed to enter the sector since the move would foster competition and hence lead to overall betterment in the quality of services.
- **Lesser accidents-** Supporters of privatization feel that it will reduce the number of accidents, thus resulting in safe travel and higher monetary savings in the long run.

Cons of Privatization of Indian Railways

- **Coverage limited to lucrative sectors:** An advantage of Indian Railways being government- owned is that it provides nation-wide connectivity irrespective of profit. This would not be possible with privatization since routes which are less popular will be eliminated, thus having a negative impact on connectivity. It will also render some parts of the country virtually inaccessible and omit them from the process of development.
- **Fares:** Given that a private enterprise runs on profit, it is but natural to assume that the easiest way of accruing profits in Indian Railways would be to hike fares, thus rendering the service out of reach for lower income groups. This will defeat the entire purpose of the system which is meant to serve the entire population of the country irrespective of the level of income.
- **Accountability:** In case of any mishap or unfortunate accident, issue of accountability and responsibility may occur.

PEPPER IT WITH
LPG Reforms, DFC Corporation,
SFURTI, Corporate trains

Conclusion

Proper Implementation of innovative suggestions made by different committees can help in

increasing the growth rate of GDP by 1.5% to 2% in the next decade which is very essential to tackle the current slowdown. Entry of private train operators in the Indian Railway will improve the train performances and better amenities and thus this path breaking reform must be looked upon sincerely in order to increase the operational efficiency of the Indian Railways.

Corporate Income Tax

News Excerpt

The government has recently slashed the corporate income tax rate from 30 percent to 22 percent for all companies. Inclusive of cess and surcharges the effective corporate tax rate in India now comes down to 25.17 per cent. Newer companies, which are set up after October 1, 2019, will be subjected to an even lower effective tax rate of 17 percent.

Thematic Connect

The new rates bring India closer, in some cases lower, to the rates prevalent in many of the emerging and industrialized countries. The new corporate income tax rates in India will be lower than USA (27 percent), Japan (30.62 percent), Brazil (34 percent), Germany (30 percent) and is similar to China (25 percent) and Korea (25 percent). New companies in India with an effective tax rate of 17 percent is equivalent to what corporates pay in Singapore (17 percent).

Analytica

The Significance of the Move

- The corporate tax cut is part of a series of steps taken by the government to tackle the slowdown in economic growth, which has dropped for five consecutive quarters to 5% in the June quarter.
- The most immediate reason behind the tax cut can be sighted as the displeasure that various corporate houses have shown against the government's policies. Many investors, for instance, were dissatisfied by the additional taxes on them that were announced by the government during the budget in July and began pulling money out of the country.

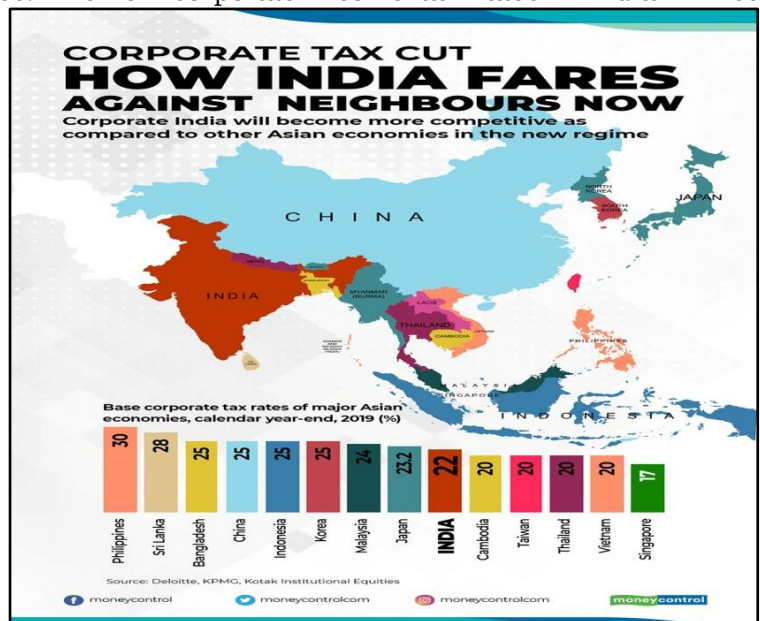
Impact of the Tax Cut

- It will likely alter the profitability dynamic of the Indian corporate ecosystem. Lower rates would imply that many corporates will break even much ahead than what would have been the case with the earlier rates.
- Lower taxes will result in higher profit margins. Companies will be able to pass on the higher margins in the form of lower product prices to consumers.
- Lower corporate income tax rates and the resultant change in profitability will likely prompt companies to invest more, raising their capital expenditure (capex). This will be particularly true for those who have the funds but have remained non-committal on deploying investible money in adding new capacity lines.
- Additional capacities will eventually lead in increased employment generation.

Concerns Raised

- Lowering corporate income tax rates addresses the supply side issues. But these could raise consumption demand through what is called the "wealth effect". Wealth effect is a behavioral economic phenomenon where consumers start spending more because of greater confidence driven by higher values of their financial and physical assets.
- The revenue foregone for the government because of the latest corporate income tax cuts

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PEPPER IT WITH
LTCG, IT act, Companies Act, Corporate governance, Kotak Committee

will be to the tune of Rs 1.45 lakh crore a year. This has triggered concerns of fiscal slippage, given that tax collections have been far below the budgeted estimates.

- The government has set a fiscal deficit target of 3.3 percent of GDP for 2019-20. Lower tax revenues could upset the fiscal math.

Steps Taken by the Government

- The government may fund part of the revenue foregone because of corporate tax cuts through the additional transfer of dividends and surplus from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- The RBI has decided to transfer a record Rs 1,23,414 crore of its surplus to the central government for the fiscal year 2018-19 or FY19 (July to June), and an additional Rs 52,637 crore of excess provisions as recommended by the **Bimal Jalan committee on Economic Capital Framework (ECF)**.

Conclusion

The decision to slash corporate tax has definitely acted as a morale booster to the decelerating economy. But at the same time the government will also need to simultaneously enact along with these tax cuts other structural reforms that reduce entry barriers in the economy and make the marketplace more competitive.

Foreign Funding of the NGOs

News Excerpt

Recently the home ministry amended the rules governing Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 1976 (FCRA).

Highlights of the Amendment

- Office bearers, key functionaries and members of NGOs receiving such funds will have to declare before the government that they were not prosecuted or convicted for religious conversion.
- Also, the ministry announced the changes in **the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Rules, 2011**, which includes that individuals receiving personal gift valued up to Rs 1 lakh (Earlier Rs. 25000) need not inform the government about it anymore.
- In case of emergent medical aid needed during a visit abroad, the acceptance of foreign hospitality has to be intimated to the government within a month of such receipt.

Analytica

- India has nearly 3.4 million non-governmental organisations (NGOs), working in a variety of fields ranging from disaster relief to advocacy for marginalised and disadvantaged communities. They are a major part of civil society which bring rapid change and social transformation.
- Many NGOs in India have assisted the state to serve its citizens by pushing for laws including those on the right to information, food security, and rural employment.
- In recent times, many NGOs have come under the government scanner for alleged contravention of FCRA. As per news reports, as many as 11,000 NGOs have even lost their permit to receive foreign contribution.
- While, the government claims that the licenses were cancelled due to violation of the act, the NGOs are contending that the government is wrongly using its discretionary powers under the act to suppress voices of dissent, especially those against government policy.
- Apart from the above debate there is also an issue of sector's lack of **transparency and accountability** that needs reforms.
- **Allegations of corruption:** In 2009, 883 NGOs were blacklisted after being found to have indulged in misappropriation of funds. In such cases, NGOs need to uphold probity in

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Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 1976

- ❖ It is a law of government of India which regulates receipt of foreign contributions or aid from outside India to India territories.
- ❖ This is essential to ensure that such aid does not affect political or any other situation in India.
- ❖ The regular compliance is limited to filing of annual return every year.
- ❖ This law is enforced by the ministry of Home affairs, Government of India.
- ❖ There is a separate section in the ministry to ensure compliance to the Foreign Funding Registration.

their work.

Steps Taken by the Government to Increase Transparency in Foreign Funding

- ✓ The 1990s also witnessed the establishment of several forums to promote dialogue between the government and NGOs.
- ✓ In May 2007, the cabinet of ministers of the Government of India approved **the National Policy on the Voluntary Sector** as the first step in a process to evolve a new working relationship between the government and volunteer organizations.
- ✓ In recent times, government has **increased scrutiny** of the funds received and activities of NGOs keeping in the view National Security and social harmony. It is a potentially positive step as it will force Indians to be more conscious of the role of NGOs and take ownership for our own issues.
- ✓ **NGO- Darpan:** It started out as an initiative of the Prime Minister's Office, to create and promote a healthy partnership between NGOs/VOs and the Government of India. Now it is an e-governance application offered by NITI Aayog to electronically maintain data and transparency regarding NGOs/VOs in the country.

Conclusion

- Since foreign aid is often paramount for the expansion or sometimes even for the survival of an NGO, it is important for an NGO to have a clear understanding of legal compliances prior to availing and using such funding.
- Human rights defenders and civil society must have the ability to do their important job without being subjected to excessive limitations on their access to foreign funding and the undue suspension of their registration on the basis of burdensome administrative requirements.

Inter Ministerial Panel on Fin-tech

News Excerpt

Recently, Inter ministerial panel on Fin-tech submitted its report to the finance minister and suggested that there is a need to put in place a comprehensive legal framework to protect consumers of legal services.

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Key recommendations

- Issuance of 'virtual banking licenses' should be examined by the Reserve Bank of India.
- Promoting **easy transaction and collateral by dematerialisation** of fixed deposits, sovereign gold bonds and post office certificates
- **Sharing crucial customer data after consent** should be made **mandatory for banks** by RBI.
- All financial sector regulators should adopt **Regulation technology** to develop standards and facilitate adoption by financial service providers.
- **Improving access of financial products** for MSMEs, farmers and poorer sections of the society by the use of Fintech.
- Encouraging Insurance companies and lending agencies for **using drone and remote sensing technology** for crop area, damage and location assessments to support risk reduction in insurance/lending business.
- **Digitise land records** across the country on a war footing.
- Monitoring progress by setting up of **an Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee on fintech** Applications in the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA).

Note: For more information of the Indian Fintech Sector, please refer **KSG Current Connect, August-2019, Page No: 39.**

Global Liveability Index

News Excerpt

Recently released Global Liveability Index 2019 by Economist Intelligence Unit's has ranked **New Delhi and Mumbai at 118th and 119th respectively out of 140 cities.**

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About

- The Economist Intelligence Unit's liveability rating quantifies the challenges that might be presented to an individual's lifestyle in 140 cities worldwide.
- Each city is assigned a score for over 30 qualitative and quantitative factors across five broad categories of **Stability, Healthcare, Culture and environment, Education and Infrastructure**.

Highlights

- Vienna in Austria, Melbourne and Sydney in Australia make the top three cities while Damascus in Syria, Lagos in Nigeria and Dhaka in Bangladesh rank in the bottom.
- Increase in cases of petty crimes and appalling air quality has led to the drop of New Delhi's rank by six places.
- Mumbai's rank also fell in this year's index by two places, as a result of downgrade in its culture category.

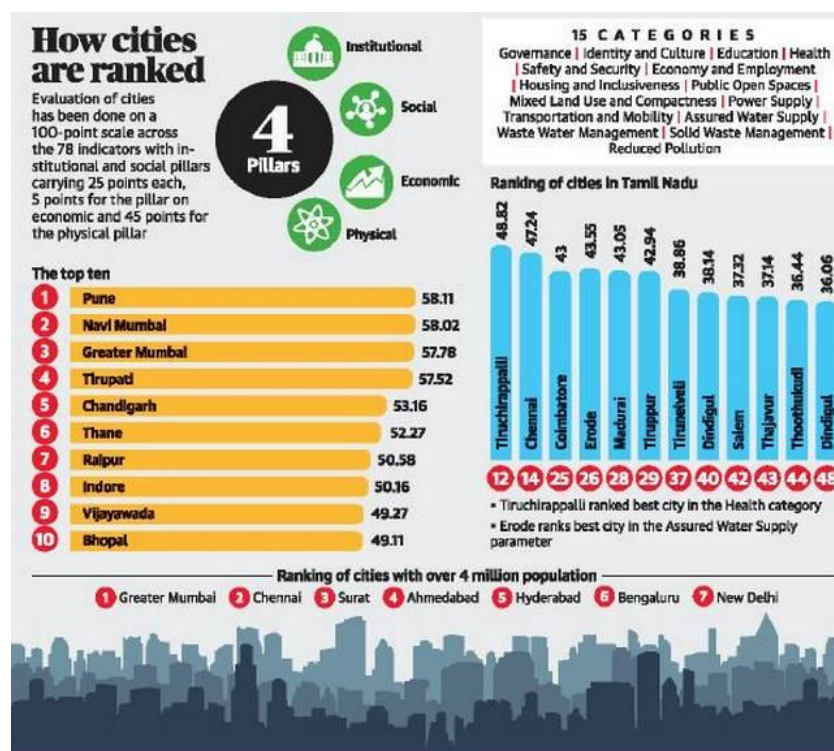
PEPPER IT WITH
HDI, Ease of Living Index

Urban Planning and Development in India

Urban planning and development activities in India have mostly focused on three approaches:

- ✓ Master Plans and Town Planning schemes, wherein a city level development agenda and land use plans are prepared;
- ✓ Centrally-sponsored National Urban Development schemes, such as the Smart Cities Missions, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), and Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) which focus on infrastructure development and improving quality of life; and
- ✓ International Partnerships and Funding, which include funding from international agencies and networks such as the World Bank and European Union for addressing emerging issues of environmental sustainability, climate change, infrastructure development, etc.

Ease of Living Index by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs



However, these approaches by the central government have been considered as 'piecemeal' efforts at the city level as the centrally-sponsored urban development schemes provide ad-hoc solutions which tend to lack contextualization in some cases.

Problems with Present Approach

- The concept of liveability is not integrated well with existing urban planning policies and guidelines.
- The key parameters of liveability are generalised for all the regions but due to vast variation in the regions with respect to topography and socio-economic development, the same approach is not applicable to all the regions.
- There is also a lack of active citizen engagement and capacity building of the ULBs.
- There is a lack of continuous funding from the central government and it was observed that

there exists a wide gap between the budgeted amount and funds allocated.

- There is also a low presence of innovative approaches to attract public-private partnerships in the long-term risk intensive projects.

What Needs to be Done?

- The strengthening of Local Urban Governance incorporates the technical and financial capacity building and clear mandates to ULBs for effective service delivery and governance.
- In terms of Financing & Implementation, it is relevant to address the challenges of existing financial and implementation mechanisms and identifying sustainable mechanisms for meeting infrastructural demands of cities.
- Urban Innovation includes the promotion of innovative solutions through the private sector, research and academia participation along with improvement in institutional capacities and share knowledge between different stakeholders.
- The strengthening of Partnerships is a supplementing enabler that highlights the significance of collaborations between cities and stakeholders to improve the capacities of partner cities.
- Organizing the Regional Policy Dialogues to mainstream liveability in the urban policy framework.

Teaser loans

News Excerpt

Recently, State Bank of India planned to offer teaser loans and is likely to hit a regulatory hurdle as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is not in favor of launching the same.

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What are Teaser Loans?

- Teaser loans are those loans that offer comparatively lower interest of rates in the first few years and after that the rates are increased that's why they are known as **fixed cum floating home loans**.
- This term is known as 'teaser loan' scheme by market players because it lures the borrower with low rates in the initial years, only to bump up the rates later.
- Teaser loan exposes banks and lenders to a high incidence of default.
- Teaser products are not banned by the regulator but the standard asset provisioning requirement is higher for such loans. For normal home loans, the standard asset provisioning is 0.4% but for teaser loans it is 2%.
- High provisioning discourages banks from offering from such products.

PEPPER IT WITH

Interest Subvention Scheme, NPA-Haircut, MUDRA scheme, PSB loans in 59 minutes

National Infrastructure Pipeline

News Excerpt

The Union finance Minister has constituted a task force under the chairmanship of Secretary (Dept of Economic affairs) for drawing up National Infrastructure Pipeline of Rs. 100 Lakh Crore from FY 2019-20 to FY 2024-25. This would include Greenfield and Brownfield projects costing above Rs 100 crore each.

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Pre- Connect

- To become a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25, India needs to spend about \$1.4 trillion (Rs. 100 lakh crore) over these years on infrastructural projects.
- In the past decade (FY 2008-17), India invested about \$1.1 trillion on infrastructure.
- Prime Minister of India in his Independence Day speech has proposed to invest Rs 100 lakh crore on infrastructure over the next five years. These will include social and economic infrastructure projects.

Features

- The task force will comprise Niti Aayog CEO, secretaries and other senior officials from different ministries.

- It will identify technically feasible and financially/ economically viable infrastructure projects that can be initiated in 2019-20. It will also list the projects that can be included in the pipeline for each of the remaining five years between fiscals 2021-25.
- Each ministry/department would be responsible for monitoring of projects so as to ensure their timely and within-cost implementation. The task force will also enable robust marketing of the pipeline of projects requiring private investment through the **India Investment Grid** and **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund**, among others.

Need

- ✓ According to National Statistical Office weak manufacturing and consumption numbers dragged the country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth to a 25-quarter low i.e. 5 per cent in the first quarter (April-June) of the current fiscal.
- ✓ NIP aims to generate employment and increased purchasing power of citizens which will lead to faster economic growth.
- ✓ NIP aims to step-up annual infrastructure investment so that lack of infrastructure does not become a binding constraint on the growth of the Indian economy.

National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Limited (NIIFL)

It is an investor-owned fund manager, anchored by the Government of India (GoI) in collaboration with leading global and domestic institutional investors. These funds have investment mandates to invest in infrastructure assets and related businesses that are likely to benefit from the long-term growth trajectory of the Indian economy.

Conclusion

With domestic conditions already bleak, a hostile global environment, tariff wars and rising protectionism could soon compound India's troubles. As external factors remain out of India's control, domestic measures like this can play a big role in keeping the economy alive.

PEPPER IT WITH

Smart Cities Mission, PM Awas Yojana, NIIF, REITs, INVITs

The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019

News Excerpt

India has moved up six places to rank 34th in a report published by World Economic Forum on world travel and tourism competitiveness index, driven by rich natural and cultural resources and strong price competitiveness.

Pre-Connect

- The travel & tourism (T&T) industry plays a vital role in the global economy and community.
- In 2018, the industry helped generate 10.4% of world GDP and a similar share of employment and has shown enormous resilience over the last decade.
- Travel and tourism are the third largest foreign exchange earner for India.
- The World **Travel and Tourism** Council calculated that **tourism** generated ₹16.91 lakh crore (US\$240 billion) or 9.2% of **India's GDP** in 2018 and supported 42.673 million jobs, 8.1% of its total employment.

About

- The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report is a report Published biennially by World Economic Forum which assesses 140 economies for Travel & Tourism competitiveness in **four subindexes**: Enabling Environment, T&T Policy and Enabling Conditions, Infrastructure, and Natural and Cultural Resources.
- Published under the **theme of "Travel and Tourism at a Tipping Point"**, the **report's results demonstrate the healthy growth of the industry**, with increased competitiveness worldwide set against the slower improvement and adoption rates of necessary infrastructure and sustainable tourism management practices respectively.

Highlights of the Report

- ✓ T&T competitiveness continues to improve worldwide, and the industry remains on an upward path.
- ✓ The TTCI 2019 results show that air transportation, digital connectivity and international openness are advancing in a global context of growing trade tensions and nationalism.

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- ✓ Europe and Eurasia remains the most competitive region and Asia-Pacific as the second-most competitive region in terms of T&T.
- ✓ **Spain** held on to the top spot followed by France, Germany and Japan, with the United States replacing the UK in the top five.
- ✓ It also warned of an approaching '**tipping point**', where factors like less expensive travel and fewer tourist barriers increase demand to unsustainable levels
- ✓ **India** has greatly improved its business environment (89th to 39th), overall T&T policy and enabling conditions (79th to 69th), infrastructure (58th to 55th) and information and communications technology (ICT) readiness (112th to 105th).
- ✓ However, India still needs to enhance its enabling environment (98th), tourist service infrastructure (109th) and environmental sustainability (128th).

The World Economic Forum

- ❖ The World Economic Forum is the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation.
- ❖ The Forum engages the foremost political, business, cultural and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.
- ❖ It was established in 1971 as a not-for-profit foundation and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- ❖ The Forum strives in all its efforts to demonstrate entrepreneurship in the global public interest while upholding the highest standards of governance.
- ❖ It publishes various reports such as Global Competitiveness Report, The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report etc.

Steps Taken by the Government to Promote Tourism and Hospitality Sector

- The launch of several branding and marketing initiatives by the Government of India such as '**Incredible India!**' and '**Athiti Devo Bhava**' has provided a focused impetus to growth.
- The Indian government has also released a fresh category of visa - the **medical visa** or M visa, to encourage medical tourism in the country.
- **Incredible India 2.0** campaign was launched in September 2017.
- In September 2018, the Indian government launched the '**Incredible India Mobile App**' to assist the traveler to India and showcase major experiences for travelling.
- Indian Government has also launched several schemes to give boost to domestic as well as international tourism such as **Swadesh Darshan**, **PRASAD**(National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive') scheme, **Adopt a heritage project** etc.
- The Government of India is working to achieve **one percent share in world's international tourist arrivals by 2020 and two percent share by 2025**.
- In the hotel and tourism sector, **100 per cent FDI** is allowed through the automatic route.
- A **five-year tax holiday** has been offered for 2, 3 and 4 star category hotels located around UNESCO World Heritage sites (except Delhi and Mumbai).
- **Under Union Budget 2019-20**, government introduced a **Tax Refund for Tourists (TRT)** scheme like in countries such as Singapore to encourage tourists to spend more in India and boost tourism.

Conclusion

India is a large market for travel and tourism. It offers a diverse portfolio of niche tourism products - cruises, adventure, medical, wellness, sports, MICE, eco-tourism, film, rural and religious tourism. India has been recognized as a destination for spiritual tourism for domestic and international tourists. Thus, focus should be on capturing all the attractive opportunities naturally available to Indian sustainable and responsible manner as it is livelihood source for around 10% of the country's population, directly or indirectly.

PEPPER IT WITH

UDAAN, Dekho Apna Desh, Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat

Loan Waiver Impacts

News Excerpt

The Reserve Bank of India shared the report of an **Internal Working Group (IWG)**, which has shown how farm loan waivers dented state finances and urged governments — both central and state — to avoid resorting to farm loan waivers.

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Pre-Connect

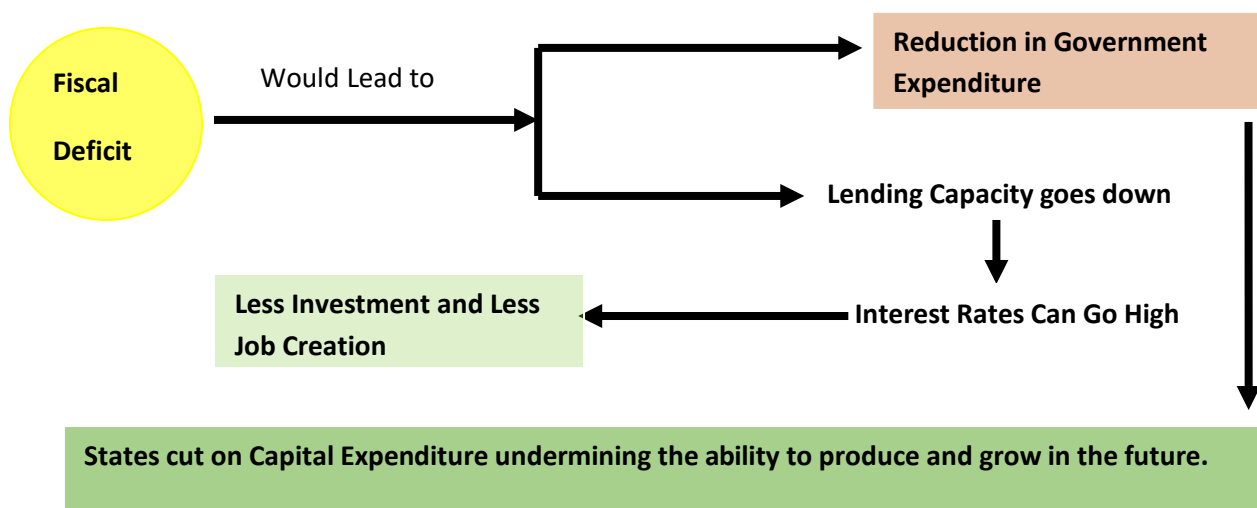
Since 2014-15, many state governments have announced farm loan waivers. This was done for a variety of reasons including relieving distressed farmers struggling with lower incomes in the wake of repeated droughts and demonetisation.

Analytica

Impacts:

In the past five years, just a handful of states have already waived three-times the amount waived by the central government in 2008-09. The actual waivers peaked in 2017-18 — in the wake of demonetisation and its adverse impact on farm incomes — and amounted to almost 12 per cent of the states' fiscal deficit.

Fiscal Deficit: A farm loan waiver eats into the government's resources which can lead to increase of the Government's fiscal deficit.



Genuine Dilemma

Farm loan waivers are not considered prudent because they hurt overall economic growth apart from ruining the credit culture in the economy since they incentivise defaulters and penalise those who pay back their loans.

What the State Governments are Doing?

- Notwithstanding farm loan waivers etc., state governments stick to their fiscal deficit targets.
- States barring the episode (in 2015-16) when they had to absorb the losses of state Discoms (power distribution companies) under the Ujjwal Discom Assurance Yojana (or UDAY), have stayed true to restricting their revenue deficit to zero and fiscal deficit to three percent of their GDP.
- **Macroeconomic Stability and State Government's Borrowings:** The NIPFP study of state finances reveals that all the states, collectively, now spend 30 per cent more than the central government.
- Moreover, since 2014, state governments have increasingly borrowed money from the market. In 2016-17, for instance, total net borrowings by all the states were almost equal (roughly 86 per cent) of the amount that the Centre borrowed.
- Thus state-level finances are just as important as the central government finances for India's macroeconomic stability and future economic growth.
- **Verdict:** The way states meet their deficit targets is not by raising more revenues but by cutting expenditure.

