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SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

- IAS SELF STUDY GUIDE -

CURRENT AFFAIRS

JULY 2018

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

GS PAPER - I _____ 7

Paper 1 Topic: Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times. __ 7

1. Ramanuja _____ 7
2. India gets its 37th WORLD UNESCO World HERITAGE SITE _____ 7
3. Meghalaya Celebrates Behdienkhlam Festival _____ 8
4. WORLD SANSKRIT CONFERENCE _____ 8
5. Rani-ki-Vav _____ 9
6. National Culture Fund _____ 9
7. National mission for manuscripts (NMM) _ 10

Paper 1 Topic: The Freedom Struggle – its various stages and important contributors /contributions from different parts of the country. _____ 10

1. 100th year of Montford Reform _____ 10

Paper 1 Topic: Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism. __ 11

1. Nelson Mandela International Day _____ 11
2. Israel Adopts Jewish Nation-State Law ____ 12

Paper 1 Topic: Role of women and women's organization. _____ 13

1. Section 497 of the IPC _____ 13
2. Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill 2018 _____ 14
3. Right of temple entry _____ 15
4. Make child marriages invalid _____ 16
5. Women Entrepreneurs Platform (WEP) ____ 17
6. Sukanya Samridhi Yojana _____ 17
7. Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill 2018 _____ 18
8. Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2018 ____ 19

Paper 1 Topic: Population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies. _____ 21

1. National Register of Citizens _____ 21
2. Gujarat government grants religious minority status to Jews _____ 21
3. World Population day _____ 22
4. Failure to educate girls could cost world \$30 trillion a year _____ 23
5. Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018 _____ 23

Paper 1 Topic: Important Geophysical phenomena. _____ 24

1. Newest phase in Earth's history named after Meghalaya rock _____ 24
2. Blood Moon _____ 25

GS PAPER - II _____ 26

Paper 2 Topic: Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions. _____ 26

1. Delhi Vs Centre: SC observations _____ 26
2. Uttarakhand HC declares animal kingdom a legal entity _____ 27

Paper 3 Topic: Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these. _____ 28

1. President nominates four members to Rajya Sabha _____ 28
2. No confidence motion _____ 28
3. What is a privilege motion? _____ 29
4. West Bengal Assembly passes resolution to rename state as Bangla _____ 30

Paper 2 Topic: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein. _____ 31

1. Assam NRC explained _____ 31

Paper 2 Topic: Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies. _____ 32

1. Chief Justice of India as 'Master of Roster' 32

2. Article 161 of the Constitution _____ 32

Paper 2 Topic: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies. _____ 33

1. Payments Council of India _____ 33

2. Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) _____ 34

3. Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) 34

4. National Green Tribunal _____ 35

5. Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) ___ 36

6. National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) _____ 36

7. Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) _____ 37

8. Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) _____ 38

9. Commission for denotified, semi-nomadic, nomadic tribes _____ 38

10. Domestic Council for Gold _____ 39

Paper 2 Topic: Salient features of the Representation of People's Act. _____ 40

1. Census of India _____ 40

2. Simultaneous elections _____ 41

Paper 2 Topic: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections. _____ 41

1. National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) _____ 41

2. Brus of Mizoram _____ 42

3. Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention _____ 43

4. Assam Bill against witch-hunt _____ 43

5. Global slavery Index 2018 _____ 44

6. Committee to check mob lynching _____ 45

Paper 2 Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation. _____ 46

1. DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018 _____ 46

2. Special Category Status for states _____ 47

3. Legalize Gambling _____ 48

4. ICAT releases First BS-VI engine certificate _ 49

5. Global Housing Construction Technology Challenge _____ 50

6. Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2018 _____ 50

7. Target Olympic Podium Scheme _____ 51

8. Telecom Commission approves net neutrality _____ 52

9. Social Media Hub _____ 53

10. Direct benefit transfer (DBT) _____ 54

11. Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018 ___ 55

12. Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013 _____ 55

13. Urja Ganga Gas Pipeline Project _____ 56

14. NCTE amendment Bill passed _____ 57

15. Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Bill, 2017 _____ 58

16. Shekatkar committee _____ 58

17. Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2018 _____ 59

18. Govt amends definition of hydrocarbon to include shale _____ 60

19. Manipur People's Protection Bill _____ 61

Paper 2 Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources. _____ 62

1. Nipah virus _____ 62

2. 'Happiness curriculum' for school students 63

3. National Health Stack _____	63
4. Formalin _____	63
5. 'Institutions of Eminence' _____	64
6. Eat Right Movement _____	65
7. Committee set up to synergise NCC and NSS _____	66
8. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Second Amendment) Bill, 2017 __	67
9. Samagra Shiksha Scheme _____	67
10. POSHAN Abhiyaan _____	68
11. Bombali: New strain of Ebola virus _____	69
12. Government extends Prime Minister's Research Fellows Scheme all potential researchers _____	69
13. National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme _____	70

Paper 2 Topic: Development processes and the development industry the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders. _____ 71

1. Student Police Cadet Programme _____ 71
2. Aspirational Districts _____ 72

Paper 2 Topic: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance-applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures. _____ 72

1. Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) _____ 72
2. Common Services Centers (CSCs) _____ 73
- 3 IFFCO i-Mandi _____ 74
4. National Database of Arms Licenses system 74
5. Public Affairs Index 2018 _____ 75
6. DigiYatra initiative _____ 76

Paper 2 Topic: India and its neighbourhood-relations. _____ 76

1. Delhi Dialogue _____ 76
2. Border Haats _____ 77
3. Girinka Programme _____ 78

4. BRICS 2018 Summit _____	78
----------------------------	----

Paper 2 Topic: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests. _____ 79

1. UNSC Resolution 2427 _____ 79
2. U.N. agrees first-ever global compact for migration _____ 80

Paper 2 Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests. _____ 81

1. "Space force" by US _____ 81
2. Invest India _____ 82

Paper 2 Topic: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate. _____ 83

1. Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) _____ 83
2. Asia Pacific Trade Agreement _____ 83
3. United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) _____ 84
4. Asian Development Bank (ADB) _____ 84
5. European Bank for Reconstruction & Development _____ 85
6. World Customs Organisation (WCO) _____ 86
7. Google teams up with UN to track environmental changes _____ 87
8. BRICS Regional Aviation Partnership _____ 88
9. International Solar Alliance (ISA) _____ 89

GS PAPER - III _____ 90

Paper 3 Topic: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. _____ 90

1. Currency Derivatives _____ 90
2. Inter-Creditor Agreement (ICA) _____ 90

Paper 3 Topic: Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth. _____ 91

1. India-Korea Technology Exchange Centre __ 91
2. Ease of Doing Business Ranking of States __ 92
3. India pips France to become world's 6th largest economy _____ 93

4. Cabinet relaxes NELP, pre-NELP pact rules_ 94

5. FDI Confidence Index_____ 94

*Paper 3 Topic: Inclusive growth and issues arising out of it.*_____ 95

1. Recapitalization of RRBs _____ 95

2. IAS officers for village outreach _____ 96

3. State Banks (Repeal and Amendment) Bill, 2017 _____ 96

Paper 3 Topic: Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing. _____ 97

1. Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) _____ 97

2. India has 5th largest area under GM crops 98

3. Jute sector _____ 99

*Paper 3 Topic: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.*_____ 99

1. Kudankulam power plant _____ 99

2. Purvanchal Expressway_____ 100

3. Bansagar canal project _____ 101

4. Right of First Refusal (ROFR) _____ 102

5. FASTags _____ 102

6. Delhi Dialogue _____ 103

7. National Waterways Projects in the North East _____ 104

8. Western Dedicated Corridor (WDFC) _____ 105

9. 'Mukhyamantri Kissan Aaye Badhotri Solar Yojna' _____ 106

10. Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF) _____ 106

Paper 3 Topic: Science and Technology-developments and their applications and effects in everyday life Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology. 107

1. Agni-V_____ 107

2. ISRO conducts pad abort test _____ 107

3. Nasscom unveils centre for data, AI _____ 107

4. Einstein's Theory of Relativity _____ 108

5. Global Innovation Index_____ 109

6. BrahMos missile _____ 110

7. IIT-Madras unveils world's first remotely operable LEAP microscope _____ 110

8. India to expand polar research to Arctic__ 111

9. 'Rent-a-lab' policy to bring revenues to institutions _____ 111

10. Innovate India Platform_____ 112

11. Deep Ocean Mission (DOM) _____ 112

Paper 3 Topic: Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights. _____ 113

1. Hubble Space Telescope _____ 113

2. Intellectual Property Appellate Board ____ 114

3. World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) treaties _____ 114

4. Parker Solar Probe _____ 115

5. Kepler space telescope _____ 116

6. RAMA (Reconstituting Asteroids into Mechanical Automata) _____ 116

7. GRACE-FO mission _____ 117

8. Pak Spy Satellites Launched By China ____ 117

9. First-Ever Colour X-Ray On A Human ____ 118

10. MeerKAT radio telescope _____ 118

11. NASA's 'Remote Sensing Toolkit' _____ 119

12. World's fastest man-made spinning object _____ 119

13. Draft of Data Protection Bill _____ 120

Paper 3 Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment. _____ 121

1. 4 species added to recovery programme by Wildlife Board _____ 121

2. Nilgiri tahr _____ 122

3. Petcoke _____ 122

4. Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan _____ 123

5. SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting) _____ 124

6. Odisha police launch drive to bust Pangolin smuggling racket _____ 125

7. 2018 Earth Overshoot Day fall on August	1125	17. First ever 'India Tourism Mart'	135
8. Green Mahanadi Mission	127	18. World's Oldest Color Discovered In Rocks Deep Beneath Sahara Desert	135
9. Naturalized species	127	19. In news- Marshall Islands	135
10. Arsenic contamination	128	20. First Chairman of Rajya Sabha to sign an MOU	136
11. International Tiger Day: 29 July	129	21. World's largest mobile phone factory	136
<i>Paper 3 Topic: Disaster management.</i>	130	22. Lonely Planet's top five "2018 Best in Asia" list	136
1. AMCDRR 2018	130	23. 'Anna' canteens	136
2. India to give flash flood warning to Asian nations	130	24. Shwet Ashwa Drass Expedition	136
<i>Paper 3 Topic: Security related issues.</i>	131	25. Sangita Kalanidhi award	136
Counter-drone strategy for airports ready	131	26. Vikas Engine	137
Facts for Prelims	133	27. Golden jackal	137
1. Golden Globe Race (GGR)	133	28. Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP)	137
2. GST day – 1 st JULY	133	29. Ex Pitch Black	137
3. Kalidas Award	133	30. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)	137
4. In news- Banking Codes and Standards Board of India (BCSBI)	133	31. India-assisted ambulance service launched in Sri Lanka	138
5. Global Mobility Summit	133	32. Iran becomes India's No. 2 oil supplier	138
6. WAPCOS Limited	133	33. Tribal Atlas of Odisha	138
7. Cvigil	134	34. Places in News	138
8. Fighter aircraft Tejas:	134	35. Kargil Vijay Diwas	138
9. Agartala Airport renamed:	134	36. 2018 Ramon Magsaysay Award	138
10. Khan Prahari	134	37. Mission Satyanishtha	139
11. 'Sambal' scheme	134	38. Country's first state-run all-woman hotel in Kerala	139
12. Eta Carinae	134	39. NASAMS-II	139
13. Gaming University In Andhra Pradesh	134	40. India's first Mobile Open Exchange zone to be at Noida	139
14. Mattala Airport	135		
15. Civil Aviation Research Organization at Begumpet Airport, Hyderabad	135		
16. What Is Aphelion?	135		

GS PAPER - I

Paper 1 Topic: Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

1. RAMANUJA

- **Context:** A 216-foot-tall statue of Ramanuja will be built at **Hyderabad**. When unveiled, it is set to become the world's second tallest statue of a seated figure.

Facts for Prelims:

- Currently, **the Great Buddha of Thailand is the tallest statue, at 302-feet**. Once the Ramanujacharya statue is unveiled, it will become the second tallest, a distinction now held by the Guanyin figure on Mount Xiqiao in China's Guangdong region, at 203 feet.

About Ramanujacharya:

- He was a Hindu theologian, philosopher, and one of the most important exponents of the Sri Vaishnavism tradition within Hinduism.
- His philosophical foundations for devotionalism were influential to the Bhakti movement.
- He is famous as **the chief proponent of Vishishtadvaita subschool of Vedānta**.
- He wrote **influential texts**, such as bhāṣya on the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita, all in Sanskrit.



What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Ramanuja- important works and contributions, Vishishtadvaita.

Sources: the hindu.

2. INDIA GETS ITS 37TH WORLD UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

- **Context:** In a Remarkable Achievement, **India gets its 37th WORLD UNESCO World HERITAGE SITE**. The decision was taken at the 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO at Manama in Bahrain.
- **37th site:** Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai.

Facts for Prelims:

- This makes Mumbai city the second city in India after Ahmedabad to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.
- In the past 5 years alone, India has managed to get inscribed seven of its properties/sites on the World Heritage List of UNESCO.
- **India now has overall 37 World Heritage Inscriptions** with 29 Cultural, 07 Natural and 01 Mixed sites.
- **While India stands second largest in number after China** in terms of number of World Heritage properties in ASPAC (Asia and Pacific) region, **it is overall sixth in the world**.



What is a World Heritage site?

- A World Heritage site is classified as a natural or man-made area or a structure that is of international importance, and a space which requires special protection.
- These sites are officially recognised by the UN and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, also known as UNESCO.

- UNESCO believes that the sites classified as World Heritage are important for humanity, and they hold cultural and physical significance.

Background:

- **In 1982, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) announced, 18 April as the “World Heritage Day”**, approved by the General Assembly of UNESCO in 1983, with the aim of enhancing awareness of the importance of the cultural heritage of humankind, and redouble efforts to protect and conserve the human heritage.

What’s important?

- **For Prelims:** UNESCO WHS- important sites.
- **For Mains:** Significance and the need for conservation of WHS.

Sources: pib.

3. MEGHALAYA CELEBRATES BEHDIENTKHLAM FESTIVAL

- **Context:** Behdienkhlam, one of the most colourful festivals of the State, was recently celebrated in the Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya.

About the festival:

- Behdienkhlam is a major festival of the people in the Jaintia Hills.
- It is celebrated to invoke the gods for a bumper harvest and drive away plague.
- It is the ritualistic expression of the relentless struggle of mankind to overcome the destructive forces of nature, including diseases, since the dawn of civilization.
- During the festival, decorated and colourful raths are immersed in ‘Wah Ainar,’ a muddy pool.
- The non-Christian ‘Pnar’ people who believe either in the traditional faith of ‘Niamtre’ or Hinduism observe this festival.



What’s important?

- **For Prelims:** Behdienkhlam, Pnar.

Sources: the hindu.

4. WORLD SANSKRIT CONFERENCE

- **Context:** The 2018 World Sanskrit Conference (WSC) is being hosted by the Department of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. It is 17th such conference.

World Sanskrit Conference:

- The World Sanskrit Conference is the premier international forum for professional researchers and educators of the Sanskrit language and its literatures, and of the history, religion, and cultures of premodern South Asia.
- **It is convened every three years under the auspices of the International Association of Sanskrit Studies.**

About IASS:

- At the 29th International Congress of Orientalists, held in Paris in 1973, Sanskritists from various countries endorsed the formation of the International Association of Sanskrit Studies and drafted its constitution.
- The main task of the IASS was agreed to be the **organizing of a World Sanskrit Conference** at different venues around the world.



- The 1972 International Sanskrit Conference in New Delhi was recognised retrospectively as the **First World Sanskrit Conference**.
- **Indologica Taurinensia** is the journal of the IASS.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** WSC and IASS.
- **For Mains:** Significance of WSC.

Sources: pib.

5. RANI-KI-VAV

- **Why in News?** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will soon be releasing a new lavender Rs 100 currency note. The banknote highlights the rich and diverse cultural heritage of India as it prominently displays a photograph of 'Rani-ki-vav' (The Queen's Stepwell), an 11th century architectural wonder.

About 'Rani-ki-vav':

- **Located in Gujarat's Patan**, the 900-year-old structure is a major tourist attraction, a **UNESCO World Heritage site**, and was awarded as the cleanest iconic place in India in 2016. It is located on the banks of Saraswati River.
- **Who built it?** It was built by the Solanki dynasty's **queen Udayamati** in the 11th century as a memorial to her deceased husband Bhimdev I.
- **Architectural significance:** Rani-ki-Vav was built in the complex Maru-Gurjara architectural style. It highlights the sanctity of water as it is designed as an inverted temple under the earth's surface. The central theme is the Dasavataras, or ten incarnations of Vishnu, including Buddha. The avatars are accompanied by sadhus, brahmins, and apsaras (celestial dancers).



What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Location of Rani-ki-Vav, Maru Gurjara architecture, who built it?
- **For Mains:** Architectural significance.

Sources: the hindu.

6. NATIONAL CULTURE FUND

- **Context:** As per the latest data, about Rs. 904.80 Lakhs has been received as part of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) under NCF for development Works at Historic Monuments in last 3 yrs.

About National Culture Fund (NCF):

National Culture Fund (NCF) was set up as a Trust under the **Charitable Endowment Act, 1890** in November 1996 by the Government, with a view to mobilize extra resources **through Public Private Partnerships**.

- The National Culture Fund is **managed and administered by a council headed by Hon'ble Culture Minister** to decide the policies and an Executive Committee headed by Secretary, Culture to actualize those policies.
- The Fund aims at inviting the participation of the corporate sector, non-government organizations, private/public sector as well as individuals in the task of promoting, protecting and preserving India's cultural heritage.
- All the projects undertaken by the NCF are **completed within a specified period**, in accordance with an MoU signed by NCF with the concerned donor organization.
- The donations/contributions to NCF are eligible **for 100% tax deduction under the Income Tax Act, 1961** subject to the limits and conditions prescribed in the said Section and relevant Rules.

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** NCF- key features.
- **For Mains:** India cultural Heritage- Significance and the need for promotion, protection and preservation.

Sources: pib.

7. NATIONAL MISSION FOR MANUSCRIPTS (NMM)

- **Context:** National mission for manuscripts (NMM) has digitized 283 lakh pages of 2.96 lakh manuscripts till date.

About National mission for manuscripts (NMM):

- In 2003, National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM), a **Mission mode Project**, was **launched by the Ministry of Culture** for documentation, conservation, preservation and digitization of manuscripts.
- The manuscripts documented and digitized by the NMM will be made **available to researcher and scholars through a Trusted Digital Repository**.
- The **ultimate object of the Mission** is to establish a Digital Manuscripts Repository at IGNC in which researchers and scholars can view and consult the manuscripts to understand our past in its totality.

What are Manuscripts?

- A manuscript is a **handwritten composition** on paper, bark, cloth, metal, palm leaf or any other material dating back at least seventy-five years that has significant scientific, historical or aesthetic value. **Lithographs and printed volumes are not manuscripts.**
- **Manuscripts are found in hundreds of different languages and scripts.** Often, one language is written in a number of different scripts. For example, Sanskrit is written in Oriya script, Grantha script, Devanagari script and many other scripts.
- Manuscripts are distinct from historical records such as epigraphs on rocks, firmans, revenue records which provide direct information on events or processes in history. Manuscripts have knowledge content.

Background:

- India possesses an estimate of ten million manuscripts, probably the largest collection in the world.
- These cover a variety of themes, textures and aesthetics, scripts, languages, calligraphies, illuminations and illustrations.

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** NMM- objectives.
- **For Mains:** Need for Protection of Manuscripts.

Sources: pib.

Paper 1 Topic: *The Freedom Struggle – its various stages and important contributors /contributions from different parts of the country.*

1. 100TH YEAR OF MONTFORD REFORM

- **Context:** This month marks the 100th year of the publication of the 'Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms', commonly known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Report (MCR). Edwin Montagu was the Secretary of State for India. Lord Chelmsford was the Viceroy of India.

Features of the Act:

- It relaxed the central control over the provinces by **demarcating and separating the central and provincial subjects**. The central and provincial legislatures were authorised to make laws on their respective list of subjects. However, the structure of government continued to be centralised and unitary.
- It further divided the **provincial subjects into two parts—transferred and reserved**. The transferred subjects were to be administered by the governor with the aid of ministers responsible to the legislative Council. The

reserved subjects, on the other hand, were to be administered by the governor and his executive council without being responsible to the legislative Council. **This dual scheme of governance was known as 'dyarchy'**—a term derived from the Greek word di-arche which means double rule. However, this experiment was largely unsuccessful.

- **It introduced, for the first time, bicameralism.** Thus, the Indian Legislative Council was replaced by a bicameral legislature consisting of an Upper House (Council of State) and a Lower House (Legislative Assembly). The majority of members of both the Houses were chosen by direct election.
- It required that **the three of the six members of the Viceroy's executive Council (other than the commander-in-chief) were to be Indian.**
- It **extended the principle of communal representation** by providing separate electorates for Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans. It granted **franchise to a limited number of people** on the basis of property, tax or education.
- It created **a new office of the High Commissioner for India in London** and transferred to him some of the functions hitherto performed by the Secretary of State for India.
- It provided for **the establishment of a public service commission.** Hence, a Central Public Service Commission was set up in 1926 for recruiting civil servants.
- It **separated, for the first time, provincial budgets from the Central budget** and authorised the provincial legislatures to enact their budgets.
- It provided for **the appointment of a statutory commission** to inquire into and report on its working after ten years of its coming into force.

How was it received by Indians?

- The 1919 reforms did not satisfy political demands in India. The British repressed opposition, and restrictions on the press and on movement were re-enacted through the **Rowlatt Acts** introduced in 1919. The act allowed certain political cases to be tried without juries and permitted internment of suspects without trial.
- These measures were rammed through the Legislative Council with the unanimous opposition of the Indian members. Several members of the council including Jinnah resigned in protest. **These measures were widely seen throughout India of the betrayal of strong support given by the population for the British war effort.**

What to study?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Features and significance of 1919 Act.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 1 Topic: Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.

1. NELSON MANDELA INTERNATIONAL DAY

- **Context:** Nelson Mandela International Day 2018 marks **100 years** since the birth of Nelson Mandela (18 July 1918).

What is Nelson Mandela International Day?

- Nelson Mandela International Day is a global event held annually to honor former South African president and anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela.
- The event started after the Nelson Mandela Foundation and 46664, a concert series that benefits AIDS victims referencing Mandela's



prison number 46664, first proposed the idea of a worldwide day honoring the work and legacy of Nelson Mandela in April 2009.

- **The first Mandela Day was held on Mandela's 91st birthday on July 18, 2009** to promote volunteering and community service, being marked worldwide with community service events, art exhibits, fundraisers and a concert at Radio City Music Hall in New York City.
- The United Nations soon took interest and supported the idea of a global day honoring Mandela, declaring in November 2009 the marking of July 18 as Nelson Mandela International Day.

Who was Nelson Mandela?

- Nelson Mandela was the former President of South Africa as well as an **anti-apartheid activist**, philanthropist and political leader.
- Mandela emerged as a key leader in the resistance to racist apartheid laws, being arrested multiple times and later being sentenced to life in prison in 1964 after being tried for conspiring to overthrow the government.
- Amid growing pressure both internally and throughout the world, the South African government finally released Mandela after 27 years in 1990. He soon worked alongside President F.W. de Klerk to dismantle the apartheid regime in 1991 and usher in the peaceful 1994 general election in which he was elected as the country's new president.
- During his presidency from May 1994 to June 1999, Mandela worked to promote racial reconciliation, fight poverty and expand healthcare for all South Africans. After leaving office, he remained active in many philanthropic efforts throughout the world, particularly ending the HIV/AIDS crisis and reducing poverty.
- **For his efforts promoting social justice, democracy and peace, he was awarded dozens of prestigious accolades, including the Nobel Peace Prize and the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom.**

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Mandela Day.
- **For Mains:** Nelson Mandela- legacy and achievements.

Sources: toi.

2. ISRAEL ADOPTS JEWISH NATION-STATE LAW

- **Context:** Israel's parliament has adopted a law defining the country as the nation state of the Jewish people, provoking fears it could lead to blatant discrimination against Arab citizens.

The Nationality Bill:

- The law speaks of Israel as the historic homeland of the Jews and says they have a "unique" right to self-determination there.
- The legislation makes Hebrew the country's national language and defines the establishment of Jewish communities as being in the national interest.
- Arabic, previously considered an official language, was granted only special status.
- It also establishes the flag, the national symbol and anthem.
- The legislation becomes part of the country's basic laws, which serve as a de facto constitution.

Concerns:

- **Critics say the law is "racist" and it legalises "apartheid"**. The passage of the law continues Israel's rightward shift in recent years amid frustration with failed peace agreements with the Palestinians and steady growth in settlement building in the occupied West Bank.
- **Arab Muslims are also concerned.** Israel is currently home to 1.8 million Arab Muslims, roughly 20 percent of its population, who have lived here since the creation of the independent nation state. They speak and study in the language most widely spoken across the region, by Muslims, Christians and Jews alike.

Why was this law created?

- The question of Israel's status as a Jewish state is politically controversial and has long been debated. Before now, it has not been enshrined in law.
- Some Israeli Jewish politicians consider that the founding principles of Israel's creation, as a state for Jews in their ancient homeland, are under threat and could become less relevant, or obsolete, in the future.

- Fears over the high birth-rate of Israeli Arabs, as well as possible alternatives to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which could challenge Israel's Jewish majority, have spurred on calls to anchor the Jewishness of Israel in law.

Analysis:

- For a country that prides itself on being the only strong and stable democracy in a region surrounded by dictators, monarchs and other authoritarian rulers inimical to its existence, this legislation changes that very character.
- Reducing the status of minorities further is only likely to fuel tensions in one of the most volatile regions in the world. After all, both Jewish national consciousness and Arab nationalism fuel each other.

Facts for Prelims:

- Israel has no constitution but instead passed over time a series of Basic Laws which have constitutional status. The nation state law is the 14th such basic law. (Source: BBC).

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Israel's basic laws.
- **For Mains:** Declaration of Jewish state- concerns and analysis.

Sources: toi.

Paper 1 Topic: Role of women and women's organization.

1. SECTION 497 OF THE IPC

- **Context:** Opposing a plea which called for the Section 497 of the IPC to be scrapped, the Centre recently told the Supreme Court that adultery must remain a punishable offence to protect the sanctity of marriage.

What is Section 497?

- Section 497 of the 158-year-old IPC says, "Whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of another man, without the consent or connivance of that man, such sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape, is guilty of the offence of adultery, and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both. In such case the wife shall not be punishable as an abettor."

Why Section 497 should not be scrapped?

- The provisions of law, under challenge in the present writ, have been specifically created by the legislature in its wisdom, to protect and safeguard the sanctity of marriage, keeping in mind the **unique structure and culture of the Indian society**.
- Striking down Section 497 which provides for punishment only to a man for having extra-marital sexual ties with the wife of another man, will destroy the **institution of marriage**.
- Striking down section 497 of IPC and Section 198(2) of the CrPC will prove to be detrimental to the **intrinsic Indian ethos** which gives paramount importance to the institution and sanctity of marriage.
- The apex court had earlier on three separate occasions, in 1954, 1985 and 1988, upheld the constitutionality of Section 497.

The plea:

- A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court which called for the Section 497 of the IPC to be scrapped, contending it does not treat men and women equally. It contended that Section 497 was "**prima facie unconstitutional on the grounds that it discriminates against men and violates Article 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution**".
- The plea also said the provision also **indirectly discriminated against women** by holding an erroneous presumption that they are the property of men.
- The petitioner had also challenged **Section 198(2) of CrPC, which deals with the prosecution for offences against marriages**.

Way ahead:

- Many countries have decriminalised adultery. IPC is the creation of England when they ruled over India for nearly 200 years and it is they who inserted Section 497 as a penal offence. What is more surprising is that England itself has decriminalised adultery and does not treat it as a criminal offence!
- It is high time that this law is revisited even in India and amended to meet the present circumstances. Either both of them should be punishable or no one. It cannot be anybody's case that the man alone should be sent behind bars for committing adultery while the woman be held just not liable at all and allowed to escape unpunished and unchecked.

Facts for Prelims:

- **Justice Malimath Committee** report on reforms in the criminal justice system had suggested making section 497 gender-neutral.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Justice Malimath Committee, Section 497 and 198.
- **For Mains:** What is Adultery, Section 497- need for revisit.

Sources: the hindu.

2. TRAFFICKING OF PERSONS (PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION) BILL 2018

- **Context:** Activists have appealed to parliamentarians that the draft anti- trafficking legislation be sent to the Standing Committee. They have appealed to the government that the bill should explicitly state that consenting adult workers will not be penalised under the new law.

Features of Bill:

- It takes into consideration **aggravated forms of trafficking**. It includes trafficking for purpose of forced labour, begging, trafficking of a woman or child for the purpose of marriage or under the pretext of marriage or after marriage, trafficking by administering chemical substance or hormones on a person for the purpose of early sexual maturity etc
- It prescribes **punishment for promoting and facilitating trafficking of person**. It includes producing, printing, issuing or distributing unissued, tampered or fake certificates, registration or stickers as proof of compliance with Government requirements, or commits fraud for procuring or facilitating acquisition of clearances and necessary documents from Government agencies.
- It deals with **confidentiality of victims and witnesses and complainants** by not disclosing their identity. It will be maintained by recording their statement through video conferencing (it will help trans-border and inter-State crimes).
- It has provision for **time bound trial and repatriation of the victims**. It will be within a period of 1 year from taking into cognizance. It provides immediate protection of rescued victims and their rehabilitation. The victims will be entitled to interim relief immediately within 30 days to address their physical, mental trauma etc. and further appropriate relief within 60 days from the date of filing of charge sheet.
- It creates dedicated **institutional mechanisms at District, State and Central level**. They will be responsible for prevention, protection, investigation and rehabilitation work related to trafficking. The tasks of Anti-Trafficking Bureau at the national level will be performed by National Investigation Agency (NIA).
- The **punishment prescribed** under it ranges from rigorous minimum 10 years to life and fine not less than Rs. 1 lakh. In order to break the organized nexus, both at national and international level, it mandates for attachment & forfeiture of property and also proceeds for crime.
- It comprehensively addresses **transnational nature of the crime**. It entrusts National Anti-Trafficking Bureau (NATB) to perform functions of international coordination with authorities in foreign countries and international organizations.