Ambiguity in Debt Relief: Setting of a cut-off date and cornering of debt relief by Middle and large farm owners.

Impact on Farmers: Here is the risk of inducing strategic default due to moral hazard. This simply means that because the farmer knows that the loan will be waived in the future, she will strictly prefer to default on the loan rather than work towards repayment.

Way Forward

- Loan waivers are a band-aid solution, but necessary at times to provide some immediate relief. But any generalised kind of write-off obviously has an adverse effect on the credit culture and future credit behaviour of the borrowers. Under certain conditions, farm loan

waivers could boost productivity and help sustain improved savings for farmers.

- One such condition could be **monitoring of debt and ensuring appropriate governance** mechanisms for new loans or targeted benefits. Second could be encouraging adoption of appropriate crop insurance products that operate along pay-on-harvest lines, as found to be effective in reducing farmer vulnerability in Kenya.
- The need of the hour is a mix of policy interventions that are aimed at reducing farmer vulnerability and helping them save more for tomorrow so that they can invest in improving their agricultural productivity. Direct income transfers like the one carried out in Telangana is more equitable and transparent.

PEPPER IT WITH

Minimum Basic Income, PM-KISAN, KISAN Man Dhan Yojana, RythuBandhu Scheme, MSP

India-Switzerland Automatic Exchange of Information

News Excerpt

Banking details of Indians with accounts in Switzerland will be available to tax authorities as the automatic exchange of information regime kicks off between the two countries. Under this mechanism, India will start receiving information on all financial accounts held by Indian residents in Switzerland, for the year 2018. This automatic information exchange will increase transparency and prevent cross-border tax evasion.

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Pre-Connect

- Switzerland has been striving hard for the past few years to shed a long-standing perception of it being a safe haven for black money.
- In 2016, India and Switzerland had signed an information-sharing deal on bank accounts, which was to come in effect from September 2019.
- In 2018, data from Zurich-based Swiss National Bank (SNB) had shown that after declining for three years, money parked by Indians in Swiss Banks rose 50 per cent to CHF (Swiss Franc) 1.02 billion (Rs 7,000 crore) in 2017 over the previous year.
- Both countries have strengthened their framework for the exchange of information in cases of financial wrongdoings, including by signing the global automatic exchange of information framework.

Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI)

- ❖ It reduces the possibility for tax evasion. It is the exchange of information between countries without having to request it.
- ❖ It provides for the exchange of non-resident financial account information with the tax authorities in the account holders' country of residence.
- ❖ Participating jurisdictions that implement AEOI send and receive pre-agreed information each year, without having to send a specific request.
- ❖ It enables the discovery of formerly undetected tax evasion and helps governments to recover tax revenue lost from non-compliant taxpayers.
- ❖ It strengthens international efforts to increase transparency, cooperation, and accountability among financial institutions and tax administrations.
- ❖ Additionally, it generates secondary benefits by increasing voluntary disclosures of concealed assets and by encouraging taxpayers to report all relevant information.
- ❖ It is possible under most of the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs) and Multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters (MAC).
- ❖ It is to be carried out under Common Reporting Standard (CRS) of OECD.

Need for AEOI?

- According to the 2017 report of the income-tax department, only 1.6% of Indians pay income tax. This is unsurprising since agricultural income is not taxed in India and the wealthy have mastered the art of tax avoidance and evasion. This tax avoidance is facilitated by quick transfer of income from one country to another.
- Tackling this cross-national transfer of money to avoid and evade taxes indicate that

national efforts are not enough to fight black money. Hence there is the need for tax cooperation and tax information exchanges between countries.

Analytica

Government in recent times have initiated several schemes such as

✓ **Enactment of Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015**

- Under which it provided a one-time compliance window to taxpayers to make declarations of their undisclosed foreign assets. Scheme landed ₹4,000-odd crore undisclosed foreign income in the government coffers within the year.

PEPPER IT WITH

Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana, MLAT, MAC, CRS OCED, FATF, BEPS, Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA).

✓ **Income Declaration Scheme (IDS)**

- It was launched in 2016 which provided compliance window for declaration of undisclosed income through the voluntary declaration.
- The scheme landed near about ₹29,400 crore but it was lower than the ₹87,000 crore it had expected based on the Voluntary Disclosure of Income Scheme 1997, that led to 1.9 per cent of GDP as disclosure and raised 0.6 per cent of GDP as taxes.
- The most declarations under the IDS were involuntary — they came after the taxman's heavy hand knocked on the doors of suspected evaders, through raids, searches and surveys.
- The IDS has made only a dent on the mountain of black money in the country.

Conclusion

The Government is today armed with data analytics on high-value transactions and sophisticated technological tools that help it sniff out and chase black money. Close coordination between authorities, the long-pending reform of electoral financing, and the political will to take on holy cows such as incomes of rich farmers will go a long way in addressing black money flow in the country. Regular alignment of circle rates for registering property with market rates should also help.

Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) and India-Russia Annual Summit

News Excerpt

Russia organized the **5th edition of Eastern Economic Forum** at Vladivostok in which Indian PM was invited as the Chief Guest. This happened alongside the **20th edition of India-Russia Annual Summit**.

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Pre-Connect

- Development of Russian Far East (RFE) is among the top priority of Russian Government. **The RFE is twice as size of India and roughly half of the population of Delhi/NCR region.**
- **REF region is extended between Lake Baikal**(world's largest freshwater lake and deepest lake) and the Pacific Ocean.
- Realizing, its geostrategic significance, **India opened a consulate in Vladivostok in 1992.** India was the first country to have a resident consulate in Vladivostok.
- Russian Far East is a resource rich region in a hostile climate. **It is rich in oil, natural gas, timber, gold and diamond among other resources. India requires all of them.**
- The **EEF was set up in 2015** with the mandate of economic development of **Russia's Far East and to expand Russia's international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.**
- Since then, it has focused on attracting investment from **China, Japan, South Korea, ASEAN and India** for the RFE.
- India too has in recent years shown interest in expanding its presence here for achieving the twin goals of improving **bilateral economic ties and pursuing strategic interests with an eye on China and the broader Indo-Pacific.**
- While the Indian energy companies have had their presence in the region for some time now, a systematic engagement with the EEF began in 2017 with ministerial representation at Vladivostok.

- Current engagement of India with this region is limited to select pockets such as **Irkutsk where the MiG and Sukhoi fighter planes are built and in Sakhalin where ONGC Videsh has invested over \$ 6 billion in oil and gas and exploration.**

Key-Highlights

At EEF

- India launched '**Act Far East**' policy to boost its engagement with RFE.
- India will provide a line of credit worth **US\$ 1 Billion for the development of RFE.**
- India and Russia agreed for a sea link between **Vladivostok, the capital of Russian Far East and Chennai.**

On Bilateral front

- ✓ Both nations decided to increase bilateral **trade to \$30 billion by 2025.**
- ✓ Strengthening the instrument of mutual settlements **of payments in national currencies.**
- ✓ Speeding up of the **India-Russia Intergovernmental Agreement on Promotion and Mutual Protection of Investments.**
- ✓ Both sides will work to eliminate trade barriers through proposed **Trading Agreement between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Republic of India.**
- ✓ Focus will be on geological exploration and joint development of oil and gas fields in Russia and India, including offshore fields.
- ✓ Both sides agreed for cooperation in hydro and thermal power, energy efficiency as well as for designing and constructing facilities that generate energy from non-conventional sources.

Timeline of India-Russia Relations

- ❖ The roots of relation dates back to 20th century. Indian freedom movement is greatly inspired by the Russian Revolution.
- ❖ India established diplomatic relations with Soviet Union in 1947.
- ❖ India's immediate goal was to establish heavy industry and in this Soviet Union helped a lot (it invested in many institutions in India such as establishment of **IIT Bombay**).
- ❖ Soviet Union also vetoed anti-India initiatives on J&K. Also, it supported India during the **Goa liberation of 1961.**
- ❖ In 1955 First summit level interaction was organized between the two nations.
- ❖ A watershed moment was signing of 1971- Treaty of Peace, Friendship and cooperation.
- ❖ 1990s was the tumultuous period for both the nations.
- ❖ After disintegration of USSR, India-Russia signed a new treaty of friendship and cooperation in 1993.
- ❖ In 2000- Partnership elevated to strategic partnership level.
- ❖ In 2010 it was elevated to Special and privileged Strategic Partnership.
- ❖ Year 2017 marked 70th anniversary of India-Russia Relations with Petersburg Deceleration.

Significance of Chennai-Vladivostok Sea Link

- ▽ It will reduce the transport time from existing 40 days to 24 days.
- ▽ It will help in counter to China's Maritime Silk Rote (MSR) which is about establishing and directly controlling Asia-Africa sea route.
- ▽ Further, the Shipping link is likely to pass through or very close to the South China Sea, which China has turned into an international geostrategic hotspot by claiming exclusive control over the resource rich maritime zone in the Pacific Ocean.
- ▽ Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have counter claims over the South China Sea. This link can help in counter balancing Chinese growing presence in Indian Ocean. It could open new vistas for India, like the India-Russia-Vietnam trilateral cooperation.
- ▽ Alternately, the link would become an extension of existing planned Asia-Africa Corridor which China considers as a challenge to its maritime OBOR plan in the region.
- ▽ It will help India in strengthening its checks and balances equation with China.

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India-Russia Economic Relations

- India-Russia bilateral trade stand at **8-10 Billion USD** which is miniscule vis-à-vis US and China.
- There is **lack of diversification** in India-Russia relations and it is heavily focused on the defence and energy sector.
- The **ease of doing business** in both the countries is still void of a conducive and business friendly environment.
- There is dire need to diversify the India-Russia economic relation **especially when standard parameters of the relationship are being challenged by sanctions like CAATSA(Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act).**
- There is need to extend economic cooperation in new areas likes Timber, Mining, Skill Development and space.

India-Russia Para-diplomacy

India gives due importance to 'paradiplomacy' where Indian States are being encouraged to develop relations with foreign countries. States like Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Haryana and Goa would be collaborating with Russian Provinces to increase trade and investments.

For India, there is immense potential for mid-sized and small businesses who should be assisted to overcome language and cultural barriers so that they successfully adopt local business practices.

Puzzle of Indo-Pacific

- The idea of an **'Indo-Pacific region'**, which signals **India's willingness to work with the U.S.** mainly to counter China's assertive maritime rise, has also left Russia concerned. Russia is apprehensive that the U.S. would exert pressure on India's foreign policy choices and that it could lose a friendly country and one of the biggest buyers of Russian military hardware.
- India has maintained that Indo-Pacific is not targeted against any country and **stands for inclusiveness and stability.** India clarified its stance at the Shangri-La dialogue, that it **considers Indo-Pacific not as a club of limited members rather wish to have an inclusive engagement with all the relevant stakeholders.**
- This constant engagement has borne fruit and the two countries are now working for a multipolar Indo-Pacific. **India has also been able to convince Russia that its engagement with the U.S. is not going to come against Russian interests.**

Why Russia Needs India in its Far East?

- Russia also wants to make sure that China does not become a hegemon in the Eurasian region and is hence deepening cooperation with countries like India, Vietnam and Indonesia. Here, the Far East has the potential to become an anchor in deepening India-Russia cooperation.
- A lack of manpower is one of the main problems faced by the Far East and Indian professionals like doctors, engineers and teachers can help in the region's development. Presence of Indian manpower will also help in balancing Russian concerns over Chinese migration into the region.
- Further, India, one of the largest importers of timber, can find ample resources in the region. Japan and South Korea have also been investing and India may explore areas of joint collaboration.

PEPPER IT WITH

ASEAN, SCO, BRICS, INSTC, Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, UNSC, CAATSA, EAEU

Conclusion

In present Global scenario, the Great power rivalry is back in international politics and is giving rise to unpredictability. Today the U.S. is interested in **'deglobalisation'** whereas China is promoting **'globalisation 2.0 with Chinese characteristics'**. It makes sense for India and Russia to increase their areas of cooperation and trade in order to **hedge against disruptive forces and make their ties sustainable.**

India-ASEAN FTA

News Excerpt

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has agreed to India's long-pending demand to review the free trade agreement (FTA) between the two sides. The objective is to make the FTA "more user-friendly, simple and trade facilitative"

Analytica

Why ASEAN is important for India?

ASEAN is an inevitable partner for India if it has to become a major Indo-Pacific power. ASEAN also acts as a central piece of India's Act East Policy.

Economic Importance

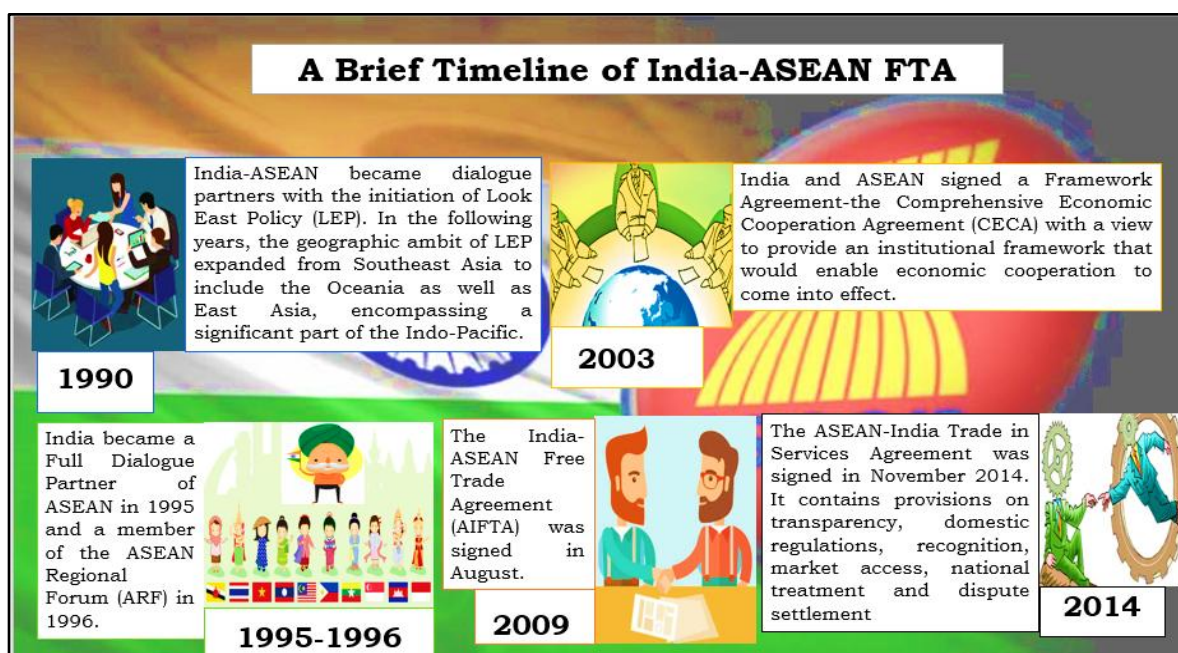
- The ASEAN-India Plan of Action for the period 2016-20 identifies economic cooperation as one of the key pillars of association.
- Several connectivity projects that India has undertaken in alliance with ASEAN countries are also aimed at improving trade ties with the Southeast Asian region.
- ASEAN is a recognized production base, with most of its members witnessing upward growth for the last couple of years.
- Asian Development Bank (ADB) also estimates that ASEAN Five (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Vietnam) will witness remarkable growth in their export trade.
- The cost of production is lower in Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar, which means that Indian firms can gain significantly by investing in these countries.
- ASEAN region has a combined GDP of \$2.7 trillion and is a market of 1.8 billion people.
- Indian firms can evade protectionist measures targeted against their exports if they start exporting from ASEAN region.
- Investing in these regions will also ease out some of India's energy requirements, enabling India to access cheaper foreign energy (Trans-ASEAN pipeline project) and minerals from Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam.
- Participation in the South-East Asian production network will enable India to increase its manufacturing base besides creating jobs for its young population.

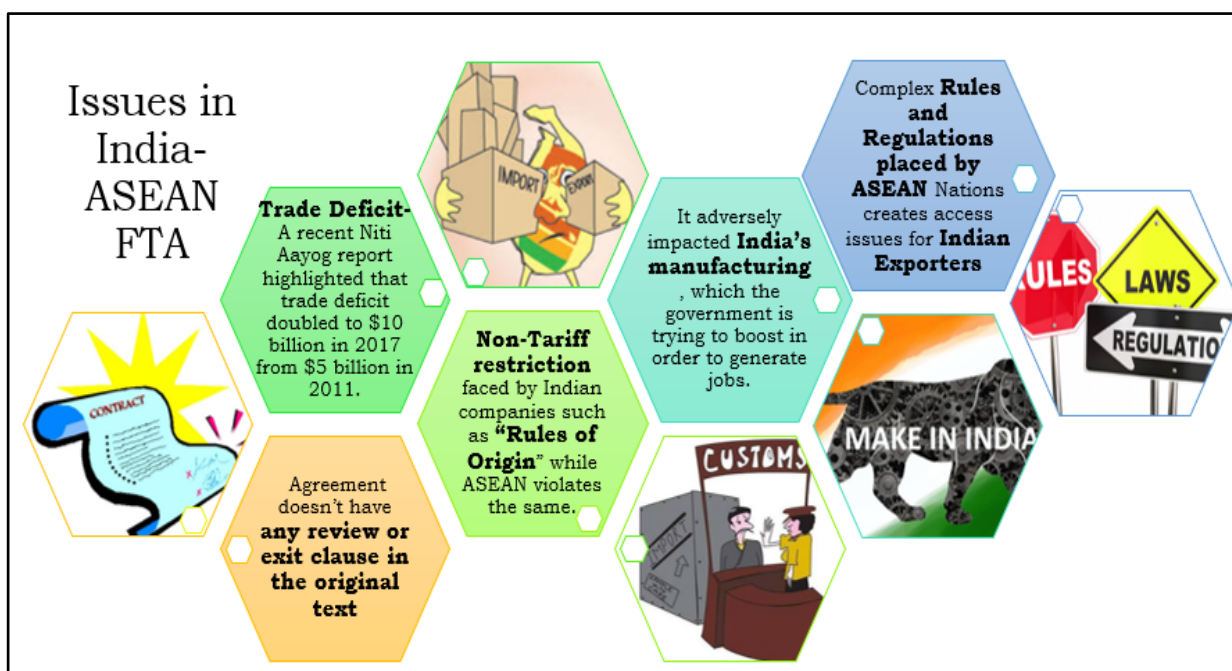
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Important Trade Agreements of India

- ❖ **MERCOSUR-India PTA**-MERCOSUR is a sub-regional trading community in Latin America. India signed a PTA with MERCOSUR, which came into effect in 2009.
- ❖ **India-South Korea CEPA**
- ❖ **India-Singapore CECA**
- ❖ **BIMSTEC FTA**
- ❖ **SAFTA**

A Brief Timeline of India-ASEAN FTA





Strategic Importance

- **Maritime Cooperation:** India-ASEAN maritime cooperation is based on mutual trust and congruence on the importance of rules-based order in the region and upholding of the international law such as UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea) including in the South China Sea. ASEAN also recognizes the India's vision of Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR).
- The regional security architecture is central to both India and ASEAN countries. For India, it is about safeguarding its borders and seeking greater strategic and maritime cooperation with other countries to counter China's expansionist push in the Indo-Pacific region.
- A number of ASEAN countries have territorial disputes with China over South China Sea. This presents a unique opportunity for India to pitch itself as a balancing force to China over the issue.
- India aims to strengthen the connectivity between ASEAN and the Northeast and wants to make the Northeast a "gateway for Southeast Asia".
- India is therefore actively engaging with ASEAN countries on major projects that will connect them with the Northeast. Some of these are the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (with Myanmar), the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project, Rhi-Tiddim Road Project (with Myanmar).
- Further, ASEAN can act as bridge between SAARC and BIMSTEC countries through which India can lead a development agenda in the region by eliminating Pakistan.

Review of FTAs

The finance ministry has initiated a review of India's free trade agreement framework to assess the impact of such pacts on the overall economy. It is being observed that these free trade agreements (FTAs) brought little tangible benefit to India, while helping the partner country. There are several concerns such as:

- ❖ **Duty Avoidance**
- ❖ **Violation of Rules of Origin**
- ❖ **Widening of Current Account deficit**
- ❖ **No significant Increase in Investment.**

PEPPER IT WITH

RECP, Custom Union and EU Common Marketplace, The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

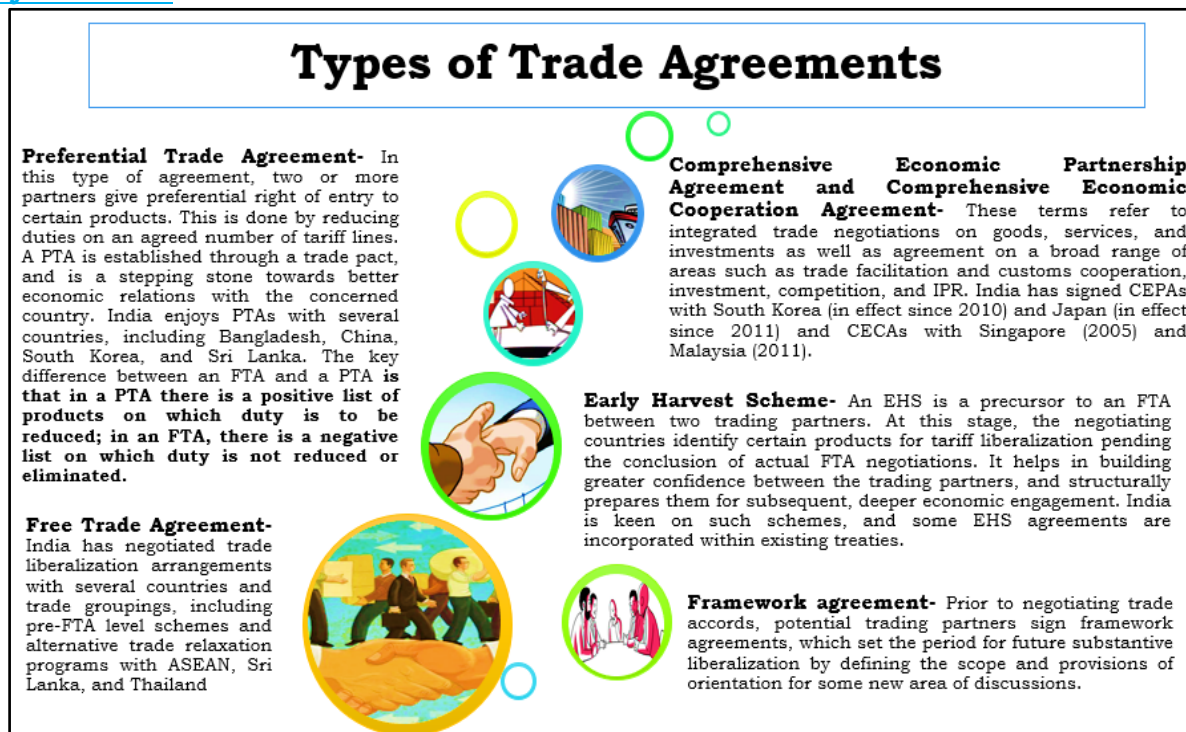
What should India do?

- ✓ **Reciprocity is the key-** India must open its markets for ASEAN nations and these countries have to revert the same. For this India should focus on capacity building of its exporters while ASEAN country must make rules and regulations simpler.
- ✓ **Increasing local competence-** There is need to focus on enhancing the competence of the

local India manufactures. The decision taken in 1991 of economic liberalization cannot be reversed.

- ✓ **Win-Win Situation**- FTA cannot benefit only one partner, they cannot be captured by one country alone. In the longer run it benefits all the players. India is needed to focus on its strength and weakness both to make sure it reaps maximum benefits of the FTA and try to create a Win-Win situation for both itself and ASEAN.

Way- Forward



How Should India Approach FTAs?

- Before getting into any multilateral trade deal India should firstly, review and assess its existing FTAs in terms of benefits to various stakeholders like industry and consumers, trade complementarities and changing trade patterns in the past decade.
- Negotiating bilateral FTAs with countries where trade complementarities and margin of preference is high may benefit India in the long run.
- Higher compliance costs nullify the benefits of margin of preference, thus reducing compliance cost and administrative delays is extremely critical to increase utilization rate of FTAs.
- Proper safety and quality standards should be set to avoid dumping of lower quality hazardous goods into the Indian market.
- Circumvention of rules of origin should be strictly dealt with by the authorities. In case of India- Sri Lanka FTA, Sri Lanka had started exporting copper to India by under invoicing of imported scrap in order to show higher value addition for qualifying for preferential rates under the FTA. Thus, **Rules of Origin** (ROO) norms can easily be circumvented by simple accounting manipulation to flood Indian markets.
- **FTAs have to be signed keeping two things in mind**, mutually reciprocal terms and focusing on products and services with maximum export potential.

Afghanistan Peace Process-A Pause for the Cause

News Excerpt

U.S. President recently cancelled peace negotiations with the Taliban after the insurgent group claimed responsibility for an attack in Kabul that claimed the life of a U.S. soldier. The US opined that the Taliban cannot use violence as a leverage in talks with Afghanistan.

Pre-Connect

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- US President Trump in his election campaign had called for withdrawal of forces from the Afghanistan. US appointed a special interlocuter Zalmay Khalilzad in June 2018 to expedite the process.
- According to media reports, Taliban demanded the complete withdrawal of foreign forces while it promised that its soil won't be used to attack the United States.
- The talks garnered much criticism, primarily because it didn't include the Afghan government as Taliban considered them US puppet. At the same it was also seen as US move to grant legitimacy to the Taliban which was early recognized by only Pakistan and the UAE.

Impact of the Move

- Taliban had questioned the intent of the US administration by pointing the fact that 15 soldiers have died in the earlier attacks so why the Trump administration reacted only to the 16th causality.
- Immediate impact of the move was increase in the incidents of the violence in the Afghanistan.
- Afghan government on the other hand had welcomed the move and decided to go ahead with the much-delayed general elections.
- **For Pakistan**, there are several implications
 - The move came as a shock as it had invested heavily in the peace process and wants a pro-Pak establishment in Afghanistan. Experts were of opinion that a Taliban dominated regime will allow Pakistan to shift its terror bases in the Afghanistan and continue its Kashmir propaganda.
 - A "no deal" situation may lead to Washington's loss of interest for some of Pakistan's concerns. The Kashmir situation is one area which may face a setback from Pakistan's perspective. If the decision to cancel talks was strategic, the issue of Kashmir may not find a lot of space in the corridors of power in the US.
- **China** forms the part of the Afghan governments first circle of engagement. Afghanistan hopes to utilize the "China Card" against Pakistan. China is the biggest foreign investor in Afghanistan. Still the move will have impact on Chinese interest as:

Taliban 2.0

- ❖ The Afghan Taliban is a Sunni Islamist organization created in 1994 to establish a strictly Shariah-governed nation. It emerged, many believe, with the help of Pakistan.
- ❖ Taliban had raised its stature significantly in recent times after the reduction in its stature in the wake of the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. This is primarily due to the absence of a truly legitimate government in Afghanistan. It was pressed as a valid interlocutor by other countries given its massive power on ground. This raised the question of whether reconciliation on the Taliban's terms is better than no reconciliation at all.
- ❖ A series of cumulative errors by the US had ultimately led to the Taliban being seen as a legitimate political actor to be negotiated with, instead of a terrorist organization.
- ❖ Rise of Taliban can also be attributed to the failure of Afghan Army. Despite the existing capabilities of the Afghan forces, problems related to capacity, corruption, attrition, internal structural frictions led to sub-par functioning.

Why Afghanistan Matters for India?

- ❖ Afghanistan plays a crucial role in India's quest to become a regional leader and a great power. This it hopes to achieve by mentoring the nascent democracy in the country.
- ❖ India has two main interest in Afghanistan, first that it prevents extremist group from taking over Afghanistan in the aftermath of US withdrawal and secondly curtail Islamabad's influence in Kabul and deny Pakistan's state and non-state agents leverage to plot against Indian interests.
- ❖ It also has economic interest in the region in form of TAPI (**Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India**) pipeline which awaits stability in Afghanistan.
- ❖ Afghanistan **provides access to the landlocked Central Asian countries** that border Afghanistan.
- ❖ Resource rich Afghanistan could become another field for regional competition and India needs to hedge its bet early.

- China's primary interest in Afghanistan is the peace and tranquillity in its restive Xinjiang province which has geographical proximity with Afghanistan.
- China also has placed its military presence in the Wakhan Corridor to counter the insurgent groups of Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP), Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) or East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) which seeks to establish an Islamic state of East Turkestan in Xinjiang.
- Withdrawal of the US forces would have created a power vacuum which China would be eager to replace so that it can secure its strategic interest.
- **Russia** is genuinely concerned about the spillover of terrorism from an unstable Afghanistan to Central Asia, it principally seeks to counter that threat by consolidating its hegemony over Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and strengthening its influence in Afghanistan by backing pro-Russian political figures. A failure of a US led peace process will be seen as opportunity by Russian to start their own peace process in Afghanistan. An initiative they took in form of **Moscow Process**.
- **Turkey** is also eyeing an opportunity to play its role to safeguard the interests of Afghanistan's Turkmen-Turkic community.
- **Iran** which is in the line of fire of the US sanctions has potential to play as both stabilizing as well as destabilizing factor in the peace process.



India's Concerns in Afghanistan

- This withdrawal will provide a psychological boost to the terrorist in Kashmir Valley as US withdrawal will be projected by Taliban as fruits of its Jihad.
- For India, American withdrawal comes at a time when its views on Afghanistan are at significant variance with other traditional regional partners like Russia and Iran.
- The region is filled with uncertainties-US sanctions had jeopardize Indian maneuvering in the Chabahar port, Taliban is gaining ground in Afghanistan. Afghan government controls barely half the country, with one-sixth under Taliban control and the rest contested.
- Situation is not rosy as there are chances of re-emergence of US stance of pro-Pakistan and at the same time there is likelihood of the creation of a Pak-China consortium which would seek to remove India from the arena.
- Pakistan continues to play the role of a spoiler in the peace process because of its support to Afghan Taliban.
- There are economic interests which India has in Afghanistan as it is the biggest regional donor to Afghanistan and fifth largest donor globally with over \$3 billion in assistance. India has built over 200 public and private schools, sponsors scholarships and hosts Afghan students.

Options for India

- There are myriad ways for India to espouse a stronger position in relation to Afghanistan, by publicly supporting the Afghan presidential elections, maintaining a neutral stance, and developing ports and strengthening the diaspora.
- In the ever-evolving situation in Afghanistan, India need to have open minded approach in dealing with the Taliban. There is a need for inclusive peace negotiations, and as great powers exercising caution and rationality in dealing with radical groups such as the Taliban.
- Revival of SAARC is important as in the absence of SAARC, the Afghanistan's engagement with the subcontinent has reduced, which India had worked hard to foster.
- Use of regional groupings like SCO to combat the terrorism emanating from Afghanistan.

Future of talks

The present US administration is looking for a major success on foreign policy front. There fall

on North Korea and in Trade war makes Afghanistan their last hope. But the speed with which the US administration moved forward with the peace process had brought criticism to the US administration. There haste was seen as a move that will not only bolster Taliban ideology but also will legitimize them. Therefore, a pause was taken by the US administration. Now, Since the Presidential elections in the US is close, there are chances that the talks will resume soon as the present US administration wish to resolve Afghan problem as early as possible.

But there is a view that resuming talks with the Taliban could be tougher. The Taliban opined that the US move will lead to more losses to Afghanistan, with American credibility eroded.

Way-Forward

- ✓ The US Withdrawal from Afghanistan is inevitable and hence close cooperation is required to preserve Afghanistan interest.
- ✓ There is a need of an inclusive dialogue: There is need to repeat the 2001 negotiations which happened under UN and had wider legitimacy.
- ✓ Afghan Elections: If Afghan government is able to conduct elections successfully then it will help in not only restoring its legitimacy but also helps in bringing down the support for Taliban.

For India:

- ✓ For India it's important to understand that Pakistan's inability to think of Afghanistan beyond its 'strategic depth' fallacy will ensure that whichever party comes to power in Kabul, it will look to New Delhi to safeguard its sovereignty.
- ✓ It needs to have dialogue on serious note with China and Russia and also try convincing Americans about the negatives of withdrawal of them.
- ✓ It should continue its efforts of implementing mega infrastructure projects, providing military equipment's and training to Afghan personnel on the sidelines.
- ✓ India's Afghanistan policy should rapidly adapt to the evolving realities and play a role that suits India's stature in the context of the wider South Asian region.

Afghan Led-Afghan Owned-Afghan Controlled Peace Process

India has long battled for an **"inclusive peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan, which is Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled,** leading to a lasting political solution based on the preservation of the gains" made since 2001. This includes preservation of the constitutional order and women's rights. India is concerned that anti-India terrorist groups could find a safe haven in Afghanistan and seeks to insulate itself from groups such as the Islamic State. India is already fighting terrorists trained in Pakistan who are infiltrating into Kashmir and would not like to see other groups join the fight.

PEPPER IT WITH

ETIM, Kabul Process for peace and Security cooperation, Heart of Asia Conference, Zaranj-Delaram road, Chabahar Port, National Unity Government, Wakhan Corridor

RCEP Negotiations

News Excerpt

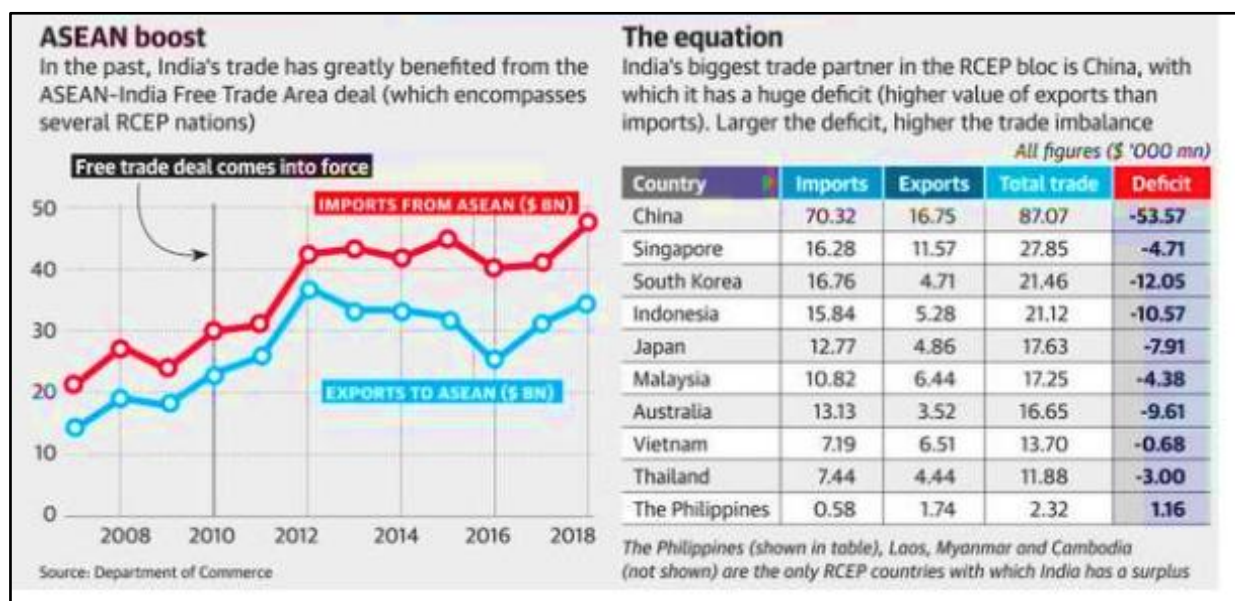
The 16 members RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) including India, have committed to conclude the trade agreement in full by November 2019. The ongoing global uncertainties have added to the urgency to conclude the mega free trade agreement between these nations. It was agreed among the partnering nations that they should not lose the long-term vision of deepening and expanding the value chains in the RECP.

Pre-Connect

- The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) announced the idea of a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (**RCEP**) in 2012.
- It would be the world's largest trading bloc covering a broad spectrum of issues such as trade in goods, services, investment, competition, intellectual property rights, and other

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areas of economic and technical cooperation



- RCEP is billed as the world's biggest trade agreement, the RCEP of 10 ASEAN countries with its six free trade agreement (FTA) partners India, China, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea.
- The RCEP countries make up 45% of the world's population with 33% of its GDP, and at least 28% of all trade in the world.
- If the RCEP is concluded it will bring stability to an otherwise unpredictable world market. The worry is that it could also make world trade less flexible, putting members into a quasi-bloc with China at the helm.
- Most RCEP members also conduct substantial trade with the United States, and the ongoing U.S.-China trade war may force many of them to take sides, causing a geopolitical rift within the group even before it is fully formed.

Why is India Holding the Deal?

The main stumbling blocks for the RCEP are the India-China trade relationship, as well as some concerns from Australia and New Zealand on labour and environmental protections.

There are several concerns India has with RCEP:

➤ China Factor-

- Unlike all the RCEP countries, India doesn't have FTA with China. There it needs to protect its economy from the flooding of cheap imports from China.
- RCEP negotiators have thus far agreed to allowing India a differential tariff ladder, for its FTA partners and its non-FTA partners (China, Australia and New Zealand) within the grouping.
- China wants zero tariffs for over 90 per cent tariff lines however, which could see low-cost "Made in China" goods kill locally manufactured goods.

➤ Local Pressure:

- Local trade bodies had called for clear declaration that the government would quit RCEP negotiations entirely, citing the impact the agreement would have on agriculture

CPTPP

The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is a free trade agreement among 11 countries in the Asia-Pacific region: Australia, Brunei, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. Once fully implemented, the 11 countries will form a trading bloc representing 495 million consumers and 13.5% of global GDP, providing Canada with preferential access to key markets in Asia and Latin America.

In 2018 the CPTPP entered into force among the first six countries to ratify the agreement – Canada, Australia, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, and Singapore.

and dairy sectors. This is primarily because a large chunk of the market price of agriculture and dairy sector goes to the farmers.

- They also pointed out that India's trade deficits have only grown with each country it has an FTA with, and already has deficits with 11 of the 15 other RCEP countries. As a result, the government has been cautious about moving ahead.

➤ Other Issues

- India has asked for strict "**Rules of Origin**" markings on all goods, so they don't come in through a third country.
- In addition, **India wants to ensure the free flow of services** (manpower) to RCEP countries as well but has faced an uphill task as most countries tighten their immigration laws.
- There are concerns regarding issues related to Intellectual Property as it can affect the generic medicines of India. Similarly, Data localization and ban on inventory-based model in the E-commerce sector in India will not likely be supported by partnering nations.
- Another area of concern is **Dispute resolution Mechanism** where India wants that the foreign companies use the mechanism available in India itself before moving to international forum. This especially in the case where Government is a party.

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)

The proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is a proposed comprehensive trade deal between the European Union (EU) and the United States with the aim of promoting trade and economic growth. The TTIP is a companion agreement to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which the United States withdrew from in 2017. It is expected to be the biggest trade agreement ever negotiated.

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Can there be a RCEP Without India?

China proposed a plan to conclude the negotiations without the naysayers, i.e. take the ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and South Korea) into the agreement, while leaving space for India, Australia and New Zealand to join later. Malaysian Prime Minister echoed the same idea after the ASEAN summit concluded in August 2019. But this is quite not possible as:

- ✓ Given the size of India's market there is no point of RCEP without India.
- ✓ India is the 3rd largest economy in the region.
- ✓ Keeping India out would hurt the consumers in the RCEP as it can provide cheap alternatives.
- ✓ The ongoing Trade war had forced China to find a new market to divert its excess manufacturing. And since it already has FTA with ASEAN, India is its only option.
- ✓ There are chances of postponement of deadline set up by RCEP as signing it set for the year 2020 showcasing the element of flexibility within the negotiations.
- ✓ There are structural problems in the RCEP itself as each country is unique in itself.

Should India Join the RCEP?

- ✓ There is clamor within the country to not to join the RCEP. That is why India is negotiating hard. The first rule of trade is that a party should trade in the area where it is strong. For India, that sector is services because of the huge human resources. Therefore, Global community should understand that if India opens up for their goods then they should also open it for Indian services.
- ✓ Further in the phase of globalization no country can isolate itself, and hence even if India decides to stay away from the deal, it will sooner or later find itself engaged indirectly.
- ✓ India has invested hugely in the region through its policy of **Look East and Act East** and now **Act Far East**. The result is that India is now seen as a major player in the Asia-Pacific, this advantage must not be given up by India.

Why India Need RCEP?



It would help in **complementing India's existing free trade agreements**. Also, it will address the challenges emanating from implementation concerns vis-a-vis overlapping agreements which is creating a "noodle bowl" situation and **obstructing effective utilization of these FTAs**.



Streamline the rules and **regulations of doing trade which will reduce trade cost**



It will also help achieve its goal of **greater economic integration** with countries East and South East of India through better access to a vast regional market ranging from Japan to Australia. The RCEP can be a stepping stone to **India's Act East Policy**



India is not a **party two regional blocs APEC and CPTPP**. RCEP will strengthen its trade ties and reduce the **potential negative impacts of CPTPP and TTIP**



It will facilitate India's integration into sophisticated "**regional production networks**" that make Asia the world's factory. The RCEP is expected to harmonize trade-related rules, investment and competition regimes of India with those of other countries of the group. Through domestic policy reforms on these areas, this harmonization of rules and regulations would help Indian companies plug into **regional and global value chains** and would unlock the true potential of the Indian economy. There would be a boost to **inward and outward foreign direct investment particularly export-oriented FDI**



India enjoys a comparative advantage in areas such as information and communication technology, IT-enabled services, professional services, healthcare and education services. RCEP markets provide more opportunities as the structure of manufacturing in many of these countries is becoming more and more sophisticated, resulting in a "**servicification**" of manufacturing. India is well placed to contribute to other countries in RCEP through its expertise in services, not only consolidating the position of the region as the world's factory but also developing it as the world's hub for services.

- ✓ India should rather continue negotiation and push its ideas, at the same time increase competency of its manufacturing.
- ✓ In this regard India should learn from the lessons it gained during the liberalization era, though initially some sector suffered but overall economic momentum increased.
- ✓ These are large structural changes from which India must not shy away. These changes would gradually make India acceptable to other countries.
- ✓ Further, one must not forget that India is not only the roadblock in conclusion of deal.



Conclusion

It is vital for India to ensure that the RCEP is truly comprehensive and does not just focus on market access for goods. Keeping these benefits in mind, India will need second-generation reforms of its domestic economic policies, including those that reform its factor markets, to make its trade more competitive. These reforms will help India better access other markets and will mitigate some of the repercussions for the Indian economy of the other two mega regionals. The worry is that 2019 is a make or break year for the RCEP, and if it doesn't conclude now, the deal itself could be "dead in the water".

PEPPER IT WITH
MERCOSUR, SAFTA, APEC, ASEAN,

Male Declaration

News Excerpt

4th South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was jointly organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the People's Majlis. Various senior lawmakers from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka along with International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) participated in the summit. Outcome of the summit was termed as "**Male Declaration**".

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Pre-Connect

Began in 2016, Summit was organized in by the Jatiya Sangsad and later the Sansad of India and the Parliament of Sri Lanka in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

Male Declaration

The declaration unanimously termed Kashmir as an internal matter of India and the summit was not envisaged as platform to raise bilateral issues. The declaration overlooked the assertions made by the Pakistani delegations.

India's New Position

- Government of India had made clear that only outstanding issue of Kashmir left for India is its claim on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), which includes Gilgit-Baltistan.
- The need for instrument of back channels and Four Point Formula has lost all its meanings.
- The decision will also have effect on the Indus Waters Treaty and Pakistan's strategy of creating obstacles for Indian power projects in Jammu and Kashmir permitted by the treaty.

Pakistan Options

Pakistan has propagandist options, but no substantial ones. This was evident from the call for Jihad from Pakistan PM after he visited UN General Assembly. Moreover, Pakistan is desperately trying raise the Nuclear bogey at every international forum it can.

There primary reaction would be strengthening and re-building the terror launch pads which were decimated after Balakot Air Strikes.

Why India is in Comfortable Position?

- ✓ UN though had called for the reduction in tensions it knows very well that it doesn't have any locus standi as change in India's domestic law on J&K's status is within the Indian Union & is not an international matter as it does not endanger international peace and security.
- ✓ More importantly, **Article 370 does not figure in any UN resolution on Kashmir**. It was inserted in the Indian Constitution in 1954 unilaterally by India, many years after the UN resolutions on J&K and, so, it can be unilaterally removed.
- ✓ Though UNSC held close door discussions, the outcome was favorable to India as it was only China that supported Pakistan stand, rest all supported India.

Conclusion

India should build on the international support it received on Kashmir in order to bring substantial and progressive changes on the ground. Restrictions should be removed in a phased manner with more and more public consultations and debate with the local population in crafting the future of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

India-Nepal Petroleum Pipeline

News Excerpt

India and Nepal inaugurated a cross-border oil pipeline, which will transport fuel to the landlocked country. The move seeks to bind Kathmandu closer to New Delhi, economically and strategically.

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- Petroleum Products are carried from India to Nepal using oil tankers as part of an arrangement which has been in place since 1973.
- The Motihari-Amlekhgunj oil pipeline project was first proposed in 1996.
- The project was put back on the agenda during Prime Minister visit to Kathmandu in 2014.
- The two governments had signed an agreement to execute the project in 2015. Construction had begun in 2018. It was constructed by Indian Oil Corp. Ltd (IOCL) in collaboration with Nepal Oil Corp. Ltd (NOCL).
- The NOCL hopes to save ₹200 crore annually with the new pipeline.

- The 69km pipeline will transport fuel from the Barauni refinery in Bihar to Amlekhgunj in south-east Nepal and is the first cross-border petroleum products pipeline in South Asia.

Analytica

Areas of Cooperation between India and Nepal

➤ **Trade and economy**

- India is one the largest trade partner for Nepal
- It is one of the largest sources of foreign investments for Nepal.
- Most of the transit of Nepal passes through India.

➤ **Connectivity**

- Being a landlocked country, Nepal is depended on India for its connectivity.
- There are various connectivity programs such as Electric rail link between Raxaul and Kathamandu.
- India is also keen to develop inland waterways which will provide additional access to sea for Nepal. it is termed as the connection between Sagarmath (Mt. Everest) with Sagar (Indian Ocean).

➤ **Defence Cooperation**

- Gorkha Regiment of India Army also includes soldiers belonging to Nepal Hill districts.
- India also provides training to Nepalese Army and assist in its modernization of equipment.
- Surya Kiran is the bilateral exercise between the two countries.

➤ **Cultural**

- There is active people-to-people contacts in the area of art & culture, academics and media with different local bodies of Nepal.
- Both nations have three sister-city agreements between Kathmandu-Varanasi, Lumbini-Bodhgaya and Janakpur-Ayodhya.

➤ **Humanitarian Assistance**

Nepal is prone to earthquakes and floods. In such cases of tragedy, India is one of the biggest donors. E.g Aid of Rs 1.6 billion through “operation Maitri” in the aftermath of 2015 Nepal Earthquake.

➤ **Multilateral Partnership**

India and Nepal share various Multilateral platforms such as BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal), BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) NAM, and SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) etc.

Why Nepal Matters for India?

- ❖ There are 5 Indian states that borders Nepal such as Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Sikkim and Bihar. These area shares social, cultural as well as economic exchange with Nepal.
- ❖ Nepal is also strategically important as it act as buffer state between India and China.
- ❖ It also plays vital role in ensuring India's national security. In recent times, reports of its being used as terror launch-pad by ISI has become common. Arrest of terrorist like Yasin Bhatkal shows the importance of Nepal in ensuring India's security.
- ❖ Rivers originating in Nepal forms perennial river systems of India in terms of ecology and has huge hydropower potential.
- ❖ Hindu and Buddhist religious sites in Nepal forms an ancient link between both the countries

Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950

- ❖ Treaty is based on the idea of reciprocal treatment of each other citizens in arena of residence, property, business and movement.
- ❖ It also establishes national treatment for both businesses therefore once a good is imported it is treated as domestic goods.
- ❖ It also provides Nepal access to weaponry from India.

Challenges in India-Nepal Relations

- ✓ Nepal has emerged as terror breeding grounds in recent times. It has become the source of fake Indian currency. Maoist forces present in Nepal has potential to foment trouble in eastern part of Left-wing extremism affected India.
- ✓ The inherent inability of India to deliver on the projects on time had created mistrust and

widened India-Nepal gap.

- ✓ There is anti-India feeling among certain ethnic groups in Nepal which emanates from the perception that India indulges too much in Nepal and tinkers with their political sovereignty.

China in Nepal

- The aim of the pipeline is to cement India-Nepal ties in the face of major inroads made by China into the Himalayan nation, and seeks to repair the trust deficit between the two countries due to an economic blockade seemingly imposed by India in 2015 to persuade Nepal to change some provisions in its new constitution.
- The development comes against the backdrop of recent plans for a rail link between Nepal and China cutting through the Himalayas.
- There were also plans to link Nepal and China through an energy pipeline running through the Himalayas.
- Both were seen as means by Nepal to find an alternative to its dependency on India and came on the back of tensions in 2015.
- Sino-Nepal economic ties have grown dramatically over the last few years. At \$79.26 million, China is Nepal's biggest foreign investor, accounting for 58 per cent of foreign direct investment in the second half of last year, more than twice that of India's \$36.63 million.
- As India failed to deliver on its commitments in time, Nepal gravitated towards China. This has been especially the case in the hydropower sector where Chinese companies have made great strides in the last few years.

PEPPER IT WITH
Haldiya Port, BBIN,
BIMSTEC, NAM, SAARC

Way-Forward

- ✓ A strongly sovereign Nepal is beneficial, not detrimental, to India's security. Nepal shares a 1,400-km-long border with the Tibetan Autonomous region of China, perhaps the only section in the Himalayas where there are no security threats.
- ✓ In a way, Nepal has helped India avoid the need to deploy thousands of troops and military hardware to this extra 1,400 km for its force posturing.
- ✓ Emphasizing Nepal's sovereign status and independent policy choices and helping Nepal exercise these is in India's interest. Similarly, there are concerns in some quarters of Kathmandu about the possible trilateral or 2+1 cooperation, that Nepal's sovereign interests are being undermined in the India-China deals. It will help build trust if India manages to translate its good will into meaningful action.
- ✓ As long as the principles of non-interference and peaceful co-existence are respected and a high level of political engagement is pursued, there will be bonhomie and cooperation between the leaders of India and Nepal.
- ✓ At the same time, it will assuage China's unease about its security in Nepal. Disregarding India's traditional muscular diplomacy, PM Modi seems to have been following this line of cooperative diplomacy.
- ✓ Nepal is equally eager about the prospects of being road-connected with Myanmar and Thailand through BIMSTEC as it is with the BRI on the northern front. Therefore, India may want to institutionalize the current approach, which seems to be in the best interest of both.

Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)

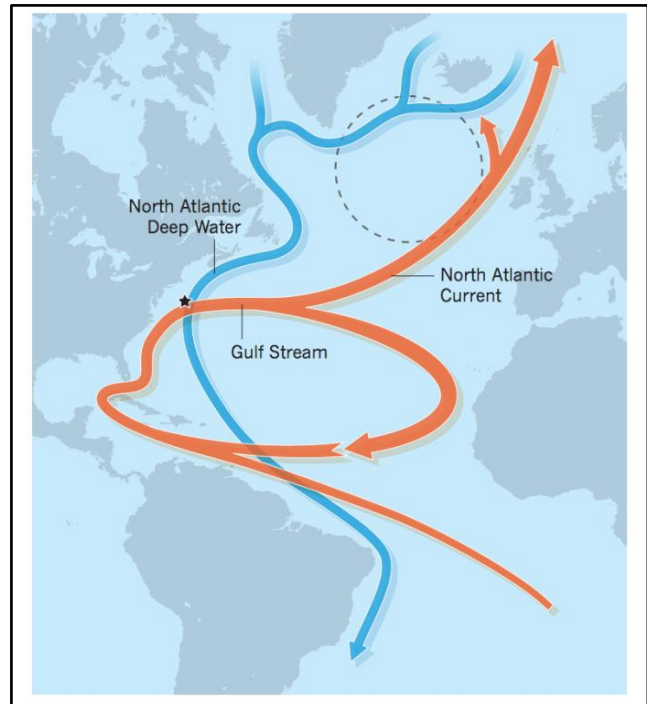
News Excerpt

Recent study published in Nature Climate Change reveals greenhouse warming caused by human activity is heating up the Indian oceans, and it is likely to boost a key system of currents in the Atlantic Ocean, that plays a key role in determining the weather across the world.