The opposition:

- Many have spoken out against the devastating effects that the new bill could have on several stakeholders which include marginalised groups such as children, the trans community and consenting sex-workers. In fact, it is claimed that the bill is essentially nothing but a veiled attempt to further criminalise sex work.

- The new bill includes a clause that makes transmission or even exposure to HIV in an instance of trafficking among one of the 'Aggravated Offences'. This would have a grave impact on those suffering from HIV.
- Consenting sex workers will be severely hit by the bill. The sex workers' community which is one of the biggest stakeholders in anti-trafficking legislation have not been consulted before the drafting of this bill.
- The bill makes giving chemicals or hormones to another for their accelerated sexual maturity an "aggravated offence", a clause that leaves the trans-community in a lurch.
- The new bill also includes child victims of trafficking. Child rights activists have raised concerns about the proposed 'rehabilitation' of children by institutionalising them, a practice which has often faced international censure.

Need for anti- trafficking legislation:

- More than 300,000 children went missing in the country between 2012 and 2017, government data shows. Around 100,000 are yet to be traced and it is feared that many of them could have been trafficked.
- In 2016, for instance, 111,569 children were reported missing. Of these, 55,944 children were traced but only 8,132 trafficking cases were reported. Many of these children are victims of modern slavery — forced into prostitution, labour or domestic work.
- They are also used as drug mules and even given up for adoption illegally. Poverty and lack of opportunity also pushes a lot of young women, especially from the interior parts of West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand, into prostitution.
- Despite the enormity of the problem, India lacks a single comprehensive law for human trafficking. At present, trafficking is covered under half-a-dozen laws resulting in confusion and poor enforcement.

Way ahead:

- The new law will make India a leader among South Asian countries to combat trafficking. Trafficking is a global concern also affecting a number of South Asian nations.
- Amongst them, India is now a pioneer in formulating a comprehensive legislation. UNODC and SAARC nations are looking forward to India to take lead by enacting this law.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Key features of the Bill.
- **For Mains:** Need for a legislation on anti- trafficking, concerns raised over the bill.

Sources: the hindu.

3. RIGHT OF TEMPLE ENTRY

- **Context:** In its first preliminary observations on a rule barring women from entering the Sabarimala temple in Kerala due to biological reasons, the Supreme Court has said **women have the constitutional right of equal access to public places of worship to pray**. Any rule that stood in their way would be against this right, the apex court said.

What's the issue?

- Women are not allowed to enter Sabarimala temple. The discrimination is based on physiological reason as women between the age group of 10-50 undergo menstruation.



Fundamental Right in question:

- Can right of women to pray at the place of their choice be discriminated against solely based "on a biological factor (menstruation) exclusive to the female gender"?
- All Hindus have the right to enter the temple and denying them the right was a kind of "untouchability" which was abolished by Article 17 of the Constitution.
- It also goes against the spirit of Articles 14, 15 and 21.

Observations made by the Court:

- In a public place of worship, a woman can enter, where a man can go. **What applies to a man, applies to a woman.**
- **Women and their physiological phenomena are creations of God. If not God, of nature.** Why should this (menstruation) be a reason for exclusion for employment or worship or anything?
- **Article 25 (1) mandates freedom of conscience and right to practise religion.** "All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion". This means right to pray is a constitutional right.
- Also, **the Constitution upholds the ideals of liberty of thought, expression, belief and faith, be it for man or woman.**
- Therefore, the discrimination is a violation of the rights to equality and gender justice.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Location of Sabarimala temple.
- **For Mains:** Temple entry- ban, need for revival, question of FRs at stake and issues associated.

Sources: the hindu.

4. MAKE CHILD MARRIAGES INVALID

- **Context:** The WCD Ministry has proposed to make child marriages "void ab initio" (invalid from the outset).

What's proposed?

- The ministry seeks to amend section 3 of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, under which a child marriage is only voidable at the option of the contracting parties.

Current scenario:

- Currently, child marriages are valid in India, but can be annulled if a case is filed in a district court by either of the two contracting parties within two years of becoming an adult, or through a guardian in case of minors.
- Also, in October 2017, the Supreme Court had ruled that "sexual intercourse with a minor wife amounts to rape, as under no circumstances can a child below 18 years give consent, express or implied, for sexual intercourse.

Background:

- The legal age for marriage in India is 18 for a woman and 21 for a man.
- According to a study based on Census 2011, there are 2.3 crore child brides in the country. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2015-16 also showed that 26.8 per cent women were married off before they turned 18.
- According to the NFHS 2015-16, nearly eight per cent girls in the 15-19 age group had already become mothers or pregnant at the time of the survey.

Way ahead:

- If approved, it will amend the provisions of the law that allow child marriages to continue till a case is filed in a district court by either of the two contracting parties within two years of becoming an adult, or through a guardian in case of minors.

Facts for Prelims:

- The West Bengal government, in June 2017, won the prestigious **UN Public Service Award** for its initiative to combat child marriage and ensure education to the girl child in the state.
- West Bengal has been awarded for the '**Kanyashree Prakalpa**' initiative that sought to reduce the high child marriage rates and low female education rates in the state.
- Through the initiative, cash was deposited into the bank account of girls for every year they remained in school and were unmarried. This initiative led to a "drastic reduction in child marriage, increase in female education and female empowerment."

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** 'Kanyashree Prakalpa' initiative, UN Public Service Award.

- **For Mains:** Child Marriage- concerns, challenges and need for prevention.

Sources: the hindu.

5. WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS PLATFORM (WEP)

- **Context:** *NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform(WEP)* and Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC), Office of International Programmes (OIP) University of Delhi, had jointly organised a Two-Day International conference on "Empowering Women: Fostering Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Sustainability".

About the Women Entrepreneurship Platform:

- **Aim:** The initiative is aimed at building an ecosystem for women across India to realize their entrepreneurial aspirations, scale-up innovative initiatives and chalk-out sustainable, long-term strategies for their businesses. This will be done through an enabling network of industry collaborations, partnerships, mentors and peer-to-peer connect.
- **What it does?** From providing unique services such as credit evaluation of women-led startups by CRISIL and potential equity investments through an INR 10 crore fund established by DICE Districts, the WEP opens up avenues of growth and opportunity for women entrepreneurs.

Need for economic empowerment of women:

- Economically empowered women are major catalysts for development. There is greater recognition of the positive relationship between increased economic activity by women and improved social outcomes.
- Women often tend to reinvest their income in their children's education, health and nutrition. This has a positive impact on the potential for economic growth.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Women Entrepreneurship Platform.
- **For Mains:** Women entrepreneurs- need, significance, challenges and solutions.

Sources: the hindu.

6. SUKANYA SAMRIDDHI YOJANA

- **Context:** By amending *Sukanya Samriddhi Account Rules, 2016*, the Union Government has reduced minimum yearly deposit required under popular girl child savings scheme, Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana to Rs 250 from Rs 1,000 earlier. This has been lowered to enable more people to enjoy benefits of this scheme.

What is it?

- Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY) is a small deposit scheme for the girl child launched as a part of the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign.

Key features:

- It is currently 8.1 per cent and provides income-tax benefit under section 80 C of the Income Tax Act,1961. Even the returns are tax free in the scheme.
- A Sukanya Samriddhi **Account can be opened any time after the birth of a girl till she turns 10, with a minimum deposit of Rs 250** (Earlier it was Rs 1,000). In subsequent years, a minimum of Rs 250 and a maximum of Rs 1.5 lakh can be deposited during the ongoing financial year.
- **The account can be opened in any post office or authorised branches of commercial banks.**
- The account will **remain operative for 21 years from the date of its opening or till the marriage of the girl after she turns 18.**


About BBBP:

- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme was launched in January, 2015. The scheme is aimed at promoting gender equality and the significance of educating girls.
- The Scheme is targeted at improving the Child Sex Ratio through multi sectoral interventions including prevention of gender biased sex selection and promoting girls' education and her holistic empowerment.
- It is a tri-ministerial effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development.

- To meet the requirement of her higher education expenses, **partial withdrawal of 50% of the balance is allowed after she turns 18.**

What to study?


- For Prelims:** Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana- key features.
- For Mains:** Significance of the scheme and other initiatives for promoting the welfare of girl child.



Sukanya Samriddhi Yojna

For a Bright Future of Your Daughter


(A Government of India Initiative)



Special Features :-

- ✿ Bank account can be opened for girl child (maximum two-three accounts can be opened in case younger siblings are twin girls) up to 10 years of age.
 - ✿ Deposit for only 15 years with maturity at 21 years.
 - ✿ Facility of 50% payment after 18 years of age.
- ✿ Facility of account closure on marriage after the age of 18 years.
- ✿ Deposit minimum ₹ 1000/- and maximum ₹ 1,50,000/- per year.
- ✿ Highest interest rate amongst all other small savings schemes.
- ✿ Income Tax benefit under section 80C.

For more information, contact the Branch Manager, SBI



Sources: the hindu.

7. TRAFFICKING OF PERSONS (PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION) BILL 2018

- Context:** The Lok Sabha has passed the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018. The Bill provides for the prevention, rescue, and rehabilitation of trafficked persons.

Key features of the Bill include:

- National Anti-Trafficking Bureau:** The Bill provides for the establishment of a National Anti-Trafficking Bureau to investigate trafficking cases and implement provisions of the Bill. The Bureau will comprise of police officers, and any other officers as required. It may take over the investigation of any offence under the Bill, that has been referred to it by two or more states. Further, the Bureau may: (i) request the state government to co-operate in the investigation, or (ii) transfer the case to the state government for investigation and trial, with approval from the central government.
- Functions of the Bureau:** Key functions of the Bureau include: (i) coordinating and monitoring surveillance along known routes, (ii) facilitating surveillance, enforcement and preventive steps at source, transit and destination points, (iii) maintaining coordination between law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders, and (iv) increasing international cooperation with authorities abroad for intelligence sharing, and mutual legal assistance.
- State Anti-Trafficking Officers:** Under the Bill, the state government will appoint a State Nodal Officer. He will be responsible for: (i) follow up action under the Bill, as per the instructions of the State Anti-Trafficking Committee, and (ii) providing relief and rehabilitation services. The state government will also appoint a Police Nodal Officer at the state and district levels. The state government will also designate Anti-Trafficking Police Officers for each district, to deal with all matters related to trafficking in the district.
- Anti-Trafficking Units:** The Bill also provides for the setting up of Anti-Trafficking Units (ATUs) at the district level. ATUs will deal with the prevention, rescue, and protection of victims and witnesses, and for the

MINIMUM 7 YEARS IN JAIL

<p>➤ Bill proposes rigorous imprisonment of at least 7 years, extendable to 10 years, for those engaging in 'buying or selling' a person. They will also be fined over ₹1 lakh</p> <p>➤ Anybody who distributes or sells or stores, in any electronic or printed form, incidents of sexual assault</p>	
<p>for extortion or coercion of victim or his/her family, or for unlawful gain, can be jailed for 3-7 years</p> <p>➤ Apart from national anti-trafficking bureau, bill also proposes state-level anti-trafficking officers</p> <p>➤ Bill spells out measures for relief & rehabilitation of victims of trafficking, and seeks formation of a committee</p>	

investigation and prosecution of trafficking offences. In districts where an ATU is not functional, this responsibility will be taken up by the local police station.

- **Anti-Trafficking Relief and Rehabilitation Committee:** The Bill provides for the establishment of Anti-Trafficking Relief and Rehabilitation Committees (ATCs) at the national, state, and district levels. These Committees will be responsible for: (i) providing compensation to victims, (ii) repatriation of victims, and (iii) re-integration of victims in society, among others.
- **Search and rescue:** An Anti-Trafficking Police Officer or an ATU can rescue persons, if there is an imminent danger to them. They will be produced before a Magistrate or Child Welfare Committee for medical examination. The district ATC will provide relief and rehabilitation services to the rescued persons.
- **Protection and rehabilitation:** The Bill requires the central or state government to set up Protection Homes. These would provide shelter, food, counselling, and medical services to victims. Further, the central or state government will maintain Rehabilitation Homes in each district, to provide long-term rehabilitation to the victims. Rehabilitation of victims will not be dependent on criminal proceedings being initiated against the accused, or the outcome of the proceedings. The central government will also create a Rehabilitation Fund, which will be used to set up these Protection and Rehabilitation Homes.
- **Time-bound trial:** The Bill provides for setting up designated courts in each district, which will seek to complete trial within a year.
- **Penalties:** The Bill specifies the penalties for various offences including for (i) trafficking of persons, (ii) promoting trafficking, (iii) disclosing the identity of the victim, and (iv) aggravated trafficking (such as trafficking for bonded labour and begging). For example, aggravated trafficking will be punishable with rigorous imprisonment of 10 years up to life imprisonment, along with a minimum fine of one lakh rupees. Further, the publishing of any material which may lead to the trafficking of a person will be punishable with imprisonment between five and 10 years, and a fine between Rs 50,000 and one lakh rupees.

Need for anti- trafficking legislation:

- More than 300,000 children went missing in the country between 2012 and 2017, government data shows. Around 100,000 are yet to be traced and it is feared that many of them could have been trafficked.
- In 2016, for instance, 111,569 children were reported missing. Of these, 55,944 children were traced but only 8,132 trafficking cases were reported. Many of these children are victims of modern slavery — forced into prostitution, labour or domestic work.
- They are also used as drug mules and even given up for adoption illegally. Poverty and lack of opportunity also pushes a lot of young women, especially from the interior parts of West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand, into prostitution.
- Despite the enormity of the problem, India lacks a single comprehensive law for human trafficking. At present, trafficking is covered under half-a-dozen laws resulting in confusion and poor enforcement.

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** Key features of the Bill.
- **For Mains:** Need for anti- trafficking legislation.

Sources: the hindu.

8. CRIMINAL LAW (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2018

- **Context:** The Lok Sabha has passed the **Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2018**. The main highlight of the bill is that it seeks to amend the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Evidence Act, the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act to introduce a new provision to sentence convicts of such crimes punishment of death.

Highlights of the Bill:

Punishment:

- It provides for **stringent punishment** including death penalty for those convicted of raping girls below the age of 12 years.

- The minimum punishment in case of rape of women has been increased from rigorous imprisonment of seven years to 10 years, extendable to life imprisonment.
- In case of rape of a girl under 16 years, the minimum punishment has been increased from 10 years to 20 years, extendable to imprisonment for rest of life, which means jail term till the convicts' "natural life".
- The punishment for gang rape of a girl below 16 years will invariably be imprisonment for the rest of life of the convict.
- Stringent punishment for rape of a girl under 12 years has been provided with the minimum jail term being 20 years which may go up to life in prison or death sentence. Gang rape of a girl under 12 years of age will invite punishment of jail term for the rest of life or death.

Speedy investigation:

- The measure also provides for speedy investigations and trial. The time limit for investigation of all cases of rape has been prescribed, which has to be mandatorily completed within two months.
- The deadline for the completion of trial in all rape cases will be two months. A six-month time limit for the disposal of appeals in rape cases has also been prescribed.

Bail related provisions:

- There will also be no provision for anticipatory bail for a person accused of rape or gang rape of a girl under 16 years. It has also been prescribed that a court has to give notice of 15 days to a public prosecutor and the representative of the victim before deciding bail applications in case of rape of a girl under 16 years of age.

Need for a stringent law:

- The number of reported cases of rapes of children increased in India by 82% in 2016 compared to 2015. A climate of violence, social and economic insecurity, alienation, and a progressive undermining of the status of women and children seem to have given an impetus to carry out crimes against women and children.
- Therefore, the legal system must give a clear signal that we as a nation consider the rape of children below the age of 12 as among the most heinous of offences. Making such crimes punishable by capital punishment certainly gives such a signal.

Is it sufficient?

- Statistics have not been able to prove or disprove the efficacy of capital punishment as a deterrent. While the U.K. has seen an increase in murders since 1965 when capital punishment for murder was removed from the statute book, Canada has not seen any such impact since it abolished the death penalty in 1976.
- The underlying socio-economic conditions in a society that cause crimes seem to have as much of an impact on the increase or decrease of crimes as the law does.

What is needed?

- It is not the severity of the punishment but the certainty and uniformity of it which will reduce crime. Even for capital punishment to work as a deterrent, the fairness of the investigation, the certainty of conviction, and the speed of the trial are vital.
- With the police and judicial independence being under a cloud, especially after the incidents in Kathua and Unnao, the deterrent value of capital punishment seems diminished unless police reforms and fast-track courts are a part of the package.

Facts for Prelims:

- Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have passed a Bill providing for death penalty to those convicted of raping girls of 12 years and below.

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** Highlights of the Bill.
- **For Mains:** Need for such harsh penalties- issues associated.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 1 Topic: Population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

1. NATIONAL REGISTER OF CITIZENS

- **Context:** The Supreme Court has extended by a month its June 30 deadline for the publication of the final draft of *Assam's National Register of Citizens (NRC)*.

Background:

- The first draft of the NRC, which was released in January, listed only 1.9 crore people as citizens out of the 3.9 crore people who had filed the NRC application.
- The updated NRC will count only those as Assam citizens who can prove their residency on or before March 21, 1971. This means that all those not included in the list run the risk of being rendered illegal immigrants.

What is National Register of Citizens (NRC)?

- The NRC was introduced *to identify illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and recognise the Indian citizens in Assam*. It was first prepared in 1951 and Assam is the only state having this arrangement.

Why the NRC is being updated in Assam?

- NRC updation basically means the process of enlisting the names of those persons (or their descendants) whose names appear in any of the Electoral Rolls up to 1971, 1951 NRC or any of the admissible documents stipulated.

Way ahead:

- The need of the hour therefore is for the Union Government to allay apprehensions presently in the minds of the people of Assam and take steps to contain any adverse fallout after the publication of the final draft of the NRC.
- At the same time, it also needs to spell out what it intends to do with the persons whose names do not figure in the final NRC.

Facts for Prelims:

- Assam, which has faced influx of people from Bangladesh for over many years now, is *the only state having an NRC*.
- The NRC will be updated as per the provisions of *The Citizenship Act, 1955 and The Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003*.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** NRC.
- **For Mains:** Need for policy on migrants.

Sources: the hindu.

2. GUJARAT GOVERNMENT GRANTS RELIGIOUS MINORITY STATUS TO JEWS

- **Context:** Gujarat Government has granted religious minority status to Jews living in the state.

Impact:

- Now, Jews living in Gujarat will get religious minority rights envisaged in Constitution of India and various acts and rules of the state government.

Facts for Prelims:

- **Gujarat** is third state in India to grant religious minority status to Jews after **West Bengal** and **Maharashtra**.
- The Synagogue Judah Hyam Hall is the only place of worship in Delhi for Jews.
- Constitution of India has not defined word 'Minority' and only refers to 'Minorities' but it speaks of those 'based on religion or language' and rights of minorities have been spelt out in Constitution in detail.
- Six religious communities, viz. Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains have been notified in Gazette of India as minority communities by Union Government all over India.

Judaism:

- Judaism originated in the Middle East over 3500 years ago
- Judaism was founded by Moses, although Jews trace their history back to Abraham.
- Jews believe that there is only one God with whom they have a covenant.
- In exchange for all the good that God has done for the Jewish people, Jewish people keep God's laws and try to bring holiness into every aspect of their lives.
- Judaism has a rich history of religious text, but the central and most important religious document is the Torah.
- Jewish traditional or oral law, the interpretation of the laws of the Torah, is called halakhah.
- Spiritual leaders are called Rabbis.
- Jews worship in Synagogues.
- They follow Hebrew calendar. They have special thanks giving ceremony known as Eliyahoo-ha-Nabiore. 'gratitude to Elijah the Prophet', on festive occasions.
- 6 million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust in an attempt to wipe out Judaism.

Jews in India:

- The Jewish community in India is one among a large number of groups who had come from outside the country's modern territorial borders and made India their home.

Main Jews groups in India:

- Cochin Jews.
- Chennai/Madras Jews.
- Bene Israel.
- Baghdadi Jews.
- Delhi Jews.
- Bnei Menashe.
- Bene Ephraim (Telugu Jews).

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Minority status- meaning and rights under constitution, Major Jews groups in India.
- **For Mains:** Significance of Minority status and the need for protection of vulnerable sections.

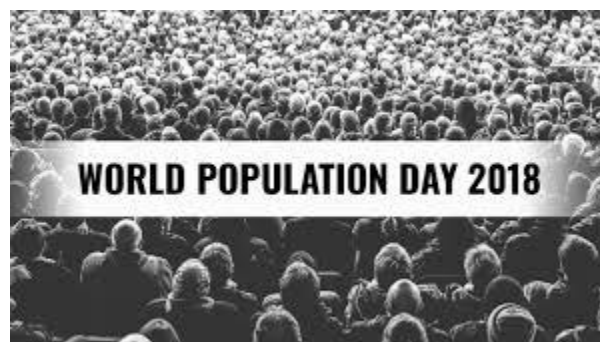
Sources: the hindu.

3. WORLD POPULATION DAY

- **July 11 was established as World Population Day in 1989** by the United Nations and since then it has been celebrated on this date every year. The United Nations recognises World Population day as an important event to spread information of population-related issues across the globe.
- **Theme for 2018:** World Population day will run on the theme "Family Planning is a Human right" this year.

Aim of World Population Day:

- Almost on the verge of completing three decades now, the internationally celebrated event aims to spread awareness on issues such as overpopulation, under-population and birth control. The world population is currently pegged at around 7 billion and according to UN reports is growing at a fast pace, adding 83 million people every year.

**What's important?**

- **For Prelims:** World Population Day- theme.
- **For Mains:** Population growth and related challenges.

Sources: the hindu.

4. FAILURE TO EDUCATE GIRLS COULD COST WORLD \$30 TRILLION A YEAR

- **Context:** World Bank has said that Failing to let girls finish their education could cost the world as much as \$30 trillion in lost earnings and productivity annually.

Present gap:

- About 132 million girls worldwide aged 6 to 17 do not attend school, while fewer than two-thirds of those in low-income nations finish primary school, and only a third finish lower secondary school.

Need for education:

- Women who have completed secondary education are more **likely to work and earn on average nearly twice** as much as those with no schooling.
- If every girl in the world finished 12 years of quality education, **lifetime earnings for women could increase by \$15 trillion to \$30 trillion every year.**
- **Other positive impacts** of completing secondary school education for girls include a reduction in child marriage, lower fertility rates in countries with high population growth, and reduced child mortality and malnutrition.
- Also, women who have completed secondary education are at **lesser risk of suffering violence** at the hands of their partners and have children who are less likely to be malnourished and themselves are more likely to go to school.

Way ahead:

- This report is more proof that we cannot afford to delay investing in girls. We cannot keep letting gender inequality get in the way of global progress. While we do need to ensure that of course all girls complete primary school, that is not enough.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Nothing much.
- **For Mains:** Women Education- need, significance, challenges and efforts by governments.

Sources: Indian express.

5. SWACHH SURVEKSHAN GRAMEEN 2018

- **Context:** Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) has launched Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018 (SSG 2018).

About Swachh Survekshan Grameen:

- SSG is a rural cleanliness survey to rank all states and districts on basis of qualitative and quantitative evaluation.
- The objective of SSG 2018 is to undertake ranking of states and districts on basis of their performance attained on key quantitative and qualitative Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) parameters. The rankings will be based on taking into account set of comprehensive cleanliness parameters.
- The criteria of SSG-2018 include survey of public places, citizens' perspective of cleanliness, their recommendations and data from SBM-G. As part of it, 6,980 villages in 698 districts across India will be covered. It will cover total 34,000 public places namely schools, anganwadis, public health centres, haat/bazaars/religious places in these villages.



Weightage:

- The SSG 2018 will assign 65% weightage to findings and outcome and 35% to service level parameters to be obtained from Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) of the MDWS.

- The weights to different elements of SSG are direct observation of sanitation in public places (30%), citizen's feedback on sanitation parameters (35%), service level progress on sanitation progress in the country as per SBMG-MIS (35%).

Survey:

- The SSG 2018 will be conducted by independent survey agency in all districts from 1st to 31st August 2018. It will also take feedback from over 50 lakh citizens on SBM related issues through direct interaction as well as online feedback. The top performing states and districts are expected to be awarded on 2nd October 2018.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** SSG Survey- criteria.
- **For Mains:** SSG- significance.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 1 Topic: Important Geophysical phenomena.

1. NEWEST PHASE IN EARTH'S HISTORY NAMED AFTER MEGHALAYA ROCK

- **Context:** Scientists have created a new phase in Earth's geological history and named it **Meghalayan**, after **a stalagmite from a cave in the Indian state of Meghalaya** that helped define climatic events 4,200 years ago, marking the beginning of the phase that continues till today.

The beginning of Meghalayan age:

- The Meghalayan Age began with a mega global drought that devastated ancient agricultural civilisations from Egypt to China. It is part of a longer period known as the Holocene Epoch, which reflects everything that has happened over the past 11,700 years.
- Evidence of the climatic event has been found in sediments on all seven continents, including those from Meghalaya.

Its uniqueness:

- The Meghalayan is unique because it is the first interval in Earth's geological history that coincided with a major cultural event, as agricultural societies struggled to recover from the shift in climate.
- The droughts over a 200-year period resulted in human migrations in Egypt, Greece, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, the Indus valley and the Yangtze river valley.

It's official:

- International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) has officially accepted the new phase. Besides, two other ages — the Middle Holocene Northgrippian Age and the Early Holocene Greenlandian Age — with beginnings defined at climatic events that happened about 8,300 years and 11,700 years ago, respectively, were also approved by the International Commission on Stratigraphy, which is responsible for standardising the geologic time scale.

About International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS):

- The IUGS is an international non-governmental organization devoted to international cooperation in the field of geology.
- It is a Scientific Union member of the International Council for Science (ICSU), which it recognizes as the coordinating body for the international organization of science.
- IUGS promotes and encourages the study of geological problems, especially those of worldwide significance, and supports and facilitates international and interdisciplinary cooperation in the earth sciences.
- IUGS is a joint partner with UNESCO for the International Geoscience Programme (IGCP) and they also participate in the Global Network of National Geoparks (GGN).

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** IUGS, Meghalayan age, geological timeline.

Sources: toi.

2. BLOOD MOON

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** What is Blood Moon and how it occurs, How Lunar Eclipse occurs, Significance of 2018 July Lunar Eclipse.
- **For Mains:** Beliefs associated with Eclipses in India and their analysis.

What is Lunar Eclipse?

- A **Lunar Eclipse** (Chandra Grahan) is when one can't see the moon at night because its position is relative to the sun and earth ensures that light doesn't fall on the part of it we can see.
- The moon gives off no light and is only visible because it reflects the light of the sun. We only see the part where light falls and thus as the earth and moon move through their orbits and different amounts of light falls on the moon, we see different phases of the moon.



What is Blood Moon?

- When a lunar eclipse (Chandra Grahan) occurs, the Earth comes between the sun and moon, preventing light from falling on the moon.
- When this happens, the moon appears to glow red and is thus called the blood moon.

Why red colour?

- The red colour is because of the way light travels through the Earth's atmosphere. Sunlight is made of several colours and they all have different wavelengths. Depending on the way they travel through our atmosphere, we see different colours.
- That's why the sun and sky have different colours during sunrise and sunset. Blues and purples have shorter wavelengths and scatter in our atmosphere, giving the sky its inky colour, but reds and oranges have the highest wavelengths and pass through our atmosphere before it is bent or refracted around Earth, hitting the surface of the Moon and making it red.

Significance of July 2018 Lunar Eclipse:

- It was the longest eclipse of the 21st century. It occurred for 1 hour 43 minutes.

Sources: the hindu.



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GS PAPER - II

Paper 2 Topic: Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.

1. DELHI VS CENTRE: SC OBSERVATIONS

- **Context:** The Supreme Court recently held that the Lt Governor of Delhi has no independent power to take decisions and is bound by the elected government's advice. The ruling also lays down for the first time clear guidelines for the LG's conduct, and delineates the powers of the two branches of the executive in Delhi, which does not have the status of a full state yet elects its own MLAs and government.

Background:

- The judgment came on appeals filed by the NCT government against an August 4, 2016, verdict of the Delhi High Court, which had declared that the L-G has "complete control of all matters regarding the National Capital Territory of Delhi, and nothing will happen without the concurrence of the L-G."

Supreme Court's observations:

Role of LG:

- The L-G is bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers. In case of difference of opinion, the L-G should straightaway refer the dispute to the President for a final decision.
- The Lieutenant-Governor should act as a "facilitator" for good governance in the national capital and not as an "obstructionist".
- The Lieutenant-Governor's authority, saying he cannot exercise his discretion in "each and every matter" of daily governance. His discretionary powers are in fact limited to only matters in the State List — public order, police and land — over which the legislative power of the Delhi Legislative Assembly stand excluded under Article 239AA.
- The NCT government need only to inform the L-G of its "well-deliberated" decisions. The government need not obtain his "concurrence" on every issue of day-to-day governance.
- The elected government could make policies on laws enacted by its own Assembly. The executive power of the NCT government was co-extensive with its legislative powers.

Why Delhi cannot be a full- fledged state?