What is AMOC?

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- The AMOC – which is sometimes referred to as the “**Atlantic conveyor belt**” – is a large-scale ocean current that moves warm, salty water from the tropics to regions further north, such as western Europe.
- The adjoining graphic shows the two main parts of the AMOC. The first is the flow of warm, salty water in the upper layers of the ocean northwards from the Gulf of Mexico (red line). This is made up of the “**Gulf Stream**” to the south and the “North Atlantic current” further north.
- The second is the cooling and freshening of water in the high latitudes of the Atlantic, which then sinks and returns southwards towards the equator at much deeper depths (blue line).
- The warm water that the AMOC carries northwards releases heat into the atmosphere, which means it plays a crucial role in keeping Western Europe warm. Without it, winters in the UK could be around 5 degree Celsius colder.



What is the cause of concern?

- Scientists fear that climate change could be causing the AMOC to “slow down”.
- Two studies published in “Nature” found that the AMOC had slowed by 15% since the mid-20th century.
- Further AMOC slowdown has been linked to an increased risk of intense storms in Europe and faster sea level rise in parts of the US, among other problems.

What does the study say?

- ✓ Researchers found that rising temperatures in the Indian Ocean can help boost the AMOC and delay slow down.
- ✓ Warming in the Indian Ocean generates additional precipitation, which, in turn, draws more air from other parts of the world, including the Atlantic.
- ✓ The higher level of precipitation in the Indian Ocean will reduce precipitation in the Atlantic and increase salinity in the waters
- ✓ However, scientists don't know for how long this enhanced warming in Indian Ocean will continue. “If other tropical oceans’ warming, especially the Pacific's, catches up with the Indian Ocean, the advantage for AMOC will stop.

PEPPER IT WITH
Indian Ocean Dipole, El-Nino, LA- Nina, Pacific Decadal Oscillations

Conclusion

Slowdown in AMOC last occurred 15000-17000 years ago which caused harsh winters in Europe, with more storms or a drier Sahel in Africa due to the downward shift of the tropical rain belt. The mere possibility that the AMOC could collapse should be a strong reason for concern in an era when human activity is forcing significant changes to the Earth's systems. Most importantly recent finding exemplifies the intricate, interconnected nature of global climate and hence demands coordinated and time bound course of action from global community.

IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere

News Excerpt

Recently the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has approved and accepted the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate at its 51st Session held in September 2019. The report highlighted the urgency for more aggressive climate action from world leaders, especially those representing the big emitters.

Major Findings

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- Over the last decades, global warming has led to widespread shrinking of the cryosphere, with mass loss from ice sheets and glaciers, reductions in snow cover and Arctic sea ice extent and thickness, and increased permafrost temperature.
- Global mean sea level (GMSL) is rising, with acceleration in recent decades due to increasing rates of ice loss from the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets.
- These changes have contributed to changing the seasonal activities, abundance and distribution of ecologically, culturally, and economically important plant and animal species, ecological disturbances, and ecosystem functioning.
- Coastal ecosystems are affected by ocean warming, including intensified marine heatwaves, acidification, loss of oxygen, salinity intrusion and sea level rise, in combination with adverse effects from human activities on ocean and land.
- Since the mid-20th century, the shrinking Cryosphere in the Arctic and high-mountain areas has led to predominantly negative impacts on food security, water resources, water quality, livelihoods, health and well-being, infrastructure, transportation, tourism and recreation, as well as culture of human societies, particularly for Indigenous peoples.
- Both positive and negative impacts result for food security through fisheries, local cultures and livelihoods, and tourism and recreation.
- Coastal communities are exposed to multiple climate-related hazards, including tropical cyclones, extreme sea levels and flooding, marine heatwaves, sea ice loss, and permafrost thaw.
- The report lays stress on Integrated water management and transboundary cooperation which provides opportunities to address impacts of these changes in water resources.
- This new assessment has also revised upwards the projected contribution of the Antarctic ice sheet to sea level rise by 2100 in the case of high emissions of greenhouse gases.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

- ❖ It was created in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- ❖ The objective of the IPCC is to provide governments at all levels with scientific information that they can use to develop climate policies.
- ❖ The IPCC provides regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.
- ❖ IPCC reports are also a key input into international climate change negotiations.

Conservation efforts to protect marine ecosystem

International Community

- The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 14)** create a framework to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems from land-based pollution, as well as address the impacts of ocean acidification. Enhancing conservation and the sustainable use of ocean-based resources through international law will also help mitigate some of the challenges facing our oceans.
- **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** aims to: to enable equitable and efficient utilisation of ocean resources; to protect and preserve the marine environment and to promote Maritime safety.
- **The Global Environmental Facility (GEF)** is the designated interim financial mechanism for the Stockholm Convention, also focuses on mitigating marine pollution and conservation of marine resources.

PEPPER IT WITH
Blue Flag Initiative, UNCLOS

Government of India

- ✓ **Environment protection Act 1986** prohibits the use of any parts of selected marine faunal communities against construction and other purposes.
- ✓ **Coastal Regulation zone rules 1991**: Regulates onshore development activities to protect coastal environments.
- ✓ **India's new Automated Ocean Pollution Observation System** by Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) which will remove the need for physical collection of samples for a faster assessment of marine pollution level.

Way Forward

- Cutting greenhouse gas emissions will limit impacts on ocean ecosystems that provide us with food, support our health and shape our cultures.
- Reducing other pressures such as pollution will further help marine life deal with changes in their environment, while enabling a more resilient ocean.”
- Policy frameworks, for example for fisheries management and marine-protected areas, offer opportunities for communities to adapt to changes and minimize risks for our livelihoods.

Forest-PLUS 2.0

News Excerpt

Recently, US Agency for International Development (USAID) and India's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) officially launched Forest-PLUS 2.0 which aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and enhance sequestration through afforestation, conservation, and sustainable management of forests.

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Pre-Connect

- India has communicated in its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) under Paris Agreement (2015) to capture 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of Carbon dioxide through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.
- Under the Bonn Challenge, India has brought an area of 9.8 million hectares under restoration since 2011, meaning that work to restore these landscapes is already underway.

What is Forest- PLUS?

- It is a five-year programme initiated in December 2018 that focuses on developing tools and techniques to bolster ecosystem management and harnessing ecosystem services in forest landscape management.
- **Forest-PLUS 1.0:** The program's first set focused on capacity building to help India participate in **Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+)**. It included four pilot projects in Sikkim, Rampur, Shivamogga and Hoshangabad.
- **Forest-PLUS 2.0** comprises pilot project in three landscapes — Gaya in Bihar, Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala and Medak in Telangana.
- The choice of these sites was driven by the contrast in their landscapes – Bihar is a forest deficit area, Telangana is a relatively drier area where there is ample scope for community livelihood enhancement and Kerala is rich in biodiversity.

Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+)

- ❖ It is a mechanism developed by Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- ❖ It creates a financial value for the carbon stored in forests by offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development.
- ❖ REDD+ goes beyond simply deforestation and forest degradation and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

The Targets

- ✓ 1,20,000 hectares of land under improved management
- ✓ New, inclusive economic activity worth \$12 million
- ✓ Measurable benefits accrued to 800,000 households
- ✓ Three incentive mechanisms demonstrated in managing landscapes for ecosystem services

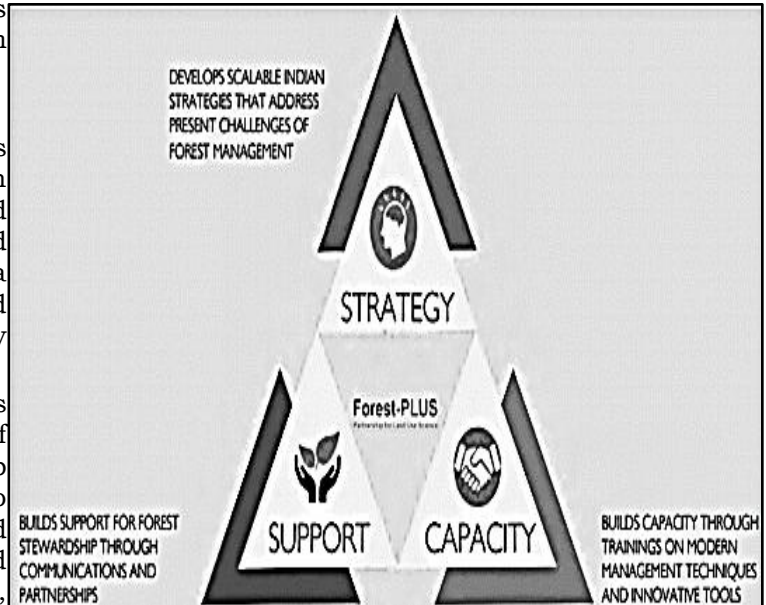
The Focal Points of Action

1. **Developing tools for multiple services in forests management:** innovative apps for automating forest planning processes, model forest management plans to result in enhanced water flow and quality, improved livelihoods and resilience of forest-dependent communities.
2. **Developing incentive-based instruments for leveraging finance.**

3. **Unlocking economic opportunities** for forest-dependent people by modeling and setting up conservation enterprises and mobilising investment from the private sector.

Achievements

- **Ecosystem Health:** USAID has developed an innovative decision support tool for evidence-based fuelwood management called **iFoReST** that can predict a range of scenarios of fuelwood use and predict sustainability and forest regeneration rates.
- **Forest Monitoring:** USAID has supported the Government of India's efforts to develop innovative techniques to improve forest management and monitoring, reporting, and verifying carbon inventories, including **mForest**, a mobile phone app for forest inventory data.
- **Forest Carbon Projects:** USAID has four successful climate mitigation projects that not only improve forests but also can make carbon payments to communities involved in forest conservation.
- **Livelihoods:** USAID works with poor and marginalized forest communities in some of the remotest regions of India. *In the Koraput district of Odisha, one of the lowest ranking districts of India on the UN's Human Development Index, community members learned new skills for the sustainable harvest and processing of non-timber forest products. Then they invested in five women-led producer companies, boosting incomes for 4,000 families by 40 percent.*
- **Innovative Private-sector Engagement:** USAID has brought together local communities, government agencies, civil society groups, and the private sector for afforestation activities.



Conclusion

- Forest resources have been important for the prosperity of any nation and its communities. Increased pressure on forest resources has threatened the livelihoods of millions of forest-dwellers.
- Forest PLUS programme brings much needed enthusiasm in fulfilling the SDG 15 that aspires to promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.
- Such wide scale afforestation programmes are necessary to combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.
- However, success of the project depends upon our sincere efforts to mobilise significant resources from all sources and at all levels to finance sustainable forest management and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance such management, including for conservation and reforestation.

PEPPER IT WITH

Van Dhan Yojana, Bonn Challenge

COP-14 of United Nations conference to combat desertification (UNCCD)

News Excerpt

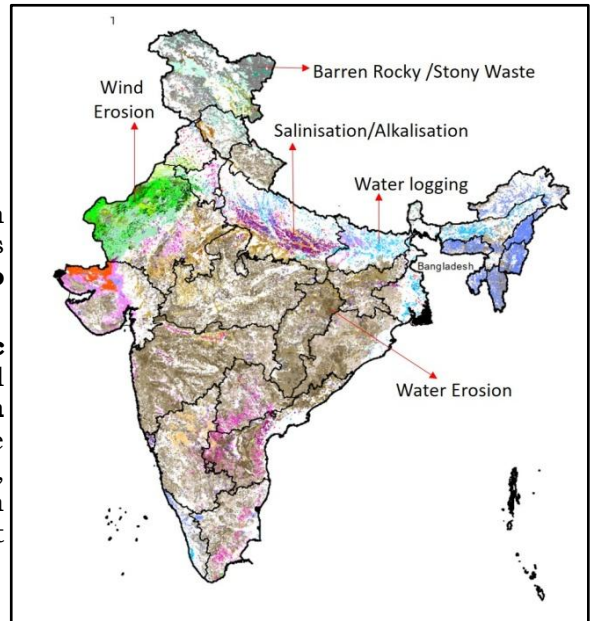
COP-14 of UNCCD was held recently in New Delhi. India took-over the COP presidency from China for two years until the next COP is hosted in 2021.

Pre-Connect

- **Desertification:** It is the process by which the fertility of soil start reducing making the region unfit for vegetation and slowly converting the region into deserts.

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- Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the **sole legally binding** international agreement linking environment and development to **sustainable land management**.
- At **UNCCD COP13** that took place in September 2017 in Ordos, China, the countries have agreed on a **new global roadmap to address land degradation**.
- The new **UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework** is the most comprehensive global commitment to achieve **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)** in order to restore the productivity of vast swathes of degraded land, improve the livelihoods of more than 1.3 billion people, and to reduce the impacts of drought on vulnerable populations.



Highlights of the COP 14

- **New Delhi declaration:** The conference adopted 35 legally binding agreements to be followed by all the 197 countries and emphasized on the land degradation and drought.
- All countries recognized that **desertification undermines health, development** and prosperity in all regions.
- **Community driven approach:** Special emphasis was given on community-driven transformative projects that are gender-sensitive at local, national and regional levels to drive implementation.

Threats due to desertification

- ✓ **Land degradation:** desertification makes land unfit for vegetation which makes primary sector industries like agriculture of the region vulnerable. Marginalization of land also takes place.
- ✓ **Effect on endemic species:** presence of endemic species is important for any ecosystem. The desertification leads to extinction of species and also migration which disrupts the ecosystem resilience of a place.
- ✓ **Migration:** Unwanted migration because of the Drought is major threat of desertification. A 2019 study by Laurent-Lucchetti pegged the number of migrants driven by drought to increase by 22 million in Africa, 12 million in South America and 10 million in Asia in 2059 from 2000-2015 levels.
- ✓ **Economic losses:** The loss in the land quality lead to economic loss to the county and also to the people living there. According to the study, in India, losses in the agriculture sector caused by land degradation due to water erosion, wind erosion, salinity and loss of vegetation are pegged at Rs 72,000 crore (\$10.68 billion)—more than the agriculture budget of Rs 58,000 crore (\$8.54 billion) in 2018-19.

Drought Toolbox

- ❖ At the COP-14 of the UNCCD the drought toolbox was officially released which can be used by countries to assess drought risks in their regions much in advance, and prepare to deal with the water scarcity.
- ❖ The drought toolbox, which uses 30 parameters, including soil moisture, rainfall data and temperature data of the present and past, can accurately evaluate the vulnerability of different geographic regions to drought.
- ❖ The economic impact of drought has increased almost three-fold in the last few years. If the cost of drought globally was \$29 billion a year during 2005-2015, it is now is more than \$80 billion a year.
- ❖ Droughts have caused loss of foodgrains that can feed as many as 81 million people every day.
- ❖ According to World Bank study, droughts, which are normally difficult to foresee are four times costlier than floods.
- ❖ A2 degree Celsius increase in global temperatures will put an additional 441 million people at the risk of facing drought globally.
- ❖ Unfortunately, drought knows gender very well. It adversely impacts women's well-being in resource-poor areas as they have to spend longer periods looking for water.

Steps taken by India to tackle desertification

- Various schemes have been launched by the Government of India: Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), Soil Health Card Scheme, Soil Health Management Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojna (PKSY), Per Drop More Crop, etc. which are helping to reduce land degradation.
- At UNCCD COP 14, India also launched its flagship project on enhancing capacity on forest landscape restoration (FLR) through a pilot phase of 3.5 years implemented in the States of Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland and Karnataka. IUCN will be partnering with India in this project.
- India also joined the voluntary Bonn Challenge pledge to bring into restoration 13 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by the year 2020, and additional 8 million hectares by 2030. India's pledge is one of the largest in Asia.

What Needs to be Done?

- **Multi stakeholders involvement:** Apart from central and state governments, local self governments, private sector, NGOs, volunteers need to work together to combat the threat of desertification in concerted manner.
- **Tailored policies for different zones:** The different vulnerable zones must have policies tailored to the geographical area and culture of the place
- International community should work in unison to deal with the issue of desertification by realizing the urgency of the issue. Developed countries can very well assist the developing countries in terms of monetary assistance, technology support, training and skill development of the human resource etc.
- Time bound implementation strategy and monitoring framework hold key to the success of all the conservation efforts.

PEPPER IT WITH
Command area development programme, SIAL desertification Case study from Africa

Climate vulnerability map of India

News Excerpt

Indian government has recently taken a decision to develop climate vulnerability assessment map in order to prepare communities and people to meet the challenges arising out of developments such as rising sea levels, increasing number of extreme weather events, urban floods, changing temperature and rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts etc.

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- Such climate vulnerability atlas has already been developed for 12 states in the Indian Himalayan Region, using a common framework now this methodology will be extended to non-Himalayan states so that we can have a national level climate vulnerability profile for India. The atlas is expected to be ready by the middle of 2020.
- Mizoram has recently launched a state wide public awareness campaign on the basis of the assessment, while West Bengal has developed a decision support system for prioritizing springshed management project sites using the climate vulnerability map as an input.

About Climate Vulnerability map of India

- The climate change research programme of DST is being implemented as part of **the National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE)** and **National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change (NMSKCC)**.
- The map is being developed under a joint project of **the Department of Science and Technology (DST)** under **the Union Ministry of Science and Technology** and **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)**.
- A common set of indicators will be used vulnerability profile and ranking of 650 districts all over the country.

Need of Climate Vulnerability map of India

- ✓ Climate risk is interplay of hazard, exposure, and vulnerability. While the occurrence of natural hazards such as landslides, droughts, and floods are projected to go up, their

impact depends on the level of exposure such as the presence of people and infrastructure in areas that could be adversely affected or climate-sensitive livelihood of people.

- ✓ Addressing vulnerability can help reduce risk to climate change. Vulnerability is the propensity to be adversely affected and can be measured in terms of both biophysical as well as socio-economic factors.
- ✓ The vulnerability assessments will be useful for officials, decision makers, funding agencies and experts to have a common understanding on vulnerability and enable them to plan for adaptation.

PEPPER IT WITH
Survey of India,
NMSHE, IHCAP

Groundwater Crisis

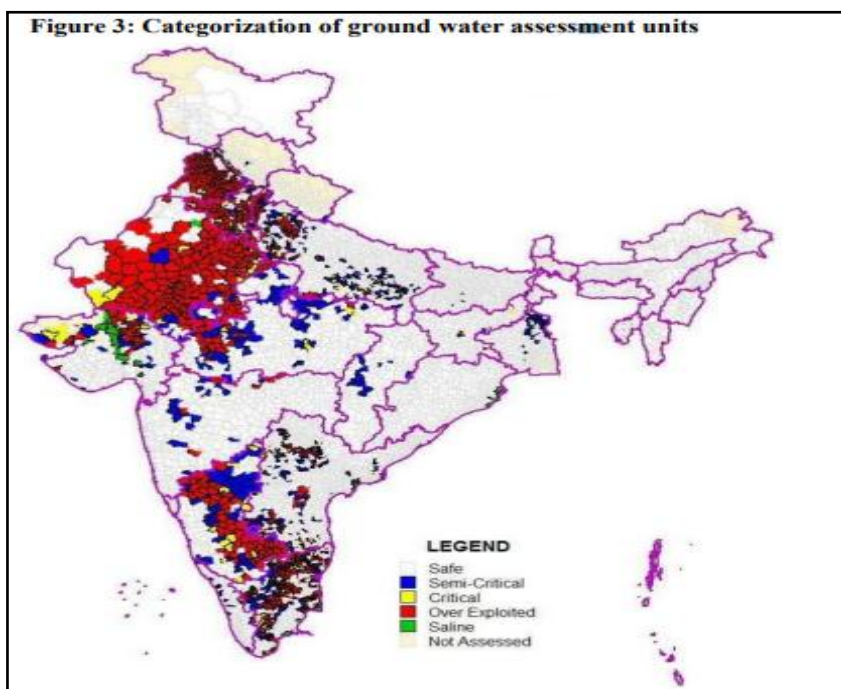
News Excerpt

Recently National green Tribunal has raised concerns over depleting groundwater resources and its illegal extraction and has formed a committee to devise steps to check illegal extraction of Groundwater Resources.

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- Groundwater overuse or overexploitation is defined as a situation in which, over a period of time, the average extraction rate from aquifers is greater than the average recharge rate.
- In India, the availability of surface water is greater than groundwater. However, owing to the decentralized availability of groundwater, it is easily accessible and forms the largest share of India's agriculture and drinking water supply.
- Irrigation (89%), Domestic usage (9%), Industrial use (2%) forms the major chunk of Groundwater usage. 50% of urban water requirements and 85% of rural domestic water requirements are also fulfilled by groundwater.



Analytica

Factors Responsible for Depletion of Groundwater Resources

- After the **Green Revolution in the 1960s** got us dependent on groundwater instead of surface water The Groundwater level receded year after year.
- **Politics of subsidy:** What Aggravated the problem is various state government giving subsidies on electricity and farmers buying powerful pumps to deepen the existing wells
- In the **fifth Minor irrigation Census**, Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), a body responsible for monitoring the sustainability of Ground water Resources in the Country noted that **more than 1,000 blocks have become water stressed**.
- **Faulty agricultural practice** like growing paddy, sugarcane (A Water intensive crop) in the North western region of the country where farmers often resort to irrigation, deepening the wells with powerful pumps.
- **Destructing the natural flow of Ecosystem:** Trees hold Rain water and slowly drops it to the ground thereby recharging the aquifers, according to one Estimate 13 million hectares of forest are lost every year across the world.
- **Illegal extraction of groundwater:** Mainly in Urban areas where in residential houses

illegal submersible pumps is installed whose detection is not an easy task provided the High tech technology in place

- **Ground Water Contamination:** Already scarce resource is contaminated by the presence of certain pollutants in ground water that are in excess of the limits prescribed for drinking water. The commonly observed contaminants include arsenic, fluoride, nitrate and iron, which are geogenic in nature. The sources of contamination include pollution by landfills, septic tanks, leaky underground gas tanks, and from overuse of fertilizers and pesticides

Steps taken by the Government

- ✓ **Atal Bhujal Yojana:** Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY) aimed at sustainable ground water management with community participation in select over-exploited and ground water stressed areas. The objective of this scheme is to recharge ground water and create sufficient water storage for agricultural purposes. This scheme also focuses on revival of surface water bodies so that ground water level can be increased, especially in the rural areas.
- ✓ **Ground water Conservation Fees:** Every project proponent is supposed to pay certain amount of fee depending upon the use of abstracted water, area of abstraction and amount of abstracted water.
- ✓ **Jal Shakti Abhiyan:** A time-bound, mission-mode water conservation campaign. The JSA aims at making water conservation a Jan Andolan through asset creation and extensive communication.
- ✓ **Maharashtra Government “Magel Tyala Shet Tale” (Farm Ponds on demand) Scheme:** Under this Scheme Ponds on a large scale is built drought hit areas of Maharashtra

Way Forward

- Government should **amend The Easement Act of 1882**, which states that landowners in their own premises can extract Groundwater based on availability and his discretion which takes a toll on already depleting Groundwater resources. This should be amended as community resources.
- Recommendation of **Mihir shah Committee** should be implemented. The Committee was of the opinion that Central Groundwater Board and Central Water Commission(CWC) should be restructured and Unified to Form National Water commission, as the problem of surface and groundwater should not be seen in isolation.

PEPPER IT WITH
Central Groundwater
Authority, Jal Shakti
Mission,

PROJECT REPLAN

News Excerpt

With an aim to **remove existing plastic waste from the Environment**, Khadi Village

Industries Commission (KVIC) has launched Project REPLAN (Reducing Plastic in Nature).

Pre-Connect

- KVIC under this project Collects Waste plastic, process and treats it and finally is mixed with paper raw material which forms the major part to make plastic mixed handmade paper
- KVIC is a statutory body established under KVIC Act, 1956 under the Ministry of Micro small and Medium Enterprises.

Analytica

Major Sources of Plastic Waste

- The massive generation of plastic waste in India is due to rapid urbanization, spread of retail chains, plastic packaging from grocery to food and vegetable products, to cosmetics and consumer items.
- The popularity of **online retail and food delivery apps**, though restricted to big cities, is contributing to the rise in plastic waste.

Menace of Plastic Waste

- ✓ Uncollected plastic waste eventually ends up in the natural environment — in our seas and oceans or piling up on our lands. By 2050, the amount of plastic in seas and oceans across

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the **world will weigh more than the fishes.**

- ✓ Marine plastic litter can result in a significant ecological impact from entanglement and ingestion, and can also act as a vector for the **transport of invasive species and other pollutants**
- ✓ Plastics are mainly made up from petro chemicals which are **Toxic in nature** and eventually they seep into our body through the long process of food chain which causes many health hazards like chronic Bronchitis, Genetic defects and many other.
- ✓ India has the largest Cattle Inventory in the World. Retaining the top **spot of Healthy cattle population is a challenge as very often directly or indirectly we see cattle taking food wrapped in a plastic.**

How Project REPLAN plans to check the Menace

- According to one estimate of Central pollution Control Board (CPCB) **Only 60 % of the plastic waste generated in our country is recycled** leaving Behind tonnes of waste in the Environment
- Therefore, to check the problem, KVIC will bring to use the waste generated by plastics and as this bags will be **eco friendly** it will in a way discourage people to use conventional plastic.



Other Government steps

- India stands among the few other countries like France and several African countries that **have initiated total or partial national-level bans on plastics in their jurisdictions, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report of 2018**
- On World Environment Day in 2018, Government **vowed to phase out single-use plastics by 2022**
- Devising **Solid Waste Management Rules 2016** which sought to improve source segregation; designing an effective municipal solid waste (MSW) plans; ensuring collection and transportation of segregated waste and encouraging the country to identify and use affordable plastic alternative products.
- It not only resolves the issue of treating the waste but also **creates jobs and business opportunities. As shown by Germany which provides employment opportunity for about 250,000 people and generates a revenue of 70 billion euros.**

PEPPER IT WITH
3R Principle, SDG-12, ecological footprint

Way Forward

Banning plastics will not serve the purpose. Instead of closing down plastic manufacturing and trading units and rendering lakhs jobless, manufacturing units should **be nudged to produce alternatives** like bioplastics, Eco friendly bags designed by the KVIC under Project REPLAN.

Emission Trading Scheme

News Excerpt

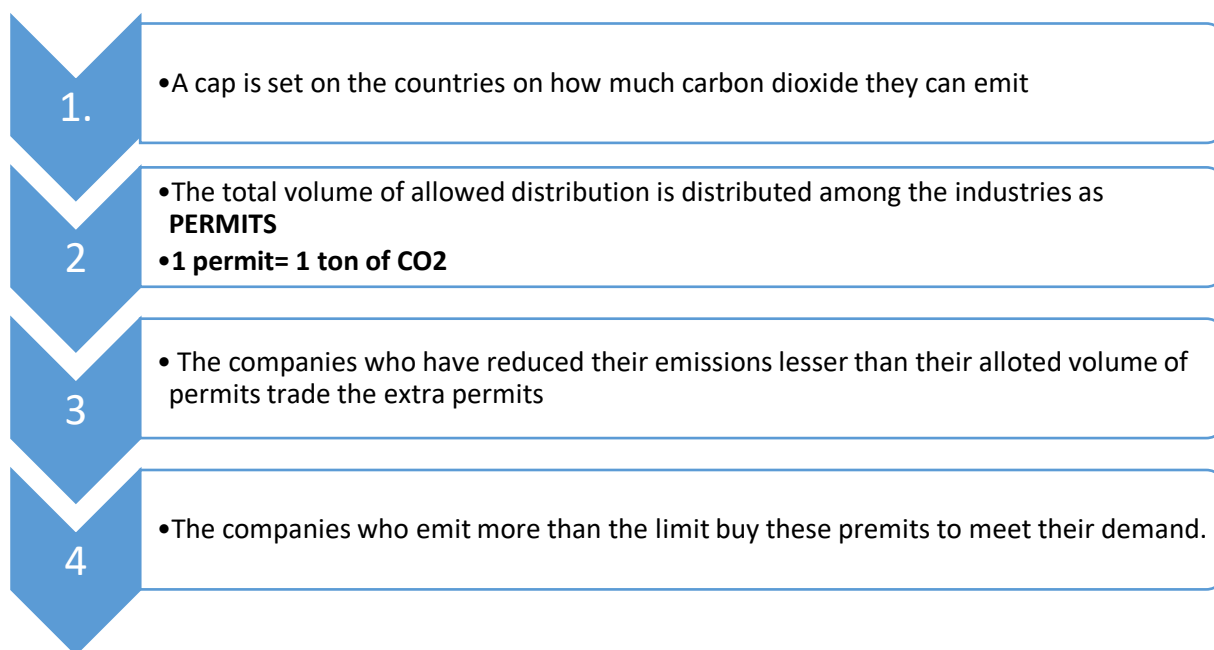
Gujarat government recently launched world's first market for trading in **particulate matter emissions.**

Pre-Connect

The concept of emission trading was first started in the Kyoto Protocol with the idea to reduce the air pollution.

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The working principle of emission trading scheme in general:



Highlights

- While trading mechanisms for pollution control do exist in many parts of the world, none of them is for particulate matter emissions
- A cap on emission load is set by the state pollution control board of Gujarat.
- Industries in Surat had installed **Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems**, which makes it possible to estimate the mass of particulate matter being released.
- The trading permits (in kilogram) are traded on the ETS-PM trading platform hosted by the **National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange e-Markets Limited (NeML)**.

Trading Mechanisms Around the World

- ❖ **Carbon development mechanism:** The CDM allows emission-reduction projects in developing countries to earn certified emission reduction (CER) credits, each equivalent to one ton of CO₂. These CERs can be traded and sold and used by industrialized countries to meet a part of their emission reduction targets under the **Kyoto Protocol**.
- ❖ **European Union emission trading system:** The EU ETS works on the 'cap and trade' principle
- ❖ **PAT scheme (India):** scheme is a flagship programme of Bureau of Energy Efficiency under the National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE).

Analytical

- The idea of ETS is to reduce the emission as the trading of the permits will become expensive in the market so companies will eventually cut down the pollution level.
- However, the numbers of permits in the market are very high and therefore the cost to buy permits is very low which allows to industries to buy cheap permits and pollute the environment.
- **Market stability reserve:** To deal with the problems of the current surplus of allowances and improve the system's resilience to major shocks by adjusting the supply of allowances to be auctioned market stability reserve can be formed like in the Europe.
- The extra permits are back-loaded to earlier dates in the reserve so that the market becomes costly for such trading.

PEPPER IT WITH

BEE, NAPCC, Kyoto protocol, National Air Quality Index

Way Forward

- ✓ Such efforts at the state level must be encouraged more in order to curb the menace of pollution with innovative solutions.

- ✓ The above mentioned scheme can also be replicated by other states with uniform guidelines from central government as PM particles due to their size pose challenge in pollution control measures.
- ✓ At the same time emphasis should also be placed on the disciplined implementation and monitoring so as to serve the intended purpose.

India's Cooling Action Plan

News Excerpt

India is one of the first countries in the world to develop a comprehensive Cooling Action plan which has a long term vision to address the cooling requirement across sectors and listed out actions which can help reduce the cooling demand.

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Highlights

The overarching goal of ICAP is to provide sustainable cooling and thermal comfort for all while securing environmental and socio-economic benefits for the society. The following goals emerge from the suggested interventions stated in ICAP over the reference scenario:

1. Recognition of "cooling and related areas" as a thrust area of research under national science and technology programme to support development of technological solutions and encourage innovation challenges.
2. Reduction of cooling demand across sectors by 20% to 25 % by year 2037-38.
3. Reduction of refrigerant demand by 25% to 30% by year 2037-38
4. Reduction of cooling energy requirements by 25% to 40% by year 2037-38
5. Training and certification of 100,000 servicing sector technicians by year 2022-23, **synergizing with Skill India Mission.**

Analytica

- Cooling is recognized as a developmental need that is linked with achieving many Sustainable Development Goals.
- Cooling requirement is cross sectoral and an essential part for economic growth and is required across different sectors of the economy such as residential and commercial buildings, cold-chain, refrigeration, transport and industries.
- Cooling is recognised as key for the health and well-being of people in hot climates.
- India is a growing economy characterized by low penetration of air conditioning, rising per capita income, rapid urbanization and a largely tropical climate, which would lead to rise in the requirement for cooling.
- Addressing the rising cooling requirement provides a challenge as well as a unique opportunity, by allowing synergies in policies and actions to address the cooling requirement across sectors, while making it sustainable and accessible to all.
- According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), refrigeration and air conditioning (RAC) causes 10% of the global CO2 emissions.
- India has one of the lowest access to cooling across the world, which is reflected in its low per-capita levels of energy consumption for space cooling, at 69 kWh, as compared to the world-average of 272 kWh.

Benefits due to development of the sector

- Thermal comfort for all - provision for cooling for EWS and LIG housing
- Sustainable cooling – low GHG emissions related to cooling
- Doubling Farmers Income – better cold chain infrastructure – better value of produce to farmers, less wastage of produce
- Skilled workforce for better livelihoods and environmental protection
- Make in India – domestic manufacturing of air-conditioning and related cooling equipment's
- Boost to robust R&D on alternative cooling technologies – to provide push to innovation in cooling sector.

PEPPER IT WITH
World Ozone Day,
Montreal Protocol,

Conclusion

India has consciously chosen a path for most environment-friendly and energy efficient technologies. The thrust of the India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP) is to look for synergies in

actions for securing both environmental and socio-economic benefits and thus deserves due appreciation.

Shola grasslands

News Excerpt

A report was filed by an expert committee formed by the Madras High Court recently on deleterious impact of invasive species on the Shola forest and grasslands.

Pre-Connect

- Three petitions were filed in the Madurai bench of the high court in 2014, 2016 and 2017 to draw the court's attention to this invasion which later moved to the Madras High Court, and on January 11, the court formed an expert committee to look into the issue.
- The domination of invasive species in the Western Ghats was between 65 and 75 per cent, according to data presented by the state government.
- According to state government data, no secondary or fresh growth of indigenous trees, plants or grass, which serves as food for elephants, was seen in areas occupied by invasive species.

Shola Vegetation

- ❖ The Shola vegetation are tropical montane forests found in the Western Ghats separated by rolling grasslands in high altitudes above 2000 meters of sea-level.
- ❖ Due to high isolation and unique climatic conditions, the Shola forests are characterised by high endemism native to southern Western Ghats.
- ❖ The shola forests form unique regions called "Sky Islands" which occur only at higher elevations.
- ❖ The shola forest and grassland complex has been described as a climatic climax vegetation with forest regeneration and expansion restricted by climatic conditions such as frost or soil characteristics.

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Highlights of the Report

- The committee found that around 60 per cent (690 square kilometres) of the entire core and buffer area of the reserve is under invasion.
- Expanding plantains like tea and eucalyptus along with exotic and invasive species in the Nilgiris can wipe out Shola vegetation.
- The Shola vegetation has become relict in Ooty Nilgiris and may vanish soon as a result of exotics and tea plantations.
- Thus, the committee recommended that there is an urgent need to map the extent of exotic plantations, spread of invasive alien species and loss of grasslands in each forest division of the Nilgiris.
- An interim report read this change in vegetation will result in loss of water sources and is already leading to massive landslides.

COAST CUTTER

CLASSIFICATION

CRZ I | Ecologically sensitive areas like sanctuaries, reserve forests, mangroves, coral reefs, turtle-nesting grounds, which could be inundated due to rise in sea level


CRZ II | Areas which have already been developed up to the shoreline within municipal or corpn limits

CRZ III A | CRZ III areas with a population of more than 2,161 per sqkm. Here, 50m from high tide will be no-development zone (NDZ)

CRZ III B | Other CRZ III areas with less population. Here area up to 200m from the HTL on the landward side will be earmarked as NDZ

BOOST FOR TOURISM

➤ With the freeze on constructions along the coastal zone more or less lifted, the tourism sector will be the biggest beneficiary



➤ Toilets, changing rooms, drinking water facility and temporary shacks can be constructed even on beaches

➤ Existing residential buildings can be converted into homestays without increasing the plinth area

➤ CRZ will not be a bar for public utilities like roads even if it passes through mangrove forests

➤ Introduction of CRZ-III into A and B clauses will address state's main concern of issuing permission to dwelling units as well

BACKGROUND

➤ Under Environment Protection Act, 1986 a notification was issued in February 1991 for regulation of activities in coastal area by the ministry of environment and forests

➤ Coastal land up to 500m from the high tide line (HTL) and area of 100m along banks of estuaries, backwater, creeks and rivers which are subject to tidal fluctuations are called coastal regulation zone (CRZ)

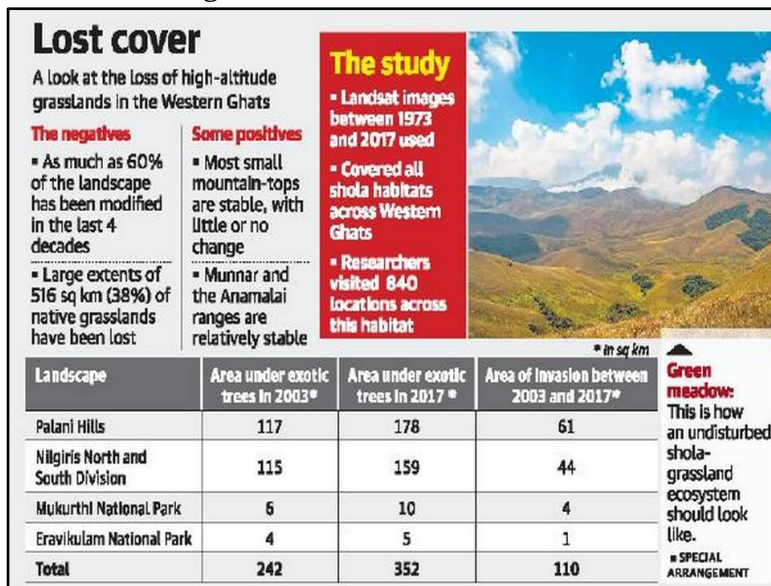
Analytica

Why Are Shola Forests Important?

- ✓ The shola forests have **high water retention capacity** than any other soil.
- ✓ They are the source of water in rivers like **Cauvery, Thamirabarani, Vaigai etc**
- ✓ They are the reason for moderate climates for several cities along their foothills.
- ✓ They are home to several **endemic species of plants and animals**.

There are several reasons for the diminishing shola-grassland complex such as:

- ✓ The Shola tree species have one of the lowest regeneration rates
- ✓ These forests and grasslands are being cleared for agriculture.
- ✓ Construction of hill stations is another major threat to these forests.
- ✓ Mining activities are increasing in the Western Ghats leading to habitat destruction of its flora and fauna.
- ✓ Hydroelectric projects and dams are a great threat as it submerges thousands of acres of forests.
- ✓ Millions of acres of hill-tops and slopes which were once covered in grasslands and shola forests are now barren tea plantations.



Invasive species are the most pressing issue in Shola grasslands.

- ✓ The exotic invasive species were introduced in the country during the colonial era for aesthetic enrichment and commercial purposes and they were now occupying the lands in Nilgiris and the Kodaikanal Hills. Lantana was one harmful invasive species which ruins common agricultural and forestlands.
- ✓ Over four decades, the country lost almost one-fourth of these grasslands. We now only have the remnants of a healthy forest and there was a serious possibility of the forest becoming a relic due to invasive alien species, therefore birds are dying, animals are straying out of the forests in search of food and lands are drying because of the exotic invasive species.

PEPPER IT WITH
Madhav Gadgil Report,
Kasturirangan Report

Way forward

All possible efforts must be made to conserve the remaining grassland tracts. Steps should be taken like banning plastic in forest zone, prohibiting vehicles that pollute, employing local population, increasing forest staff strength, creating a strong seed bank and so on. More awareness needs to be created among the public to join hands to save the unique gift given to us.

Maradu Demolition Case

News Excerpt

Recently Supreme Court upheld the order to demolish four posh apartment complexes that have come up close to the backwaters of Kochi in violation of Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) rules. It has led to the eviction of around 400 families and hence demands serious attention.

Pre-Connect

- The foundation for the case was laid in 2006, when the Maradu Panchayat granted permission for the construction for five waterfront apartments overlooking the scenic **Kochi** backwaters.

PEPPER IT WITH
Environmental Impact Assessment

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- As a compensation for the eviction, Supreme Court has ordered the Kerala Government to pay 25 lakh to each flat owner as an interim relief. It also said that this money can be recovered from those responsible for erecting the structures.

Sustainable Coastal Zone Management: A need of an hour

- India's coastal zone is endowed with fragile ecosystems including mangroves, coral reefs, estuaries, lagoons, and unique marine and terrestrial wildlife, which contribute in a significant manner to the national economy.
- Economic activities such as rapid urban-industrialization, maritime transport, marine fishing, tourism, coastal and sea bed mining, offshore oil and natural gas production, aquaculture, and the recent setting up of special economic zones have led to a significant exploitation of these resources.
- In addition to the contribution of increased economic activity, coastal development and livelihoods are under stress due to a higher incidence of severe weather events, which have the potential to inflict irreversible damage to lives and property, for communities that are traditionally poor and vulnerable to economic shocks.
- Thus, **sound environment governance mechanism** needs to be put in place for integrated and coordinated decision-making. Present mechanism in India is facing challenges due to fragmented policies and multiple institutional legal and economic planning frameworks, with often conflicting objectives and approaches.
- Given India's vulnerability to climate change we cannot afford another mistake similar to Maradu Case.

Mapping Lightning Across India

News Excerpt

Recently a report that has mapped lightning strikes across the country and the lives they have claimed, for the first time has been prepared by Climate Resilient Observing Systems Promotion Council (CROPC), a non-profit organisation that works closely with India Meteorological Department (IMD).

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Highlights of the Report

- It counted 65.55 lakh lightning strikes in India during this four-month period between April and July this year.
- 23.53 lakh (36 per cent) happened to be cloud-to-ground lightning, the kind that reaches the Earth.
- The other 41.04 lakh (64 per cent) were in-cloud lightning, which remains confined to the clouds in which it was formed.
- According to the report, Mid-Monsoon 2019 Lightning, Odisha was followed by Maharashtra with 6.26 lakh strikes and Karnataka with 6.21 lakh.
- With 224 deaths, Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest casualties, followed by 170 in Bihar and 129 in Odisha.

How will this study help?

- Between 2,000 and 2,500 people are estimated as killed every year in lightning strikes in the country.
- Thus, there was a need to create a database that can help develop an early warning system for lightning, spread awareness, and prevent deaths.
- It is possible to predict the lightning strike, 30-40 minutes in advance; the prediction is made possible through study and monitoring of the in-cloud lightning strikes. Timely dissemination of this information can

The Phenomenon of Lightning

- ❖ Lightning is an electrical discharge between a high amount of electrons at the bottom of a cloud and their resulting attraction of protons in objects in the ground.
- ❖ As many as 1 billion volts can be present in a single bolt.
- ❖ Thunder can help approximate how far away a lightning strike occurred. For every **5** seconds between a strike and the thunder it caused, the lightning is **1** mile away.
- ❖ There are approximately 100 lightning strikes every second on Earth. This equals approximately 8.6 Million strikes per day.
- ❖ There are three main types of lightning. The **Cloud-to-Ground** type is the most familiar due to its appearance, visibility and threat to people, and occurs between a cloud and object on the ground. **Cloud-to-Cloud** lightning occurs between two unique clouds, and **Intra-Cloud** lightning occurs within a single cloud.

save several lives.

- Along with the number of strikes, the study has focused on intensity and frequency of the lightning bolt.
- Microzonation (the process of subdividing a potential seismic or lightning prone area into smaller zones) of forecasts, landfall and impact of lightning strikes is necessary to prevent deaths.
- CROSPC plans to develop **Lightning Resilience Index** for States which would include Lightning risk assessment, Lightning early warning and dissemination system, capacity building programme, Lightning protection system –its quality and density, Lightning research etc. It would further help in reducing casualties by spreading awareness.

PEPPER IT WITH
IMD, NDMA

Climate Action Summit-2019

News Excerpt

Recently Climate Action Summit was held in New York on the sidelines of United Nations General assembly meeting.

Pre-Connect

- **Climate change is real:** The last four years were the four hottest on record, and winter temperatures in the Arctic have risen by 3°C since 1990.
- **Threats:** Sea levels are rising, coral reefs are dying, and we are starting to see the life-threatening impact of climate change on health, through air pollution, heat waves and risks to food security.
- **Paris COP 21:** During the summit the countries pledge of reducing global greenhouse gas emissions by 45 per cent by 2030, and to “net zero” by 2050. All the countries revealed a **Nationally determined contribution by 2020.**

Highlights of the Summit

- **Concrete plans:** As per the COP 21 the countries have revealed much specific plans for under the NDC which has to be updated every 5 years.
- **Industry Transition Track initiative:** A global initiative that will help guide the world's heaviest greenhouse gas (GHG) emitting industries towards the low-carbon economy.
- 66 countries are planning to achieve **carbon neutrality** by 2050.
- **Least developing countries** have pledged to enhance their climate plans next year and reach net zero emissions by 2050.
- **Indian commitment:** Raise the portion of renewable energy into its energy mix to 175GW by 2022, with the aim of boosting it to **450GW** in the long-term.

Analytica

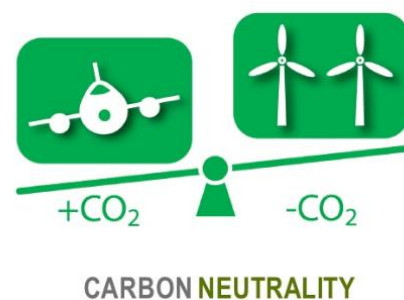
Hurdles in fight against climate change

- Fund Crunch:** The funding for sustainable climate initiatives have not taken pace as the developed countries have not shown desired enthusiasm. 100 billion dollars funding pledge by the developed countries to developing countries is still awaited.
- Consensus among the countries:** There is a divide between Developed and developing countries of who is responsible for the climate change. This delays the process and world is losing time. Recently USA (largest emitter of Green House gases) also backed out of the Paris COP 21.
- Lack of technology:** Renewable energy technologies are still in their nascent stage in developing and LDC countries requiring more funding, assistance in technology transfer as well as in training from developed world.
- Poor monitoring framework:** Various international treaties regarding climate action lack

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Carbon Neutrality

The concept is basically a net zero emission of GHGs. It aims at establishing ecological balance between activities that are responsible for pollution and processes that reduce the impact of that pollution to zero or close to zero.



sound monitoring framework. Lack of enforcement in time bound mechanism is simply unaffordable given the severity of climate change threat.

Initiatives by India on Climate Change

1. India NDC pledge

- * Pledged to improve the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35 per cent by 2030 below 2005 levels.
- * Increase the share of non-fossil fuels-based electricity to 40 per cent by 2030.

2. Bonn Challenge:

Enhance its forest cover which will absorb 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂, the main gas responsible for global warming) by 2030.

3. National action plan for Climate Change:

Initiative was started in 2007 in India with 7 sub plans under it for sustainable development.

4. **Hydropower policy** for 2018-28 has been drafted for the growth of hydro projects in the country.
5. **National Mission on advanced ultra-supercritical technologies** for cleaner coal utilisation.
6. **Custom and excise duty benefits** to the solar rooftop sector, which in turn will lower the cost of setting up as well as generate power, thus, boosting growth.

Friday for future

- ❖ Fridays for Future is a people's movement following the call from **Greta Thunberg** to school strike.
- ❖ The movement that began in August 2018, after 15 years old Greta Thunberg sat in front of the Swedish parliament every schoolday for three weeks, to protest against the lack of action on the climate crisis.
- ❖ The movement went viral on social media and now Greta requested school going children to strike on every Friday in front of their closest town hall and post picture on social media.
- ❖ The point is to show what is the need of going to school when the future is itself is not safe due to climate change.

Way Forward

- ✓ **Common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR):** The climate change is global problem. The divide between the Developed and developing countries must be reduced for swift action on the problem. Both developing and developed countries should voluntarily come forward and assume responsibility to tackle the issue. Given the historical factors and level of development, developed countries should assume leadership under CBDR as propounded by Kyoto Protocol.
- ✓ **Research and development:** Veracious funding is required in the field of renewable energy as with time the energy crisis will become even more evident which will have domino effect on the economic and social life of the global community.
- ✓ Fight against climate crisis needs **multistakeholder approach** which includes involvement of not just governmental authorities but also various NGOs, MNCs, local authorities etc. Acting in concert holds the key in this sphere.

PEPPER IT WITH

UNFCCC, Paris COP-21, INDC, NAPCC, IPCC report, GHGs

Iodine survey in India

News Excerpt

Recently an Iodine Survey Report has been released by **Nutrition International** in collaboration with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, Association for Indian Coalition for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD) and Kantar. Iodized salt is salt that contains minimum of 15 parts per million of iodine in it.

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Pre-Connect

Universal Salt Iodization (USI) in India

- In India, the entire population is at risk of Iodine Deficiency Disorder (IDD) due to iodine deficiency in the soil and, subsequently, in the food derived from it.
- India was one of the first countries in the world to introduce salt iodization in 1962 to

eliminate goiter. But initially the program did not receive the attention it deserved because, at the time, goiter was considered mainly a cosmetic problem.

- In 1983 IDD control was included in the National Development Program. In the same year, the Central Council of Health in India recommended that iodized salt should be made available to the entire population.
- In 1992, the national goiter program was renamed as the National IDD Control Program (NIDDCP), reflecting the government's commitment to eliminating the whole spectrum of IDD.
- Universal iodization of edible salt became the recommended intervention strategy, and the program has become one of the biggest public health successes in India.

The National Coalition for Sustained Optimal Iodine Intake (NCSOII) was established in 2006 with partnership from government agencies, Salt Commissioner of India, academic institutions, salt producers and traders, bilateral and multilateral development agencies and civil society

Key Highlights

- Three out of every four Indian households consume adequately iodised salt, necessary for optimal mental and physical development.
- **On Production level-** Gujarat is India highest producing salt state accounting 71% of total production followed by Rajasthan at 17% and Tamil Nadu at 11%.
- **On Consumption level-** Tamil Nadu has the lowest consumption of Iodized salt Andhra Pradesh (63.9%), Rajasthan (65.5%), Odisha (65.8%) and Jharkhand (68.8%).
- Only 13 out of 36 States have achieved Universal Salt Iodisation or have 90% of households with access to adequately iodised salt.
- The northeastern States have appropriate consumption of Iodised salt at the household level because of the distance they have from the salt producing centres.

Significance of Iodine

- ✓ Iodine is a trace mineral required for optimal mental and physical development and is a key constituent of thyroid hormones.
- ✓ Iodine deficiency is the single largest cause of preventable brain damage globally.
- ✓ Rapidly changing environmental conditions leading to melting of glaciers, frequent floods, change of river beds and loss of forest cover have led to depletion of the iodine from the top layers of the soil.