- The Supreme Court followed the 1987 **Balakrishnan report to conclude that Delhi is not a State**. Balakrishnan report had envisaged that Delhi could not have a situation in which the national capital had "two governments run by different political parties. Such conflicts may, at times, prejudice the national interest."
- Delhi as the national capital belongs to the nation as a whole. if Delhi becomes a full-fledged State, there would be a constitutional division of sovereign, legislative and executive powers between the Union and the State of Delhi. Parliament would have limited legislative access and that too only in special and emergency situations. The Union would be unable to discharge its "special responsibilities in relation to the national capital as well as to the nation itself".

Way ahead:

- L-G's role is not that of a Constitutional figurehead, though the ultimate responsibility for good administration of Delhi is vested in the President acting through the Administrator. However, the Administrator has to take a somewhat more active part in the administration than the Governor of a State.
- Hence, differences of opinion would arise between the L-G and the elected government. The report had recommended that the "best way" of doing this is to let the L-G refer such differences of opinion to the President for a final decision.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Role of LG, Article 239AA.
- **For Mains:** Dispute between LG and Delhi government.

Sources: the hindu.

2. UTTARAKHAND HC DECLARES ANIMAL KINGDOM A LEGAL ENTITY

- **Context:** The Uttarakhand high court has declared *the entire animal kingdom, including birds and aquatic animals, as a legal entity* having rights of a “living person”. The move aims to ensure “greater welfare” of animals.
- The entire animal kingdom, including avian and aquatic ones, are declared as legal entities having a distinct persona with corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person.

Legal entity?

- A legal entity means an entity which acts like a natural person but only through a designated person, whose acts are processed within the ambit of law. This means the animal kingdom could be represented by a custodian.

Constitutional status:

- Invoking **Article 21 of the Constitution**, the court said: “Article 21 of the Constitution, while safeguarding the rights of humans, protects life and the word ‘life’ means animal world”.
- The court cited a 2014 Supreme Court judgment to say any disturbance from the “basic environment which includes all forms of life, including animals life, which are necessary for human life, fall within the meaning of Article 21 of the Constitution”.

As part of the judgment, the court has issued following directions:

- Create an **animal welfare committee in every district** of the state. All citizens of Uttarakhand shall be “persons in loco parentis” (in the place of a parent). This gives them the responsibility to protect animals and ensure their welfare.
- The court also gave directions ranging from the amount of load allowed to be pulled by various animals in accordance with the kind of carriage being pulled to the amount of riders per carriage.
- Further banning the use of spike or other sharp tackle or equipment on the animal, the court also directed the state government to ensure that if temperature exceeds 37 degree Celsius or drops below 5 degree Celsius, no person be permitted to keep in harness any animal used for the purpose of drawing vehicles.
- The court also went into the aspect of animal safety, highlighting the need for fluorescent reflectors in carriages and animals, certificates of unladen weight of vehicles, compulsory shelter of suitable size for horses, bullocks and stray cattle and a direction to the veterinary doctors of Uttarakhand to treat any stray animals brought to them or by visiting them.
- The court said as the carts driven by animals have no mechanical devices, animal-drawn carriages have to be given Right of Way over other vehicles.

Background:

- The order came in response to a public interest litigation seeking directions to restrict the movement of horse carts/tongas between Nepal and India through Champawat district and highlighted that ailing, infirm and old horses were being abandoned by the owners in the Indian territory.

Significance:

- This order will go a long way in building a compassionate society as it was illogical to treat sentient creatures as inanimate objects.

Facts for Prelims:

- Uttarakhand high court in March last year accorded the status of “living entity” to the Ganga and Yamuna rivers, a decision subsequently stayed by the Supreme Court.

What’s important?

- **For Prelims:** Legal entity- meaning.
- **For Mains:** Animal Kingdom as a Legal entity- need, challenges in implementation of the judgment and solutions.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3 Topic: Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

1. PRESIDENT NOMINATES FOUR MEMBERS TO RAJYA SABHA

- **Context:** In exercise of the powers conferred by **Article 80 of the Constitution of India**, and on **the advice of the Prime Minister**, the President of India has made four nominations to the Rajya Sabha.
- **The nominated members are-** Ram Shakal, Rakesh Sinha, Raghunath Mohapatra and Sonal Mansingh.

Nominated member of the Rajya Sabha:

- **Under article 80 of the Constitution**, the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) is composed of not more than 250 members, of whom 12 are nominated by the President of India from amongst persons who have special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as literature, science, art and social service.

Powers and privileges:

- Nominated members enjoy all powers, privileges and immunities available to an elected member of Parliament.
- They **take part in the proceedings of the House** as any other member.
- They, however, **are not entitled to vote in the election of the President of India**.
- But **in the election of the Vice-President of India, they have a right to vote**.
- **A nominated member is allowed six months, should he decide to join a political party after he has taken his seat in the House in terms of article 99 of the Constitution.**
- A nominated member has also been exempted from filing his assets and liabilities **under Section 75A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951** which requires the elected member to do so within 90 days of his making or subscribing oath/affirmation.
- Under MPLADS, **the Nominated Members of the Rajya Sabha may select any Districts from any State in the Country** for implementation of their choice of work under the scheme.

Rationale behind the principle of nomination:

- By adopting the principle of nomination in Rajya Sabha, the Constitution has ensured that the nation must also receive services of the most distinguished persons of the country who have earned distinction in their field of activity, many of whom may not like to face the rough and tumble of the election.
- By nominating them to Rajya Sabha, the State not only recognises their merit and confers honour on them, but also enables them to enrich the debates by their expertise and knowledge that they have in different areas.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Article 80, the process of nomination of members to Rajya Sabha, powers and privileges of nominated members.
- **For Mains:** Rationale behind the principle of nomination.

Sources: pib.

2. NO CONFIDENCE MOTION

- **Context:** The Speaker of Lok Sabha, Sumitra Mahajan has admitted a no-confidence motion moved by the opposition against the ruling government.

How it works?

- At least 50 MPs would need to stand up and support the move. If there are 50 MPs in favour, the motion is admitted and the speaker allots a date for discussion on the motion. The prime minister or ministers reply to the charges made.
- The mover has the right to reply. After the debate, the speaker puts question to the house and ascertains the decision of the house by voice vote or a division.

Grounds:

- A Motion of No-confidence need not set out any grounds on which it is based. Even when grounds are mentioned in the notice and read out in the House, they do not form part of the no-confidence Motion.

Implications:

- The government is expected to resign if it loses a trust vote. In case its refuses to do so, the President has the power to remove the prime minister. In the history of Indian Parliament, no Prime Minister has been forcibly removed so far. After a government loses a trust vote and resigns, it continues to function, but as a caretaker government with almost the same powers as it had before the voting.
- However, a caretaker government wouldn't have the power to take any major policy decisions since Parliament remains dissolved. A new government gets elected after the general elections.

Key facts for Prelims:

- The **Rajya Sabha does not have a procedure** for moving of an adjournment motion, censure motion or no-confidence motion against the Government.
- **Rule 198 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business** in Lok Sabha lays down the procedure for moving a Motion of No-Confidence in the Council of Ministers.
- There is **no mention of a no-confidence motion in the constitution**.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** All about no- confidence motion.

Sources: the hindu.

What is a no-confidence motion?

- A no-confidence motion is a parliamentary motion which is moved in the Lok Sabha against the entire council of ministers, stating that they are no longer deemed fit to hold positions of responsibility due to their inadequacy in some respect or their failure to carry out their obligations.
- No prior reason needs to be stated for its adoption in the Lok Sabha.

3. WHAT IS A PRIVILEGE MOTION?

What to study?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** All about Privilege motion and privilege committee, Rafale deal.
- **Context:** The Congress has submitted a notice to Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan for a **privilege motion** against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for allegedly misleading the House on the commercial value of the deal to buy Rafale fighter jets from France.

What is a privilege motion?

- Parliamentary privileges are **certain rights and immunities enjoyed by members of Parliament, individually and collectively**, so that they can "effectively discharge their functions".
- When any of these rights and immunities are disregarded, the offence is called **a breach of privilege** and is **punishable under law of Parliament**.

Who can move it? How?

- A notice is moved in the form of a motion by **any member of either House against those being held guilty of breach of privilege**.
- Each House also claims the right to punish as contempt actions which, while not breach of any specific privilege, are offences against its authority and dignity.

What are the rules governing privilege?

- Rule No 222 in Chapter 20 of the **Lok Sabha Rule Book** and correspondingly Rule 187 in Chapter 16 of the **Rajya Sabha rulebook** governs privilege. It says that a member may, with **the consent of the Speaker or the Chairperson**, raise a question involving a breach of privilege either of a member or of the House or of a committee thereof.
- The rules however **mandate that any notice should be relating to an incident of recent occurrence and should need the intervention of the House**. Notices have to be given before 10 am to the Speaker or the Chairperson.

What is the role of the Speaker/Rajya Sabha Chair?

- The Speaker/RS chairperson is the **first level of scrutiny of a privilege motion**. The Speaker/Chair can decide on the privilege motion himself or herself or refer **it to the privileges committee of Parliament**.
- If the Speaker/Chair gives consent under Rule 222, the member concerned is given an opportunity to make a short statement.

What is the privileges committee?

- **In the Lok Sabha, the Speaker nominates a committee of privileges consisting of 15 members as per respective party strengths**. A report is then presented to the House for its consideration. The Speaker may permit a half-hour debate while considering the report. The Speaker may then pass final orders or direct that the report be tabled before the House.
- A resolution may then be moved relating to the breach of privilege that has to be unanimously passed. **In the Rajya Sabha, the deputy chairperson heads the committee of privileges, that consists of 10 members**.

Sources: IE.

4. WEST BENGAL ASSEMBLY PASSES RESOLUTION TO RENAME STATE AS BANGLA**What to study?**

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Procedure to change the name of states in India.
- **Context:** West Bengal state assembly has unanimously passed resolution to change state's name to 'Bangla' in all three languages – Bengali, Hindi and English.

Rationale behind renaming:

- The state government first proposed the renaming in 2016. West Bengal parliamentary affairs minister Partha Chatterjee had then argued for the change saying bureaucrats and politicians from the state often complain that they are asked to speak at the end of every national-level meeting in Delhi. **This was because the speakers' lists at such meeting are prepared according to alphabetical order of the states they represent**. If West Bengal gets the new name, it will leapfrog from bottom of the list to the top of the pecking order.
- **The renaming will help the state appear at the fourth spot** after Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Assam in the alphabetic order of the states.

What next?

- The name change will only become official when resolution gets approval from Union Home Ministry and Parliament passes Bill.

The procedure of renaming of the state can be initiated by either the Parliament or the State Legislator and the procedure is as follows:

1. The renaming of a state requires Parliamentary approval under Article 3 and 4 of the Constitution.
2. A bill for renaming a state may be introduced in the Parliament on the recommendation of the President.
3. Before the introduction of the bill, the President shall send the bill to the respective state assembly for expressing their views within a stipulated time. The views of the state assembly are not binding, neither on the President nor on the Parliament.
4. On the expiry of the period, the bill will be sent to the Parliament for deliberation. The bill in order to take the force of a law must be passed by a simple majority.
5. The bill is sent for approval to the President. After the approval of the said bill, the bill becomes a law and the name of the state stands modified.

Initiation by a State:

- If any fresh proposal comes from states to the Home Ministry, it will prepare a note for the Union Cabinet for an amendment to the Schedule 1 of the Constitution.
- Thereafter, a Constitution Amendment Bill will be introduced in Parliament, which has to approve it with a simple majority, before the President gives his assent to it.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

1. ASSAM NRC EXPLAINED

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** Particulars of NRC.
- **For Mains:** Update of NRC- issues associated including ethical concerns.
- **Context:** The draft National Register of Citizens (NRC), published recently, includes only those able to prove they were in Assam before 1971. It excludes D- voters.

Who is a D-voter?

- Short for 'dubious' or 'doubtful', this is **a category of voters disenfranchised by the government for alleged lack of proper citizenship documents**. Some 2.48 lakh people got the D-voter tag during NRC process

Who is a declared foreigner?

- D-voters are tried by special tribunals under the Foreigners' Act and if they fail to defend their citizenship claim they are marked as declared foreigners and sent to any of six detention camps, which are within jails for criminals, for deportation.
- There were 91,206 declared foreigners as on December 31, 2017.

Why is NRC being updated in Assam?

- Officially, the NRC process will address the issue of illegal migrants, specifically from Bangladesh.
- The National Register of Citizens was first published in 1951 to record citizens, their houses and holdings. Updating the NRC to root out foreigners was a demand during the Assam Agitation (1979-1985).

Why is March 24, 1971 the cut-off date?

- There have been several waves of migration to Assam from Bangladesh, but the biggest was in March 1971 when the Pakistan army crackdown forced many to flee to India.
- The Assam Accord of 1985 that ended the six-year anti-foreigners' agitation decided upon the midnight of March 24, 1971 as the cut-off date.

Who is a citizen in Assam?

- The Citizenship Act of 1955 was amended after the Assam Accord for all Indian-origin people who came from Bangladesh before January 1, 1966 to be deemed as citizens.
- Those who came between January 1, 1966 and March 25, 1971 were eligible for citizenship after registering and living in the State for 10 years while those entering after March 25, 1971, were to be deported.

What happens to the excluded 40 lakh?

- They will have to file for claims and objections and submit relevant documents for re-verification.
- The NRC office will issue claim forms from August 7 to 30, and these applicants would have to submit the forms from August 30 to September 28.
- The documents will be verified and accepted or rejected for the final NRC to be published on an unspecified date.
- The cases of those left out of the final NRC will be heard in the Foreigners' Tribunals, after which applicants can approach the High Court.

WHAT IS NRC?

➤ Unique to Assam, National Register of Citizens has details of all citizens in the state

➤ First prepared by Union home ministry in 1951

➤ Present NRC meant to screen illegal immigrants who entered state after March '71. Total applicants: 3.3cr; 1.4cr names still being verified; Final NRC expected by yr-end

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

1. CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA AS 'MASTER OF ROSTER'

- **Context:** The Chief Justice of India (CJI) is the “master of the roster,” the Supreme Court has reaffirmed, declining to accept former law minister Shanti Bhushan’s suggestion that the CJI consult his collegium colleagues –the top four judges after him in seniority –in allocating cases to various benches.

Supreme Court’s observations:

- **Position of CJI:** CJI is the master of roster in allocating cases to different benches and his power cannot be delegated to collegium comprising of CJI and four senior most judges. Although the constitution is silent on the CJI’s role as the master of the roster, his power is based on a healthy practice and “convention aimed at maintaining discipline and decorum.” He is described as “first among equals.”
- **Moral responsibility of CJI:** SC highlighted that the CJI owes a moral responsibility to his colleagues and the public at large while flexing his powers as ‘Master of Roster’ to allocate cases. “Absolute discretion” cannot be confined in just one man, the CJI.
- **Qualities for a CJI:** The court listed some of the qualities a CJI should possess as the Master of Roster, including balance, fortitude, moral courage and independence of mind. Also, as the court’s spokesperson, it is the CJI’s duty to usher in and administer reform as a continuous process.

What does ‘master of the roster’ mean?

- ‘Master of the Roster’ refers to the privilege of the Chief Justice to constitute Benches to hear cases.
- This privilege was emphasised in November last year, when a Constitution Bench, led by the Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, declared that “the Chief Justice is the master of the roster and he alone has the prerogative to constitute the Benches of the Court and allocate cases to the Benches so constituted.”
- It further said that “no Judge can take up the matter on this own, unless allocated by the Chief Justice of India, as he is the master of the roster.”
- The immediate trigger for this was a direction by a two-judge Bench that a petition regarding a medical college corruption case, involving an alleged conspiracy to bribe Supreme Court judges, be heard by a Bench for the five senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.

Concerns associated:

- Undoubtedly, the chief justices enjoy a special status and they alone can assign work to a judge sitting alone and to the judges sitting in division bench or full bench. They have the jurisdiction to decide which case will be heard by which bench.
- If judges were free to choose their jurisdiction or any choice was given to them to do whatever case they may like to hear and decide, the machinery would collapse and the judicial work of the court would cease by generation of internal strife on account of hankering for a particular jurisdiction or a particular case.

What’s important?

- **For Prelims:** CJI- appointment and powers.
- **For Mains:** Master of Roster- meaning, concerns and viable solutions, moral responsibilities of CJI.

Sources: the hindu.

2. ARTICLE 161 OF THE CONSTITUTION

- **Context:** Cabinet approves Special Remission to Prisoners on the occasion of **150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi**. Ministry of Home Affairs will issue advice to all States and UTs asking them to process the cases of eligible prisoners.

What next?

- State Governments and UT Administrations will be advised to constitute a Committee to examine the cases.
- State Governments will place the recommendations of the Committee before Governor for consideration and approval under **Article 161 of the Constitution**. After the approval, the prisoners will be released.

What you need to know? Article 161:

- **Article 161 deals with Power of Governor** to grant pardons, etc, and to suspend, remit or commute sentences in certain cases.
- It states, *the Governor of a State shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the State extends.*

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PARDONING POWERS OF PRESIDENT AND GOVERNOR:

The scope of the pardoning power of the President under Article 72 is wider than the pardoning power of the Governor under Article 161. The power differs in the following two ways:

- The power of the President to grant pardon extends in cases where the punishment or sentence is by a Court Martial but Article 161 does not provide any such power to the Governor.
- The President can grant pardon in all cases where the sentence given is sentence of death but pardoning power of Governor does not extend to death sentence cases.

Significance of pardoning powers:

- The pardoning power of Executive is very significant as it corrects the errors of judiciary. It eliminates the effect of conviction without addressing the defendant's guilt or innocence.
- Pardon may substantially help in saving an innocent person from being punished due to miscarriage of justice or in cases of doubtful conviction.
- The object of pardoning power is to correct possible judicial errors, for no human system of judicial administration can be free from imperfections.

Way ahead:

- The process of granting pardon is simpler but because of the lethargy of the government and political considerations, disposal of mercy petitions is delayed.
- Therefore, there is an urgent need to make amendment in law of pardoning to make sure that clemency petitions are disposed quickly. There should be a fixed time limit for deciding on clemency pleas.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Pardoning powers of Governors and the President- constitutional provisions, features, need, differences and significance.

Sources: pib.

Paper 2 Topic: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

1. PAYMENTS COUNCIL OF INDIA

- **Context:** Payments Council of India (PCI), an apex body representing companies in payments and settlement system, has a new Chairman in Vishwas Patel.

ABOUT PCI:

- The Payments Council of India was formed **under the aegis of IMAI** in the year 2013 catering to the needs of the digital payment industry.

Functions:

- The Council was formed inter-alia for the purposes of representing the various regulated non-banking payment industry players, to address and help resolve various industry level issues and barriers which require discussion and action.
- The council works with all its members to promote payments industry growth and to support our national goal of 'Cash to Less Cash Society' and 'Growth of Financial Inclusion' which is also the Vision Shared by the RBI and Government of India.
- PCI works closely with the regulators i.e. Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Finance Ministry and any similar government, departments, bodies or Institution to make 'India a less cash society'.

About IAMAI:

- The Internet and Mobile Association of India [IAMAI] is a young and vibrant association with ambitions of representing the entire gamut of digital businesses in India.
- It was established in 2004 by the leading online publishers, but in the last 10 years has come to effectively address the challenges facing the digital and online industry including mobile content and services, online publishing, mobile advertising, online advertising, ecommerce and mobile & digital payments among others.
- It is the only professional industry body representing the online and mobile VAS industry in India.
- The association is registered under the Societies Act and is a recognized charitable institution in Maharashtra.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** PCI, IAMAI.

Sources: the hindu.

2. KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES COMMISSION (KVIC)

- **Context:** The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has launched its, in-house developed, single-umbrella e-marketing system named Khadi Institution Management and Information System (KIMIS). The system can be accessed from anywhere in the country for the sale and purchase of Khadi and Village Industries products.

About Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC):

- The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is **a statutory body** established by an Act of Parliament (Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956). In April 1957, it took over the work of former All India Khadi and Village Industries Board.
- **Functions:** It is an apex organization **under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**, with regard to khadi and village industries within India, which seeks to – “plan, promote, facilitate, organise and assist in the establishment and development of khadi and village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary.”

The Commission has three main objectives which guide its functioning. These are:

- The Social Objective – Providing employment in rural areas.
- The Economic Objective – Providing salable articles.
- The Wider Objective – Creating self-reliance amongst people and building up a strong rural community spirit.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** KVIC and its important functions.

Sources: pib.

3. HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCING AGENCY (HEFA)

- **Context:** The cabinet has approved the proposal for expanding the scope of Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) by enhancing its capital base to Rs. 10,000 crore and tasking it to mobilise Rs. 1,00,000 crore for Revitalizing Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) by 2022.

Significance:

- This would enable addressing the needs of all educational institutions with differing financial capacity in an inclusive manner.
- This would enable HEFA to leverage additional resources from the market to supplement equity, to be deployed to fund the requirements of institutions.

What is RISE scheme all about?

- Under RISE, all centrally-funded institutes (CFIs), including central universities, IITs, IIMs, NITs and IISERs, can borrow from a Rs 1,00,000 crore corpus over the next four years to expand and build new infrastructure. The initiative aims to step up investments in research and related infrastructure in premier educational institutions, including health institutions.

- Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) would be suitably structured for funding this initiative. The manner in which investment in institutions is provided is likely to be the same as is practised in HEFA, but there may be different windows for different institutions.

About HEFA:

- What is it?** The Union Cabinet had approved HEFA in September 2016 as a Special Purpose Vehicle with a public sector bank (Canara Bank). It would be jointly funded by the promoter/bank and the MHRD with an authorised capital of ₹2,000 crore. The government equity would be ₹1,000 crore.
- Functions:** HEFA will leverage the equity to raise up to ₹20,000 crore for the funding of world-class infrastructure at the IITs, IIMs, the National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and such other institutions. The agency will also mobilise Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds from public sector units (PSUs) and corporates. These would be released as grants to eligible institutions for promoting research and innovation.
- Significance of HEFA:** Funding from HEFA is expected to boost infrastructure, especially state-of-the-art laboratories, in key institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and the Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs).

₹ 1,000 CRORE
APPROVED FOR HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCING AGENCY BY CABINET

HEFA to give a major push for creation of high quality infrastructure in premier educational institutions

- Authorised capital: **Rs.2,000 crore**
- Government equity: **Rs.1,000 crore**

HEFA would mobilise CSR funds from PSUs/Corporates to promote Research & Innovation, on grant basis

It will finance Civil & Lab Infrastructure projects through a 10-year loan

What's important?

- For Prelims:** RISE scheme, HEFA.
- For Mains:** Need for funding in the education sector.

Sources: pib.

4. NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

- Context:** Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel has been appointed the chairperson of the National Green Tribunal (NGT).

About the National Green Tribunal (NGT):

- What is it?** NGT has been established **under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010** for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- Ambit:** The tribunal deals with matters relating to the enforcement of any legal right relating to environment and giving relief and compensation for damages to persons and property.

Members:

- Sanctioned strength:** currently, 10 expert members and 10 judicial members (although the act allows for up to 20 of each).
- Chairman:** is the administrative head of the tribunal, also serves as a judicial member and is required to be a serving or retired Chief Justice of a High Court or a judge of the Supreme Court of India.

National Green Tribunal

- ▶ The National Green Tribunal was established under Section 3 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010;
- ▶ It was established on 18th Oct. 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010;
- ▶ It has been established to provide speedy environmental justice and help reduce the burden of litigation in the higher courts.

- **Selection:** Members are chosen by a selection committee (headed by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court of India) that reviews their applications and conducts interviews. The Judicial members are chosen from applicants who are serving or retired judges of High Courts.
- **Expert members** are chosen from applicants who are either serving or retired bureaucrats not below the rank of an Additional Secretary to the Government of India (not below the rank of Principal Secretary if serving under a state government) with a minimum administrative experience of five years in dealing with environmental matters. Or, the expert members must have a doctorate in a related field.

Other facts:

- The Tribunal is **not bound by the procedure** laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.
- The Tribunal's dedicated jurisdiction in environmental matters shall provide speedy environmental justice and help reduce the burden of litigation in the higher courts.
- The Tribunal is mandated to make and endeavour for disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing of the same.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** NGT- establishment, composition, roles, powers and functions.

Sources: the hindu.

5. INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS (ICWA)

- **Context:** Dr. TCA Raghavan is the new Director General (DG) of Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA).
- **Appointment:** He was **selected by Governing Body and Governing Council of ICWA headed by Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu.**



What is ICWA?

- It was established in 1943 by group of Indian intellectuals as think tank. It was established as non-official, non-political and non-profit organisation under Registration of Societies Act 1860.
- It was declared **institution of national importance** by Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), 2001 enacted by Parliament.
- **The Vice President of India is the ex-officio President of ICWA, while the Minister of External Affairs is its Vice-President.**
- ICWA is devoted exclusively for the study of international relations and foreign affairs. Vice President of India is its ex-officio President.
- It had conducted historic international conferences like Asian Relations Conference in 1947 under leadership Sarojini Naidu and United Nations and New World Order in 1994.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** ICWA- composition and functions.

Sources: pib.

6. NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS (NCPCR)

- **Context:** NCPCR has come up with a model fee regulatory framework for unaided private schools.

Background:

- NCPCR has been receiving reports that children were being harassed by school administrations and that they considered committing suicide over the fee hike issue.

The framework:

- The framework is for private unaided schools – which are 23% of the total schools in India and cater to 36% of the total population of children attending school.
- The framework is a model document that may be recommended to states where the fee regulation mechanism does not work effectively.
- According to the draft regulations, if a school violates the norms provided in the uniform fee framework, the respective government can bar the school from taking new admissions for the next academic year or impose fine equivalent to 10% of the total revenue generated by the school or society or trust in the preceding year.

Recommendations:

- A 10% yearly cap on fee hike in private, unaided schools.
- Set up a district fee regulatory authority in states to monitor school fee increases.

About NCPCR:

- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was set up in March 2007 under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.
- It works under the administrative control of the Ministry of Women & Child Development.
- The Child is defined as a person in the 0 to 18 years age group.
- The Commission's Mandate is to ensure that all Laws, Policies, Programmes, and Administrative Mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** NCPCR- Statutory status and mandate of the commission.
- **For Mains:** Protection of vulnerable section of the society, need for regulation of fees.

Sources: the hindu.



7. CENTRAL ADOPTION RESOURCE AUTHORITY (CARA)

- **Context:** Taking cognizance of the recent cases of illegal adoptions, Ministry of Women and Child Development directs state governments to ensure registration of all child care institutions and linking to CARA within the next one month.

Background:

- The mandatory registration of CCIs and linking to Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) has been provided in Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

What is the Hague Convention?

- The Hague Convention protects children and their families against the risks of illegal, irregular, premature or ill-prepared adoptions abroad.

To do this, the Hague Convention puts:

- Safeguards in place to make sure that all intercountry adoptions are in the best interests of the child and respects their human rights,
- A system in place of cooperation among countries to guarantee that these safeguards are respected, and to prevent the abduction of, sale of, or traffic in children.

About CARA:

- Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) is **a statutory body** of Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India.
- It **functions as the nodal body for adoption of Indian children** and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country and inter-country adoptions.
- CARA is designated as **the Central Authority to deal with inter-country adoptions** in accordance with the provisions of the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption, 1993, ratified by Government of India in 2003.
- CARA primarily deals with adoption of orphan, abandoned and surrendered children through its associated / recognised adoption agencies.

- For Hague adoptions, the authorities in both countries must agree to go ahead with the adoption. For non-Hague adoptions, requirements may vary from one country to another. The Hague Convention does not allow private adoptions in the child's home country.
- Adoption is handled by the provinces and territories, and they all have and follow laws implementing the Hague Convention.

Facts for Prelims:

- Know where Hague is located: Hague is a city on the western coast of the Netherlands and the capital of the province of South Holland.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** CARA, Hague convention.
- **For Mains:** Child Abduction- concerns, challenges and regulatory framework.

Sources: the hindu.

8. INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS OF INDIA (ICAI)

- **Context:** Cabinet approves MoU between the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India and Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance, Bahrain.
- The MoU will provide an opportunity to the ICAI members to expand their professional horizon and simultaneously ICAI will become an entity to aid strengthen building of local national capabilities.
- The aim is to work together to develop a mutually beneficial relationship in the best interest of members, students and their organizations.

About ICAI:

- The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) is **a statutory body** established by an Act of Parliament of India, 'The Chartered Accountants Act, 1949, to regulate the profession of Chartered Accountancy in India.
- ICAI is **the second largest professional Accounting & Finance body in the world**.
- ICAI is the **only licensing cum regulating body** of the financial audit and accountancy profession in India.
- It **recommends the accounting standards** to be followed by companies in India to National Advisory Committee on Accounting Standards (NACAS).
- ICAI is **solely responsible for setting the Standards on Auditing (SAs)** to be followed in the audit of financial statements in India.
- ICAI is **one of the founder members of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA), and Confederation of Asian and Pacific Accountants (CAPA)**.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** ICAI- key facts.

Sources: pib.

9. COMMISSION FOR DENOTIFIED, SEMI-NOMADIC, NOMADIC TRIBES

- **Context:** The NITI Aayog has backed a proposal by a panel constituted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to set up **a permanent commission for Denotified (DNT), Semi-Nomadic (SNT), and Nomadic Tribes (NT)**.

Proposed by Idate Commission:

- Bhiku Ramji Idate Commission on DNT, SNT, and NT communities, in its report, had recommended to set up a permanent commission for the communities on the lines of similar commissions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes.
- **Composition:** In its report submitted to the social justice ministry in January 2018, the Idate Commission said such **a permanent commission should have a prominent community leader as its chairperson, and a senior Union government bureaucrat, an anthropologist, and a sociologist as members**.

- **Other important recommendations** of the panel include granting Constitutional protection to these communities under a separate third schedule after Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, making them eligible for reservation, and extending the protective cover of Prevention of Atrocities Act to them.

Need for special attention:

- The DNT, NT, SNT communities have been identified as the most marginalised by several commissions set up since Independence.
- The community has for long not been enumerated in the Census data.
- The Renke Commission report of 2008 had arrived at a rough estimate of their population being between 10-12 crore but none of its recommendations were implemented.

NITI Aayog's views:

- NITI Aayog has offered to set up a working group to come up with policy suggestions on many issues of these marginalised communities.
- It has also proposed lowering tuition fees and relaxing admission conditions for children from the communities, and easy allotment of land and housing for members of the community in which 90% or more are landless.
- The Niti Aayog has also supported the panel's suggestion to form a dedicated National Finance Development Corporation for DNT, SNT and NTs.

What are denotified tribes?

- Denotified tribes are those that were labelled as criminals through a legislation by British government and were denotified post-independence, the Nomadic tribes maintain constant geographical mobility while semi-nomads are those who are on the move but return to fixed habitations once a year, mainly for occupational reasons.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Idate commission, meaning of denotified tribes.
- **For Mains:** Proposed commission- need, vulnerability of these communities and other welfare measures needed.

Sources: IE.

10. DOMESTIC COUNCIL FOR GOLD

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** Proposed Council, its objectives and functions.
- **For Mains:** Need for such a council, Gold- import and export, and effects on trade balance.
- **Context:** The Centre has decided to set up **a Domestic Council for Gold** to aid exports of jewellery.

Composition of the council:

- The council will represent all the jewellers of India who will be the electoral college. They will form different interest groups and elect those who will sit in the council.

The council would work towards:

- Industry development.
- Job creation.
- The building of regional clusters.
- Strengthening of value chains.

Significance of the Gold Council:

- It will help in creating an ecosystem to harness the true potential for jewellery-making in the country.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

1. CENSUS OF INDIA

- **Context:** According to an amended rule notified by the Registrar-General of India (RGI), the data collected during the 2021 Census will be stored **electronically**, the **first time since the decennial exercise was conducted in 1951 in Independent India**.

Census of India:

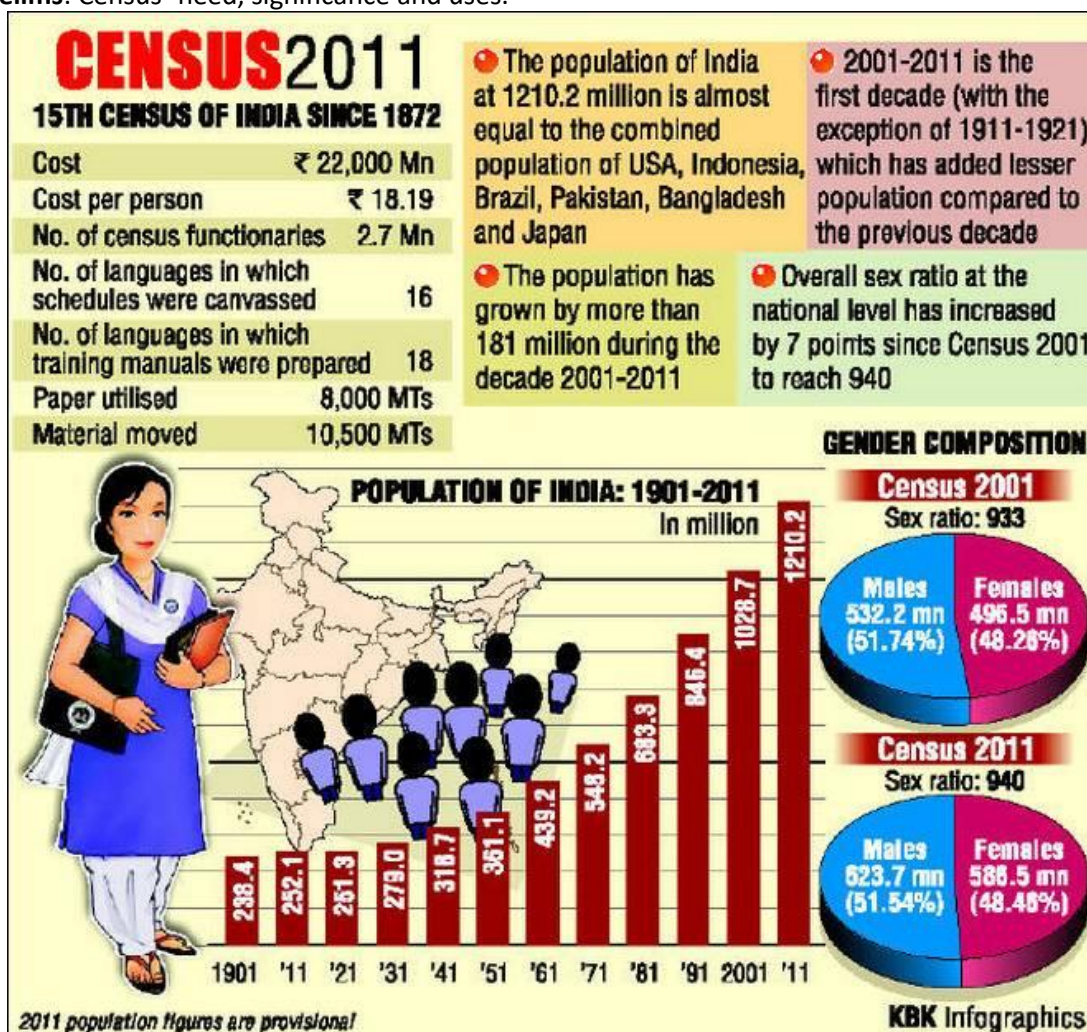
- **The decennial Census of India has been conducted 15 times, As of 2011.** While it has been conducted every 10 years, beginning in 1872, the first complete census was taken in the year 1881.
- Post 1949, **it has been conducted by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs**, Government of India.
- All the census since 1951 are conducted under 1948 **Census of India Act**.

Facts for Prelims:

- The celebrated '**Arthashastr**' by '**Kautilya**' written in the 3rd Century BC prescribed the collection of population statistics as a measure of state policy for taxation. It contained a detailed description of methods of conducting population, economic and agricultural censuses.
- During the regime of the Mughal king Akbar, the administrative report '**Ain-e-Akbari**' included comprehensive data pertaining to population, industry, wealth and many other characteristics.
- **The Delimitation/reservation of Constituencies**– Parliamentary/Assembly/Panchayats and other Local Bodies is also done on the basis of the demographic data thrown up by the Census.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Census- need, significance and uses.



Sources: the hindu.

2. SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS

- **Context:** During recent consultations with the Law Commission of India, as many as nine parties expressed their reservations while four parties supported holding of simultaneous elections.

Background:

- Simultaneous elections were held in the country during the first two decades after Independence up to 1967.
- Dissolution of certain Assemblies in 1968 and 1969 followed by the dissolution of the Lok Sabha led to the “disruption of the conduct of simultaneous elections.

Simultaneous elections: Why is it a good idea?

- This will help save public money.
- It will be a big relief for political parties that are always in campaign mode.
- It will allow political parties to focus more on policy and governance.

Need for simultaneous elections:

- **To reduce unnecessary expenditures:** Elections are held all the time and continuous polls lead to a lot of expenditure. More than Rs 1, 100 crore was spent on the 2009 Lok Sabha polls and the expenditure had shot up to Rs 4,000 crore in 2014.
- **To reduce the unnecessary use of manpower:** Over a crore government employees, including a large number of teachers, are involved in the electoral process. Thus, the continuous exercise causes maximum harm to the education sector.
- **Security concerns:** Security forces also have to be diverted for the electoral work even as the country’s enemy keeps plotting against the nation and terrorism remains a strong threat.

Way ahead:

- The time is ripe for a constructive debate on electoral reforms and a return to the practice of the early decades after Independence when elections to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies were held simultaneously. It is for the Election Commission to take this exercise forward in consultation with political parties.

Facts for Prelims:

- **Law Commission of India** is an executive body established by an order of the Government of India. Its major function is to work for legal reform. Its membership primarily comprises legal experts, who are entrusted a mandate by the Government.
- The Commission is established for a fixed tenure and works as an advisory body to the Ministry of Law and Justice
- The first Law Commission was established during the British Raj era in 1834 by the Charter Act of 1833. After that, three more Commissions were established in pre-independent India. The first Law Commission of independent India was established in 1955 for a three-year term.

What’s important?

- **For Prelims:** Law commission.
- **For Mains:** Simultaneous elections- need, challenges and solutions.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

1. NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED TRIBES (NCST)

- **Context:** Chairperson NCST Presents Special Report on “Indira Sagar Polavaram Project” Affected Tribal People to President of India.

Facts for Prelims:

- **The report and recommendations are under Article 338A(5)(e) of the Constitution** on the measures to be taken by the Government of Andhra Pradesh for the effective implementation of constitutional safeguards and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the Scheduled Tribes who are affected on account of Polavaram Irrigation Project, Andhra Pradesh.

About the project:

- Polavaram Project is a multi-purpose irrigation project which has been accorded **national project status** by the central government.
- **This dam across the Godavari River** is under construction located in West Godavari District and East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh state and its reservoir spreads in parts of Chhattisgarh and Orissa States also.
- The project is multipurpose major terminal reservoir project on river Godavari for development of Irrigation, Hydropower and drinking water facilities to East Godavari, Vishakhapatnam, West Godavari and Krishna districts of Andhra Pradesh.
- The project is likely to displace over 1.88 lakh people across 222 villages and so far, 1,730 persons in six villages have been rehabilitated by the government.

About NCST:

- NCST was established by amending Article 338 and inserting a new Article 338A in the Constitution through the Constitution (89th Amendment) Act, 2003. By this amendment, the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was replaced by two separate Commissions namely- (i) the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), and (ii) the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST).
- **Composition:** The term of office of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and each member is three years from the date of assumption of charge. The Chairperson has been given the rank of Union Cabinet Minister and the Vice-Chairperson that of a Minister of State and other Members have the ranks of a Secretary to the Government of India.
- **Powers:** NCST is empowered to investigate and monitor matters relating to safeguards provided for STs under the Constitution or under other laws or under Govt. order. The Commission is also authorized to inquire into specific complaints relating to rights and safeguards of STs and to participate and advise in the Planning Process relating to socio-economic development of STs and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union and States.
- **Report:** The commission submits its report to the President annually on the working of safeguards and measures required for effective implementation of Programmers/ Schemes relating to welfare and socio-economic development of STs.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** NCST, Polavaram project.
- **For Mains:** Issues associated with Polavaram project.

Sources: the hindu.

2. BRUS OF MIZORAM

- **Context:** In a major breakthrough on repatriation laced Bru persons from Mizoram since 1997, an agreement has been signed by Government of India, Governments of Mizoram and Tripura and Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF).
- The central government will provide financial assistance for rehabilitation of Bru community members in Mizoram and address their issues of security, education, livelihood, etc. in consultation with the governments of Mizoram and Tripura.

What's the issue?

- A bout of ethnic violence forced thousands of people from the Bru tribe to leave their homes in Mizoram. As many as 32,876 people belonging to 5,407 families are living in the refugee camps in the Jampui Hills of Tripura.
- The displaced Bru people from Mizoram have been living in various camps in Tripura since 1997. In 1997, the murder of a Mizo forest guard at the Dampa Tiger Reserve in Mizoram's Mamit district allegedly by Bru

militants led to a violent backlash against the community, forcing several thousand people to flee to neighbouring Tripura.

- The Bru militancy was a reactionary movement against Mizo nationalist groups who had demanded in the mid-1990s that the Brus be left out of the state's electoral rolls, contending that the tribe was not indigenous to Mizoram.

Facts for Prelims:

- The Brus, also referred to as the Reangs, are spread across the northeastern states of Tripura, Assam, Manipur, and Mizoram.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Bru community.
- **For Mains:** Bru militancy- causes, effects and solutions.

Sources: the hindu.

3. MAHATMA GANDHI INTERNATIONAL SANITATION CONVENTION

- **Context:** In a bid to eliminate the need for manual scavenging, the Centre has launched a challenge asking innovators, NGOs, research institutions, companies and cities to propose technology and business solutions to clean urban sewers and septic tanks without human entry. The challenge will be part of the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention to be held on October 18 this year.
- The objectives are to identify technological and business process innovations, endorse viable business models suitable for cities of different sizes and geographies, and pilot test shortlisted technologies and solutions in select project cities and bridge the gap between innovators or manufacturers and beneficiaries such as urban local bodies and citizens.



Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention:

- It will be launched at the 150th anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi. It will be a first-of-its-kind International Sanitation Convention.
- Ministers from over 70 countries will be invited and taken on a 'Gandhi Trail' in Gujarat.
- The government will use the occasion to "showcase its performance" and "success story" in the Swachh Bharat programme in the past four years, which was launched on October 2, 2014, and have a face-to-face dialogue with the world leaders to share their experiences on sanitation programmes.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** International Sanitation Convention, SBM.
- **For Mains:** Manual scavenging- concerns and issues to be addressed, performance of SBM.

Sources: the hindu.

4. ASSAM BILL AGAINST WITCH-HUNT

- **Context:** President Ram Nath Kovind has Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2015 passed by State Assembly in August 2015.
- The law was prepared to rein in the rising incidents of witch-hunting cases across the State, following demand from cross-section of society.
- It was prepared in lines with spirit of universal declaration of human rights, crimes in witch hunting cases cause gross violation of basic human rights.

Highlights of the Bill:

- The Bill contains provisions for imprisonment up to seven years along with a fine up to Rs 5 lakh for identifying and calling a person witch. This will come with Section 302 of the IPC if someone is killed after branding as witch.
- The punishment for leading a person to commit suicide after intimidating, stigmatising, defaming and accusing as witch may be extended to life imprisonment and fine up to Rs 5 lakh.
- The Bill also contains provisions about various measures that the administration and police need to initiate along with NGOs and civil society to educate people about witch hunting.
- According to the bill, the fine realised as punishment for an offence shall be paid to the victim or his/her next of kin as compensation by following the procedures.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Highlights of the Bill.

Sources: the hindu.

5. GLOBAL SLAVERY INDEX 2018

- **Context:** The report of the Global slavery Index 2018 has been released. It is published by the Australia-based human rights group **Walk Free Foundation**.
- The estimation data were drawn from 54 surveys conducted in 48 countries which included a module on Modern Slavery, with a total sample of 71,158 individual interviews.

What is Modern Slavery?

- “In the context of this report, modern slavery covers a set of specific legal concepts including forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, slavery and slavery-like practices, and human trafficking”.
- It is used as an umbrella term which refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and abuse of power.

Performance of various countries:

- North Korea is at the top of the list with 104.6 per 1,000 and Japan registering the lowest prevalence rate of 0.3 per 1,000.
- Globally, nearly three-quarters (71 percent) of modern slavery's victims are women and girls. There are more female than male victims across all forms of modern slavery.
- The 10 countries with the largest number of absolute numbers of people in modern slavery include **India**, China, Pakistan, North Korea, Nigeria, Iran, Indonesia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Russia and the Philippines. These 10 countries account for 60 percent of people living in modern slavery.
- Findings from the Index highlight the connection between modern slavery and two major external drivers – highly repressive regimes, in which populations are put to work to prop up the government, and conflict situations which result in the breakdown of rule of law, social structures, and existing systems of protection.

Extent of modern slavery in India:

- Among 167 countries, India ranked 53. However, in absolute numbers, India topped the list on prevalence.
- The index estimates that on any given day in 2016 there were nearly 8 million people living in “modern slavery” in India — a claim strongly contested by the government on the grounds that its parameters were poorly defined and too wide-ranging.
- The report said that in terms of prevalence, there were 6.1 victims for every thousand people.

India's stand:

- The Indian government questioned the definition of modern slavery used in the research and also the sample size for interviews and the questions posed to those surveyed.
- Ministry of Women and Child Development termed the index flawed in its interpretations and as the terminology used is very broad based and words like “forced labour” need a more detailed elaboration in the Indian context where the socio-economic parameters are diverse and very nuanced.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Highlights and rankings of countries in the Global Slavery Index 2018.
- **For Mains:** Modern Slavery- extent, concerns, issues that need to be addressed and government efforts.

Sources: ET.

6. COMMITTEE TO CHECK MOB LYNCHING**What to study?**

- **For Prelims:** Head of the Committee.
- **For Mains:** Need for a legislation on lynching, Supreme Court guidelines.
- **Context:** Considering the increasing incidents of mob lynching, the Union Government has constituted a High Level **Committee chaired by the Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba** to deliberate in the matter and make recommendations. The committee will submit its recommendations to the Government within four weeks.

Background:

- The move comes after a number of mob lynching incidents were reported in several areas, stemming from fake social media rumours of child kidnapers as well as cow vigilantism.

Need for coordination between the centre and states on this matter:

- The Union Government is highly concerned about the incidents of mob violence in some parts of the country. Government has already condemned such incidents and made its stand clear in the Parliament that, as per the Constitutional scheme, **'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects**.
- **State Governments are responsible for controlling crime, maintaining law and order, and protecting the life and property of the citizens.** They are empowered to enact and enforce laws to curb crime in their jurisdiction.

Recent directions of the Supreme Court on the issue of mob violence:

Condemning mob lynching incidents across the country and the Supreme Court had urged the Parliament to enact a new law to deal with the crime. The court passed a slew of directions in this regard to deal with the mob lynching. Here are the directions:

- There shall be **a "separate offence" for lynching** and the trial courts must ordinarily award maximum sentence upon conviction of the accused person to set a stern example in cases of mob violence.
- The state governments will have to designate **a senior police officer in each district** for taking measures to prevent incidents of mob violence and lynching.
- The state governments need to **identify districts, sub-divisions and villages** where instances of lynching and mob violence have been reported in the recent past.
- The **nodal officers** shall bring to the notice of the DGP about any inter-district co-ordination issues for devising a strategy to tackle lynching and mob violence related issues.
- Every **police officer shall ensure to disperse the mob** that has a tendency to cause violence in the disguise of vigilantism or otherwise.
- Central and the state governments shall **broadcast on radio, television and other media platforms** about the serious consequences of mob lynching and mob violence.
- Despite the measures taken by the State Police, if it comes to the notice of the local police that an incident of lynching or mob violence has taken place, the jurisdictional police station shall immediately **lodge an FIR**.
- The State Governments shall prepare **a lynching/mob violence victim compensation scheme** in the light of the provisions of Section 357A of CrPC within one month from the date of this judgment.
- If a police officer or an officer of the district administration fails to fulfill his duty, it will be considered **an act of deliberate negligence**.

Need for an anti-lynching law:

- At present there is **no law that criminalises mob killings**. The **Indian Penal Code has provisions for unlawful assembly, rioting, and murder** but nothing that takes cognisance of a group of people coming together to kill (a lynch mob).

- **Under Section 223 (a) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC)**, to prosecute together two or more people accused of the same offence committed in the course of the “same transaction”. But the provision falls far short of an adequate legal framework for prosecuting lynch mobs.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

1. DNA TECHNOLOGY (USE AND APPLICATION) REGULATION BILL, 2018

- **Context:** Cabinet approves DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018.

Need for the legislation and its significance:

- The utility of DNA based technologies for solving crimes, and to identify missing persons, is well recognized across the world.
- Therefore, the new bill aims to expand the application of DNA-based forensic technologies to support and strengthen the justice delivery system of the country.

Highlights of the Bill:

- As per the Bill, **national and regional DNA data banks** will be set up for maintaining a national database for identification of victims, suspects in cases, undertrials, missing persons and unidentified human remains.
- According to it, those leaking the DNA profile information to people or entities who are not entitled to have it, will be punished with a jail term of up to three years and a fine of up to Rs. 1 lakh. Similar, punishment has also been provided for those who seek the information on DNA profiles illegally.
- As per the bill, all DNA data, including DNA profiles, DNA samples and records, will only be **used for identification of the person and not for “any other purpose”**.
- The bill’s provisions will enable **the cross-matching** between persons who have been reported missing on the one hand and unidentified dead bodies found in various parts of the country on the other, and also for establishing the identity of victims in mass disasters.

Benefits of the Bill:

- By providing for the mandatory accreditation and regulation of DNA laboratories, the Bill seeks to ensure that with the proposed expanded use of this technology in the country.
- There is also the assurance that the DNA test results are reliable and the data remain protected from misuse or abuse in terms of the privacy rights of our citizens.
- It has provisions that will enable the cross-matching between persons who have been reported missing on the one hand and unidentified dead bodies found in various parts of the country on the other, and also for establishing the identity of victims in mass disasters.

Way ahead:

- It is expected that the expanded use of DNA technology would result not only in speedier justice delivery but also in increased conviction rates, which at present is only around 30% (NCRB Statistics for 2016).

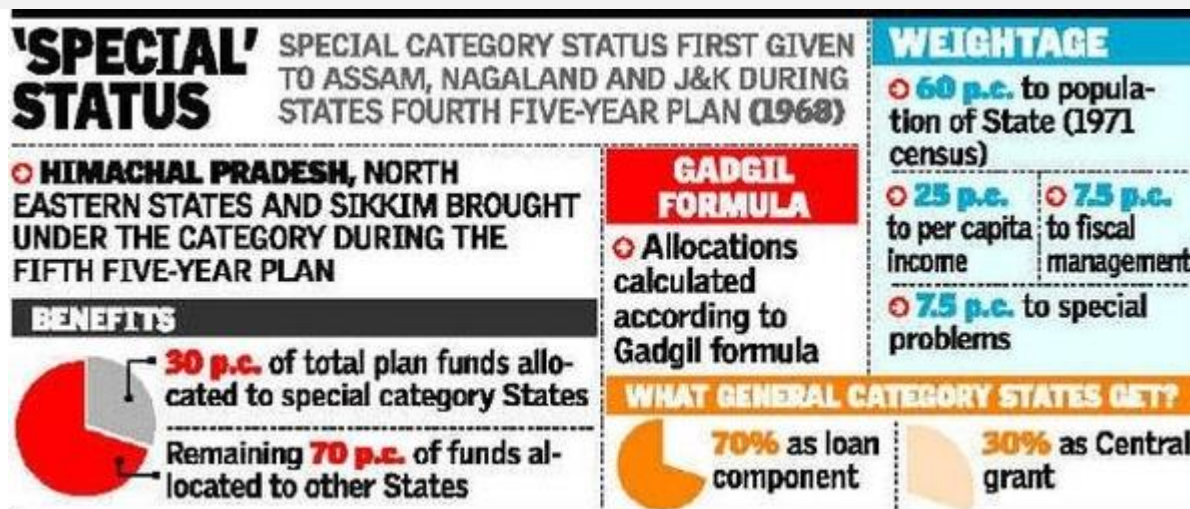
What’s important?

- **For Prelims:** DNA Bill- highlights, difference between DNA and RNA.
- **For Mains:** DNA profiling- uses, challenges and concerns.

DNA technology- significance and concerns:

- DNA analysis is an extremely useful and accurate technology in ascertaining the identity of a person from his/her DNA sample, or establishing biological relationships between individuals.
- A hair sample, or even bloodstains from clothes, from a scene of crime, for example, can be matched with that of a suspect, and it can, in most cases, be conclusively established whether the DNA in the sample belongs to the suspected individual. As a result, DNA technology is being increasingly relied upon in investigations of crime, identification of unidentified bodies, or in determining parentage.
- But information from DNA samples can reveal not just how a person looks, or what their eye colour or skin colour is, but also more intrusive information like their allergies, or susceptibility to diseases. As a result, there is a greater risk of information from DNA analysis getting misused.

2. SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS FOR STATES



- **Context:** The Central government has filed a counter affidavit in the Supreme Court expressing its inability to give Special Category Status (SCS) to Andhra Pradesh and said all commitments under the A.P. Reorganisation Act (APRA), 2014 had been addressed.

What is the economic rationale for the demand and how serious are the economic challenges for Andhra?

- When the state was divided, Andhra not only lost a capital but also an important industry hub, which was in and around Hyderabad. The contribution of agriculture to state GDP is higher for Andhra than its neighbouring states.
- In fact, today it is arguably the highest in South. This is also a reflection of a lower level of industrialization and along with it a lower per capita income and again, the lowest in South.
- Much of this is because of Hyderabad, which political analysts argue has gone on to make Telangana, a city-centric state, with the city still an important growth engine and revenue source for Telangana.
- Today, the per capita income for Telangana is at par with states like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, and many see this as largely on account of Hyderabad.

What is Special Category Status?

- There is no provision of SCS in the Constitution; the Central government extends financial assistance to states that are at a comparative disadvantage against others.
- The concept of SCS emerged in 1969 when the Gadgil formula (that determined Central assistance to states) was approved.

Some prominent guidelines for getting SCS status:

- Must be economically backward with poor infrastructure.
- The states must be located in hilly and challenging terrain.
- They should have low population density and significant tribal population.
- Should be strategically situated along the borders of neighbouring countries.

What kind of assistance do SCS States receive?

- The SCS States used to receive block grants based on the Gadgil-Mukherjee formula, which effectively allowed for nearly 30 per cent of the Total Central Assistance to be transferred to SCS States as late as 2009-10.
- Following the constitution of the NITI Aayog (after the dissolution of the Planning Commission) and the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC), Central plan assistance to SCS States has been subsumed in an increased devolution of the divisible pool to all States (from 32% in the 13th FC recommendations to 42%) and do not any longer appear in plan expenditure.
- The FFC also recommended variables such as “forest cover” to be included in devolution, with a weightage of 7.5 in the criteria and which could benefit north-eastern States that were previously given SCS assistance.

Besides, assistance to Centrally Sponsored Schemes for SCS States was given with 90% Central share and 10% State share.

When was the first Special Category status bestowed?

- The NDC first accorded SCS in 1969 to Jammu and Kashmir, Assam and Nagaland. Over the years, eight more states were added to the list — Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Tripura and, finally, in 2010, Uttarakhand. Until 2014-15, SCS meant these 11 states received a variety of benefits and sops.

Way ahead:

- Considering special status to any new State will result in demands from other States and dilute the benefits further.
- It is also not economically beneficial for States to seek special status as the benefits under the current dispensation are minimal. States facing special problems will be better off seeking a special package.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** SCS and associated issues.

Sources: the hindu.

3. LEGALIZE GAMBLING

- **Context:** The Law Commission of India has submitted a report to the government recommending “cashless” gambling in sports as a means to increase revenue and deal a blow to unlawful gambling.

Legalize gambling?

Why legalize gambling?



Yes?

- Since it is impossible to stop illegal gambling, the only viable option left is to “regulate” gambling in sports.
- It will increase revenue and deal a blow to unlawful gambling. The money generated can be used for public welfare activities.
- If gambling is legalised in a controlled manner, crores of rupees in black money involved in illegal gambling activity currently could be made available to the legal economy.
- Without a strong regulatory structure to oversee this illegal activity, government loses huge amount of revenue that could be put to better use - like building schools, hospitals, infrastructure, etc

No?

- A country as poor as India should not allow ‘legalised gambling’. Such a move would leave the poor poorer and only vested interests want legalisation of gambling.
- Socio-economic and cultural circumstances of the country are not pragmatic to accept legalised gambling activities as it is still treated as a social stigma.
- It may also prompt future generations to take unethical paths.

Law commission recommendations:

- The revenue from gambling should be taxable under laws like Income Tax Act, the Goods and Services Tax Act.
- Transactions between gamblers and operators should be linked to their Aadhaar and PAN cards so that the government could keep an eye on them.
- There is a need for classification of ‘proper gambling’ and ‘small gambling.’ Proper gambling would be for the rich who play for high stakes, while small gambling would be for the low-income groups.
- The government should introduce a cap on the number of gambling transactions for each individual, that is, monthly, half-yearly and annual.
- Restrictions on amount should be prescribed while using electronic money facilities like credit cards, debit cards, and net-banking. Gambling websites should also not solicit pornography.
- Regulations need to protect vulnerable groups, minors and those below poverty line, those who draw their sustenance from social welfare measures, government subsidies and Jan Dhan account holders from exploitation through gambling.
- Foreign Exchange Management and Foreign Direct Investment laws and policies should be amended to encourage investment in the casino/online gaming industry. This would propel tourism and employment.

What's important?

- **For Mains:** Legalize gambling- need, concerns, challenges in regulation and solutions.

Sources: the hindu.

4. ICAT RELEASES FIRST BS-VI ENGINE CERTIFICATE

- **Context:** ICAT has completed the first BS-VI certification for a heavy-duty engine model for M/s Volvo Eicher Commercial Vehicle Limited.

What are BS norms?

- The BS — or Bharat Stage — emission standards are norms instituted by the government to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles.
- India has been following the European (Euro) emission norms, though with a time-lag of five years.

Difference between BS-IV and the new BS-VI:

- The major difference in standards between the existing BS-IV and the new BS-VI auto fuel norms is the presence of sulphur.
- The newly introduced fuel is estimated to reduce the amount of sulphur released by 80%, from 50 parts per million to 10 ppm.
- As per the analysts, the emission of NOx (nitrogen oxides) from diesel cars is also expected to reduce by nearly 70% and 25% from cars with petrol engines.

Why is it important to upgrade these norms?

- Upgrading to stricter fuel standards helps tackle air pollution. Global automakers are betting big on India as vehicle penetration is still low here, when compared to developed countries. At the same time, cities such as Delhi are already being listed among those with the poorest air quality in the world. The national capital's recent odd-even car experiment and judicial activism against the registration of big diesel cars shows that governments can no longer afford to relax on this front.
- With other developing countries such as China having already upgraded to the equivalent of Euro V emission norms a while ago, India has been lagging behind. The experience of countries such as China and Malaysia shows that poor air quality can be bad for business. Therefore, these reforms can put India ahead in the race for investments too.