Steps Needed to be Taken

There is need to take several steps to achieve USI by 2020 in India such as:

1. Adopt a mission approach for greater coordination
 - a. Include time-bound targets at all administrative levels.
 - b. Strengthen national and state IDD cells of the NIDDCP:
 - i. Provide financial support
 - ii. Strengthen infrastructure
 - iii. Build human resources capacity
2. Strengthen the supply chain of iodized salt
 - a. Streamline policy and regulations from production to consumer level.
 - b. Consolidate, modernize, and mechanize the salt industry.
 - c. Give special focus on medium- and small-scale salt producers.
3. Strengthen the regulatory framework
 - a. "Zero tolerance" and punishment of violators of mandatory salt iodization.
 - b. Focus on effective implementation of the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act.
4. Quality Control of salt testing laboratories

- a. Computerized Management Information System (MIS) in laboratories.
 - b. Stringent laboratory quality assurance programs.
5. Special focus on vulnerable groups: pregnant women and newborn children
 - a. Survey special populations and use targeted interventions.
 - b. Strengthen research.
6. Reaching the unreached
 - a. Use the Public Distribution System (PDS) for low-cost delivery of adequately iodized salt to marginalized populations.
 - b. Target economically disadvantaged populations and zones that have low coverage.
 - c. Leverage the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme, the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) program, and the feeding program.
7. Strengthen information, education and communication
 - a. Scale up behavior change communication (BCC) activities.
 - b. Enable communities to monitor the quality of iodized salt through salt testing kit (STKs).
 - c. Monitor and give regular feedback on STKs.
8. Sustain and strengthen partnerships
 - a. Continue engagement with development agencies.
 - b. Target the National Coalition and State Coalitions for high-level advocacy.
9. Track progress
 - a. Carry out national and state IDD surveys, especially of high-risk populations such as pregnant women and school children.
 - b. Encourage regular zonal reviews by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
 - c. Encourage state and district level reviews by the respective administrative heads.
10. Sustain progress
 - a. Vigorously implement and regularly monitor the program.
 - b. Develop and achieve political resolve and agreement.
 - c. Strengthen the Salt Commissioner's office and foster close collaboration with the salt industry.

PEPPER IT WITH

Food-Fortification, Universal salt iodization, IDD, ICDS, MDM

First military medicine conference of SCO

News Excerpt

The first conference on military medicine of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was hosted by India. It was organized under the aegis of Headquarters Integrated Defense Staff (HQ IDS). The conference forms the part of the SCO defence cooperation plan 2019-2020.

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Thematic Connect

- **Aim:** The aim of the conference was to share best practices in the field of **military medicine, build capacities and overcome common challenges.**
- **Pakistan** refused to attend the meeting because of the ongoing tussle with India.

Bio-Terrorism

Bio-Terrorism: It is a **planned and deliberate use of pathogenic strains** of microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, or their toxins to **spread life-threatening diseases** on a mass scale in order to devastate the population of an area and create an environment of panic and chaos.

Categorization

Category A

- These are easily disseminated or transmitted from person to person, result in high mortality rates, and have the potential for major public health impact.
- Example include Anthrax, Smallpox.

Category B

- These are the second highest priority agents include those that are moderately easy to disseminate, result in moderate morbidity rates and low mortality rates, and require specific enhancements
- For E.g. Salmonella

Category C

- These are highest priority agents include emerging pathogens that could be engineered for mass dissemination in the future because of availability, ease of production and dissemination, and potential for high morbidity and mortality rates
- For E.g. Influenza, HIV etc.

The Biological Weapons Convention, 1972

About

- It is a legally binding treaty that outlaws biological arms.
- Its non-signatory states are Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Israel, Kiribati, Micronesia, Namibia, South Sudan and Tuvalu

BwC bans

- The development, stockpiling, acquisition, retention, and production of:
 - Biological agents and toxins "of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes;"
 - Weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles "designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict."
- The transfer of or assistance with acquiring the agents, toxins, weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles described above.
- The convention further requires states-parties to destroy or divert to peaceful purposes the "agents, toxins, weapons, equipment, and means of delivery" described above within nine months of the convention's entry into force.
- The BWC does not ban the use of biological and toxin weapons but reaffirms the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which prohibits such use. It also does not ban biodefense programs.

Analytica

Significance of Conference

- ✓ **Co-operation:** The conference will improve cooperation among the SCO nations in the field of combat medical support and disasters.
- ✓ **Preparedness against bio-Weapons:** bio-terrorism is a real threat for India and therefore such cooperation and technological sharing will help the countries to be prepared against bio-terrorism.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

- ❖ It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation, created in 2001.
- ❖ The SCO comprises eight member states, namely India, Kazakhstan, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan
- ❖ Proceeding from the **Shanghai Spirit**, the SCO pursues its internal policy based on the principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, mutual consultations, respect for cultural diversity, and a desire for common development, while its external policy is conducted in accordance with the principles of non-alignment, non-targeting any third country, and openness.

India's current preparedness:

- As of now in India any biological threats are dealt by the disaster relief force of National Disaster relief program.
- Existing force is specifically trained to deal with chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats.

Way Forward

- **Legal mandate:** There is no law till now on bio-terrorism in India like the Bioterrorism Act of 2002 of USA. India should make it a law.
- **International cooperation:** Technological advancement and for security benefits there is need of international cooperation same like the SCO meeting.
- **Skilled and dedicated force:** Specialized forced with all the modern equipment and technology must be kept ready for any such incidents.
- **Awareness:** like mock drills in case of Earthquakes and tsunamis, awareness about bio terrorism must be spread and how to handle such situation by the general public.

PEPPER IT WITH
SCO, NDMA, Integrated Disease Surveillance Project (IDSP)

Hepatitis B

News Excerpt


Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Thailand have become the first countries in WHO South-East Asia Region to achieve Hepatitis B control, with prevalence of the deadly disease dropping to less than one per cent among five-year-old children, the World Health Organization. The virus is said to be controlled when the disease prevalence is reduced **to less than 1% among children less than five years of age.**

Pre-Connect


- There are five types of Hepatitis known as A, B, C, D and E, in which A and E are water borne and spread through contaminated food or water, then Hepatitis B, C and D are blood borne and at last Hepatitis D causes infection only along with Hepatitis B.
- The major concern is being focused for Hepatitis B which can spread unknowingly from a mother who is infected to a new born child.
- Over 90% of new hepatitis B infections occur through mother-to-child transmission and during the early age of childhood.
- An estimated 1.4 million people die each year in the world from Hepatitis B, about 4,000 a day, due to liver cirrhosis (shrunken hard liver) or liver cancer.
- This is a staggeringly high number, higher than the counts for HIV/ AIDS and tuberculosis combined.
- At 40 million, India has the maximum number of people infected with the hepatitis B virus (HBV), next only to China, 1-2 per cent of whom die.

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HOW IS HEPATITIS B SPREAD?




Infected mother to baby during birth



Sexual contact with infected partners




Direct contact with infected blood




Shared drug equipment

Hepatitis B can also be spread by sharing items such as toothbrushes or razors with someone infected with hepatitis B.


WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?



Yellowing of skin and eyes (jaundice)



Fever




Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea


Symptoms may also include: dark pee, pale poop, stomach pain, tiredness, lack of appetite.

If you have symptoms please call your healthcare provider or local health department.

HOW DO I HELP PREVENT HEPATITIS B FROM SPREADING?



GET VACCINATED for hepatitis B



USE CONDOMS with sexual partners

* VACCINATION IS RECOMMENDED FOR:

- Anyone wanting protection against hepatitis B
- People who use recreational drugs
- Men who have sexual contact with men
- People who are homeless or in transient living
- People who have direct contact with someone with hepatitis B

How South-East Asian Countries counter with this?

- **Unwavering determination to reach every child, everywhere**, every time, with life-saving Hepatitis B vaccines through childhood immunization, has made this achievement possible.
- **The Expert Panel for Verification of Hepatitis B Control** in WHO South-East Asia Region recommended verification of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Thailand, after reviewing childhood immunization data that showed consistent over 90% coverage with Hepatitis B vaccine doses provided during infancy for past many years.
- Children across 11 countries of WHO South-East Asia Region get three doses of Hepatitis B containing vaccines in their first year of life under national immunization Programme.

Eight countries also administer Hepatitis B vaccine birth dose crucial to prevent mother-to-child transmission of the disease.

- **Preventing Hepatitis B infection in infancy substantially reduces chronic infections and cases of liver cancer and cirrhosis in adulthood.**

What are the Challenges India Face?

✓ **Sub-Optimal Coverage:**

Despite the high vaccination coverage, prevalence of disease in children less than five years has not dropped below 1%. This is primarily attributed to the sub-optimal coverage of birth dose in all infants within 24 hours of birth. Hepatitis B birth dose, given in the first 24 hours, helps prevent vertical transmission from the mother to child.

- ✓ Coverage of Children has remained low **45% in 2015 and 60% in 2016**. One of the reasons for the low coverage is the fear of **wastage of vaccine** when a 10-dose vial is used.
- ✓ **Social Stigma:** Discrimination and marginalization of people living with the chronic infection is a major concern that majorly impact the life of patients. This also act as significant hindrance to care-seeking, treatment compliance and mother to child transmission mainstreaming.
- ✓ **Identification issues:** Hepatitis B or C positivity is equated with HIV positivity and is a deterrent to voluntary testing. Indeed, those who test positive rarely disclose and take treatment, resulting in chronic and advanced conditions. The infected need to be protected by a civil rights law. Society need to change their mindset, embrace and support the infected.

National Viral Hepatitis Control Program

Aim of the Program

- ❖ Combat hepatitis and achieve country wide elimination of Hepatitis C by 2030
- ❖ Achieve significant reduction in the infected population, morbidity and mortality associated with Hepatitis B and C viz. Cirrhosis and Hepato-cellular carcinoma (liver cancer)
- ❖ Reduce the risk, morbidity and mortality due to Hepatitis A and E.

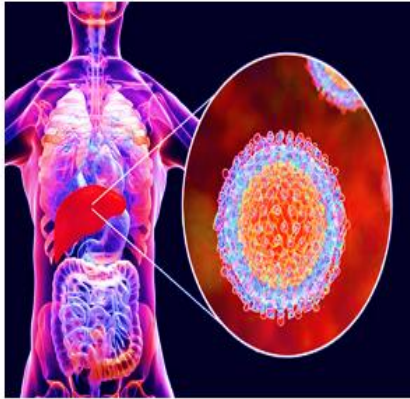
Key Objectives

- ❖ Enhance community awareness on hepatitis and lay stress on preventive measures among general population especially high-risk groups and in hotspots.
- ❖ Provide early diagnosis and management of viral hepatitis at all levels of healthcare
- ❖ Develop standard diagnostic and treatment protocols for management of viral hepatitis and its complications.
- ❖ Strengthen the existing infrastructure facilities, build capacities of existing human resource and raise additional human resources, where required, for providing comprehensive services for management of viral hepatitis and its complications in all districts of the country.
- ❖ Develop linkages with the existing National programmes towards awareness, prevention, diagnosis and treatment for viral hepatitis.
- ❖ Develop a web-based “Viral Hepatitis Information and Management System” to maintain a registry of persons affected with viral hepatitis and its sequelae

PEPPER IT WITH
Indradhanush Scheme, ICDS

What are the possible solutions?

- **Preventive Screenings-** Will help in identification of dormant infections and treat them on time, especially in case of high-risk individuals who have undergone dialysis or blood transfusions.
- **Spread Awareness-** Public health experts also claim that awareness about safe blood transfusion and use of safe needles for injections is very important, Similarly, it is crucial to educate youth about the threat of hepatitis infection through unsafe needles used in tattooing and body piercing.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation, Surveillance and Research-** There is need of regular

<p>Hepatitis A Most common type of Viral Hepatitis. Transmission- Fecal-Oral route i.e. contaminated food and water Treatment- No specific treatment available only symptoms are treated. Vaccination Available-Yes High Prevalence Areas: The Indian subcontinent, Africa, Central and South America, the Far East and Eastern Europe.</p>	<p>Types of Viral Hepatitis</p> 	<p>Hepatitis D Perquisite- Only People suffering from Hep-B. it needs the presence of the Hep-B to survive in the body Transmission- Same as Hep-B Treatment- Self Care and Avoiding Alcohol. No treatment for Hep-D Vaccination- Yes- use of Hep-B as Without Hep-B Hep-D is not possible. High Prevalence Areas: Central and west Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, South America, Pacific Island and Greenland</p>
<p>Hepatitis B Transmission-Unprotected sex or by sharing needles to inject drugs. As virus is present in Blood and body fluids. Treatment- Anti Viral Medications and avoidance of Alcohol Consumption. Vaccination Available-Yes High Prevalence Areas: It is common in India and other parts of the world, such as China, Central and Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.</p>		<p>Hepatitis E Transmission- Fecal-Oral route. Person-to-Person transmission is rare. Treatment- Supportive care, rehydration and rest. Vaccination Available- Yes High Prevalence Areas: Indian Subcontinent West Africa, Southern Africa Mexico, Taiwan and China</p>
<p>Hepatitis C Transmission: Blood to Blood Contact. Treatment: Antiviral Medications- it causes side effects though Vaccination Available: No High Prevalence Areas: Worldwide, Most affected regions- Eastern Mediterranean region and European region</p>	<p>Alcoholic hepatitis Transmission- Heavy Alcohol Consumption Treatment- Medication and Detoxing Detection- Blood test only Risk: Continuous consumption of Alcohol may cause cirrhosis and liver failure</p>	<p>Autoimmune Hepatitis A very rare cause of Chronic Hepatitis Treatment- Medicine that suppress the immune system and reduce inflammation and Steroid Medication Vaccination- Yes-same as that of Hep-A High Prevalence Areas: Western Europe</p>

monitoring and evaluation of vaccination and intervention program. Research in the field of Hepatitis and causes need to be strengthen.

- **Training and capacity Building-** Strengthen the hepatitis induction and update programs for all level of health care workers using both, the traditional cascade model of training through master trainers and various platforms available for enabling electronic, e-learning and e-courses.

Green Technology Initiative

Methane Powered Rocket Engine

What? ISRO is planning to develop a Methane Powered rocket engine. Methane, which can be synthesized with water and carbon dioxide in space, is often described as the space fuel of the future.

Why? Currently, ISRO uses Unsymmetrical Dimethyl Hydrazine, along with Nitrogen tetroxide as oxidizer. It is said to be highly toxic and carcinogenic in nature **Where as methane on the other hand is**

- Non-Toxic
- Higher specific impulse i.e. longer life
- Easy to store,
- No Waste produce
- Less Bulky
- Synthesis possible in Space.
- Cheaper
- More Efficient
- Highly Reusable

Other Examples:

- ❖ Chinese have developed 80-tonne TQ-12 engine made up of LOx methane engine.
- ❖ SpaceX is developing Raptor rocket methane-fueled.
- ❖ Europe had developed Ammonium di Nitramide
- ❖ US had developed Hydroxyl Ammonium Nitrate

Shifting Track From EOG to HOG

What? Indian Railways had decided to upgrade its Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches from EOG (End of Generation) to HOG (Head on Generation).

In EOG system, train's 'hotel load' (the load of air conditioning, lights, fans, and pantry, etc.) provided with electricity from two large diesel generator sets attached to either end of the train, giving the system its name.

In HOG system, runs the hotel load by drawing electricity from the overhead electric lines through the pantograph. This energy is then provided to the compartments.

Why? HOG-fitted trains do not require power from diesel generators at all, they only have one emergency generator car attached, instead of two regular generator cars. There are other advantages also

- ❖ **Cost Saving-** Electricity produced in HOG, cost @ INR 6/unit, as compared to the price of INR 22/unit in the EOG system.
- ❖ **Reduction of Pollution-**The system would bring down yearly CO₂ and NO_x emissions, which according to the press release are currently at 1724.6 tonnes/annum and 7.48 tonnes/annum respectively, to zero. Further, It help the Railways accrue carbon credits, and trade them on the international market.
- ❖ **Extra space:** Extra space created would now be used for an LSLRD (LHB Second Luggage, Guard & Divyaang Compartment)- meaning more passengers can be accommodated

Build for Digital India Programme

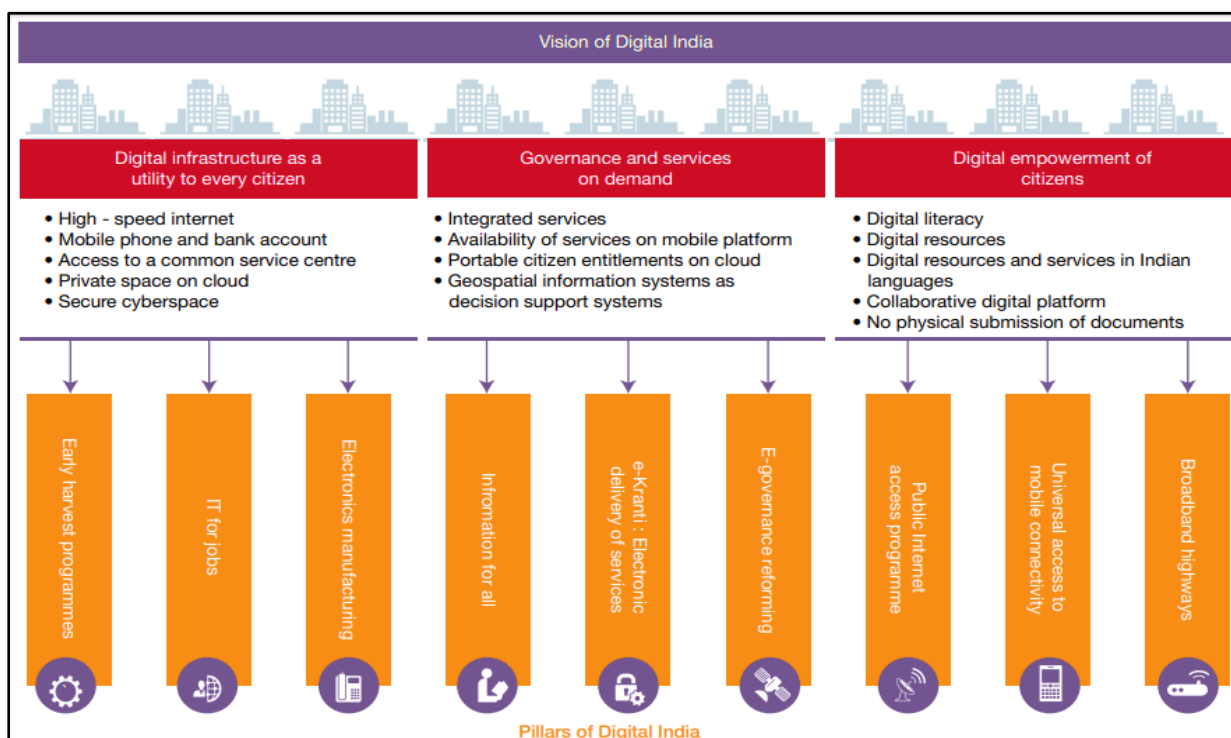
News Excerpt

Recently, the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** and **Google** signed a statement of intent to roll-out 'Build for Digital India', a programme that will give **engineering students** a platform to **develop market-ready, technology-based** solutions that **address key social problems**.

Pre-Connect

The **Digital India** program, launched in **July 2015**, is a flagship program of the Government of India that is transforming the country into a digitally empowered society and knowledge

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economy.

Significance of Build for Digital India Programme

- The Programme will offer a platform to engineering students to develop market-ready, technology-based solutions that address key social problems.
- Engineering students across the country will be invited to present their ideas and solutions in areas like **healthcare, agriculture, education, smart cities and infrastructure, women safety, smart mobility and transportation, environment, accessibility and disability and digital literacy**.
- Online and offline learning opportunities on key technologies such as **Machine Learning (ML), Cloud and Android** that will be offered through **Google's Developer Student Club** network and other Google Developer networks.
- Google will also offer **mentorship sessions in product design**, strategy and technology to the most promising products and prototypes.

PEPPER IT WITH
Bharatnet Project, Digi Locker, E-governance

'TB Harega DeshJeetega' Campaign

News Excerpt

Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare today launched the new "TB HaregaDeshJeetega Campaign", along with the National TB Prevalence Survey. Union Minister also released the TB India Report (2019), the Work Place Policy Framework for TB, Operational Guideline for Employer Led Model on TB, Training module for transforming TB survivor to TB champion, and Elected Representative's Handbook on TB.

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Pre-Connect

- In April 2018, the government launched the NikshayPoshan Yojana for TB patients.
- RNTCP has released a 'National strategic plan for tuberculosis 2017-2025' (NSP) for the control and elimination of TB in India by 2025. According to the NSP TB elimination have been integrated into the four strategic pillars of "Detect – Treat – Prevent – Build" (DTPB).
- The Government of India has also partnered with the Global Fund to launch JEET (Joint Effort for Elimination of TB), a private sector engagement program operating across the country.

Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program

RNTCP is the state-run tuberculosis control initiative of the Government of India being implemented under the umbrella of National Health Mission. It was launched in 1997 and implemented a phased expansion, achieving nationwide program coverage in March 2006.

Highlights

- This campaign is based on **three pillars** which includes clinical approach, public health component and active community participation.
- Another supporting element of the campaign comprise private sector engagement, patient support, and political and administrative commitment at all levels.
- It aims to achieving our target of a TB-free India by 2025, much ahead of the global target of 2030.
- Union Health Minister also launched an all oral regimen kit for multi-drug resistant TB patients which does not include injections which are painful and can have side effects.
- He also announced a partnership with the World Bank which is providing a \$400 million credit for accelerating TB response in 9 states through private sector engagement and other critical interventions.

Nikshay Poshan Yojana

It is centrally sponsored scheme under National Health Mission (NHM), financial incentive of Rs.500/- per month is provided for nutritional support to each notified TB patient for duration for which the patient is on anti-TB treatment. Incentives are delivered through Direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme to bank accounts of beneficiary.

TB Prevalence Survey

- ✓ It is a largest ever effort to reach out to every tuberculosis (TB) patient in the country.
- ✓ 25 vans will be the part of the prevalence survey, which shall take 6 months and be carried out across the country.
- ✓ This shall present national and state level data, which will be used as a policy tool for further interventions

TB India Report (2019)

- As per the TB India report 2019, **21.5 lakh cases of tuberculosis** were notified to the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) in 2018 — a 17% increase from 2017.
- The number of HIV-infected people who develops Tuberculosis (TB) is increasing in India, as per the India *TB Report 2019* and TB is the leading cause of their morbidity and mortality.
- India ranks second in the world as far as TB-related mortality is concerned.
- TB burden in India is **highest in Uttar Pradesh**.
- The percentage of **pediatric tuberculosis** (TB among the population aged less than 15 years) cases have also slightly gone up at 6.17 per cent compared to 6% preceding year.
- Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat among states with a large population (>50 lakhs) were awarded as best performers.
- While Tripura and Sikkim were recognized for their efforts among medium population (less than 50 lakhs) states.
- Puducherry, and Daman and Diu were judged as the best performers among Union Territories.

PEPPER IT WITH

MDR- TB, DOTS, G+ Capsule bacteria, Ayushman Bharat,

Conclusion

The multifaceted threat of TB and its intrinsic links to such socio-economic factors as undernutrition, poverty and social prejudice require an interdisciplinary, patient-centric response. Establishing partnerships among various ministries and across public and private sectors as well as patient support systems would not only help bring down the costs of TB treatment but also encourage thousands of patients to seek and complete the treatment.

Global Antimicrobial Resistance Research and Development Hub

News Excerpt

Recently the Department of Biotechnology, **Ministry of Science & Technology** has announced that India has joined the Global Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Research and Development (R&D) Hub as a new member.

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Pre-Connect

- About 7 lakh people die every year due to antimicrobial resistance (AMR) worldwide.
- AMR alone is killing more people than cancer and road traffic accidents combined together.
- India has been referred to as 'the AMR capital of the world'.
- India has also framed its **National Action Plan (NAP)** and **National Policy for Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance 2011**.
- The poultry consumption in India is expected to rise by 577 per cent between year 2000 and 2030 which may lead to the increased use of antimicrobial agents to increase the productivity.

National Action Plan (NAP) 2017-21

It aims to effectively combat antimicrobial resistance in India across multiple sectors such as human health, animal husbandry, agriculture and environment in consideration of the "One-Health" approach and contribute towards the global efforts to tackle this public health threat. It primarily focuses on resistance in bacteria. One Health concept recognizes that the health of people is connected to the health of animals and the environment.

Antimicrobial Resistance

AMR is the ability of a microbe to resist the effects of medication that once could successfully treat the microbe.

Causes:

- Use of sludge in agriculture, improper discard of livestock animals and aquaculture industry are considered AMR contributors
- Use of antimicrobial agents as pesticides and insecticides in the agriculture industry is also causing the growth of AMR.
- Injudicious use of antimicrobials and inadequate treatment of waste waters are important drivers of AMR in India.
- Self-prescription of antimicrobial agents and easy availability of over the counter drugs without any professional knowledge regarding the dose and duration of treatment further contributes to AMR.

National Policy for Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance 2011

It envisages enforcement and enhancement of regulatory provisions for use of antibiotics for humans as well as for veterinary use.

About Global AMR R&D Hub

- ✓ The Global AMR R&D Hub was launched in May 2018 in the margins of the 71st session of the World Health Assembly, following a call from G20 Leaders in 2017.
- ✓ The operation of the Global AMR R&D Hub is supported through a Secretariat, established in Berlin and currently financed through grants from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG).

Analytica

- By joining the Global AMR R&D Hub, India aims to work with all partners to leverage their existing capabilities, resources and collectively focus on new R&D intervention to address

drug resistant infections.

- It is estimated that by 2050, AMR would decrease gross domestic product (GDP) by 2-3.5 per cent with a fall in livestock by 3-8 per cent, costing USD100 trillion to the world.
- Antibiotic or Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is spreading in not just among humans but also dolphins and other animals, therefore it is a positive step in this direction as there was an emergent need to take action.

PEPPER IT WITH
Superbugs, Total Drug Resistance

Way Forward

- To have the benefit of this partnership, India should improve its implementation mechanism of its policies to have the desired results.
- As India has achieved the status of the largest producer of milk and second largest producer of fish in the world, simultaneous efforts should be made to protect animals from Antimicrobial Resistance. Our focus should be on safety also.
- Awareness should be increased among the peoples regarding the AMR consequences.
- Effective monitoring system and frequent inspection should be done to keep a check.