Facts for Prelims:

- **The International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT)** is a division of NATRiP implementation society (NATIS), under the administrative control of the Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises, Government of India.
- ICAT is the first of new world-class centers established under the National Automotive Testing and R&D Infrastructure Project (NATRiP) with the main objective of carrying out Research & Development besides extending homologation facilities in the field of Automotive Engineering.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** BS Norms and composition.
- **For Mains:** BS norms- implementation- issues, challenges and solutions.

Sources: the hindu.

5. GLOBAL HOUSING CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGE

- **Context:** The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs is set to launch the Global Housing Construction Technology Challenge as part of the technology sub-mission of PMAY-U.

Global Housing Construction Technology Challenge:

- The challenge aims to provide more dynamism to the scheme.
- It will invite ideas from across the globe for alternative technologies that go beyond the brick-and-mortar building model used widely in Indian construction.
- The four parameters in the global challenge would be time, cost, quality, and sustainability. The technology will have to be better than the existing ones on all these four fronts.
- It will be tested in geographically different urban areas across the country with varying terrains such as say hilly, plain, or earthquake-prone.
- The winning technologies would be used to build mass houses, in a tie-up with the states, for the economically weaker sections and low-income groups under the affordable housing project vertical of PMAY-U.

PMAY- Urban:

- The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Programme launched by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA)**, in Mission mode envisions provision of Housing for All by 2022.
- Under the scheme, the government is providing an interest subsidy of 6.5% on housing loans which can be availed by beneficiaries for 15 years from start of loan date.

The Mission seeks to address the housing requirement of urban poor including slum dwellers through following programme verticals:

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

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Global Housing Construction Technology Challenge, PMAY- features.
- **For Mains:** Housing For All- need, significance and challenges.

Sources: the hindu.

6. CRIMINAL LAW (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2018

- **Context:** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has sent the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2018, to the Union cabinet for approval, to replace the related Ordinance.

Highlights of the Bill:

- It provides for stringent punishment including death penalty for those convicted of raping girls below the age of 12 years.
- The minimum punishment in case of rape of women has been increased from rigorous imprisonment of seven years to 10 years, extendable to life imprisonment.
- In case of rape of a girl under 16 years, the minimum punishment has been increased from 10 years to 20 years, extendable to imprisonment for rest of life, which means jail term till the convicts' "natural life".
- The punishment for gang rape of a girl below 16 years will invariably be imprisonment for the rest of life of the convict, another official said.
- Stringent punishment for rape of a girl under 12 years has been provided with the minimum jail term being 20 years which may go up to life in prison or death sentence. Gang rape of a girl under 12 years of age will invite punishment of jail term for the rest of life or death.
- The measure also provides for speedy investigations and trial. The time limit for investigation of all cases of rape has been prescribed, which has to be mandatorily completed within two months.
- The deadline for the completion of trial in all rape cases will be two months. A six-month time limit for the disposal of appeals in rape cases has also been prescribed.

- There will also be no provision for anticipatory bail for a person accused of rape or gang rape of a girl under 16 years. It has also been prescribed that a court has to give notice of 15 days to a public prosecutor and the representative of the victim before deciding bail applications in case of rape of a girl under 16 years of age.

Need for a stringent law:

- The number of reported cases of rapes of children increased in India by 82% in 2016 compared to 2015. A climate of violence, social and economic insecurity, alienation, and a progressive undermining of the status of women and children seem to have given an impetus to carry out crimes against women and children.
- Therefore, the legal system must give a clear signal that we as a nation consider the rape of children below the age of 12 as among the most heinous of offences. Making such crimes punishable by capital punishment certainly gives such a signal.

Is it sufficient?

- Statistics have not been able to prove or disprove the efficacy of capital punishment as a deterrent. While the U.K. has seen an increase in murders since 1965 when capital punishment for murder was removed from the statute book, Canada has not seen any such impact since it abolished the death penalty in 1976.
- The underlying socio-economic conditions in a society that cause crimes seem to have as much of an impact on the increase or decrease of crimes as the law does.

Way ahead:

- It is not the severity of the punishment but the certainty and uniformity of it which will reduce crime. Even for capital punishment to work as a deterrent, the fairness of the investigation, the certainty of conviction, and the speed of the trial are vital.
- With the police and judicial independence being under a cloud, especially after the incidents in Kathua and Unnao, the deterrent value of capital punishment seems diminished unless police reforms and fast-track courts are a part of the package.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Highlights of the Bill.
- **For Mains:** Capital punishment- need, concerns and the way ahead.

Sources: the hindu.

7. TARGET OLYMPIC PODIUM SCHEME

- **Context:** The *Mission Olympic Cell* has included the entire Indian hockey team in the Target Olympic Podium Scheme, rewarding the players for their silver medal-winning performance at the Champions Trophy.

Significance of the move:

- Athletes from different sports have been included in Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) individually but it is first instance that an entire team has been made beneficiary of the financial assistance scheme.

Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS):

- It was launched by Ministry of Sports within the ambit of **National Sports Development Fund (NSDF)**.
- It aims at identifying and supporting potential medal prospects for upcoming Olympic Games.
- It will provide selected sportspersons customized training at institutes having world class facilities and also other necessary support is being provided to the elite athletes. It will also provide a benchmark for selection of athletes on par with international standards.
- Under it, Sports Authority of India (SAI) and federations, which are members of Mission Olympic Cell (MOC), will be nodal agencies for disbursement of fund. They will make payments directly to beneficiary person and institution concerned on behalf of athletes.

Facts for Prelims:

- **Abinav Bindra Committee** was constituted to identify and support potential medal prospects for 2020 and 2024 Olympic Games under the scheme.
- The *Mission Olympic Cell* is a dedicated body created to assist the athletes who are selected under the TOPS Scheme. The MOC is under the Chairmanship of the Director General, Sports Authority (DG, SAI). The idea of

the MOC is to debate, discuss and decide the processes and methods so that the athlete receives best assistance. The MOC also focuses on selection, exclusion and retention of athletes, coaches, training institutes that can receive TOPS assistance.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Mission Olympic Cell, TOPS, Abhinav Bindra Committee.
- **For Mains:** Performance of Indian sportspersons at the international level, need for support and training.

Sources: pib.

8. TELECOM COMMISSION APPROVES NET NEUTRALITY

- **Context:** Telecom Commission (a group within India's Department of Telecom) has approved the recommendations made by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on net neutrality.
- The move aims to ensure that all web traffic is treated fairly, and that internet service providers won't block, throttle, or favor any content or services (with a few reasonable exceptions).

The rules:

- As per the net neutrality rules in India, mobile operators, internet providers and social-media and internet companies **cannot engage in, or seek, preferential treatment** as there will now be prohibition on any kind of interference in the treatment of content, including practices like blocking, degrading, slowing down or granting differential speeds or treatment to any content.
- Any efforts to create **zero-rated platforms** have now been blocked. Zero-rated platforms, which had earlier been tried (by companies such as Airtel and Facebook) but barred, offer only a certain category of services and websites as free, thus creating paid layers and stifling competition and innovation.
- Under net neutrality, **online access is unrestricted and non-discriminatory. The only exceptions** are new and emerging services such as autonomous driving, tele-medicine or remote-diagnostic services, which may require prioritised internet lanes and faster-than-normal speeds. A committee will look into the possible exceptions for "critical services" which will also be defined keeping in view the basic tenets of net neutrality.

Significance of the move:

- It's a huge win for those who favour free and fair internet access in the country. It also prevents programs like Facebook's Free Basics, which granted free access to mobile sites on the zero-rated platform that were allowed in by the company.
- The government's decision is being seen as progressive as it will not allow any mobile operator, internet service provider or online/social media giant to create monopolies on the internet by getting specialized treatment by paying for it. The rules of equal access will be maintained and no company can buy special treatment for itself or its services.

Background:

- Net neutrality has become a contentious issue across the world as social media giants and mobile and internet providers seek greater control on delivery of content and services to customers.
- It is feared that handing out greater and unchecked control to them will lead to monopolies and situations of paid prioritisation, both of which will stifle the start-up culture and new innovations.

Way ahead:

- As the internet economy gains in size and influence across the world, there have been increasing concerns with relation to the potential for discriminatory treatment of internet traffic by the entities that control access to the internet.
- All those who believe in a fair marketplace should welcome the reiteration that the principles of net neutrality will be upheld in India. This will ensure that those who control the pipes through which data flows – between providers and consumers of content – cannot favour some providers over others.
- The government now needs to ensure there are no loopholes that could result in an uneven playing field – for instance, companies that own both broadband and produce content should not be allowed to distribute their content free, by not charging for the data. Conversely, other content providers should have the same free access to distribution.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Meaning of net neutrality, free basics.
- **For Mains:** Net neutrality- need, challenges and government efforts to ensure net neutrality.

Sources: the hindu.

9. SOCIAL MEDIA HUB

- **Context:** The Supreme Court has taken a strong note of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry's decision to set up a social media hub for monitoring online data and said that it will be like creating **a surveillance state**. These observations were made by the court based on a petition filed.

Concerns over the proposed Social media hub:

- The petition alleged that though the stated aim of the project was to enable the government to understand the impact of social media campaigns on welfare schemes and improve the reach of such campaigns, the project had two aspects — “mass surveillance apparatus that aims at collecting and analysing huge volumes of data, and profiling people based on that” and “utilising this data to predict the mood of people online and issue responses, including those targeted at individuals or groups”.
- The social media analytical tool is expected to ‘listen’ to conversations on all major digital channels, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Tumblr, as well as blogs and news channels.
- Therefore, the petition contended that **“such intrusive action on the part of the government, is not only without the authority of law, but also infringes fundamental right to freedom of speech under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.”** The move is violative of Articles 14, 19(1)(a) and 21.

What is Social media communication hub?

- The hub proposes to monitor social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and even email) handles at the very local level in multiple languages to carry out “sentiment analysis”, track down the influence-making social media users and to categorise the conversations on social media into positive, negative and neutral sections.
- It also aimed to track real time the way social media receives news on government's schemes and announcements and also political events.

Benefits:

- This information would help the government in formulating policies, schemes or rectify any flaws in their implementation at the ground level so that the ultimate beneficiary who is the common man is benefited and has a direct way to communicate any complaints regarding the same to the Government.

Social media managers:

- As per the proposal, the project is meant to strengthen the social media division and recruit social media managers to be deployed in 712 districts of the country.
- Each district will have one social media manager who will be entrusted with the tasks of keeping a close eye on the regional and local media, collecting data of regional media and of local events, providing content for social media and supporting media units at the regional level for social media publicity.

Role of social media managers:

- These social media managers will also monitor local editions of newspapers, local cable channels, local audio channels (FM) and key local social media handles for important local developments.
- They will make a daily analysis report incorporating local sentiments to be sent to region head in the PIB as well as the media hub (command centre).

Concerns:

- The proposal to set up such a hub had turned controversial, as many called it an indirect measure to “snoop” on and influence voters.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Social Media Hub- features and concerns, Social media managers- roles.
- **For Mains:** Controversy surrounding the proposed Social Media Hub.

10. DIRECT BENEFIT TRANSFER (DBT)

- **Context:** Acknowledging that problems have been experienced by three Union Territories (UTs) in the implementation of direct benefit transfer (DBT) for food subsidy, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has advised States that are planning to shift to cash transfer to be cautious while effecting the migration.

Problems highlighted by the RBI:

- Inadequacy of transfers to maintain pre-DBT consumption levels.
- Insufficiency of last-mile delivery mechanisms.
- A weak grievance redressal system.

Why cash transfer is better than the public distribution system (PDS)?

- Cash transfer mode reduces the need for large physical movement of food grains.
- Given the wide inter-State and intra-State variations in food consumption habits, the DBT provides “greater autonomy” to beneficiaries to choose their consumption basket, apart from enhancing dietary diversity.
- It also reduces the leakage in the PDS, as the Central government has to absorb a huge food subsidy bill under the existing system of distribution of food grains in fulfilment of provisions of the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

DIRECT BENEFIT TRANSFER



- Bank account-Aadhaar linkage forms to be submitted at banks
- Aadhaar numbers should then be linked to LPG consumer number
- LPG users have to pay full price for the refill cylinder
- Subsidy for up to nine cylinders a year will be transferred to bank account
- District officials are maintaining a hands-off policy as Chief Minister has expressed her reservations about it
- The scheme was to have been introduced on July 1 but was postponed for various reasons

Processes to be followed by States prior to DBT execution:

- RBI has referred to certain pre-conditions mentioned in the Central government’s 2015 food subsidy rules. The pre-conditions include complete digitisation and de-duplication of the beneficiary database, and seeding of bank account details and Aadhaar numbers in the digitised database.

Background:

- With the aim of reforming Government delivery system by re-engineering the existing process in welfare schemes for simpler and faster flow of information/funds and to ensure accurate targeting of the beneficiaries, de-duplication and reduction of fraud Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) was started on 1st January, 2013.

JAM Trinity:

- DBT by leveraging the JAM (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobiles) trinity and the technological prowess offers to drastically improve the benefit delivery system in the country. The JAM Trinity will enable this novel system to transfer benefits in a leakage-proof, well targeted, cashless and timely manner.

Way ahead:

- The success of an ambitious and a highly desirable initiative like DBT depends on a set of a few critical factors. For a heterogeneous and a large country like India, it becomes imperative that these critical success factors are ensured to achieve smooth rollout of a programme like DBT.
- The key success factors or enablers for an efficacious Implementation of DBT would include: JAM Trinity, Business Correspondents (BC) Infrastructure, payment bank and mobile money.

What’s important?

- **For Prelims:** DBT- what is it and where is it being implemented.
- **For Mains:** DBT implementation- issues, challenges and solutions.

11. FUGITIVE ECONOMIC OFFENDERS BILL, 2018

- **Context:** The Lok Sabha has passed the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, which aims to deter fugitive economic offenders from evading the legal process by fleeing the country and remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts.

Highlights of the Bill:

- The Bill **aims to curb the practice of evading the criminal prosecution** by the economic offenders who flee from the country to stay out of the jurisdiction of Indian courts.
- The Bill will give **the right to the government to confiscate the property** of such economic offenders in India and abroad. The Bill will also be applicable on the proxy-owned properties of the economic offenders.
- The Bill **defines the economic offenders** as those against whom a legal warrant has been issued, but they refuse to adhere to the summons of the legal authorities.
- The **law balances itself with a provision that allows the accused to file an appeal** in the High Court to state their case.
- The Bill **keeps the banks and other financial institutions at the Centre** and seeks to help them recover the amount. The Bill will only be used for economic offences over Rs 100 crores.
- The Bill **makes provisions for a Court** ('Special Court' under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002) to declare a person as a Fugitive Economic Offender.

Significance of the Bill:

- The Bill is expected to re-establish the rule of law with respect to the fugitive economic offenders as they would be forced to return to India to face trial for scheduled offences.
- This would also help the banks and other financial institutions to achieve higher recovery from financial defaults committed by such fugitive economic offenders, improving the financial health of such institutions.
- It is expected that the special forum to be created for expeditious confiscation of the proceeds of crime, in India or abroad, would coerce the fugitive to return to India to submit to the jurisdiction of Courts in India to face the law in respect of scheduled offences.

Need for a law in this regard:

- There have been several instances of economic offenders fleeing the jurisdiction of Indian courts, anticipating the commencement, or during the pendency, of criminal proceedings.
- The absence of such offenders from Indian courts has several deleterious consequences— first, it hampers investigation in criminal cases; second, it wastes precious time of courts of law; third, it undermines the rule of law in India.

Who is a fugitive economic offender?

- A Fugitive Economic Offender is a person who has an arrest warrant issued in respect of a scheduled offence and who leaves or has left India so as to avoid criminal prosecution, or refuses to return to India to face criminal prosecution.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Key provisions in the Bill.
- **For Mains:** Need for law in this regard.

Sources: pib.

12. PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2013

- **Context:** The Rajya Sabha has passed the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013. The Bill seeks to amend the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

Major changes suggested in the PC Act, 1988 as reported by the Rajya Sabha Select Committee, 2016 include:

- **Giving a bribe as punishable offence:** The Bill introduces the offence of 'giving a bribe' as a direct offence. However, a person who is compelled to give a bribe will not be charged with the offence if he reports the matter to law enforcement authorities within seven days.
- **Redefining the Criminal misconduct:** The Bill redefines the provisions related to criminal misconduct to only cover two types of offences: (i) fraudulent misappropriation of property; and (ii) illicit enrichment (such as amassing of assets disproportionate to one's known sources of income).
- **Prior approval for investigation** alleged to have been committed by a Public Servant: Before a police officer conducts any investigation into an offence alleged to have been committed by a public servant, prior approval of the relevant government or competent authority should be taken. Such approval would not be necessary in cases which involves the arrest of a person on the spot on the charge of taking a bribe.
- **Time limit for trial of cases:** As per the Bill, trial by special judge should be completed within two years. If not, reasons for the delay must be recorded, for every six months of extension of time obtained. However, the total period for completion of trial may not exceed four years.

The Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013

- **Offence of giving a bribe to a public servant under abetment. The Bill makes specific provisions related to giving a bribe to a public servant, and giving a bribe by a commercial organisation.**
- **The Bill redefines criminal misconduct to only cover misappropriation of property and possession of disproportionate assets.**
- **The Bill modifies the definitions and penalties for offences related to taking a bribe, being a habitual offender and abetting an offence.**
- **Powers and procedures for the attachment and forfeiture of property of public servants accused of corruption have been introduced in the Bill.**
- **The Act requires prior sanction to prosecute serving public officials. The Bill extends this protection to former officials.**

R P Saxena 62

Background:

- The amendment to the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 was necessitated from the obligation of India to review the existing provisions of the Act so as to bring it in line with the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Key features of the Bill, UNCAC.
- **For Mains:** Anti-corruption legislation- need, concerns and protection for whistle-blowers.

Sources: toi.

13. URJA GANGA GAS PIPELINE PROJECT

- **Context:** Five public sector oil and natural gas companies have signed the joint venture agreement to implement the Rs 6000 Crore gas pipeline grid project in Northeast.

Key facts:

- The five companies are Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), ONGC, GAIL, Oil India Limited and Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL).
- The joint venture company will have equal equity contribution from all the partners for development of the natural gas pipeline project.
- The schedule for commissioning the project will be four years, including one year pre-project activities.

Scheme Highlights

- ◆ 2540 KM long Jagdishpur – Haldia and Bokaro - Dhamri Natural Gas Pipeline project to begin
- ◆ Rs 12490 Crore investment to be done
- ◆ 5 regions to benefit – UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal, including 40 Districts and 2600 Villages
- ◆ Development to be completed between 2018 – 2020

- With the signing of the agreement the joint venture company will develop, build, operate and maintain the natural gas pipeline grid.

Northeast gas pipeline grid project:

- The proposed gas pipeline grid will **connect Guwahati to the major Northeast cities and major load centers**. The project is being implemented under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious Urja Ganga Gas Pipeline Project.
- Besides connecting all the state capitals in the region, the pipeline will also connect with the National Gas Grid through Barauni-Guwahati Gas Pipeline, which is being laid by GAIL.
- From Guwahati, the pipeline will extend to Numaligarh, Dimapur, Kohima and Imphal in one direction; Shillong, Silchar, Aizawl and Agartala in the second direction and to Itanagar in the third direction. Gangtok will be connected from Siliguri from the gas pipeline of GAIL coming from Barauni to Guwahati.

About the Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga project:

- The gas pipeline project aims to provide piped cooking gas to residents of Varanasi and later to millions of people in states like Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha.
- From Varanasi's perspective, an 800-km long MDPI pipeline will be laid and 50,000 households and 20,000 vehicles will get PNG and CNG gas respectively. The government estimates that around 5 lakh gas cylinders will be sent at rural areas annually.
- According to GAIL, with the Urja Ganga project, 20 lakh households will get PNG connections. The project is said to be a major step towards collective growth and development of the Eastern region of India.
- GAIL has built a network of trunk pipelines covering the length of around 11,000 km. With Urja Ganga project, this number will further increase by 2540 km.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Northeast gas pipeline grid project and Urja Ganga Project- key features.
- **For Mains:** Significance and the need for such projects for India, especially for NE region India.

Sources: TOI.

14. NCTE AMENDMENT BILL PASSED

- **Context:** The Lok Sabha has passed the **National Council for Teacher Education (Amendment) Bill** to grant retrospective recognition to Central/State institutions that are conducting teacher education courses without NCTE approval.
- This has been done as a one-time measure to ensure that the future of students studying in these institutions is not jeopardised.

Key Features of Bill:

- **Retrospective recognition of certain teacher education institutions:** The Bill seeks to grant retrospective recognition to institutions that have been notified by central government, funded by Central Government or State/UT government and but do not have recognition under the parent Act. Besides, these institutions must have offered teacher education courses on or after establishment of NCTE until academic year 2017-2018.
- **Retrospective permission to start new courses:** The Bill grants retrospective permission these institutions to start new course or training in teacher education to institutions.

About National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE):

- It is **statutory body** of Central Government set up under NCTE Act, 1993 in 1995 to formally oversee standards, procedures and processes in Indian education system.
- NCTE plans and co-ordinates the development of teacher education system throughout the country (for both central as well as state governments).
- It also ensures the maintenance of norms and standards in the teacher education system. Its headquarters are in New Delhi.
- This council **functions for the central as well as state governments** on all matter with regard to the Teacher Education.

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** Features of NCTE Bill.
- **For Mains:** Importance of teachers' education.

Sources: the hindu.

15. NEGOTIABLE INSTRUMENTS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017

- **Context:** Lok Sabha has passed **Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Bill, 2017** to reduce the number of cheque dishonour cases pending in courts.
- The bill **amends Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881** to primarily address issues of dishonor of cheques and deal with unnecessary delay in disposal of such cases.
- The Act **defines promissory notes, bills of exchange, and cheques**. It also **specifies penalties** for bouncing of cheques, and other violations with respect to such negotiable instruments.

Key Features of Bill:

- **Interim compensation:** The Bill inserts new Section 143 A in parent Act to allow court trying offence related to cheque bouncing to direct drawer (person who writes cheque) to pay interim compensation to complainant. This compensation may be paid under certain circumstances, including where drawer pleads not guilty of accusation. It will not exceed 20% of cheque amount and will be paid by drawer within 60 days of trial court's order to pay such compensation.
- **Deposit in case of appeal:** The Bill inserts another new Section 148-A in the parent act specifying that if drawer convicted in cheque bouncing case files appeal, appellate court may direct him to deposit minimum of 20% of fine or compensation awarded by trial court during conviction. This amount will be in addition to any interim compensation paid by drawer during earlier trial proceedings.
- **Returning interim compensation:** In case drawer is acquitted during trial or by appellate court, then court will direct complainant to return interim compensation (or deposit in case of an appeal case), along with interest. This amount will be repaid within 60 days of court's order.

What is a negotiable instrument?

- It refers to any legal documents like cheques, promissory notes, bill of exchange etc which promises to pay bearer or holder of instrument or person whose name is written on instrument specific amount of money either on demand or after specified time i.e. on some future date.
- **The Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881** defines promissory notes, bills of exchange and cheques. It also specifies penalties for bouncing of cheques and other violations with respect to such negotiable instruments.

What to study?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Bill, 2017- key features and significance.

Sources: the hindu.

16. SHEKATKAR COMMITTEE

- **Context:** The government recently reviewed the implementation of ambitious reform initiative for the Indian Army based on recommendations of a **committee headed by Lt Gen (retd) DB Shekatkar**.
- **Shekatkar Committee** was tasked with suggesting steps to enhance combat capability of the armed forces.

Measures as recommended by the Committee and taken up for implementation include:

- **Optimization of Signals Establishments** to include Radio Monitoring Companies, Corps Air Support Signal Regiments, Air Formation Signal Regiments, Composite Signal Regiments and merger of Corps Operating and Engineering Signal Regiments.
- **Restructuring of repair echelons** in the Army to include Base Workshops, Advance Base Workshops and Static / Station Workshops in the field Army.
- **Redeployment of Ordnance echelons** to include Vehicle Depots, Ordnance Depots and Central Ordnance Depots apart from streamlining inventory control mechanisms.

- **Better utilization of Supply and Transportation** echelons and Animal Transport Units.
- **Closure of Military Farms and Army Postal Establishments** in peace locations.
- **Enhancement in standards for recruitment** of clerical staff and drivers in the Army.
- Improving the efficiency of the **National Cadet Corps**.

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** Shekatkar committee and important recommendations made.
- **For Mains:** Defence reforms- need, necessary reforms.

Sources: pib.

17. PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2018

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** Key features of the Bill.
- **For Mains:** Significance of the Bill.
- **Context:** The Lok Sabha has passed the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2018. Punishment for both bribe givers and takers has been enhanced to make it a deterrent for the corrupt.



Bribery

What is new

- Giving a bribe is now an offence, punishable by a 7-year prison term
- Except when one is forced to give a bribe. But it should be reported within seven days
- Bribe is termed 'undue advantage', defined as 'gratification other than legal remuneration'

What it was

- No specific provision, except as abetment

It could empower the public to refuse to give a bribe but seven-day limit may not be enough. As to what happens if citizen's report of coercion is not registered by the police is unclear



Pre-investigation approval

What is new

- Police officer cannot begin probe without prior approval of relevant authority or govt (except when caught red-handed)

What it was

- No such provision in the Act, but a rule similar to it was struck down by Supreme Court

Protection formerly available to officials of rank of joint secretary and above (before SC struck it down) is extended to all public servants



Sanction for prosecution

What is new

- Sanction needed for prosecuting former officials for offences done while in office
- Centre may notify guidelines for sanction
- Decision on request for sanction within 3 months, which may be extended by a month"

What it was

- Sanction was required under PCA for serving officers only

Sanction for IPC offences covered both serving and retired officers. Guidelines and time-limit may help make sanction process easier



Criminal misconduct

What is new

- Only be two forms of criminal misconduct.
- Misappropriation of property entrusted to public servant
- Intentionally enriching oneself illicitly

What it was

- There were five kinds: omitted ones are taking bribe habitually, getting anything free or at a concession, obtaining pecuniary advantage for oneself or for another without public interest

This is to protect public servants from being wrongly prosecuted for official decisions. Earlier it was a crime to "obtain advantage to a private party without public interest"



Forfeiture of property

What is new

- Section introduced for Special Court under this Act to attach and confiscate property

What it was

- This was not done under the Prevention of Corruption Act, but under a 1944 ordinance through civil courts

This helps avoid a fresh procedure to confiscate property obtained through corruption, enables court conducting trial to do so itself

Highlights of the Bill:

- **Punishment for bribe-taking enhanced:** Minimum punishment of 3 yrs, extendable up to 7 yrs with fine; from the earlier 6 months, with extension up to 3 yrs.
- **'Undue Advantage' expanded:** The earlier limited definition of "undue advantage" expanded to now include "anything other than legal remuneration".
- **Gifts criminalised:** Gifts received for established undue advantage/mala-fide motive are now considered an act of corruption.
- **Collusive bribe-givers criminalised:** For the first time, the giving of bribe has now been made a direct offence on par with taking of bribe. At the same time, protection has been built-in against coercive bribery, as long as the victim comes forward within 7 days.
- **Corporate bribery criminalised:** Superiors to be held if employee/agent has bribed with their approval, for advancement of the organisation's interests.

- **Immediate forfeiture:** Law enforcement empowered for immediate attachment & forfeiture of illegal property of a public servant, invoking provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).
- **Timely trial mandated:** To conclude the investigation and trial within 2 yrs, extendable up to 4 yrs.

Sources: the hindu.

18. GOVT AMENDS DEFINITION OF HYDROCARBON TO INCLUDE SHALE

- **Context:** The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has liberalised **the definition of petroleum** to bring more hydrocarbons such as **coal bed methane and shale gas** under its fold. **Petroleum and Natural Gas (Amendment) Rules, 2018** have been amended in this regard.

The new Definition:

- Petroleum will now mean naturally occurring hydrocarbons, whether in the form of natural gas, in a liquid, viscous or solid form, or a mixture of these.
- It, however, does not include coal, lignite and helium occurring in association with petroleum or coal or shale.

What necessitated this move?

- Prior to this, the definition excluded shale and therefore barred companies from exploiting it from fields that are producing conventional oil and gas or coal-bed methane.

Significance of this change:

- The amendment of the definition of petroleum is a welcome move as it would **open up exploration of all hydrocarbons in existing fields** which is in line with the new **Hydrocarbon Exploration Licensing Policy (HELP)**.
- It would help in **enhancing domestic exploration and production of hydrocarbons** and increasing India's energy security and reducing dependency on imports.

Other reforms necessary:

- The **exclusion of natural gas from the purview of GST** remains a deterrent to attracting large-scale investments as neither the producers nor the consumers are able to set off the taxes paid on their input and output.
- While the Goods and Service Tax (GST) was implemented from July 1, 2017, **crude oil, natural gas, petrol, diesel, and jet fuel (ATF)** were kept out of it for the time being. No date for their inclusion in GST regime has yet been announced.

What is Coal Bed Methane?

- Coal Bed Methane (CBM) is **an unconventional form of natural gas found in coal deposits or coal seams**.
- CBM is formed during the process of coalification, the transformation of plant material into coal.
- It is considered a valuable energy resource with reserves and production having grown nearly every year since 1989. Varied methods of recovery make CBM a stable source of energy.

What is Shale Gas?

- Shale gas is **a natural gas formed from being trapped within shale formations**. It is an unconventional source of methane, like coal-bed gas (in coal seams) and tight gas (trapped in rock formations). It is **colourless, odourless gas, lighter than air**.
- It is cheaper than natural gas, releases 50% less CO₂, hence a better source for generating electricity. It also provides feedstock for the petrochemicals industry, which is turned into fertilizer, plastics and other useful stuff.

About Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP):

- Government of India launched a new policy regime for Exploration & Production (E&P) sector namely Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) in 2016 which is a paradigm shift from the earlier policy regime.
- The main features of the new Policy regime are **Revenue Sharing Contract, single Licence for exploration and production** of conventional as well as unconventional Hydrocarbon resources, marketing & pricing freedom, etc.

- **Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP)** under HELP, is main innovative feature wherein investor can carve out Blocks of their own interest and submit an Expression of Interest (Eoi) throughout the year. Based on the areas for which expression of interest has been expressed bidding will be conducted every 6 months.

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** Definition of Hydrocarbon, What is Shale and Shale gas?, What is CBM?, Hydrocarbon Exploration Licensing Policy (HELP)- features.
- **For Mains:** Significance of shale gas, challenges involved in its extraction and why is it so popular these days?

Sources: the hindu.

19. MANIPUR PEOPLE'S PROTECTION BILL

- **Context:** Manipur People's Protection Bill, 2018, passed by the state assembly recently, has been welcomed with protests across various districts in the state.

Highlights of the Bill:

- The Manipur People's Protection Bill, 2018 seeks **to regulate the entry and exit of "outsiders" on the lines of the British-era inner-line permit system** prevalent in three other north-eastern states — Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland.
- The bill sets **1951 as the base year to identify locals and prevent an influx of outsiders.**
- According to the bill, **Manipur people include Meitis, the Pangal Muslims, scheduled tribes as listed under the Constitution** in terms of Manipur and **all those citizens of India who have been living in Manipur before 1951.**
- The rest have been put in the category of **non-Manipuris** and will have to register themselves within one month of the notification of the law. They will be issued a pass extendable up to six months. While those who have trade licences can get a pass extendable up to five years, which will have to be renewed every year. **Any outsider visiting Manipur would need a pass.**

What next?

- If approved by the Governor and made an Act, people who came to Manipur after 1951 would be viewed as 'foreigners' and would have no voting or land rights.

Rationale behind the Bill:

- The influx of foreign tourists has increased exponentially in Manipur, thus creating a demographic imbalance in the region. If this was not enough, illegal immigration from Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar has also contributed to the crisis. This has created fear among the locals over employment and availability of resources.
- At a time where there already exists stiff competition between the locals and outsiders over jobs, the outsiders mostly settle for low paid work. Hence, locals feel ILP fails to safeguard the interests of the indigenous people.

WHAT IS THE INNER LINE PERMIT?

- The Inner Line Permit (ILP) is **an official travel document** issued by the Government of India to grant inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited period. It is obligatory for Indians residing outside those states to obtain permission prior to entering the protected areas.
- Currently, the **Inner Line Permit is operational in Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland.** The document has been issued under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 and the conditions and restrictions vary from state to state.
- **It can be issued for travel purposes solely.** Visitors are not allowed to purchase property in these regions. However, there might be a different set of rules for long term visitors, though they are not valid for central government employees and security forces.

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** Highlights of the bill, ILP- meaning and features.
- **For Mains:** Protests over the bill and concerns associated with ILP.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

1. NIPAH VIRUS

- **Context:** Kozhikode and Malappuram districts have been declared free of Nipah virus by the Kerala government. No fresh cases have been reported after June 1 in these districts.

What is Nipah Virus?

- According to WHO, the Nipah virus infection is a newly emerging **zoonosis**, that is, a disease transmitted from animals to humans. The virus belongs to a new genus termed Henipavirus (subfamily Paramyxovirinae).
- **The natural host of the virus are fruit bats** belonging to the family Pteropodidae. In 2004, humans were affected after eating the date palm contaminated by infected fruit bats. Pigs can also act as intermediate hosts.

When was it first reported?

- It was first identified in 1998 at Kampung Sungai Nipah village, Malaysia. The virus is named after this village.

What are the symptoms in humans?

- The symptoms of Nipah are similar to that of influenza: fever, muscle pain, and respiratory problems. Inflammation of the brain can also cause disorientation.
- Late onset of Encephalitis can also occur. Sometimes a person can have an asymptomatic infection, and be a carrier of Nipah and not show any symptoms.

Are there any vaccines?

- Currently, there are no vaccines for both humans and animals. Intensive supportive care is given to humans infected by Nipah virus.
- According to WHO, ribavarin can reduce the symptoms of nausea, vomiting, and convulsions associated with the disease. Individuals infected need to be hospitalised and isolated. Special care should be taken to prevent human-to-human transmission. Surveillance systems should be established to detect the virus quickly and to initiate appropriate control measures.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Nipah Virus Infection- causes, spread and symptoms.
- **For Mains:** Major outbreaks and government preparedness to tackle them.

SYMPTOMS



Fever



Headache



Drowsiness



Disorientation



Mental confusion

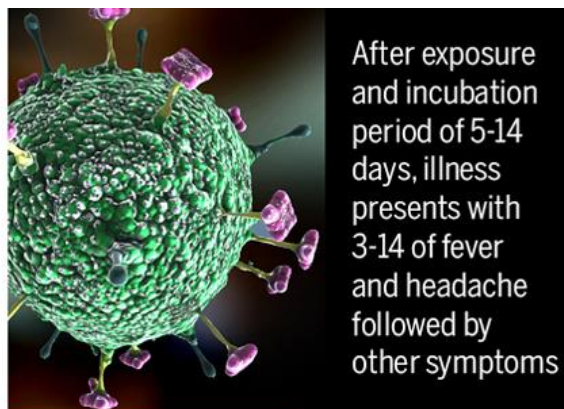


Coma



Potentially death

Source: WHO & Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US



After exposure and incubation period of 5-14 days, illness presents with 3-14 of fever and headache followed by other symptoms

TREATMENT

No specific treatment for Nipah Virus

Primary treatment is intensive supportive care

Sources: the hindu.

2. 'HAPPINESS CURRICULUM' FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

- **Context:** The Delhi government has launched a “happiness curriculum” in state-run schools.

About Happiness Curriculum:

- The curriculum will be taught to around eight lakh students from nursery up to Class 8 of all Delhi government schools from the new academic session.
- The curriculum involves a “happiness period” of 45 minutes and five minutes of meditation before each class. It will include meditation, moral values and mental exercises.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Happiness curriculum- where it has been introduced, features.
- **For Mains:** Need, significance and similar innovative measures.

Sources: the hindu.

3. NATIONAL HEALTH STACK

- **Context:** *NITI Aayog has proposed creation of National Health Stack (NHS)*, a centralized health record for all citizens of the country, in order to streamline the health information and facilitate effective management of the same.

Need for a database:

- India today is witnessing significant trends in health: increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases for instance, as well as marked demographic shifts. Climbing out-of-pocket costs is becoming difficult for most households.
- The proposed NHS is an approach to address the challenge and seeks to employ latest technology including Big Data Analytics and Machine Learning Artificial Intelligence, a state of the art Policy Mark-up Language and create a unified health identity of citizens – as they navigate across services across levels of care, i.e. Primary, Secondary and Tertiary and also across Public and Private.

Way ahead:

- The innovativeness of the proposed National Health Stack design lies in its ability to leverage a shared public good – a strong digital spine built with a deep understanding of the incentive structures of the system.
- Once implemented, the National Health Stack will significantly bring down the costs of health protection, converge disparate systems to ensure a cashless and seamlessly integrated experience for the poorest beneficiaries, and promote wellness across the population.

What's important?

- **For Mains:** NHS- need and significance.

Sources: pib.

4. FORMALIN


- **Context:** Fish samples in Chennai test positive for formalin. This is the first time samples of fish in Tamil Nadu have tested positive for formalin.

Formalin- key facts:

- Formalin is a toxic, colourless solution that is derived by dissolving formaldehyde gas in water.
- It is a cancer-inducing chemical used to preserve fish is used as a disinfectant. It is used in the manufacture of pesticides, fertilisers, glue, paper and paint, among other products.
- Formalin causes irritation in the eyes, throat, skin and stomach. In the long run continued exposure causes harm to the kidneys, liver and can even cause cancers.
- Formaldehyde is a highly reactive, flammable gas, which means it can become a fire hazard when exposed to flame or heat.
- Formaldehyde solutions can be flammable when there are high concentrations of formaldehyde or methanol.

When ethics took a dive

According to sources, though formalin is mostly mixed in consignments meant for other States, some of them find their way to the local markets too



ORIGIN

- The issue came to light after traders from Kerala refused to buy from T.N, following a scare that fish from the State showed presence of formalin

WHAT WE DID

- The Hindu joined hands with the Tamil Nadu Dr. J. Jayalalithaa Fisheries University to conduct tests on fish to detect the presence of formalin


On two days, fish samples were collected from various fish markets in the city

What's the kit?

- The Fisheries University started work on the test kit four years ago when there was a scare in Punjab where fish from Andhra Pradesh was found to have formalin

How the samples are tested?

- A 2 gm piece of meat from the fish is taken and put inside 4 ml of diluent and shaken so that the formalin in the meat gets into the diluent. Then the diluent is poured into the bottle containing the reagent that turns yellow if formalin is present



What's important?

- For Prelims: Formalin- effects on health.

Sources: the hindu.

5. 'INSTITUTIONS OF EMINENCE'

- **Context:** Government declares 6 educational 'Institutions of Eminence'; 3 Institutions from Public Sector and 3 from Private Sector shortlisted.

The institutions selected are:

- **Public Sector:** (i) Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Karnataka; (ii) Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, Maharashtra; and (iii) Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.
- **Private Sector:** (i) Jio Institute (Reliance Foundation), Pune under Green Field Category; (ii) Birla Institute of Technology & Sciences, Pilani, Rajasthan; and (iii) Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, Karnataka.

Implications of the decision:

- Each 'Public Institution' selected as 'Institution of Eminence' will get **financial assistance** up to Rs. 1000 Crore over a period of five years.
- These Institutions shall be provided with **greater autonomy** to admit foreign students up to 30% of admitted students; to recruit foreign faculty upto 25% of faculty strength; to offer online courses upto 20% of its programmes.
- They will also be allowed to enter into **academic collaboration** with top 500 in the world ranking Institutions without permission of UGC; free to fix and charge fees from foreign students without restriction; complete flexibility in fixing of curriculum and syllabus, among others.
- At the same time, they will get more opportunity to scale up their operations with more skills and quality improvement so that they become **World Class Institutions** in the field of education.

Need for world-class institutes:

- India lacks world-class universities according to international rankings, and Indian academics, compared internationally, are rather poorly paid. Students also suffer an immense shortage of places in top academic

institutions and throughout the higher education system. India today educates only half as many young people from the university age group as China and ranks well behind most Latin American and other middle-income countries.

Way ahead:

- If India is to succeed as a great technological power with a knowledge-based economy, world-class universities are required.
- The first step, however, is to examine the problems and create realistic solutions. Spending large sums scattershot will not work. Nor will copying the American academic model succeed.

Facts for Prelims:

- **N Gopalaswami committee** was constituted to select 20 institutes of higher education in India that will be developed into “world-class” institutes.

Institutions of Eminence scheme:

- The institutes of eminence scheme under the Union human resource development (HRD) ministry aims to project Indian institutes to global recognition.
- The 20 selected institutes will enjoy complete academic and administrative autonomy.
- The government will run 10 of these and they will receive special funding.
- The selection shall be made through challenge method mode by the Empowered Expert Committee constituted for the purpose.
- Only higher education institutions currently placed in the top 500 of global rankings or top 50 of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) are eligible to apply for the eminence tag.
- The private Institutions of Eminence can also come up as greenfield ventures provided the sponsoring organisation submits a convincing perspective plan for 15 years.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Gopalaswami committee, Institutions of eminence scheme.
- **For Mains:** Need for world class institutes and challenges therein.

Sources: the hindu.

6. EAT RIGHT MOVEMENT

- **Context:** Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has unveiled ‘The Eat Right Movement’ with a view to get industry on board for implementation of draft food labelling regulation.

Eat Right Movement:

- The movement aims to cut down salt/sugar and oil consumption by 30% in three years.
- It is built on two broad pillars of ‘Eat Healthy’ and ‘Eat Safe’.
- It also aims to engage and enable citizens to improve their health and well-being by making the right food choices.

About FSSAI:

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been established under **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006** which consolidates various acts & orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.
- It was created for laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.
- **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the Administrative Ministry** for the implementation of FSSAI.
- **Composition:** The Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) are appointed by Government of India. The Chairperson is in the rank of Secretary to Government of India.

Food Safety and Standards (Labeling and Display) Regulations 2018:

- The proposed regulations will prescribe the labeling requirements of pre-packaged foods and display of essential information on premises where food is manufactured, processed, served and stored.
- The draft Regulation also states that HFSS (high in fat, sugar or salt) food products shall not be advertised to children in any form.
- It also introduces labelling of genetically modified (GM) food.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Eat Right Movement, FSSAI and regulations.

Sources: the hindu.

7. COMMITTEE SET UP TO SYNERGISE NCC AND NSS

- **Context:** Government has decided to set up *a committee under the Chairmanship of Shri Anil Swarup* to suggest measures to strengthen National Cadet Corps (NCC) and National Service Scheme (NSS).
- The Committee will deal with on issues like expansion, strengthening training infrastructure, rationalizing resources, reducing manpower deficiency affecting NCC and NSS. The Committee will also submit recommend for building synergies between these two institutions viz. NCC and NSS and further strengthen them for empowering the youth.

About National Service Scheme (NSS):**What is it?**

- NSS is a Centrally Sector Scheme. The Scheme was launched in the year 1969 with the primary objective of developing the personality and character of the student youth through voluntary community service.
- The ideological orientation of the NSS is inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. Very appropriately, the motto of NSS is "NOT ME, BUT YOU".

Programme Structure:

- NSS is being implemented in Senior Secondary Schools, Colleges and Universities.
- The design of the NSS envisages that each educational institution covered under the Scheme has at least one NSS unit comprising of normally 100 student volunteers, led by a teacher designated as Programme Officer (PO). Each NSS unit adopts a village or slum for taking up its activities.

Nature of Activities under NSS:

- Briefly, the NSS volunteers work on issues of social relevance, which keep evolving in response to the needs of the community, through regular and special camping activities.
- Such issues include (i) literacy and education, (ii) health, family welfare and nutrition, (iii) environment conservation, (iv) social service programmes, (v) programmes for empowerment of women, (vi) programmes connected with economic development activities, (vii) rescue and relief during calamities, etc.

What is National Cadet Corps?

- The National Cadet Corps (NCC) is a youth development movement. It came into existence under the National Cadet Corps Act XXXI of 1948.
- It is *a Tri-Services Organization*, comprising the Army, Navy and Air Force, engaged in grooming the youth of the country into disciplined and patriotic citizens.
- It has enormous potential for nation building. The NCC provides opportunities to the youth of the country for their all-round development with a sense of Duty, Commitment, Dedication, Discipline and Moral Values so that they become able leaders and useful citizens.
- The NCC provides exposure to the cadets in a wide range of activities, with a distinct emphasis on Social Services, Discipline and Adventure Training. The NCC is open to all regular students of schools and colleges on a voluntary basis. The students have no liability for active military service.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** NSS and NCC- features and significance.

Sources: pib.

8. RIGHT OF CHILDREN TO FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION (SECOND AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017

- **Context:** Lok Sabha has passed The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Second Amendment) Bill, 2017 to abolish the 'no detention policy' in schools.

Highlights of the Bill:

- The Bill amends the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. The Act was having provision of no detention policy i.e. no child can be held back in any class until completion of elementary school (classes 1-8).
- The Bill amends provision related to no detention policy in the parent Act to empower central or state government to allow schools to hold back child in class 5, class 8, or in both classes. It mandates conducting regular examination in class 5 and class 8 at end of every academic year.
- In case, child fails class 5, class 8 examinations, he will be given additional instruction and opportunity for a re-examination (within two months from the declaration of the result). If child fails again in re-examination, he may be held back in class 5, class 8, or in both classes.
- The Bill empowers Union and State governments to decide whether to not hold back child in any class till completion of elementary education. Further, Union or State governments will decide manner and conditions subject to which child may be held back.

What is no detention policy?

- According to this provision "no child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class". This translates into automatic promotions to the next class every year until Class VII.
- Instead of exams, schools are supposed to hold Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluations (CCE) for every child.

Criticism:

- The provision had attracted criticism with several states and schools complaining that it compromised on academic rigour and learning levels and quality at schools.
- The TSR Subramanian committee for formulation of the National Policy on Education has also suggested that 'no detention' policy should be discontinued after Class V. It had recommended restoration of detention provision, remedial coaching and two extra chances to each student such to move to a higher class.
- A sub-committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education also studied the issue closely and recommended a provisional detention clause at Classes V and VIII. In 2013, a parliamentary panel had also asked the ministry to 'rethink' on its "policy of automatic promotion up to Class VIII".

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** RTE Act- key features, TSR Subramanian Committee.
- **For Mains:** No detention policy- meaning, pro and against arguments.

Sources: the hindu.

9. SAMAGRA SHIKSHA SCHEME

- **Context:** Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has announced '*Padhe Bharat- Badhe Bharat*' an initiative to promote reading culture among students. The initiative has been *launched under 'Samagra Shiksha'*.

About 'Padhe Bharat- Badhe Bharat':

- Under this initiative, government will give an annual library grant to schools to allow students widen their ambit of learning.
- The grant will be given to Primary to Senior Secondary levels and will vary between Rs. 5000 and Rs. 20000.

About Samagra Shiksha scheme:

- 'Samagra Shiksha' is an overarching programme for school education extending **from Primary till class 12**. The programme was introduced in the Union Budget 2018-19 with the aim to treat school education holistically without segmentation of primary and secondary education.
- This **programme subsumes the three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes** of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).
- It envisages the 'school' as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels.

A flagship programme aimed at all-round development of school children

Samagra Shiksha

Department of School Education & Literacy
Ministry of Human Resource Development
Government of India

**The major interventions, across all levels of school education, under the scheme are:**

- Universal Access including Infrastructure Development and Retention.
- Gender and Equity, Inclusive Education.
- Financial support for Teacher Salary.
- Digital initiatives.
- Entitlements under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 including uniforms, textbooks etc.
- Pre-school, Vocational and Sports and Physical Education.
- Strengthening of Teacher Education and Training.
- Monitoring and Programme Management.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** About 'Padhe Bharat- Badhe Bharat', Samagra Shiksha scheme.
- **For Mains:** Features of the schemes and efforts by the government for universalisation of education.

Sources: pib.

10. POSHAN ABHIYAAN

What to Study?

- For Prelims: Key features of POSHAN Abhiyaan, National Nutrition Month.
- For Mains: Significance of POSHAN Abhiyaan and the need for such schemes.
- **Context:** Union Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) had recently organized 2nd meeting of **National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges under POSHAN Abhiyaan** in New Dehli.

Outcomes of the meeting:

- Inclusion of 32 new districts under POSHAN Abhiyaan in the current year. This will help to saturate all districts of Union Territories (UTs) that were left out under Phase-I and Phase-II.
- In-principle approval to guidelines for construction of anganwadi centres in urban areas and slums under aanganwadi services.
- Month of September will be celebrated as the **National Nutrition Month** every year.

POSHAN Abhiyaan:

- POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 8th March, 2018 in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan.
- **Targets:** The Abhiyaan targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively.
- The target of the mission is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.

Sources: pib.

11. BOMBALI: NEW STRAIN OF EBOLA VIRUS**What to study?**

- **For Prelims:** six strain of Ebola virus, Ebola- the disease, spread, causes, treatment and vulnerability.
- **For Mains:** Epidemics- spread, global concern and joint efforts in this regard.
- **What?** Researchers have discovered **new strain of Ebola virus**.
- **Where?** In bats in northern Bombali region of **Sierra Leone**.

Key facts:

- It has been named as Bombali virus strain, **after district where it was found**.
- **The sixth in line:** The Bombali virus is overall sixth known virus strain Ebola virus. Others are Zaire, Sudan, Tai Forest, Bundibugyo and Reston.

What you need to know about Ebola?

- **Ebola virus disease (EVD)**, formerly known as Ebola haemorrhagic fever, is a severe, often fatal illness in humans.
- **Transmission:** The virus is transmitted to people from wild animals and spreads in the human population through human-to-human transmission.
- **The average EVD case fatality rate** is around 50%. Case fatality rates have varied from 25% to 90% in past outbreaks.
- **Prevention:** Community engagement is key to successfully controlling outbreaks. Good outbreak control relies on applying a package of interventions, namely case management, surveillance and contact tracing, a good laboratory service and social mobilisation.
- Early supportive care with rehydration, symptomatic treatment improves survival. There is as yet no licensed treatment proven to neutralise the virus but a range of blood, immunological and drug therapies are under development.

Background:

- More than 11,000 people died in the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014-2015, mainly in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. The last outbreak in the DRC was in 2014 and killed more than 40 people.
- The region affected lies 1,300 km north-east of Kinshasa, close to the border with the Central African Republic.

Sources: the hindu.

12. GOVERNMENT EXTENDS PRIME MINISTER'S RESEARCH FELLOWS SCHEME ALL POTENTIAL RESEARCHERS**What to study?**

- **For Prelims and Mains:** PMRF- objectives and significance of the scheme.
- **Context:** The government has extended the scope of **Prime Minister's Research Fellows Scheme**. The decision was made after Government failed to find adequate number of candidates for PMRF this year. Only 135 fellowships were finally offered against 1,000 positions.

Changes introduced:

- Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF) Scheme will now be **open to all potential researchers from 2019** and not limited to candidates from IISc, IITs, NITs, IEST and IISERs.

About PMRF:

- **Aim:** The Prime Minister's Research Fellowship (PMRF) scheme is aimed **at attracting the talent pool of the country** to doctoral (Ph.D.) programs of Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institute of Science (IISc) for carrying out research in cutting edge science and technology domains, with focus on national priorities.
- **Eligibility:** Under the PMRF scheme, students who have completed, or are pursuing, the final year of four year undergraduate or five year integrated M.Tech or five year integrated M.Sc. or five year undergraduate-postgraduate dual degree programs in Science and Technology streams from IEST/IISc/IITs/NITs/IISERs and centrally funded IITs are eligible for admission to full time Ph.D. programme in the IITs & IISc provided they fulfil prescribed eligibility criteria and finally get selected after shortlisting/written test/interview.
- **Fellowship:** Applicants who fulfil the eligibility criteria, and are finally selected through a selection process, will be offered admission to Ph.D. program in one of IITs/IISc with a fellowship of Rs.70,000/- per month for the first two years, Rs.75,000/- per month for the 3rd year, and Rs.80,000/- per month in the 4th and 5th years.
- **A research grant** of Rs.2.00 lakh per year will be provided to each of the Fellows for a period of 5 years to cover their academic contingency expenses and for foreign/national travel expenses.

Other such government initiatives:

- For attracting highly skilled researchers and scientists to pursue their R&D interests in Indian Institutions, several initiatives have been launched such as: Faculty Recharge Programme, CV Raman Post-Doctoral Fellowship Scheme by University Grants Commission (UGC), Ramanujan Fellowship, JC Bose Fellowship, Swarnjayanti Fellowship, Young Scientist Project Award, Women Scientist Scheme by Department of Science & Technology (DST), and Ramalinga Swami Re-entry Fellowship by Department of Biotechnology.
- Ministry of Human Resource Development have launched **Global Initiative for Academic Network (GIAN)** which seeks to tap the talent pool of scientists and entrepreneurs from abroad, including those of Indian origin to augment the country's existing academic resources.

Sources: pib.

13. NATIONAL VIRAL HEPATITIS CONTROL PROGRAMME

- **Context:** With an aim to combat viral hepatitis and reduce mortality and morbidity associated with it, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched **National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme**. It was launched on the occasion of **World Hepatitis Day, that is July 28**.
- The **theme for World Hepatitis Day 2018** is "Test. Treat. Hepatitis".

About National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme:

- **Aim:** The programme aims at both **prevention and treatment** of hepatitis which is among leading causes of liver cancer, cirrhosis of liver and acute liver failure.
- **Target:** It aims to treat minimum of 3 lakh hepatitis C cases over a period of three years for eliminating deadly condition by 2030.
- **The programme is part of National Health Mission.** Under it, expensive antiviral for hepatitis B and C infections will be made available free of cost at all government hospitals.
- **Treatment:** It will set up and upgrade facilities for diagnosis and treatment primarily of hepatitis B and C. These designated treatment centres will provide free anti-viral to hepatitis C patients. They will also provide hepatitis B vaccine to babies born to mothers carrying the virus within 24 hours of birth.

- **Decentralization:** The programme also aims to build capacities at national, state, district levels and sub-district level up to Primary Health Centres (PHC) and health and wellness centres to scale program till lowest level of the healthcare facility in a phased manner.

What is hepatitis?

- Hepatitis is an **inflammation of the liver**. The condition can be self-limiting or can progress to fibrosis (scarring), cirrhosis or liver cancer.
- Hepatitis viruses are the most common cause of hepatitis in the world but other infections, toxic substances (e.g. alcohol, certain drugs), and autoimmune diseases can also cause hepatitis.

Types:

- **There are 5 main hepatitis viruses**, referred to as types A, B, C, D and E. These 5 types are of greatest concern because of the burden of illness and death they cause and the potential for outbreaks and epidemic spread.
- In particular, types B and C lead to chronic disease in hundreds of millions of people and, together, are the most common cause of liver cirrhosis and cancer.
- Hepatitis A and E are typically caused by ingestion of contaminated food or water. Hepatitis B, C and D usually occur as a result of parenteral contact with infected body fluids.

Spread:

- Common modes of transmission for these viruses include receipt of contaminated blood or blood products, invasive medical procedures using contaminated equipment and for hepatitis B transmission from mother to baby at birth, from family member to child, and also by sexual contact.
- Acute infection may occur with limited or no symptoms, or may include symptoms such as jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), dark urine, extreme fatigue, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain.

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** Features of National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme, Hepatitis- causes, symptoms, spread and treatment.
- **For Mains:** Hepatitis- concerns and the need for National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme.

Sources: pib.

Paper 2 Topic: Development processes and the development industry the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

1. STUDENT POLICE CADET PROGRAMME

- **Context:** Union Home Minister has launched Student Police Cadet Programme.

About Student Police Cadet Programme:

- The programme seeks to build **a bridge between the Police and the larger community through school students** by inculcating values and ethics in them through classes in school and outside.
- The programme **focuses on students of class 8 & 9** and special care has been taken to ensure that it does not lead to increase in the workload of the students.
- The programme does not have any prescribed text book nor is any exam envisaged. Only one class in a month is proposed.
- The programme seeks to cover broadly two kinds of topics: Crime prevention and control and Values and ethics.
- The Programme shall be at first implemented in Government schools in both urban and rural areas.

Implementation:

- The programme shall be steered by a State level committee to be headed by the Principal Secretary, Home Department with the Principal Secretary, Education and Director General of Police as members.
- There shall be a similar committee at the district level headed by the District Magistrate with the District Inspector of Schools and Superintendent of Police as members.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Programme and its significance.

Sources: pib.

2. ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS**What to study?**

- **For Prelims:** Aspirational District Programme- key features.
- **For Mains:** Significance of the scheme and the need for holistic development of backward districts.
- **Context:** A Statement of Intent (Sol) was recently signed between NITI Aayog and Lupin Foundation to collaborate in Aspirational Districts Programme.
- For this programme, the NITI Aayog and Lupin Foundation are collaborating to improve indicators in education, health & nutrition, financial inclusion and skill development, agriculture and water resources and basic infrastructure in Aspirational Districts of India.

About Aspirational Districts Programme:

- Launched in January this year, the 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' programme **aims to quickly and effectively transform** some of the most underdeveloped districts of the country.
- The broad contours of the programme are **Convergence** (of Central & State Schemes), **Collaboration** (of Central, State level 'Prabhari' Officers & District Collectors), and **Competition** among districts driven by **a Mass Movement or a Jan Andolan**.
- With States as the main drivers, this program will focus on the strength of each district, identify low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement, measure progress, and rank districts.

Focus of the programme:

- To enable optimum utilization of their potential, this program focuses closely on improving people's ability to participate fully in the burgeoning economy. Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure are this programme's core areas of focus.

Significance of the scheme:

- If these districts are transformed, there would be tremendous improvement in the internal security environment of the country.
- If Prabhari officers can bring convergence in the development efforts of different Ministries and state Governments and the schemes specially launched by Home Ministry in these districts, it would serve as a great opportunity to ensure rapid development in the country.

Sources: pib.

Paper 2 Topic: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance-applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

1. SYSTEMATIC VOTERS EDUCATION AND ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION (SVEEP)

- **Context:** Election Commission of India has launched a dedicated portal for the ECI's 'Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation' (SVEEP).

What is Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP)?

- SVEEP is a programme of multi interventions through different modes and media designed to educate citizens, electors and voters about the electoral process in order to increase their awareness and participation in the electoral processes.