Indo-Thai CORPAT

News Excerpts

28th edition of India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol (Indo-Thai CORPAT) between the **Indian Navy (IN)** and the **Royal Thai Navy (RTN)** is being conducted in the month of September.

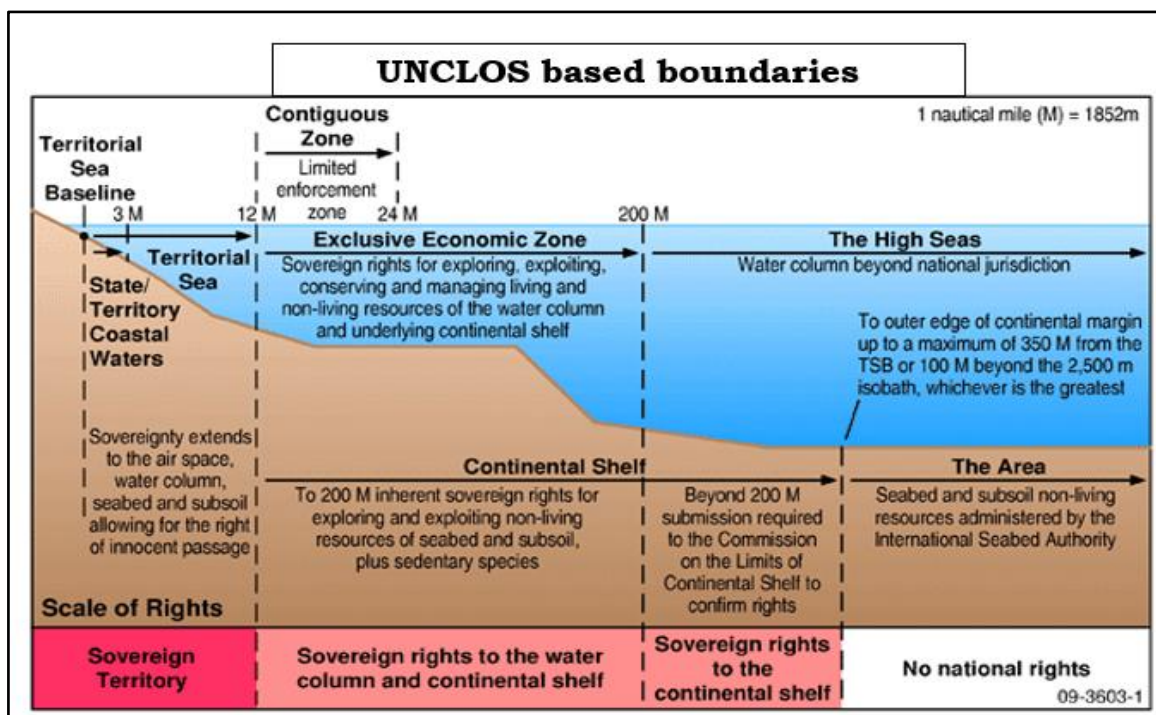
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Pre-Connect

- Indo-Thai coordinated patrol or CORPAT first began in 2003.
- It is a biannual coordinated patrol in which ships and aircraft of Andaman and Nicobar Command of Indian Navy participate.

Objective

- The objective of the Indo-Thai CORPAT is to ensure effective implementation of United Nations Conventions on Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS)
- UNCLOS specify regulations regarding protection and conservation of natural resources, conservation of marine environment, prevention and suppression of illegal, unregulated fishing activity/ drug trafficking/ piracy, exchange of information in prevention of smuggling, illegal immigration and conduct of Search and Rescue operations at sea.



Important UNCLOS Articles

- ✓ **Article 3- Breadth of the Territorial Sea:** Every State has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial sea up to a **limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles**, measured from baselines determined in accordance with this Convention.
- ✓ **Article 5- Normal Baseline**
- ✓ **Article 7- Straight Baselines:**
 - In localities where the coastline is deeply indented and cut into, or if there is a fringe of islands along the coast in its immediate vicinity, the method of straight baselines joining appropriate points may be employed in drawing the baseline from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured.
 - Where because of the presence of a delta and other natural conditions the coastline is highly unstable, the appropriate points may be selected along the furthest seaward extent of the low-water line and, notwithstanding subsequent regression of the low-water line, the straight baselines shall remain effective until changed by the coastal State in accordance with this Convention.
 - Straight baselines shall not be drawn to and from low-tide elevations, unless lighthouses or similar installations which are permanently above sea level have been built on them or except in instances where the drawing of baselines to and from such elevations has received general international recognition.
- ✓ **Article 111- Right of Hot Pursuit:**
 - Coastal states enjoy the right of hot pursuit. However, the right of hot pursuit ceases as soon as the ship enters the territorial sea of its own flag state or a third state.
 - Any entry into the territorial seas of the flag state or third-party state would be legally acceptable if the action was authorized under a recognized mandate such as the UN or a bilateral understanding with the flag or third-party state.
- ✓ **Article 55** provides for “an exclusive zone” as an area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea, subject to the specific legal regime established.
- ✓ **Articles 77 to 81** define the “rights of a country over its continental shelf,” which includes territorial seas (Coastal states would exercise sovereignty over their territorial sea of up to 22.2 km (12 nm) in breadth, but foreign vessels would be allowed “**innocent passage**” through those waters for purposes of peaceful navigation.)
- ✓ **Article 298:** A State party may declare in writing that it does not subscribe to the jurisdiction of compulsory procedures over disputes in case of arbitration.

UNCLOS

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is an international treaty which was adopted and signed in 1982. It replaced the four Geneva Conventions of April, 1958, which respectively concerned the territorial sea and the contiguous zone, the continental shelf, the high seas, fishing and conservation of living resources on the high seas.

The Convention has created three new institutions on the international scene:

- ❖ The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea,
- ❖ The International Seabed Authority,
- ❖ The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

PEPPER IT WITH

SAGAR, BIMSTEC, BHARATMALA Project, Blue economy

IUCN and UNCLOS

UNCLOS has become the legal framework for marine and maritime activities and IUCN with its partners are working towards an implementing agreement (UNCLOS IA) that will close important gaps in governance. A positive result would provide a measure of protection and conservation of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) where there

SITMEX-19

It is a maiden Trilateral exercise involving **Indian Navy, Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) and Royal Thai Navy (RTN)** commenced in the Andaman Sea

Participating Fleet

INS Ranvir: It is a Rajput Class Destroyer. Destroyers are intended to escort larger vessels in a fleet, convoy or battle group and defend them against powerful short range attackers.

INS Kora: It is a Kora Class of Corvettes. These are small warships and smallest class of vessel considered to be a proper warship



INS Sumedha: It is a Saryu Class Patrol Vessel. It is indigenous product of the Goa Shipyard Limited which is used for surveillance and monitoring.

P8-I: It is a Long Range Maritime Patrol aircraft. They provide a boost to snooping and anti-submarine warfare capabilities

**Samudra Laksamana**

It is bilateral exercise between Indian Navy and the Royal Malaysian Navy. It is conducted during the Port of call made by India Navy.

Phases of Exercise**Harbor Phase**

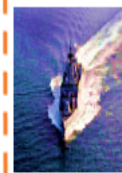
Includes professional interactions, official calls, social engagements, visits by the local populace and various sports events.

Sea Phase

It enables the two navies to further hone their skills in order to enhance interoperability between the navies to ensure peaceful and secure seas for all.

Participating Fleet

INS Sahyadri- it is indigenously built Shivalik-class multi-role guided missile stealth frigate



INS Kiltan is a indigenously built Kamorta-class anti-submarine warfare corvette.

MAITREE-2019

It is the Joint Military exercise between **Indian Army and Royal Thailand Army (RTA)** at Meghalaya. It is an annual training event that is conducted in India and Thailand alternatively, since 2006.

Significance

Exercise is significant as both face the security challenges from terrorism.

Southern regions of Thailand is prone to terrorism but it is also a tourist destination.

Exercise covers company level joint training on insurgency & counter-terrorism operations in jungles and urban scenarios.

**India-Sri Lanka****Mitra Shakti****India-France****Shakti, Varuna and Garuda****India-Maldives****Ekuverin****India-UK****Emerald Mercury and Ajay Warrior****India-Singapore****Bold Kurukshetra****India's Major Joint Military Exercises****India-Indonesia****Garuda Shakti****India-Mongolia****Nomadic Elephant****India-Nepal****Surya Kiran****India-USA****Yudh Abhyas****India-Russia****Indra****India-China****Hand-in-Hand**

Yudh Abhyas

News Excerpt

YudhAbhyas, the exercise is one of the largest joint-running military training and defence co-operation endeavors between India and the US. The aim of this exercise is to enhance inter-operability between armies with the focus on enhancing counter-terror cooperation. This year it is conducted at the at Joint Base Lewis Mc Chord, Washington DC.

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Pre-Connect

- Exercise began in 2001 in Agra India.
- It is held annually between the two nations alternatively in the two countries.

Significance

- It provides an opportunity to the armed forces of both countries to train in an integrated manner at battalion level with joint planning at brigade level.
- It will allow both armies the opportunity to jointly train, plan, execute a series of well-developed operations for neutralization of threats of varied nature.
- The exercise will result in a higher degree of collaboration that can further facilitate interoperability between the armed forces of both countries to meet any unforeseen contingency across the globe.
- It provides an ideal platform to learn from each other's expertise and experiences of planning and execution of operations.

India-US Military Cooperation

In recent times the relationship between the United States and India has converged considerably over the last decade. India has signed two crucial agreement

- ✓ Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA): It is a foundational agreement facilitating mutual logistics support between the two sides.
- ✓ Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA): It facilitated the sharing of secure information through encrypted means.

Apart from YudhAbhyas, India-USA conduct other major exercises, including Malabar Naval Exercise which became a trilateral exercise to include Japan.

Further, the US department of defense recently released Indo-Pacific Strategy which emphasis a central role for India in US-Asia strategy

PEPPER IT WITH
THAAD, Integrated Battle Corps, India – Iran and India-Russia deals (US reaction)

UNMHA

News Excerpt

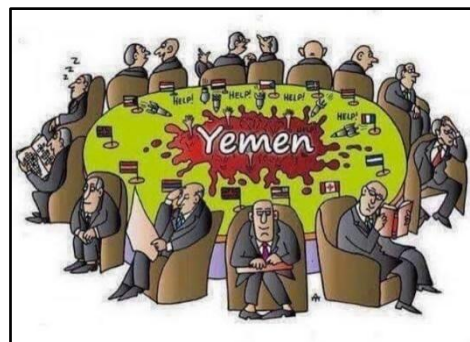
Recently, UN appointed retired Indian Army Lieutenant General Abhjit Guha as the head of the UN mission in Hodeidah, Yemen. General Guha will also hold the chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC) which is entrusted with redeploying forces of the Yemeni warring parties in accordance with their agreement.

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Pre-Connect

Yemen Conflict

- Its roots lie in the Arab spring. Pro-democracy protesters took to the streets in a bid to force the president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to end his 33-year rule. He responded with economic concessions but refused to resign.
- Election took place in 2012 due to international efforts, and the newly elected Vice president attempted reforms but was opposed by the Houthis (belong to a small branch of Shia Muslims known as Zaydis).
- The Houthis expelled the new VP While Saudis involvement with Ali Abdullah Saleh intensified the conflict.



- A total of 80% of the population – more than 24 million people – need assistance and protection, including 10 million who rely on food aid to survive.

Yemen Peace Process

- The UN brokered an agreement in Stockholm in December to demilitarise the Red Sea city of Hodeidah, and after five months of talks a small part of the agreement has been implemented on the ground.
- The Houthis had promised a two-phase redeployment out of the city and agreed that an alternative force – poorly defined in the Stockholm agreement – would take over security in the areas they vacated.

About UNMHA

- ✓ In January 2019, UN established a political mission known as UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA).
- ✓ Agreement was the outcome of Stockholm Agreement reached in Sweden in 2018, between the Government of Yemen and the Houthis under the auspices of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen
- ✓ UNMHA will oversee the governorate-wide ceasefire, redeployment of forces, and mine action operations.
- ✓ Mission was authorized for an initial period of 6 months to lead and support functioning of Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC), assisted by a secretariat staffed by UN personnel.
- ✓ UNMHA will work with the parties so that security of the city of Hudaydah and the ports of Hudaydah, Saleef and Ras Isa are assured by local security forces in accordance with the Yemeni law.
- ✓ Mission will facilitate and coordinate UN support to assist the parties to fully implement the Hudaydah Agreement.

PEPPER IT WITH

Operation Rahat, Human Rights Watch (NGO) Report on Yemen Crisis, UNOCHR

Red Notices

News Excerpt

Government of India had conveyed to the International Police Agency-Interpol to expediate its process of publishing Red Notices (RNs). This come in the backdrop of enactment of Fugitive Economic offender, Act and surfacing of new Banking Scams in India. As many as 18 requests for RNs from India are pending with Interpol.

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About RN

- Criminals or suspects often flee to other countries to evade facing justice. An RN alerts police forces across the world about fugitives who are wanted internationally.
- Issuance of RN act as a request to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender, or similar legal action.
- An RN is published by Interpol at the request of a member country. The fugitives may be wanted for prosecution or to serve a sentence.
- The country issuing the request need not be the home country of the fugitive; Interpol acts on the request of a country where the alleged crime has been committed.

Conditions for Requesting a Red Notice

The publication of an 'A' series or Red notice should only be requested if all the following conditions are fulfilled:

- ❖ The person against whom the notice is to be published has committed an offence against ordinary criminal law.
- ❖ The offence is an "extraditable offence" under the Indian Extradition Act, 1962.
- ❖ A warrant of arrest has been issued for his/her arrest.
- ❖ Extradition will be requested, at least from certain countries.

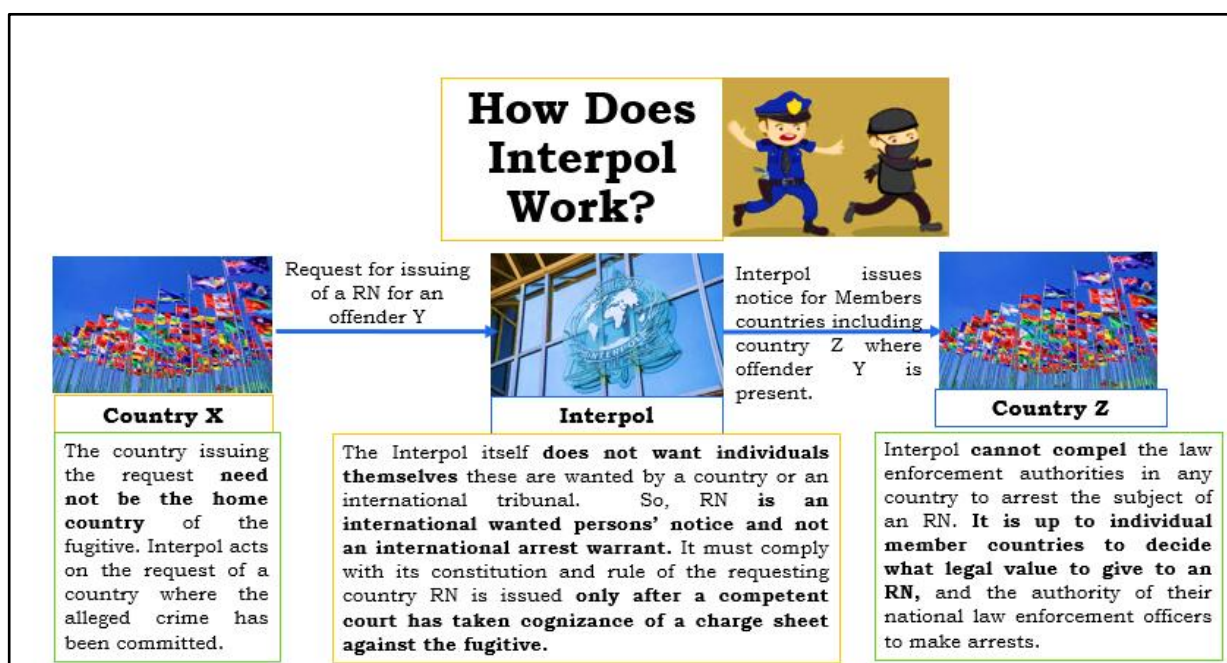
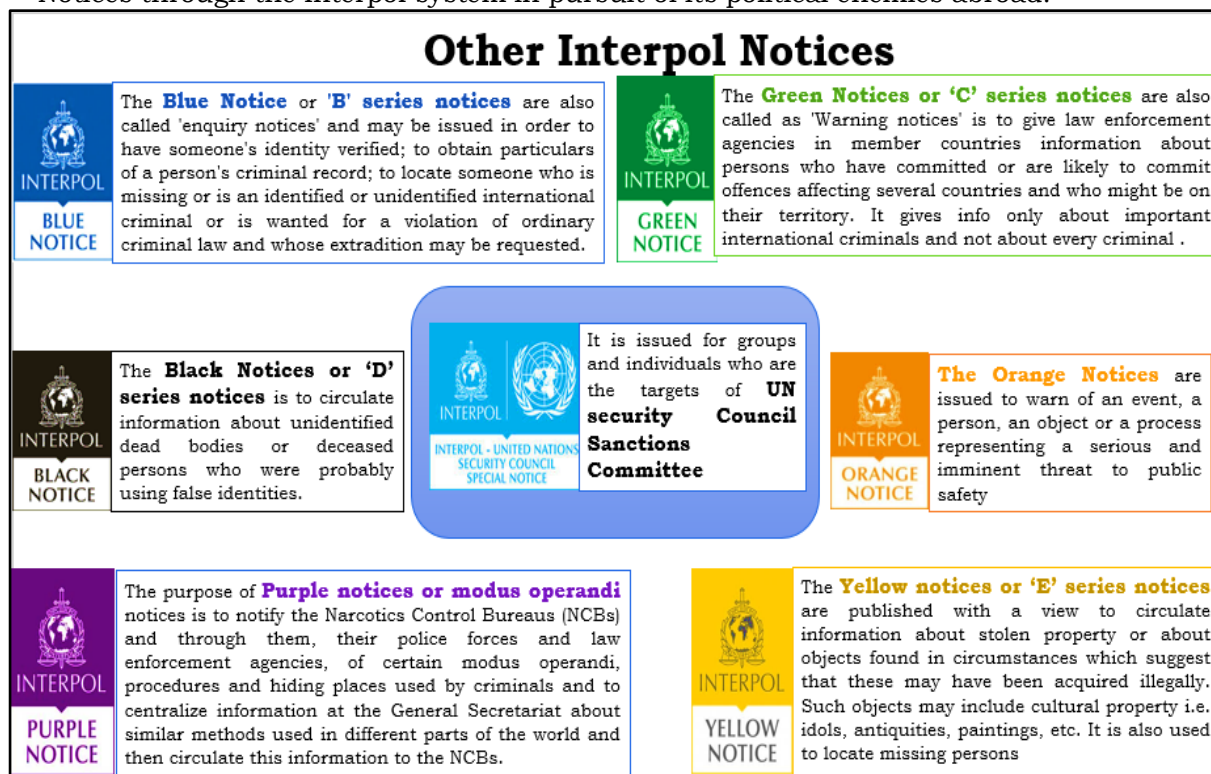
If any of the above conditions is not satisfied, a 'B' series notice should probably be requested.

Significance of RNs

- RNs are issued to simultaneously alert police in all member countries about internationally wanted fugitives.
- An RN can help bring a fugitive to justice, sometimes many years after the crime was committed.

Issues with RNs

- ✓ Misuse of RNs- Presidency of Interpol is open for all member countries as a result there are chances that it can be misused by some countries. Russia has been known to issue Red Notices through the Interpol system in pursuit of its political enemies abroad.



- ✓ As a RN is not an arrest warrant, action against a fugitive frequently rests on the diplomatic clout that the country making the request has with the country where the fugitive is located.

- ✓ Nations with a big international profile, and economic or political heft, are often more successful than the rest.
- ✓ Lack of Transparency- There is a lack of transparency and abuse of its rules by authoritarian regimes. For instance- UAE—which hosted Interpol's General Assembly—uses the agency as its private international debt collection agency.
- ✓ Conflict with Internal laws: - Red Notices issued by Interpol's 194 member states are usually reserved for people suspected of committing serious crimes. But under the UAE's sharia-influenced legal system, some foreigners who did business there have found themselves on Interpol's wanted list for business disputes, bounced checks, or even credit card debt—things that in many countries do not carry criminal penalties.

PEPPER IT WITH
FATF, INTERPOL, ICJ, Fugitive Economic Offenders Act

Indus Valley Civilization

News Excerpt

A professor of Harvard Medical School, David Reich, in partnership with Indian archaeologist Vasant Shinde and other experts studied skeletal DNA from Rakhigarhi, an Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC) site.

The report was titled 'An Ancient Harappan Genome Lacks Ancestry from Steppe Pastoralists or Iranian Farmers'.

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Key Highlights

- Woman whose skeleton was found consisted of DNA from two different lineages i.e Andamanese tribe and ancient Iranians.
- Ancient DNA evidence reveals that the people of the mysterious and complex Indus Valley Civilization are genetically linked to modern South Asians today.
- The same gene sequences, drawn from a single individual who died nearly 5,000 years ago and was buried in a cemetery near Rakhigarhi, also suggest that the **Indus Valley developed farming independently**, without major migrations from neighbouring farming regions.
- The study of DNAs from 11 other IVC sites showed missing Aryan gene from the indigenous population — highlighting that the **Aryan migration to the region happened after the IVC declined**.

About Indus Valley Civilization

- Indus valley civilization or Harappan civilization is the earliest known urban culture of the Indian subcontinent. The nuclear dates of the civilization appear to be about 2500–1700 BCE, though the southern sites may have lasted later into the 2nd millennium BCE.
- The civilization was first identified in 1921 at Harappa in the Punjab region and then in 1922 at Mohenjo-daro, near the Indus River in the Sindh (Sind) region.
- The people of the Indus Valley forged an impressively advanced civilization, with **large urban centers, standardized systems of weights and measurements and even drainage and irrigation systems**.
- Yet despite that sophistication, archaeologists know far less about the civilization than that of ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia, in part because the **Indus Valley writing system hasn't yet been deciphered**.

Contemporary works on the IVC

- ❖ Coincidentally, another important scientific paper was also published at the same time, titled "The formation of human populations in South and Central Asia", by Vagheesh, the paper examined a much larger sample of ancient DNA.
- ❖ It concluded "After the IVC's decline, this population mixed with northwestern groups with Steppe ancestry to form the 'Ancestral North Indians' (ANI) and also mixed with southeastern groups to form the 'Ancestral South Indians' (ASI), whose direct descendants today live in tribal groups in southern India.
- ❖ Mixtures of these two post-IVC groups — the ANI and ASI — drive the main gradient of genetic variation in South Asia today."

- By 1800 BCE, the Indus Valley Civilization saw the beginning of their decline. The reasons for this decline are not entirely clear, but it is believed that the drying up of the Saraswati River. Other experts speak of a great flood in the area. Either event would have had catastrophic effects on agricultural activity, making the economy no longer sustainable and breaking the civic order of the cities.

PEPPER IT WITH

Lothal, Rakhigarhi, Mohenjodaro, Pottery culture, Economic activities

Conclusion

The study confirms that IVC gene forms the most prominent part of modern Indian genome. However, the other component i.e the Aryan gene which is present in modern Indians was not present in IVC ancestors **confirming large scale migration of Aryan population to the south Asian subcontinent from the central steppe later.**

Ek Bharat Vijayi Bharat**News Excerpt**

In order to commemorate 50th year of Vivekanand rock memorial, a major contact programme, "**EK BHARAT-VIJAYEE BHARAT**" was planned from 2nd September across the country.

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About

Vivekanand rock memorial has been an iconic landmark at the Tri-junction of Indian ocean, Bay of Bengal and Arabian sea in Kanyakumari, where Vivekananda meditated in 1892 and decided to restore the glory of Bharat.

Highlights of the Programme

- Kanyakumari-based Vivekanand Kendra and its state units will launch a year-long nation-wide contact programme to spread the messages of Swami Vivekananda. The mass contact programme, titled "**Ek Bharat Vijayi Bharat**", coincides with the 50th foundation year of Vivekanand Rock Memorial in Kanyakumari.
- The programme will also focus on making people aware of the inspiring story of Vivekanand Rock Memorial and the activities of Vivekanand Kendra.
- Vivekananda Kendra works in the field of yoga, education, rural development, youth motivation, natural resource development, cultural research among other areas.

PEPPER IT WITH

World parliament of Religion, Vedanta, Ramakrishna Mission.

Swami Vivekanand

- He coined a new word Daridra Narayana. Daridra-Narayana brought in an element of the sense of duty which was enjoined on men and women to serve the poor if they wanted to serve God.
- He explained that Vedanta philosophy was not Brahmanic or Buddhist, Christian or Muslim, but the sum total of all these.

Festival of Nuakhai**News Excerpt**

Nuakhai was celebrated across districts like Kalahandi, Sambalpur, Sundargarh and other districts of Odisha and also across several areas of Jharkhand.

Pre-connect

Nuakhai Juhar is a **harvest festival of Odisha**. Nuakhai is a combination of two words, 'nua' meaning new and 'khai' means eat, it thus signifies "**eating of new rice**".

Details

- NuakhaiJuhar is also called NuakhaiParab or NuakahiBhetghat and is a greeting exchanged on the special day. People worship food grain on this auspicious day. Special meals are prepared and everyone eats it together. The farmers offer the first produce from their lands to **Goddess Samaleswari**, the famous mother goddess of Sambalpur district of the state.

PEPPER IT WITH

Makar Sankranti, Thai, Pongal, Uttarayana, Lohri, Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu, Vaisakhi, Onam.

- Several cultural programmes - folk songs and dances are organised on this day to display the state's local culture and tradition.
- It is widely believed that a tribal chief of Patharla helped the Kalahandi king in a war. Pleased with their service, the king wanted to reward them. But instead of asking for material gifts, the tribal chief requested the Maharaja to allow them to offer Nabanna (new rice) to their presiding deity first on Nuakhai. The king allowed them to do so as a mark of gratitude and ever since, the tribals are allowed to offer Nabanna to the deity first.