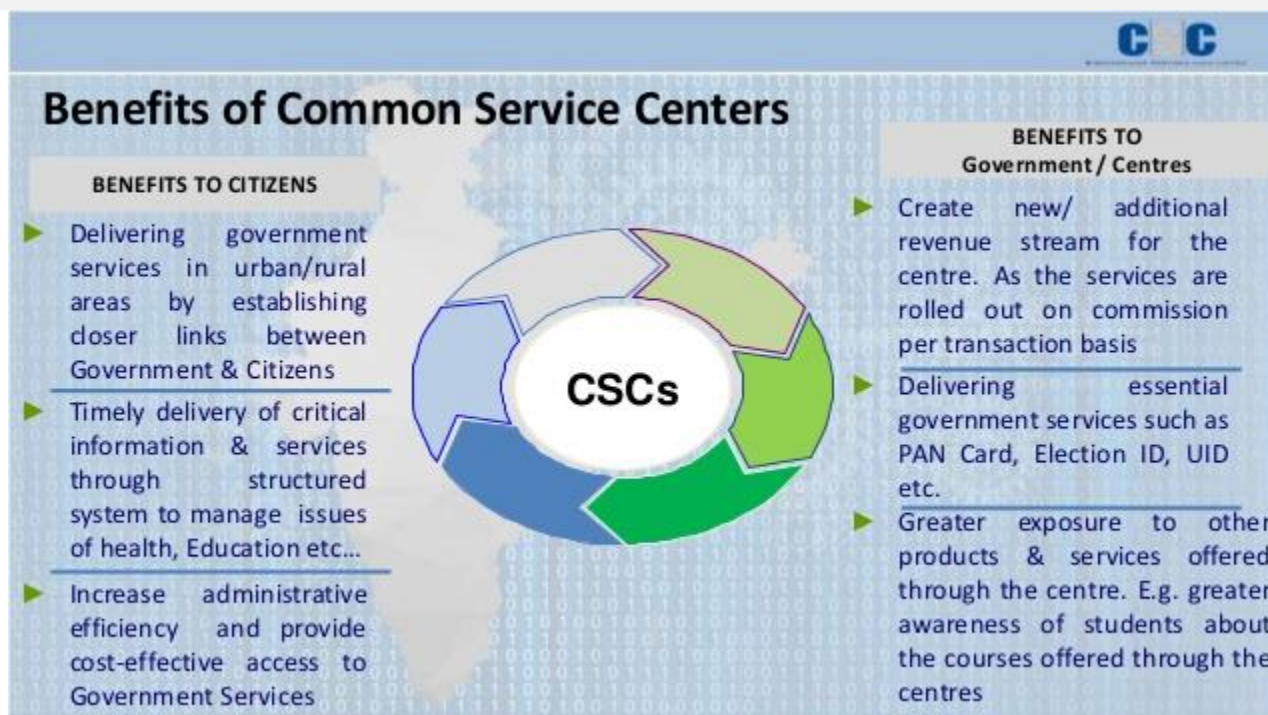
- SVEEP is designed according to the socio-economic, cultural and demographic profile of the state as well as the history of electoral participation in previous rounds of elections and learning thereof.
- Now it includes enhanced interaction with the citizens through social media, online contests and voters' festivals; awareness about new initiatives of linking EPIC with AADHAAR and National Voters' Service Portal and a regularised yearly plan of activities.
- In addition to target groups of women, youth, urban voters and the marginalized sections, the inclusion of groups like service voters, NRIs, persons with disabilities, prospective voters/ students is of primary focus.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** SVEEP- key features.

Sources: the hindu.

2. COMMON SERVICES CENTERS (CSCS)



- **Context:** CSC SPV, a Special Purpose Vehicle under the Ministry of Electronics & IT, has entered into agreement with HDFC Bank to enable its three lakh Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) managing the Common Services centres operate as Banking Correspondents of HDFC Bank.
- Under the agreement, VLEs of CSC will work as Banking Correspondent of HDFC Bank and support the Government initiative to promote financial inclusion and make banking services more accessible in rural areas.

Significance:

- This agreement is expected to be a game changer as it would significantly contribute to Government's objectives of enabling Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of various schemes.
- Women, senior citizens and persons with disability will especially get benefitted through this initiative.
- This will facilitate withdrawal and deposit of government entitlements such as payments under MGNREGA as well as various social welfare schemes like widow pension, handicapped and old age pension, etc.

What are CSCs?

- Common Services Centers (CSCs) are a strategic cornerstone of the Digital India programme.
- They are the access points for delivery of various electronic services to villages in India, thereby contributing to a digitally and financially inclusive society.

CSCs enable the three vision areas of the Digital India programme:

- Digital infrastructure as a core utility to every citizen.
- Governance and services on demand.

- Digital empowerment of citizens.

Significance of CSCs:

- CSCs are more than service delivery points in rural India. They are positioned as change agents, promoting rural entrepreneurship and building rural capacities and livelihoods.
- They are enablers of community participation and collective action for engendering social change through a bottom-up approach with key focus on the rural citizen.

Key facts:

- The CSC project, which forms a strategic component of the National eGovernance Plan was approved by the Government in May 2006, as part of its commitment in the National Common Minimum Programme to introduce e-governance on a massive scale.
- It is also one of the approved projects under the Integrated Mission Mode Projects of the National eGovernance Plan.

What's important?

- For Prelims: CSCs, NEP, SIDBI.
- For Mains: CSCs and their significance, VLEs and their role in rural economy.

Sources: pib.

3 IFFCO I-MANDI

- **What is it?** It is an e-commerce platform launched by IFFCO to address all needs of the farming community associated with it. For this initiative, IFFCO has partnered with Singapore-based technology firm iMandi.
- **Target:** Through this e-commerce platform, IFFCO is targeting to reach GMV (gross merchandise value) of \$5 billion in the next two years by catering needs of 5.5 crore farmers already associated with it.

Features of IFFCO iMandi:

- The e-commerce platform is one stop shop for agri inputs and produce, FMCG, electronics, loans, insurance etc.
- It has features like buy-sell, communication, entertainment and information/advisory content to keep farmers engaged.
- Using it, farmers buy all agri inputs of IFFCO, including fertilisers, agro chemicals and seeds at discounted price and get free delivery at their doorstep.

About Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO):

- IFFCO is large scale fertiliser cooperative federation in India which is registered as Multistate Cooperative Society. It is one of India's biggest cooperative society which is wholly owned by Indian Cooperatives.

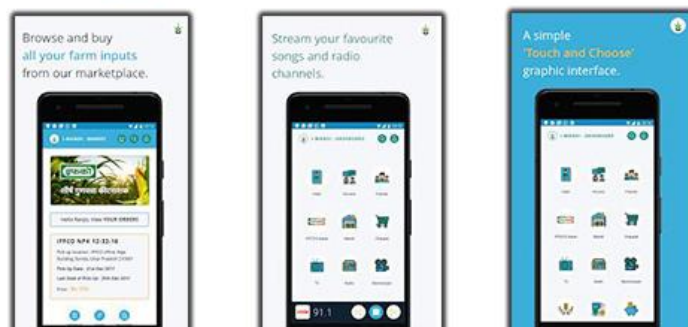
What's important?

- For Prelims: IFFCO, IFFCO iMANDI.
- For Mains: Significance and features of iMANDI.

Sources: the hindu.



IFFCO iMandi App



4. NATIONAL DATABASE OF ARMS LICENSES SYSTEM

- **Context:** Union Home Ministry is planning to create **National Database of Arms Licenses system from April 2019**. The decision has been taken by exercising powers under Section 44 of the Arms Act, 1959 (54 of 1959) by amending the Arms Rules, 2016. These rules will be called the **Arms (Second Amendment) Rules, 2018**.

Significance of the move:

- The move is aimed at keeping tab on authorised private gun holders, many of whom are often found involved in crimes and celebratory firing leading to loss of lives.
- It will also eliminate possibilities of issuing arms licence to persons whose antecedents are not bona.

About the National Database of Arms Licenses system:

- All the arms licence holders, new or old, will be included in a national database of arms licenses system and they will be issued a **unique identification number (UIN)** as well.
- Every licensing and renewing authority will have to enter the data in the National Database of Arms Licenses system, which will generate a UIN, and with effect from April 1, 2019, any arms licence without UIN shall be considered invalid.
- Additionally, any existing licensee holding multiple licenses – under Form III – shall on or before April 1 make an application for grant of a single license in respect of all firearms held by him or her under his or her UIN to the concerned licensing authority.
- Where the applicant applying for a licence for restricted category of arms or ammunition is also a holder of a licence for permissible category, or where the applicant applying for permissible category of arms or ammunition is also a holder of a licence for restricted category, the licensing authority concerned shall issue a new licence for restricted or permissible category of arms or ammunition under the existing UIN of the licensee.
- Separate licence books will be generated in case of each licence, separately for restricted and permissible categories of arms and ammunition with an overall ceiling of three firearms under a single UIN.

Background:

- **Under Section 3 of the Arms Act**, it is essential to obtain an arms possession licence issued by a competent licensing authority, by any person for acquisition, possession or carrying any firearms or ammunition.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Highlights of Arms (Second Amendment) Rules, 2018, National Database of Arms Licenses system- key features.

Sources: the hindu.

5. PUBLIC AFFAIRS INDEX 2018

- **Context:** Public Affairs Index (PAI) 2018 has been released by the think tank Public Affairs Centre (PAC).

What is Public Affairs Index (PAI)?

- The index is released since in 2016 by Bengaluru base Public Affairs Centre (PAC), a not for profit think tank which aims to improve governance in India.
- It is based on 10 themes, 30 focus subjects and 100 indicators, relying solely upon government data.
- It covers wide range of themes such as support to human development, social protection, essential infrastructure, women and children, crime, law and order, delivery of justice, transparency and accountability, environment, fiscal management and economic freedom.
- 2018 PAI also included separate index on children of India, giving measure of how child-friendly each of the states are.

Key performers:**Larger states:**

- **Kerala** tops the list as best-governed state in the country. Kerala has topped PAI as the best-governed state for the third consecutive year.
- Kerala is followed by Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka and Gujarat.
- Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar ranked the lowest, indicating higher social and economic inequalities in the states.

Smaller states (with population less than two crore):

- **Himachal Pradesh** topped the list followed by Goa, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura. Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya were ranked at bottom of the index among small states.

Index on children of India:

- In the index on children of India, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram topped the index.

What's important?

- For Prelims: Features of the index and top performers.
- For Mains: Significance of competition among states for promoting public welfare policies.

Sources: the hindu.

6. DIGIYATRA INITIATIVE

- **Context:** The Ministry of Civil Aviation is planning to launch DigiYatra service at airports in a few months.

What is DigiYatra?

- DigiYatra is an industry-led initiative coordinated by the **Ministry of Civil Aviation** in line with **Digital India** programme.
- It aims to transform the flying experience for passengers and position Indian Aviation amongst the most innovative aviation networks in the world.
- The facility will use digital technology to enhance air passenger experience all the way from ticket booking to airport entry check, security check and aircraft boarding.

How it works?

- For this, a passenger needs to enrol into DigiYatra program through AirSewa app and a DigiYatra verified passenger will get hassle free entry at the airport through E-Gates
- At the entry gate, a single token for the passenger will be created. This will also facilitate walk-through security scanners swiftly owing to advanced biometric security solutions.

Security concerns:

- This facility will be optional for passengers. If somebody does not want to disclose the identity, there will be a separate provision for them.
- The ID verification will be done by the BCAS-approved Government ID.

What to study?

- For Prelims: DigiYatra initiative- features.
- For Mains: Privacy concerns associated.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

1. DELHI DIALOGUE

- **Context:** **10th edition of the Delhi Dialogue (DD X) was held in New Delhi.** This is the first major event to be organized after the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit, that was held in New Delhi in January 2018.
- **Theme:** "Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation".

What is Delhi Dialogue?

- It is a premier annual **track 1.5 event** to discuss politico-security, economic and socio-cultural engagement between India and ASEAN.
- It has been held annually since 2009 and political leaders, policy makers, senior officials, diplomats, think tanks and academicians from both sides participate in the discussions pertaining to ASEAN-India relations.
- It is aimed at finding a common ground and expanding the scope of cooperation between India and ASEAN nations.

India's active participation in the region:

- India's focus on a strengthened and multi-faceted relationship with ASEAN is an outcome of the significant changes in the world's political and economic scenario since the early 1990s and India's own march towards economic liberalisation.
- Apart from ASEAN, India has taken other policy initiatives in the region that involve some members of ASEAN like BIMSTEC, MGC etc. India is also an active participant in several regional forums like the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting + (ADMM+) and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF).

Significance of India-ASEAN relations for India:

- ASEAN is our fourth largest trading partner and India is their seventh largest trading partner.
- The South-East Asian region is economically very vibrant; this is a vibrant economic commercial space for India.
- India's investment in the last two decades has been \$70 billion. So, there is a lot of potential in engaging them further.
- Many countries in the region have people of Indian origin among their citizens—most notably Malaysia and Singapore.

Facts for Prelims:

- The theme of ninth edition of dialogue was "**ASEAN-India Relations: Charting the Course for the Next 25 Years**". It had marked the 25th anniversary of ASEAN-India Partnership.
- The term **track 1.5 diplomacy** is used by some analysts to define a situation where official and non-official actors cooperate in conflict resolution.

What's important?

- For Prelims: Delhi Dialogue- theme and key facts.
- For Mains: ASEAN- features, significance for India and challenges in the changing world.

Sources: pib.

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations):

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August **1967** in Bangkok, Thailand.
- It was established with the signing of an ASEAN Declaration (**Bangkok Declaration**) by the ministers of the founding countries.
- Its founding countries are Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- Eventually, Brunei Darussalam then joined on 7 January 1984, Viet Nam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up to ten Member States of ASEAN.

2. BORDER HAATS

What to study:

- For Prelims: What are Border Haats, Operational Border Haats.
- For Mains: Need for Border Haats, their significance for people and the participating countries.
- **Context:** First meeting of India-Bangladesh Joint Committee on Border Haats was recently held in Agartala, Tripura.
- In the meeting both sides noted the positive impact of Border Haats on the livelihoods of the people living in areas adjoining the Haats. Extensive discussions were held on issues related to review of operations of the **four functional** Border Haats.

What are Border Haats?

- They are **market places organised by the two countries one day each week**. It is not only a market for buying daily commodities but also a reunion spot for families living on both sides.



- **Aim:** The border haats aim at promoting the wellbeing of the people dwelling in remote areas across the borders of two countries, by establishing traditional system of marketing the local produce through local markets.

Operational Border Haats between India and Bangladesh:

- Currently, **four border haats are operational along the India-Bangladesh border**. Two border haats are located in Meghalaya at Kalaichar and Balat and two are located in Tripura at Srinagar and Kamalagar.

How it functions?

- The trade at border haats is permitted to be carried out **in Indian Rupees/Bangladesh Taka and on a barter basis**, and data of such trade is maintained by the **Haat Management Committee** of the respective border haat.

The Following commodities are traded in the Border Haats:

- Vegetables, food items, fruits, spices.
- Minor Forest produce eg bamboo, bamboo grass and broom sticks, excluding timber.
- Products of Cottage Industries like Gamcha, Lungi etc.
- Small Agriculture household implements eg dao, plough, axe, spade, chisel etc.
- Garments, melamine products, processed food items, fruit juice, toiletries, cosmetics, plastic products, aluminium products, cookeries.

Proposed border Haats:

- In addition to the four functional border haats, the government of India and the government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh have approved **six more border haats**: two in Tripura at Palbasti and Kamalpur and four in Meghalaya at Bholaganj, Nalikata, Shibbari and Ryingku.

Sources: pib.

3. GIRINKA PROGRAMME

What to study?

- For Prelims: Girinka Programme- key features.
- For Mains: India-Africa Relationship is Beyond Strategic Considerations.
- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted 200 cows to villagers from Rweru villages as part of **Rwandan Government's Girinka Programme**.

About Girinka Programme:

- The programme was initiated by President Paul Kagame in response to alarmingly high rate of childhood malnutrition and as way to accelerate poverty reduction and integrate livestock and crop farming.
- Under this programme, poorest residing in region get cows from Government and gift first female calf to neighbour to promote brotherhood.
- The programme is based on premise that providing dairy cow to poor, transforms livelihoods, reconciles communities improving agricultural productivity through use of manure as fertilizers.
- The program has contributed to increase in agricultural production in Rwanda – especially milk production and products and has reduced malnutrition and increased incomes.



Sources: the hindu.

4. BRICS 2018 SUMMIT

What to study?

- For Prelims: What is BRICS, 2018 summit- place of event and theme, previous summits.
- For Mains: Significance of BRICS nations.

- **Context:** The 2018 BRICS summit, the tenth such annual summit, is being held in South Africa.
- **Theme:** “BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution”.
- The theme is intended to align and ensure strategic continuity with the approved themes for South Africa’s Chairship of both the South African Development Community (SADC) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

The new areas of BRICS cooperation as proposed by South Africa, are as follows:

- Establishment of a Working Group on Peacekeeping.
- Establishment of a Vaccine Research Centre for Collaboration with BRICS vaccine innovation and development partners – this is intended to be a physical research centre focused on research and development and vaccine innovation.
- Establishment of a BRICS Gender and Women’s Forum – intended as a dedicated track for gender and women’s issues, given the economic benefit to be derived from the socio-economic empowerment of women, particularly in developing countries.
- Establishment of a BRICS Tourism Track of Cooperation.

What is BRICS?

- BRICS is an acronym for the grouping of the world’s leading emerging economies, **namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa**.
- **Summits:** The BRICS Leaders’ Summit is convened annually with discussions representing spheres of political and socio-economic coordination, in which member countries have identified several business opportunities, economic complementarities and areas of cooperation.
- **Chairship:** The **Chairship of the forum is rotated annually among the members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S**. Over and above the summit, BRICS cooperation in the past decade has expanded to include an annual programme of over 100 sectoral meetings. Cooperation among members is predicated on three levels or “tracks” of interaction, namely:
 1. **Track I:** Formal diplomatic engagement between the national governments.
 2. **Track II:** Engagement through government-affiliated institutions, e.g. state-owned enterprises and business councils.
 3. **Track III:** Civil society and “people-to-people” engagement.

Facts for Prelims:

- The **First BRIC Summit** was held in June 2009 in Yekaterinburg, Russia.
- The **Ninth BRICS Summit** was held in Xiamen, China under the **theme “BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future”**. The leaders built on achievements already made with a share vision for future development of BRICS, discussed international and regional issues of common concern and adopted the **Xiamen Declaration**.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: *Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.*

1. UNSC RESOLUTION 2427

- **Context:** The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has adopted Resolution 2427. The resolution has won unanimous approval of the 15 members of the council.

What is Resolution 2427 all about?

- The resolution is aimed at further crystalizing the protection of children in armed conflicts, including by combating their recruitment by non-State armed groups and treating formerly recruited children primarily as victims.

Highlights of the resolution:

- It strongly condemns the recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflict as well as their re-recruitment, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and abductions.
- It also condemns attacks against schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access by parties to armed conflict and all other violations of international law committed against children in situations of armed conflict.
- It demands that all relevant parties immediately put an end to such practices and take special measures to protect children.
- It also emphasizes the responsibility of all states to put an end to impunity and to investigate and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious crimes perpetrated against children.
- The resolution reiterates the Security Council's readiness to adopt targeted and graduated measures against persistent perpetrators of violations and abuses committed against children.
- It calls on member states and the United Nations to mainstream child protection into all relevant activities in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations with the aim of sustaining peace and preventing conflict.

Background:

- Over 21,000 cases of grave violations of children's rights in armed conflict have been verified by the United Nations for 2017, a drastic increase from the previous year with 15,500 violations, according to an annual report of the UN secretary-general on children and armed conflict that was released last week.
- Among the violations in 2017, some 15,000 were perpetrated by non-state armed groups and about 6,000 were committed by government forces, according to the report.

Way ahead:

- There is a need to ensure that children continue to have access to basic services during the conflict and post-conflict periods, including education and health care. In this regard, countries across the world, UN bodies and civil society need to take specifically into account girls' equal access to education.
- There is need for long-term and sustainable funding for mental health and psychosocial programming in humanitarian contexts. There is also need to ensure that all affected children receive timely and sufficient support.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Resolution 2427 and its significance.

Sources: the hindu.

2. U.N. AGREES FIRST-EVER GLOBAL COMPACT FOR MIGRATION

- **Context:** United Nations for *first time has finalized Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* to better manage international migration, address its challenges, strengthen migrant rights and contribute to sustainable development. The agreement will be formally adopted by world leaders in Morocco in December 2018.

Key facts:

- The compact is the *first intergovernmental agreement to cover wide-ranging dimensions of international migration* in holistic and comprehensive manner, agreed upon by all the UN member states minus the United States.
- It sets out **23 objectives** to deal issues ranging from factors that compel people to move, legal channels for migration, combating trafficking and smuggling, harnessing the economic benefits of migration and return of the migrants.
- It is **not legally binding**.

Need for a global compact:

- Over 250 million migrants worldwide account for 3% of the world's entire population, but contribute 10% of the global gross domestic production (GDP). Migrants remittance is huge contributor to their home countries' development.

Way ahead:

- The Global Compact for Migration (GCM) offers the international community the opportunity to improve workplace productivity and deliver decent work outcomes for migrant and national workers, as well as to shift current misperceptions of migration, by readjusting migration policies to effectively include all labour market aspects.

Facts for Prelims:

- The GCM is meant to be consistent with **target 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** – in which Member States committed to cooperate internationally to facilitate orderly, safe and responsible migration.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Global compact for migration- highlights.
- **For Mains:** Need for a global compact and the pattern of migration worldwide.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: *Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.*

1. "SPACE FORCE" BY US

- **Context:** U.S. President Donald Trump is planning to create a "space force" or a sixth branch of the American armed forces. This has taken many by surprise within and outside the U.S.

Purpose:

- The purpose is to deny the Russians and the Chinese advantages in space. The main intention is to see that the U.S. establishes and maintains dominance in space.

Why it is not a "good idea"?

- Another military arm would only compound the organisational challenges facing the U.S. armed services.
- It could undercut ongoing missions.
- It could very well increase budgetary allocations in the future.
- A space corps could undermine American efforts in the domain of joint warfare.

Why it may not be feasible to have a space force?

- The fundamental difficulty of a space corps is that the physical environment of space is not conducive to the conduct of military operations without incurring serious losses in the form of spacecraft and debris.
- And despite efforts to make spacecraft more fuel efficient, the energy requirements are enormous.
- The technical demands of defending assets in space make the possibility of dominance and space as a domain for war-fighting a sort of chimera.

Way ahead:

- The imperative by America to build space weapons, which is nothing new, goes back to the Cold War, an example being the Strategic Defense Initiative of the Reagan Administration. The creation of the new force represents an important shift at least at an institutional level. What advantages it will bring to American war-fighting capabilities are still unclear.
- A new space force is not merely a brand new service; it potentially increases greater organisational uncertainty within the U.S. military. Notwithstanding these concerns, Washington's headlong rush is the by-product of a strong commitment to preserving American advantages in space.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Nothing much.
- **For Mains:** Space force- the idea, concerns, challenges and the need for free outer- space.

Sources: the hindu.

2. INVEST INDIA

- **Context:** Invest India and Business France have signed an MoU to promote investment facilitation and cooperation between startups of the two countries.

As per the MoU:

- Invest India and Business France will collaborate to promote business and startup ecosystem cooperation through joint activities and exchange experiences to strengthen institutional knowledge.
- The goal will be to facilitate direct foreign investment by providing practical investment information to enterprises and support the companies pursuing those opportunities, which contribute positively to economic growth of the two countries.

**What is Invest India?**

- Invest India is the **National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency** of India and acts as the first point of reference for investors in India.
- Invest India is set up as **a non profit venture under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce** and Industries, Government of India.
- **A joint venture:** Operationalized in early 2010, Invest India is set up as a joint venture company between the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry (35% equity), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) (51% equity), and State Governments of India (0.5% each).
- **Functions:** The core mandate of Invest India is investment promotion and facilitation. It provides sector-specific and state-specific information to a foreign investor, assists in expediting regulatory approvals, and offers hand-holding services. Its mandate also includes assisting Indian investors to make informed choices about investment opportunities overseas.

Why Invest in India?

- India to remain one of the fastest growing economies in the world- International Monetary Fund.
- FDI inflows increased by 37% since the launch of Make in India initiative.
- Leading investors ranked India as the most attractive market.
- Largest youth population in the world.
- Huge domestic market.
- Rising economic influence- IOR and INSTC.
- India registered a record improvement on EoDB ranking from 142 to 100 between 2014-2017.

What to study?

- For Prelims and Mains: Invest India- features, roles and significance.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.

1. REGIONAL INTEGRATED MULTI-HAZARD EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (RIMES)

- **Context:** The Odisha government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) for effective management of disasters.
- RIMES and OSDMA collaboration will contribute to global efforts targeted to substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems as articulated in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.



What is RIMES?

- RIMES was established on 30 April 2009 to provide user-relevant early warning services to its Member States and others.
- **It is a UN registered international and inter-governmental institution.**
- **It is owned and managed by its 48 members and collaborating states** for building capacities in the generation and application of user-relevant early warning information.

What's important?

- For Prelims: RIMES.
- For Mains: Need for early warning and international efforts in this regard.

Sources: the hindu.

2. ASIA PACIFIC TRADE AGREEMENT

- **Context:** India has agreed to provide tariff concessions on 3,142 products to Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) members. These duty concessions will be more for least developed countries (LDCs) and less for developing nations.

About APTA:

- The Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), previously named the **Bangkok Agreement**, was signed in 1975 as an initiative of ESCAP.
- The **six member countries** are Bangladesh, China, India, Laos, Korea and Sri Lanka.
- Being the oldest preferential trade agreement among developing countries in Asia-Pacific, APTA aims to promote economic development through the adoption of mutually beneficial trade liberalization measures that will contribute to intra-regional trade expansion and provides for economic integration through coverage of merchandise goods, services, investment and trade facilitation.

Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA)

The Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), previously named the Bangkok Agreement, signed in 1975 as an initiative of ESCAP, is a preferential tariff arrangement that aims at promoting intra-regional trade through exchange of mutually agreed concessions by member countries.



It is the oldest preferential trade agreement between developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Its aim is to promote economic development and cooperation through the adoption of mutually beneficial trade liberalization measures.

Significance of APTA:

- Open to all developing member countries, APTA is a truly region-wide trade agreement spanning East and South Asia, with potential to expand to other sub-regions, including Central Asia and the Pacific.

- **APTA is the first plurilateral agreement among the developing countries in the region to adopt common operational procedures for certification and verification of the origin of goods** and it has the longest effective implementation period amongst the trade agreements in the entire Asia-Pacific.
- Notably, **APTA is the only operational trade agreement linking China and India**, two of the fastest growing markets in the world, and other major markets such as the Republic of Korea.

What's important?

- For Prelims: APTA- members, objectives, significance.
- For Mains: Free trade agreements- meaning, concerns and the need.

Sources: the hindu.

3. UNITED NATIONS MILITARY OBSERVER GROUP IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN (UNMOGIP)

- **Context:** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed Major General Jose Eladio Alcain of Uruguay as Chief Military Observer and Head of Mission for the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), which monitors the ceasefire in the disputed Jammu and Kashmir.

About UNMOGIP:

- UNMOGIP, one of the oldest UN mission, was deployed in January 1949 to supervise the ceasefire between India and Pakistan in the State of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The tasks of UNMOGIP have been to observe, to the extent possible, developments pertaining to the strict observance of the ceasefire of 17 December 1971 and to report thereon to the Secretary-General.
- The group, based in Rawalpindi, is composed of 43 military observers and 23 international civilian personnel.

India's position:

- Since the Simla Agreement of 1972, India has adopted a non-recognition policy towards third parties in their bilateral exchanges with Pakistan over the question regarding the state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The military authorities of Pakistan have continued to lodge alleged ceasefire violations complaints with UNMOGIP.
- The military authorities of India have lodged no complaints since January 1972 limiting the activities of the UN observers on the Indian-administered side of the Line of Control, though they continue to provide necessary security, transport and other services to UNMOGIP.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains: UNMOGIP- composition, mandate and India's stand.

Sources: the hindu.

4. ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)

- **Context:** Centre and ADB signed \$84 million loan for water supply in Bihar. The ADB loan is part of the \$200 million multi-tranche financing facility for the Bihar Urban Development Investment Programme, and it will facilitate improvement and expansion of water supply in Bhagalpur and Gaya towns in the state.

Membership:

- The bank admits the members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, formerly known as the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East) and non-regional developed countries.
- Currently, it has 67 members – of which 48 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.

About ADB:

- It is a regional development bank established on 22 August 1966 and is headquartered in **Philippines**.
- It aims to facilitate economic **development** of countries in Asia.
- It also aims for an Asia and Pacific **free from poverty**.

Voting:

- ADB was modelled closely on the World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in **proportion with member's capital** subscriptions.

Funding:

- ADB raises funds through bond issues on the world's capital markets.
- ADB also rely on its members' contributions, retained earnings from its lending operations, and the repayment of loans.
- Japan holds the largest proportions of shares at 15.67%. The United States holds 15.56%, China holds 6.47%, India holds 6.36%, and Australia holds 5.81%.

Board of Governors:

- It is the highest policy-making body of the bank.
- It is composed of one representative from each member state.
- The Board of Governors also elect the bank's President who is the chairperson of the Board of Directors and manages ADB.
- The Alternate Board of Governors are nominated by Board of Governors of ADB's 67 to represent them at the Annual Meeting that meets formally once year to be held in a member country.

Loans:

- It offers both Hard Loans and Soft loans.
- The ADB offers "hard" loans from ordinary capital resources (OCR) on commercial terms, and the Asian Development Fund (ADF) affiliated with the ADB extends "soft" loans from special fund resources with concessional conditions.

What's important?

- For Prelims: ADB and key facts.
- For Mains: Significance of ADB and the need for regional financial institutions.

Sources: the hindu.

5. EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION & DEVELOPMENT

- **Context:** India has joined the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) as the 69th shareholder, paving the way for more joint investment with Indian companies across the EBRD's regions.
- The EBRD's board of governors, which represents all existing shareholders, voted unanimously in favour of the country's application in March 2018.

Position of India:

- India takes a **shareholding** in the EBRD but will **not be a recipient** of EBRD financing. But it may benefit indirectly through EBRD projects or if Indian companies invest alongside the bank.

How will this membership help India?