Sardar Patel National Unity Award

News Excerpt

Government of India has instituted the **highest civilian award** in the field of contribution to the unity and integrity of India, in the name of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

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Thematic connect

- The Award seeks to recognize notable and inspiring contributions to promote the cause of national unity and integrity and to reinforce the value of a strong and united India.
- The Award shall be conferred by the President by a Sanad **under his hand and seal** and presented by him in a presentation ceremony along with the Padma award presentation ceremony held in Rashtrapati Bhawan.
- An **Award Committee would be constituted by the Prime Minister**, which would include the Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Secretary to the President, Home Secretary as Members and three-four eminent persons selected by the Prime Minister.
- The Award would consist of a medal and a citation. **No monetary grant** or cash award would be attached to this Award. Not more than three Awards would be given in a year. It **would not be conferred posthumously** except in very rare and highly deserving cases.
- Any Indian national or institution or organization based in India would be able to nominate an individual for consideration for this Award. Individuals may also nominate themselves. State Governments, UT Administrations and Ministries of Government of India may also send nominations.

PEPPER IT WITH
Bardoli Satyagraha, Karachi Session, Princely states, statue of Unity

Sardar Patel

- He was first Indian Municipal commissioner of Ahmedabad.
- He was a member of important committees of the Constituent Assembly on Fundamental Rights, Minorities, provincial Constitution.

Vaidyaratnam, Shri P.S. Varier

News Excerpt

The Vice President of India inaugurated the 150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Vaidyaratnam, Shri P.S. Varier, at Kottakkal in Kerala.

Pre-connect

Vaidyaratnam P.S. Varier, was a great visionary who brought about a **renaissance of Ayurveda, over the course of the last century.**

Thematic connect

- PS Varier, the founder of Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala, was a representative of Indian Renaissance in Ayurveda. He was an **effective clinician with a unique healing touch**, an academician-cum-educator, a **benevolent entrepreneur, a philanthropist, a man of letters and a promoter of fine arts.**
- Also, Varier was an ardent follower of Indian traditions. He was not satisfied by merely dwelling on past glories and had set his vision on future. The 117-year-old Arya Vaidya Sala, 100-year-old Ayurveda College, 87-year-old Vishwambhara temple, 85-year-old Herbal Garden and the 80-year-old Kathakali Academy are living monuments of his institution-building efforts.

PEPPER IT WITH
Ministry of AYUSH and its initiatives, National Health Policy, Ayush for New India

About Ayurveda

- The Atharva Veda is a treasure trove of knowledge and wisdom in the field of medicine. It is lauded as the earliest source of medical information in India.
- Despite, the non-supportive political environment created by foreign rulers, Ayurveda survived, thrived and earned global recognition as a benign healthcare science with time-tested healing and wellness capabilities.
- There is a need of integrating and **harmonizing traditional systems like Ayurveda with the modern allopathic system** for enhancing the efficacy of treatments.
- As a practicing science, the system of **Ayurveda needs to be strengthened through research**. The ancient wisdom in this traditional system of medicine is still not exhaustively explored.

Pulikali

News Excerpt

Pulikali (Tiger dance), a folk art is celebrated at the time of Onam in Kerala in the form of dance and performances in the first week of September.

Pre-connect

The origin of Pulikali is supposed to be 200 yrs back with the King Ramama. Mohameddan soldiers of the British army stationed in Thrissur used to celebrate Muharram with great fervor. Along with the celebrations, they used to perform the art form decked as tigers with peculiar steps resembling the tiger, then known as '**Pulikkettikali**' which was immensely enjoyed by the locals. Pulikali in Trichur is held in memory of this event.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Purbi dance,
Bagurumba, Jhumur,
Bathukamma dance

Thematic connect

- Onam is one of the most celebrated festivals of Kerala State. It is being celebrated on the **harvest of new crop**. The joy of festivity with colour of happiness can be easily observed in the festival of Onam.
- On the fourth day of Onam, people celebrate the Pulikali Play. Pulikali means Tiger and the **Pulikali Play exhibit the haunting and hide** – seek activities of a tiger from hunters and also the haunting activities of Tigers.
- It is a dance performed by men adorning the costume of tiger. From children to elderly people take part in Pulikali. The performer will be wearing masks of tiger face and body painted in black and yellow. Tiger faces are also drawn on bellies.

Sangam Civilization (Older Than Thought)

News Excerpt

Six carbon samples collected from Keezhadi, Tamil Nadu, the Sangam-era site, have been found to belong to 580 BC suggesting that the urbanisation of Vaigai plains happened earlier than thought, around the 6th century BC.

Pre-connect

The Sangam Age in South India is a landmark in her history. The Tamil Sangam was an academy of poets and bards who flourished in three different periods and in different places under the patronage of the Pandyan kings.

Thematic connect

- By analyzing six carbon samples at the Keezhadi site it was proved that the Keezhadi samples could be dated between the 6th century BC and 1st century AD.
- It also proves that the Tamil Brahmi script originated in the 6th century BC. It suggests that **People were either literate or at least knew the art of writing** as early as the 6th century BC.
- The results of the analysis showed that the **species such as ox, cow, buffalo, goat were used for agriculture**. The cut marks found on the skeletal remains of goat and wild boar suggested that they were consumed. The report suggested that **people then mainly depended on agriculture and cattle rearing**.
- A 13-metre long wall was excavated from the site. Well-laid floors along with roof tiles in a collapsed state were found at the site. The roof tiles contained finger groove impressions to

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PEPPER IT WITH
Three Sangam
assemblies, Sangam
literature,
Tolakkapiyam

drain water. Such activities prove a **high standard of living during the Sangam age.**

Sangam Literature

- It can be divided into two groups- narrative and didactic. The narrative texts are called **Melkannakku** while the didactic texts are called **Kilkanakku**.
- The narrative texts **glorify heroes and perpetual wars and cattle raids** are frequently mentioned.
- The didactic texts cover the early centuries of the Christian era and **prescribe a code of conduct not only for the king and his court but also for the various social groups** and occupations.

Bathukamma Festival

News Excerpt

Recently, thenine-day floral festival, 'Bathukamma', an embodiment of Telangana's rich cultural identity was celebrated.

Thematic connect

- It is a floral festival **celebrated particularly by the women of Telangana**. The festival takes place towards the end of the monsoon season, just before the onset of winter.
- Since a lot of water inflows during monsoons, there is high cultivation of wild flowers in multiple vibrant colors- which are used to celebrate 'Bathukamma'. The most widely used flowers are **'gunuka' and 'tangedu'**.
- Traditionally, Bathukamma is all about **worshipping the local goddesses** of Telangana and revering to their power during the monsoon season.
- The festival begins a week before the 'Saddula Bathukamma' (the finale of the Bathukamma festival), which falls two days before the Dussehra.
- Women make small 'Bathukammas' during the nine-day period, dance around them every evening and immerse them in a nearby water pond. 'Bathukammas' are colorful flowers carefully arranged in circular rows in a brass plate (called 'taambalam').
- 'Bathukamma' a **state festival of Telangana**.

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PEPPER IT WITH

Onam, Pongal, Hampi festival, Mysore Dasara, vishu, Ugadi

Ramanujan Prize

News Excerpt

Recently the international prize committee of 6 mathematicians decided the SASTRA Ramanujan prize for 2019 will be awarded to mathematician Adam Harper, Assistant Professor with the University of Warwick, England.

Thematic connect

- The prize carries a citation and an award of \$10,000 and is conferred annually on mathematicians from across the world who are less than 32 years of age, working in an area influenced by the genius Srinivasa Ramanujan.
- The age limit is 32 years to commemorate the fact that Srinivasa Ramanujan accomplished a phenomenal body of work in this short span.
- Every year, this prize is awarded by SASTRA University on its campus near Kumbakonam in Tamil Nadu, on Ramanujan's birth anniversary, December 22.

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PEPPER IT WITH

Contributions of Ramanujan in Mathematics.

About Adam Harper's contributions

He has been awarded for several outstanding contributions to analytic and probabilistic number theory. The prize also recognizes Harper's seminal work using the Riemann Hypothesis to determine the correct order upper bound for the higher moments of the Riemann zeta function on the critical line.

Lesser Known Freedom Fighters

Lesser Known Freedom Fighters

Velu Nachiyar



- Rani Velu Nachiyar- a scion of a Royal family in Tamil Nadu, was the first ever woman from a royal family to have challenged the mighty British Empire.
- According to historian Prof. Sanjeevi, brave heart queen Velu Nachiyar revolted against English empire 85 years before Rani of Jhansi challenged Colonial power. Another historian Venkatam further stated that Velu Nachiyar was India's Joan of Arc.
- Queen Velu Nachiyar took to arms when her husband and his second wife were killed by combined forces of British soldiers and the son of the Nawab of Arcot.
- Later, she formed an army and formed an alliance with Gopala Nayaker and Hyder Ali with the aim of attacking the British.
- In 1780 Rani Velu Nachiyar fought the British with military assistance of her allies and won the battle. Thus she became the first queen who successfully fought against British in India.

Durgabai Deshmukh



- A freedom fighter, lawyer, Social worker & politician, Durgabai led numerous Satyagraha movements and was a member of the Constituent Assembly of India and the Planning commission of India.
- Influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, She participated in Gandhiji led Salt Satyagraha activities during the civil disobedience movement. She was instrumental in organizing women satyagrahis in the movement & was imprisoned 3 times between 1930 & 1933.
- At Steering Committee, she actively participated in assembly debates defending property rights for women under the Hindu Code Bill, independence of the judiciary and selection of Hindustani- a combination of Hindi and Urdu as the national language.

Senapati Bapat



- Pandurang Mahadev Bapat, popularly known as Senapati Bapat, was a prominent figure in the Indian independence movement.
- He acquired the title of Senapati, meaning commander, as a consequence of his leadership during the Mulshi Satyagraha.
- He spent nearly two-decade in prison for his role in the freedom struggle and after independence too he continued working for the motherland by participating in Samyukta Maharashtra and Goa Liberation movement.

Tiruppur Kumaran



- Inspired by Gandhi's principles and ideals, he was an Indian revolutionary who participated in the Indian independence movement.
- Kumaran was the founder of the Desa Bandhu Youth Association and led protest against the British.

Miscellaneous

Saraswati Samman

Kannada novelist S L Bhyrappa was recently conferred the prestigious **Saraswati samman 2019**. The award, instituted by the KK Birla Foundation, is given annually for an outstanding literary work written in any official Indian language and published during the preceding 10 years. It is the highest recognition in the field of Indian literature and carries a cash purse of Rs 15 lakh, apart from a citation and a plaque.

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IMD World Digital Competitiveness Ranking 2019

India has advanced four places to 44th position in terms of digital competitiveness in the world as the country has made improvement in terms of knowledge and future readiness to adopt and explore digital technologies. The IMD World Competitiveness Rankings, established in 1989, incorporate 235 indicators from each of the 63 ranked economies to evaluate their ability to foster an environment where enterprises can achieve sustainable growth, generate jobs and increase welfare for its citizens. It takes into account a wide range of statistics such as unemployment, GDP and government spending on health and education, as well as data from an executive opinion survey covering topics such as social cohesion, globalization and corruption.

United Nations Global Climate Action Awards, 2019

Infosys has won the prestigious **United Nations Global Climate Action Award** in the ‘**Carbon Neutral Now**’ category. Infosys is the only corporate from India to earn the recognition for its efforts to combat climate change. The UN Global Climate Action Awards are spearheaded by the Momentum for Change initiative of the UN Climate Change Secretariat. The award winning projects are recognized for their innovative solutions that address climate change, and help drive progress on many other sustainable development goals, such as poverty alleviation, gender equality and economic opportunity.

Goldschmidtite

A team of geologists from the University of Alberta, Northwestern University and the University of Glasgow has found a previously unknown mineral Goldschmidtite in a diamond that formed at great depth.

- ✚ Goldschmidtite is a mineral, found as an inclusion in a dodecahedral diamond from the Koffiefontein kimberlite pipe, South Africa.
- ✚ The mineral is dark green with an adamantine luster and has a density of 5.32 g/cm³. It has the formula (K,REE,Sr) (Nb,Cr) O₃, and is the natural analog of the well-known ferroelectric material KNbO₃.
- ✚ It has high concentrations of niobium, potassium, and the rare earth elements lanthanum and cerium, whereas the rest of the mantle is dominated by other elements, such as magnesium and iron.
- ✚ Goldschmidtite is highly unusual for an inclusion captured by diamond and gives us a snap-shot of fluid-processes that affect the deep roots of continents during diamond formation.
- ✚ The name goldschmidtite is in honor of Victor Moritz Goldschmidt, the founder of modern geochemistry.

ANGAN (Augmenting Nature by Green Affordable New-habitat)

‘ANGAN’- A three-day international Conference on Energy Efficiency in Building Sector was held in New Delhi from 9-11 September organised by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power in collaboration with GIZ under the Indo German Technical Cooperation.

Thematic tracks of the conference were:

- ✚ Meeting two ends: Heritage and construction practices
- ✚ Policy Framework for Energy Efficiency in Buildings (Codes and Labelling)
- ✚ Circular Economy (Waste or Resource)
- ✚ Smart cities and Smart readiness indicators (SRI) for buildings
- ✚ Affordable and Sustainable Development: Priorities for India

The Basel Convention Ban Amendment

Recently the 1995 Basel Ban Amendment, a global waste dumping prohibition, has become an international law after Croatia ratified it in September 2019. The Ban Amendment prohibits all export of hazardous wastes, including electronic wastes and obsolete ships from 29

wealthiest countries of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to non-OECD countries. It will become a new Article in the Convention and will enter into force in the 97 countries after 90 days — on December 5.

National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT)

Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has announced a new Public-Private Partnership (PPP) scheme- National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) which aims at using technology for better learning outcomes in Higher Education.

The objective is to use Artificial Intelligence to make learning more personalized and customized as per the requirements of the learner. This requires the development of technologies in adaptive learning to address the diversity of learners. MHRD has proposed to create a National Alliance with such technology. MHRD would create and maintain a National NEAT platform that would provide one-stop access to these technological solutions. EdTech companies would be responsible for developing solutions and manage the registration of learners through the NEAT portal. They would be free to charge fees as per their policy but would also have to offer free coupons to the extent of 25 per cent of the total registrations for their solution through the NEAT portal to the most socially or economically backward students. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) would be the implementing agency for the NEAT program.

Bamboonomics

- ✚ Union Minister for Tribal Affairs **Shri Arjun Munda** launched the Biggest Tribal movement to promote tribal enterprises through Bamboonomics with the objective of combating desertification and the climate change.
- ✚ It has been launched under the Central Government's Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) through bamboo cultivation project under Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan scheme. This initiative has been launched jointly with a German Company named as GIZ.
- ✚ Items such as bamboo charcoal, bamboo plastic, composite bamboo furniture (detachable), bamboo wood structure, gazebo and non-timber forest products can be made and their usage will be encouraged through this initiative. This will also help in promoting the construction of ethnic and eco-tourism.
- ✚ Bamboo being categorised as the grass has a higher carbon sequestration potential and excellent capacity to restore degraded land. Tribal households with the availability of bamboo can now be put to greater economic use and can increase their income. India is the world's largest natural repository of bamboo but India holds a mere 4% of the world market on bamboo. It aims to involve five lakh tribals and will earn carbon credits as well within next three to four years.

Concept Clearing Assignment

1. The present Yemen crisis has its roots in the Arab spring. Discuss. In this context, Analyze the potential of UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) in Yemen peace process.
2. With the increasing incidence of Fugitive Economic offences in India, Discuss the importance of International agencies like INTERPOL in getting hold of Fugitive Economic offenders.
3. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has agreed to India's long-pending demand to review the free trade agreement (FTA) between the two sides. Discuss the Objectives and merits of the reviewed FTA.
4. The Male declaration unanimously termed Kashmir as an internal matter of India. Critically Analyze.
5. Discuss the significance of various joint exercises by our defence forces. Also, enlist some of the recent exercises along with their strategic advantages.
6. Examine the role of Ocean currents and their impact on Weather pattern with special importance to the Atlantic Conveyor Belt.
7. Define Desertification. Also examine the threats due to desertification along with the steps taken by Global and National Players to tackle desertification.
8. India is in crucial need of a climate vulnerability assessment map. Elucidate.
9. Do you think that there is a need for a revision in India's renewable energy targets? Discuss it in the context of the worsening energy crisis situation around the world.

10. Indian Railways has undergone many reforms since its establishment yet Privatization is still a distant goal. Analyse. Also Discuss the merits and demerits of Privatization of Indian Railways.
11. Loan Waiver is merely a band-aid in place of a Surgery. Analyse. Also discuss the impacts of frequent loan waivers on the Fiscal framework of the country.
12. A recent excavation in a Sangam-era site has found that Urbanisation of Vaigai plains happened earlier than thought, around the 6th century BC. Discuss the importance of the site and also explain how the Cultural history of Tamil Nadu is redefined.
13. Critically examine the role and potential of the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act 2019 in ensuring road safety in India.
14. Recently the Government has approved a proposal to set up a new National Recruitment Agency (NRA) to streamline the recruitment of Group-B and Group-C posts. In this Context, Analyze how it will ease the recruitment process and facilitate the candidates aspiring for such jobs highlighting the lacunas in the current recruitment process.
15. Maintaining Judicial independence and transparency requires a fine balance between the both. The collegium system with certain modifications would pave a way to improve its functioning. Critically analyse.

P.T Oriented Question

1. Consider the following statements with reference to the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)

1. It is a large-scale ocean current that moves warm, salty water from the tropics to regions further north.
2. It is a conveyor belt where the cooling and freshening of water in the high latitudes takes place, which then sinks and returns southwards towards the equator.
3. Climate change would have adverse effects on the AMOC making the process rapid.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1 and 2 only

2. "Recently the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has approved and accepted the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate at its 51st Session."

In this regard, Consider the following statements:

1. IPCC was created in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

2. It provides regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.
3. It is a special research body which works in the area of Climate Change research.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) All of the above.

3. With reference to the recently launched Forest-PLUS 2.0 programme, Which of the following statements is correct?

1. It is a three-year programme focusing on developing tools to bolster and harness the ecosystem services in forest landscape management.
2. It aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.
3. It comprises pilot project in three landscapes-Sikkim, Rampur and Hoshangabad.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 3 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 only
(d) None of the above.
4. With reference to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Which of the following statements is/are correct?
1. It is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.
 2. The drought tool box was released which will be used by countries to assess drought risks in their regions much in advance.
- 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
5. The term "Project REPLAN" is recently mentioned in the news is in context of:
- (a) An initiative of CPWD to eradicate Plastic waste from the Environment.
 - (b) An initiative of CPCB to replan the pollution control strategy in Delhi.
 - (c) An initiative of Khadi Village Industries Commission to remove existing plastic waste from the Environment.
 - (d) An initiative of google to control air pollution through air balloons.
6. In the era, when there is a shift from Bipolar to Multi-polar world order, Various regional trade blocs play a major role. In this context, Consider the following grouping(s)/Trade partnership(s) in which India is not a member:
1. APEC- Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.
 2. CPTPP- Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.
 3. RCEP- Regional Comprehensive

Economic Partnership.

4. ASEAN- Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Select the answer from the codes given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 2, and 3 only
(c) 1, 2 and 4 only
(d) 2 and 4 only

7. Which of the following countries border the Wakhan corridor?

1. India
2. Pakistan
3. China
4. Russia
5. Tajikistan

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
(b) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
(c) 1, 2, 4 and 5 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only

8. Consider the following pairs:

<i>Joint Exercise</i>	<i>Countries Involved</i>
1. Coordinated Patrol or CORPAT	India-Thailand
2. YudhAbhyas	India- USA
3. Nomadic Elephant	India-Maldives

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above.

9. Recently, Government of India had conveyed to the International Police Agency-Interpol to expedite its process of publishing Red Notices (RNs). In this context, which of the following information can be retrieved through the Red Notices (RNs)?

1. Name
2. Nationality
3. Physical attributes
4. Biometric data such as fingerprints

5. History of crimes
Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
(a) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
(b) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
(c) 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
(d) All of the above.
10. With reference to Eat Right India movement, Consider the following statements:
1. Its objective is to make people aware of the importance of breast feeding.
2. It is aligned with the government's flagship public health programmes such as POSHAN Abhiyaan, AnemiaMukt Bharat and Ayushman Bharat Yojana.
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
11. With reference to the recently launched Jan soochna portal, Which of the Statements given above is/are not correct?
1. It is inspired by the very spirit of the Right to Information Act, 2005 i.e. Proactive Disclosure of Information.
2. It is the first-ever portal launched by the Government of India for quick access to information on Government departments.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
12. "Recently, the Kerala High Court has declared the right to Internet access as a fundamental right forming a part of Article 21 of the Constitution."
In this context, which of the following rights are the part of fundamental rights under Article 21?
1. Right to free education up to 14 years of age.
2. Right to free legal aid.
3. Right against solitary confinement.
4. Right against handcuffing.
5. Right to appropriate life insurance policy
6. Right to information.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
(a) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 only
(b) 2, 3, 4 and 6 only
(c) 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
(d) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 only
13. Consider the following statements:
1. The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is a register containing names of all genuine Indian citizens.
2. At present, only Assam and Tripura has such an arrangement.
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. "Recently, the Vice President of India suggested setting up of regional benches of the Supreme Court of India due to the concern over inordinate delay in justice delivery."
In this Context, Consider the following statements:
1. As per Article 130 of the Indian Constitution, the seat of Supreme Court shall be in Delhi.
2. The President has the power to make seats of Supreme Court at different places with the recommendation of Chief justice of India.
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

15. With reference to Bathukamma festival, Which of the following statements are correct?

1. It is a harvest festival celebrated particularly by the women of Telangana.
2. Bathukamma is the state festival of Telangana.
3. The festival takes place towards the end of the monsoon season, just before the onset of winter.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) All of the above.

16. Consider the following statements:

1. Keezhadi, the Sangam-era site, have been found to belong to Post Vedic period.
2. The urbanisation of Cauvery plains happened around the 6th century BC.
3. The findings suggest that People were either literate or at least knew the art of writing since vedic times.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) All of the above.

17. Which one of the following organization releases the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report?

- (a) United Nations world Tourism Organization.
- (b) World Travel & Tourism Council
- (c) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- (d) World Economic Forum.

18. With reference to the Teaser loans, Consider the following statements:

1. These are loans that offer comparatively higher rates of interests in the first few years and the rates are gradually decreased in later years.
2. Teaser loan protects banks and

lenders from defaults and NPA issues.

Which of the Statements given above is/are not correct?

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

19. Which of the following are the possible Outcomes of Privatization of Indian Railways?

1. It may lead to improved amenities for travelers.
2. It may reduce the number of accidents resulting in a safe travel.
3. The fares would be halved.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) All of the above.

20. With reference to Goldschmidtite, Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Goldschmidtite is a mineral, found as an inclusion in a diamond from South Africa.
2. The mineral is dark green in color with a density less than that of water.

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

21. Which one of the following best describes the term "ANGAN" recently seen in news?

- (a) It is a mission mode project to create green houses powered only by renewable energy.
- (b) It is a financial support mechanism for self-employment of women
- (c) It is a part of digital India campaign which strives to make the Anganwadis go digital.
- (d) It is an international Conference

on Energy Efficiency in Building Sector

22. With reference to the Participatory Guarantee Scheme, Which of the following Statements is/are correct?

1. It is launched by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
2. It is a process of certifying organic products, which ensures certain quality standards.

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

23. "Recently an Iodine Survey Report has been released by Nutrition International." In this regard, Which of the following are the significances of Iodine?

1. It helps in optimal mental and physical development
2. It is a thyroid hormone regulator.
3. More use of Iodine has led to the faster melting of glaciers.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) All of the above.

24. Consider the following statements:

1. The most recent conference on military medicine of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was hosted by India.
2. It is the third such conference to be held under the aegis of SCO.
3. India officially become a observer state of SCO.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) All of the above.

25. With reference to Bal Basera, Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?

1. It is a project for the welfare of Children of Unorganized Workers.
2. It also provides for a Pre-Matric Scholarship to the Children of Unorganized Workers.
3. The first such project is deployed at AIIMS Rishikesh with the support of CPWD.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 3 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) 1 and 3 only

26. Which one of the following reflects the most appropriate relationship between law and liberty? UPSC 2019

- (a) If there are more laws, there is less liberty.
- (b) If there are no laws, there is no liberty.
- (c) If there is liberty, law have to be made by the people.
- (d) If laws are changed too often, liberty is in danger.

27. With reference to the difference between the culture of Rigvedic Aryans and Indus Valley people, which of the following statements is/are correct? UPSC 2017

1. Rigvedic Aryans used the coat of mail and helmet in warfare whereas the people of Indus Valley Civilization did not leave any evidence of using them.
2. Rigvedic Aryans knew gold, silver and copper whereas Indus Valley people knew only copper and iron.
3. Rigvedic Aryans had domesticated the horse whereas there is no evidence of Indus Valley people having been aware of this animal.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only

- (d) 1, 2 and 3
28. Right to vote and to be elected in India is a (UPSC 2019)
- Fundamental Right
 - Natural Right
 - Constitutional Right
 - Legal Right
29. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017? (UPSC 2019)
- Pregnant women are entitled for three months pre-delivery and three months post-delivery paid leave.
 - Enterprises with creches must allow the mother minimum six creche visits daily.
 - Women with two children get reduced entitlements.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- 1 and 2 only
 - 2 only
 - 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3
30. With reference to the election of the President of India, consider the following statements: (UPSC 2018)
- The value of the vote of each MLA varies from State to State.
 - The value of the vote of MPs of the Lok Sabha is more than the value of the vote of MPs of the Rajyasabha
- Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2

Answers

- | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 11. B | 21. D |
| 2. C | 12. D | 22. B |
| 3. B | 13. A | 23. A |
| 4. C | 14. C | 24. B |
| 5. C | 15. D | 25. A |
| 6. C | 16. A | 26. B |
| 7. D | 17. D | 27. C |
| 8. A | 18. C | 28. C |
| 9. D | 19. A | 29. C |
| 10. B | 20. A | 30. A |