- Membership of EBRD would enhance India's international profile and promote its economic interests. It will also give access to EBRD's Countries of Operation and sector knowledge.
- India's investment opportunities would get a boost. It would increase the scope of cooperation between India and EBRD through co-financing opportunities in manufacturing, services, Information Technology, and Energy.
- EBRD's core operations pertain to private sector development in their countries of operation. The membership would help India leverage the technical assistance and sectoral knowledge of the bank for the benefit of development of private sector.
- This would contribute to an improved investment climate in the country. The membership of EBRD would enhance the competitive strength of the Indian firms, and provide an enhanced access to international markets in terms of business opportunities, procurement activities, consultancy assignments etc.
- This would open up new vistas for Indian professionals on the one hand, and give a fillip to Indian exports on the other. Increased economic activities would have the employment generating potential. It would also enable Indian nationals to get the employment opportunity in the Bank.

About EBRD:**What is the EBRD?**

- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is an international financial institution that supports projects in over 30 countries, from eastern Europe to central Asia and the southern and eastern Mediterranean.
- Investing primarily in private sector clients whose needs cannot be fully met by the market, the EBRD promotes entrepreneurship and fosters transition towards open and democratic market economies.

What is the EBRD's mandate?

- The mandate of the EBRD stipulates that it must only work in countries that are committed to democratic principles.
- Respect for the environment is part of the strong corporate governance attached to all EBRD investments.

What support does the EBRD provide in the countries where it works?

- The EBRD provides project financing for banks, industries and businesses, both new ventures and investments in existing companies.
- It also works with publicly owned companies, to support privatisation, restructuring state-owned firms and improving municipal services.
- It uses close relationship with governments in the region to promote policies that will bolster the business environment.

Who owns the EBRD?

- The EBRD is owned by 65 countries and two intergovernmental institutions: the European Union and the European Investment Bank (EIB).

How is the EBRD governed?

- The powers of the EBRD are vested in the Board of Governors to which each member appoints a governor, generally the minister of finance.
- The Board of Governors delegates most powers to the Board of Directors, which is responsible for the EBRD's strategic direction. The President is elected by the Board of Governors and is the legal representative of the EBRD. Under the guidance of the Board of Directors, the President manages the EBRD's work.

Sources: the hindu.

6. WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANISATION (WCO)

- **Context: India has become the Vice-Chair (Regional Head) of the Asia Pacific Region of World Customs Organisation (WCO)** for a period of two years, from July, 2018 to June, 2020. Being the Vice Chair of AP Region of WCO will enable India to take on leadership role.

About WCO:

- The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as **the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body** whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- Today, the WCO represents 182 Customs administrations across the globe that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade.
- As the global centre of Customs expertise, the WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.
- The WCO has divided its Membership into six Regions. Each of the six Regions is represented by a regionally elected Vice-Chairperson to the WCO Council.

Roles and functions:

- As a forum for dialogue and exchange of experiences between national Customs delegates, the WCO offers its Members a range of Conventions and other international instruments, as well as technical assistance and training services provided either directly by the Secretariat, or with its participation.

- Besides the vital role played by the WCO in stimulating the growth of legitimate international trade, its efforts to combat fraudulent activities are also recognized internationally.
- WCO has also been responsible for administering the World Trade Organization's Agreements on Customs Valuation, which provide a system for placing values on imported goods, and the Rules of Origin, which are used to determine the origin of a given commodity.

What's important?

- For Prelims: WCO- objectives and functions, India as Asia Pacific head.
- For Mains: WCO and its role in international trade.

Sources: pib.

7. GOOGLE TEAMS UP WITH UN TO TRACK ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

- **Context:** The UNEP has entered into a partnership with Google to monitor the impacts of human activity on global ecosystems by using sophisticated online tools.
- The **aim of the partnership** is to develop a platform to enable governments, NGO's and the public to track specific environment-related development targets with a user-friendly Google front-end.

Initial focus:

- It has its initial focus on freshwater ecosystems including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.
- These areas account for 0.01% of the world's water but provide habitat for almost 10% of the world's known species and evidence suggests a rapid loss of freshwater biodiversity.
- Google will periodically produce geospatial maps and data on water-related ecosystems by employing massive parallel Cloud computing technology.
- Satellite imagery and statistics will be generated to assess the extent of change occurring to waterbodies, and made freely accessible to ensure nations have the opportunity to track changes, prevent and reverse ecosystem loss.

About UNEP:

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is an agency of United Nations and coordinates its environmental activities, assisting developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices.
- It was **founded by Maurice Strong**, its first director, as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) in June 1972 and has its headquarters in the Gigiri neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya.
- UNEP has overall responsibility for environmental problems among United Nations agencies but talks on addressing global warming are overseen by the Bonn-based Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Its activities cover a wide range of issues regarding the atmosphere, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, environmental governance and green economy.
- UNEP has also been active in funding and implementing environment related development projects.
- **The World Meteorological Organization and UNEP established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988.** UNEP is also one of several Implementing Agencies for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, and it is also a member of the United Nations Development Group.
- The International Cyanide Management Code, a program of best practice for the chemical's use at gold mining operations, was developed under UNEP's aegis.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains: UNEP- roles and functions, IPCC.

Sources: the hindu.

8. BRICS REGIONAL AVIATION PARTNERSHIP

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) amongst BRICS Nations on the Regional Aviation Partnership Cooperation viz. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- The objective is that BRICS countries would benefit from the establishing of an institutional framework to cooperate in the field of civil aviation.

Among the areas of cooperation, following areas have been identified:

- Public Policies and best practices in regional services.
- Regional Airports.
- Airport infrastructure management and air navigation services.
- Technical cooperation between regulatory agencies.
- Environment Sustainability; including deliberation of global initiatives.
- Qualification and Training.
- Other fields as mutually determined.



Impact:

- The MoU signifies an important landmark in the civil aviation relations between India and other BRICS Member States and has the potential to spur greater trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchanges amongst the BRICS Nations.

Why does the world need the BRICS?

- Jim O'Neill's point has been that the world is changing. The leading role of the Group of Seven (G7) and, more broadly, of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is no longer undisputed. Most multi-lateral institutions were designed in the era when the West dominated the world. The US and Europe are over-represented in the IMF and the World Bank. Together with Japan, they control most regional development banks as well.
- This imbalance has been especially clear during the recent global financial crisis when the need for participation by non-G7 countries became evident. This resulted in reviving the Group of 20 (G20) and proposals to redistribute voting rights in international financial institutions. But change has been slow and Western countries continue to control the international financial institutions.
- This is why BRICS summits are so important. These meetings provide a unique forum where non-OECD leaders can discuss global challenges and co-ordinate their actions within and outside global institutions. The small size of the club and the absence of OECD partners helps in shaping the discussions at the summit.

What is BRICS?

- BRICS is the acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: **B**razil, **R**ussia, **I**ndia, **C**hina and **S**outh Africa.
- The acronym "BRICS" was initially formulated in 2001 by economist Jim O'Neill, of Goldman Sachs, in a report on growth prospects for the economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China – which together represented a significant share of the world's production and population.

What's important?

- For Prelims: BRICS- recent summits, its founding and other key facts.
- For Mains: Significance of BRICS in the emerging world.

Sources: pib.

9. INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE (ISA)

- **Context:** Myanmar has joined the India-initiated International Solar Alliance (ISA), thus, becoming the **68th signatory to the Framework Agreement of the ISA** that aims for optimum utilisation of solar energy.

About ISA:

- The **Paris Declaration** establishes ISA as an alliance dedicated to the promotion of solar energy among its member countries.
- **Objectives:** The ISA's major objectives include global deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity and mobilisation of investment of over US\$ 1000 billion into solar energy by 2030.
- **What it does?** As an action-oriented organisation, the ISA brings together countries with rich solar potential to aggregate global demand, thereby reducing prices through bulk purchase, facilitating the deployment of existing solar technologies at scale, and promoting collaborative solar R&D and capacity building.
- **When it entered into force?** When the ISA Framework Agreement entered into force on December 6th, 2017, ISA formally became a de-jure treaty based International Intergovernmental Organization, headquartered at Gurugram, India.

Way ahead:

- The ISA is not only expected to spur innovation in the RE space but also help make India a technological hub with independent manufacturing capabilities of RE equipment like solar panels, rather than being dependent on imports, through initiatives like 'Make in India'. India's Ministry of External Affairs is expected to play a role in "marrying Indian tech and finance capabilities with specific projects around the world".
- India announced a goal of obtaining **40% of its electricity** from **non-fossil** fuels by **2030** at the Paris climate change summit. It is close to achieving 20 GW grid connected solar power generation capacity this fiscal year (2018), in pursuit of achieving its target of **100 GW by 2022**.

What's important?

- For Prelims: ISA.
- For Mains: Renewable energy and its significance, India's leadership in the sector.

Sources: pib.



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GS PAPER - III

Paper 3 Topic: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

1. CURRENCY DERIVATIVES

- **Context:** The Multi Commodity Exchange of India (MCX), the country's largest commodity bourse in terms of market share, is planning to enter the currency derivatives segment.

What are currency derivatives?

- Currency derivatives are **exchange-based futures and options contracts** that allow one to hedge against currency movements.
- Simply put, one can use a currency future contract to exchange one currency for another at a future date at a price decided on the day of the purchase of the contract.
- In India, one can use such derivative contracts to hedge against currencies like dollar, euro, U.K. pound and yen. Corporates, especially those with a significant exposure to imports or exports, use these contracts to hedge against their exposure to a certain currency.
- While all such currency contracts are cash-settled in rupees, the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)**, early this year, gave a go-ahead to start cross currency contracts as well on euro-dollar, pound-dollar and dollar-yen.

Why were such derivatives introduced on exchange platforms?

- Prior to the introduction of currency derivatives on exchanges, there was only the OTC – over the counter – market to hedge currency risks and where forward contracts were negotiated and entered into.
- It was kind of an opaque and closed market where mostly banks and financial institutions traded. Exchange-based currency derivatives segment is a regulated and transparent market that can be used by small businesses and even individuals to hedge their currency risks.

Facts for Prelims: What is MCX?

- Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) as the name suggests is an exchange like BSE and NSE where commodities are traded.
- It is a platform for commodity traders that facilitate online trading, settlement and clearing of commodity futures transactions, thereby providing a platform for risk management (hedging).
- It was established in November **2003** under the regulatory framework of **FMC (Forward Markets Commission)**.
- In 2016, the FMC was merged with SEBI and MCX as an exchange falls under the regulatory purview of SEBI.

What's important?

- For Prelims: What are Currency derivatives and their features.

Sources: the hindu.

2. INTER-CREDITOR AGREEMENT (ICA)

- **Context:** more than 50 banks and financial institutions in India have entered into an inter-creditor agreement to speed up the resolution of stressed assets of Rs 50 crore and above that are under consortium lending.

How it works?

- The agreement says if 66% of lenders by value agree to a resolution plan, it would be **binding on all lenders**. The dissenting creditors will, however, have **the option to sell their loans to other lenders at a discount of 15% to the liquidation value, or buy the entire portfolio** paying 125% of the value agreed under the debt resolution plan by other lenders.

What is Inter-Creditor Agreement (ICA)?

- The inter-creditor agreement is **aimed at the resolution of loan accounts with a size of ₹50 crore and above** that are under the control of a group of lenders. **It is part of the "Sashakt" plan** approved by the government to address the problem of resolving bad loans.
- The agreement is based on a recommendation by **the Sunil Mehta committee** that looked into resolution of stressed assets.

- The agreement says each resolution plan would be submitted to an overseeing committee comprising experts from the banking industry. For dissenting creditors, the agreement says the **“lead bank has the right, but not the obligation, to arrange the buyout of the loan facilities** at a value that is equal to 85% of the liquidation or the resolution value —whichever is lower.”
- Dissenting creditors **can also exit by selling their loans to any entity at a price mutually arrived at between the lender and buyer.**
- The agreement has **a standstill clause** wherein all lenders are barred from enforcing any legal action against the borrower for recovery of dues. During the standstill period, lenders are barred from transferring or assigning their loans to anyone except a bank or finance company.
- **The standstill provision will be operative for 180 days from the reference date** — the RBI had asked lenders to resolve their restructured loans within 180 days beginning March 1 or refer those to the bankruptcy court. However, **the provision would not prevent lenders from acting against borrowers or directors for criminal offence.** Lenders are in the process of getting this inter-creditor agreement approved by their boards.

Significance of the agreement:

- The agreement is a “huge step forward” in tackling the bad loan issue as it is drawn up by banks themselves and is a reflection of bankers’ resolve to collectively find a solution to stressed asset mess.
- Almost the entire banking system and prominent NBFCs like REC, PFC are joining the ICA which has held back fast and effective resolution of stressed assets for decades in the past.

Background:

- The non-performing assets (NPAs) or bad loans in the banking sector crossed Rs 9 lakh crore at end-December 2017 and the Reserve Bank of India has warned of further worsening of the situation.

Way ahead:

- The biggest obstacle to bad loan resolution is the absence of buyers who can purchase stressed assets from banks, and the unwillingness of banks to sell their loans at a deep discount to their face value.
- Unless the government can solve this problem, the bad loan problem is likely to remain unresolved for some time to come.

What to study?

- **For Prelims:** What is Inter-Creditor Agreement (ICA)?, standstill clause.
- **For Mains:** ICA- features, significance and challenges associated.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3 Topic: *Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.*

1. INDIA-KOREA TECHNOLOGY EXCHANGE CENTRE

- **Context:** The India-Korea Technology Exchange Centre was recently Inaugurated in New Delhi. It has been established at the National Small Industries Corporation premises in New Delhi.

India- Korea Technology Exchange Centre:

- **Purpose:** To create a platform for micro, small and medium enterprises of India and Korea where they can be assisted to identify and exchange latest technologies, share management expertise, product development and technology applications for product development.

Significance:

- With this platform, SMEs of both the countries can learn from each other to enhance their comparative advantages and be competitive in the world.
- Korea has strong industrial base with well-developed small and medium enterprises (SME) sector, especially in advanced manufacturing technologies such as machinery & equipment, electronics, electrical machinery & equipment and robotics.

Facts for Prelims:

- **National Small Industries Corporation Limited (NSIC)** is a Mini Ratna PSU established by the Government of India in 1955.
- It falls under **Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises of India**.
- NSIC is the nodal office for several schemes of Ministry of MSME such as Performance & Credit Rating, Single Point Registration, MSME Databank, National SC ST Hub, etc.

Government Schemes implemented by NSIC:

- MSME DataBank.
- National Scheduled Caste And Scheduled Tribe Hub.
- Performance & Credit Rating Scheme.
- Marketing Assistance Scheme.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Technology exchange centre, NSIC.
- **For Mains:** MSME- significance and the need for innovative technologies.

Sources: pib.

2. EASE OF DOING BUSINESS RANKING OF STATES

- **Context:** Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has released the final rankings of States in Ease of Doing Business.

Performance of states:

- The top rankers are Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Haryana. Jharkhand and Gujarat stood fourth and fifth respectively.
- Delhi is placed at 23rd among 34 states and Union territories. Its rank also worsened from 18th in 2016.
- Karnataka has occupied the eighth spot, against 13th in 2016.

BRAP- 2017:

- The rankings are based on the performance of states in implementing the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP).
- DIPP, Ministry of Commerce and Industry in collaboration with the World Bank conducted an annual reform exercise for all States and UTs under the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP). The aim of this exercise is to improve delivery of various Central Government regulatory functions and services in an efficient, effective and transparent manner.
- The reform plan includes 372 recommendations for reforms on regulatory processes, policies, practices and procedures spread across 12 reform areas including labour regulation enablers; contract enforcement; registering property; inspection reform enablers; single window system; land availability and allotment; construction permit enablers etc.
- BRAP 2017 includes two new sectors i.e. Healthcare and Hospitality.

Facts for Prelims:

- India climbed up 29 spots to the 100th position out of 190 surveyed countries in the World Bank's ease of doing business (EDB) index 2018.

What's important?

- For Prelims: BRAP- action points (Brief idea), Ease of Doing Business rankings.
- For Mains: Ease of doing business in states- challenges, potential and innovative solutions by the centre.

TELANGANA SLIPS, HARYANA RISES

Andhra Pradesh topped the ranking of states in the central government's ease of doing business survey, in which a newly introduced feedback system dragged down the performance of several states.

Rank		State	Score
2017	2016		
1	1	Andhra Pradesh	98.42
2	1	Telangana	98.33
3	6	Haryana	98.07
4	7	Jharkhand	97.99
5	3	Gujarat	97.96
6	4	Chhattisgarh	97.36
7	5	Madhya Pradesh	97.31
8	13	Karnataka	96.4
9	8	Rajasthan	95.68
10	15	West Bengal	94.7

Source: DIPP

3. INDIA PIPS FRANCE TO BECOME WORLD'S 6TH LARGEST ECONOMY

- **Context:** India has now become world's sixth-largest economy, pushing past France, according to the updated World Bank figures for 2017.

Large economies:

- The US remains the world's largest economy followed by China, Japan, Germany and Britain.

India's performance:

- India is reclaiming its place as a growth leader after a short slowdown. Just in the last decade, India has doubled the size of its economy outpacing that of France. While India's GDP has risen by an average 8.3% over the decade, that of France's actually declined by 0.01%.
- To add more perspective, in the past 10 years India's GDP grew by 116.3% while France witnessed a 2.8% decline in GDP. Certainly, this tells us that India is gaining economic size consistently and is emerging as one of the powerhouses.

Why this position may not be significant?

- When compared with \$2.582 trillion for France, India's GDP stood at \$2.597 trillion at 2017 end. However, India has an estimated per capita income of \$7,060 while France has \$43,720, some six times more than that of India. India ranks at the 123th position when it comes to per capita income at PPP while France ranks at the 25th position. An average Indian is far poorer than the average Frenchman if one uses this yardstick.
- The size of the economy is linked to the size of geography, its population, and workforce. India has a population of 1.34 billion while France has 67 million. If one talks about the prosperity of the people in an economy, PPP is the right metric to look at.
- One reason why India has a much lower PPP compared with France is the difference in population (per capita is the total size of the economy divided by the total number of people in that country).

Challenges ahead for India:

- Employment scenario in the country is disturbing. Almost 80% of all Indians rely on the informal sector to make a living — a large chunk of them are still dependent on farming, the contribution of which to the economy has shrunk from 50% at the time of independence to 15-16% now.
- Output hasn't increased but farming still constitutes one of the largest areas of employment. That's one reason why the poor remain poor and live in distress. Even today, India doesn't have solid payroll data but the unemployment rate is believed to be quite high. China, UK, and Germany have a 3-4% unemployment rate while France has close to a nine percent rate.
- Till recently, India was home to the largest number of poor in the world but it got rid of the dubious title. Nigeria has about 87 million people in extreme poverty, compared with India's 73 million.

Way ahead:

- In April earlier this year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected India to grow at 7.4% in 2018 and 7.8% in 2019, leaving its nearest rival China behind respectively at 6.6 and 6.4% in the two years. However, while debating a course correction, India will have to repair its fault lines even as it gains economic muscle.



What's important?

- For Prelims: Large economies.
- For Mains: Real growth Vs Growth w.r.t size, reforms necessary to propel the growth engine.

Sources: the hindu.

4. CABINET RELAXES NELP, PRE-NELP PACT RULES

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet approved the policy framework to streamline production sharing contracts signed in the pre-New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) and NELP periods.
- **Key decisions under the framework** include increasing the exploration period granted for blocks in the northeast, and easing the sharing of royalties with the developers of the blocks.

New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP):

- New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) was conceptualized by the Government of India, during 1997-98 to provide an equal platform to both Public and Private sector companies in exploration and production of hydrocarbons.
- It provided for establishment of Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH) as a nodal agency for its implementation.
- It was introduced to boost the production of oil and natural gas and providing level playing field for both public and private players.
- Before implementation of the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) in 1999, a mere 11% of Indian sedimentary basins were under exploration, which has now increased extensively over the years.

About Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP):

- Government of India launched a new policy regime for Exploration & Production (E&P) sector namely Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) in 2016 which is paradigm shift from earlier policy regime.
- **The main features of new Policy regime** are Revenue Sharing Contract, single Licence for exploration and production of conventional as well as unconventional Hydrocarbon resources, marketing & pricing freedom, etc.
- **Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP)** under HELP, is main innovative feature wherein investor can carve out Blocks of their own interest and submit an Expression of Interest (Eoi) throughout the year. Based on the areas for which expression of interest has been expressed bidding will be conducted every 6 months.

What's important?

- For Prelims: OALP, HELP.
- For Mains: Need for HELP and its significance.

Sources: the hindu.

5. FDI CONFIDENCE INDEX

- **Context:** 2018 FDI Confidence Index was recently released by global consultancy firm A T Kearney.

FDI Confidence Index:

- The AT Kearney Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Confidence Index, created in 1998, is an annual survey of the business executives that ranks countries which are likely to attract the most FDI in the next three years.
- The Index is calculated as a weighted average of the number of low, medium and high responses to questions on the possibility of making a direct investment in a market over the next three years.

Global performers:

- The United States (US) topped the index, followed by Canada at 2nd and Germany at the 3rd place.
- China falls three spots to 5th place this year, the lowest ranking of the country in the history of the Index.
- Switzerland and Italy entered the top 10 for the first time in more than a decade, pushing out India and Singapore to 11th and 12th spots, respectively.

- Only four emerging markets appear among the top 25 countries for FDI intentions- China, India, Mexico and Brazil.
- The newcomers to the Index are all European countries- Denmark (20th), Portugal (22nd) and Norway (23rd).
- The countries, that appeared on the 2017 Index but do not appear this year, are all emerging markets: Thailand, the United Arab Emirates and South Africa.

Performance of India:

- **India was ranked 11th**, down from 8th in 2017 and 9th in 2016.
- Fall in India's rankings may be due to teething troubles in implementation of goods and services tax (GST) and Government's demonetisation decision in 2016.
- These policies may have deterred investors in the short term as they have disrupted business activity and weighed on economic growth
- Several of India's reforms such as removing Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) and liberalising FDI limits in key sectors such as retail, aviation, and biomedical industries have maintained India's high rankings in terms of FDI attractiveness.

Way ahead:

- In future, potential investors are likely to be cautious as they are monitoring political risks such as China abolishing presidential term limits and upcoming general election in India.
- But sheer size of Chinese and Indian markets, will continue to be draw for investors and they will remain highest-ranking emerging markets on the index.

What to study?

- For Prelims: FDI Confidence Index- Key performers.
- For Mains: FDI in India- potential, challenges and reforms needed.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3 Topic: Inclusive growth and issues arising out of it.

1. RECAPITALIZATION OF RRBS

- **Context:** Cabinet approves extension of Scheme of Recapitalization of Regional Rural Banks upto 2019-20.

Impact:

- This will enable the RRBS to maintain the minimum prescribed Capital to Risk Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) of 9%.
- A strong capital structure and minimum required level of CRAR will ensure financial stability of RRBS which will enable them to play a greater role in financial inclusion and meeting the credit requirements of rural areas.

About RRBS:

- RRBS are jointly owned by Government of India, the concerned State Government and Sponsor Banks with the issued capital shared in the proportion of 50%, 15% and 35% respectively.
- RRBS were set up with the objective to provide credit and other facilities, especially to the small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans and small entrepreneurs in rural areas for development of agriculture, trade, commerce, industry and other productive activities.

Facts for Prelims:

- A Regional Rural Banks Ordinance was promulgated in September 1975, which was replaced by the Regional Rural Banks Act 1976.

What's important?

- For Prelims: RRBS.
- For Mains: RRBS- need, significance and the need for recapitalization.

Sources: the hindu.

2. IAS OFFICERS FOR VILLAGE OUTREACH

- **Context:** A battalion of Central government IAS officers has been drafted to ensure on the ground implementation as the Centre races to saturate 117 “aspirational districts” with seven flagship social welfare schemes by Independence Day.

What’s the plan?

- At least 800 Deputy Secretaries, Under-Secretaries and Director-level officers, drawn from Ministries as diverse as Defence and Urban Affairs, have been assigned about 75 villages to visit, as part of the Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (EGSA) from June 1 to August 15. In total, 49,178 villages — most with a majority SC/ST population — are being targeted.
- Over the two-and-a-half month period, these Central officials are being absorbed into EGSA duty for at least 15 working days.
- In each village, the Central team convenes a meeting of villagers and beneficiaries along with a State government or district official, a lead bank representative and local officials from the agencies responsible for enrolling people into the schemes.

Monitoring:

- Central officers could direct the local representatives to give immediate sanction for gas cylinders, bank accounts or electricity connections. The teams can also directly input the day’s progress into a data system.
- Senior Ministry officials also make direct daily calls to a section of District Collectors to monitor progress, while third-party observers for each district — mostly from NGOs or academia — have been drafted in to do random checks of villages and report back to the Ministry.

Concerns:

- The large-scale involvement of Central officers raises questions about the viability of such drives, and about roles in a federal democracy. Questions are being raised about Centre-State relations under this model, in an election year.
- Direct connections to the district administration tend to bypass State administrations, while sending out large Central teams to do the work of local officials fails to empower local human resources.

About Gram Swaraj Abhiyan:

- The campaign, undertaken under the name of “Sabka Sath, Sabka Gaon, Sabka Vikas”, is to promote social harmony, spread awareness about pro-poor initiatives of government, reach out to poor households to enroll them as also to obtain their feedback on various welfare programmes.
- As a special endeavour during the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, saturation of eligible households/persons would be made under seven flagship pro-poor programmes in 21,058 identified villages.
- The programmes covered are Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Saubhagya, Ujala scheme, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and Mission Indradhanush.

What’s important?

- For Prelims: Aspirational districts programme, Gram Swaraj Abhiyaan.
- For Mains: Deployment of Central officers- concerns, threat to the spirit of cooperative federalism and issues to be addressed.

Sources: the hindu.

3. STATE BANKS (REPEAL AND AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017

- **Context:** Parliament passes *State Banks (Repeal and Amendment) Bill, 2017* to merge six subsidiary banks with State Bank of India after it was approved by Rajya Sabha.

Features of the Bill:

- The bill repeals **two Acts namely- State Bank of India (Subsidiary Banks) Act, 1959, and State Bank of Hyderabad Act, 1956**. These two acts had established State Bank of Bikaner, State Bank of Patiala, State Bank of Mysore, State Bank of Hyderabad and State Bank of Travancore. These banks were subsidiaries of SBI.

- By repealing these two acts, **five subsidiary banks will be merged with SBI**. The bill also seeks to amend State Bank of India (SBI) Act, 1955 to remove references to subsidiary banks and powers of SBI to act as an agent of the RBI for subsidiary banks.

Background:

- The Union Cabinet in February 2017 had approved merger of five associate banks along with Bharatiya Mahila Bank with SBI.
- The purposes of merger were rationalisation of public bank resources, reduction of costs, better profitability, lower cost of funds leading to better rate of interest for public at large and improve productivity and customer service of the public service banks. The merger had made SBI one of 50 biggest banks of world.

What's important?

- For Prelims: SBI and its associate banks merger.
- For Mains: Need for merger, issues and significance of large banks.

Sources: pib.

Paper 3 Topic: *Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.*

1. MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICES (MSPS)

- **Context:** Giving a major boost for the farmers' income, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the increase in the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for all kharif crops for 2018-19 Season.

What is it?

- In theory, an MSP is the minimum price set by the Government at which farmers can expect to sell their produce for the season.
- When market prices fall below the announced MSPs, procurement agencies step in to procure the crop and 'support' the prices.

Who announces?

- The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs announces MSP for various crops at the beginning of each sowing season based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
- The CACP takes into account demand and supply, the cost of production and price trends in the market among other things when fixing MSPs.

Why is it important?

- Price volatility makes life difficult for farmers. Though prices of agri commodities may soar while in short supply, during years of bumper production, prices of the very same commodities plummet.
- MSPs ensure that farmers get a minimum price for their produce in adverse markets. MSPs have also been used as a tool by the Government to incentivise farmers to grow crops that are in short supply.

Way ahead:

- Trends in MSP impact the availability of key food crops and food inflation. MSP is also good tool to ensure that farmers produce what is most lucrative for them, given consumer demand.
- However, in recent years, there have been large-scale imports of pulses and oil seeds into India with high costs adding to Consumer Price inflation. Unless the Centre increases State procurement of these crops, the bias towards rice, wheat and sugarcane (where minimum prices are fixed by States) may continue. Pulses are a cheap source of protein for the masses.

What's important?

- For Prelims: MSP- crops covered, how is it decided.
- For Mains: MSP- need, significance, concerns and rectifying measures.

Sources: the hindu.

2. INDIA HAS 5TH LARGEST AREA UNDER GM CROPS

- **Context:** As per International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA)'s latest 'Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/ GM Crops in 2017' report, India has the world's fifth largest cultivated area under genetically modified (GM) crops.

Highlights of the report:

- **Unlike other big growers, India's entire GM crop area is under a single crop — cotton** — incorporating genes from the *Bacillus thuringiensis* or Bt soil bacterium coding for resistance against heliothis bollworm insect pests.
- **The country with the highest area under transgenic crops, at 75 mh, is the United States.** It includes soyabean, maize (corn), cotton, alfalfa, canola, sugar-beet, potato, apples, squash and papaya.
- **The report shows farmers across the world to have planted 189.8 mh under transgenic crops last year.** This is as against 1.7 mh in 1996, the year when they were grown commercially for the first time. Total planted area grew particularly during the first decade of this century, while slowing down in the last five years.
- The report has estimated the **highest share in the world's total 189.8 mh GM crop area for 2017 to be of soyabean (94.1 mh)**, followed by maize (59.7 mh), cotton (24.1 mh), canola (10.2 mh), alfalfa (1.2 mh) and sugar-beet (0.50 mh).

GM crops in India:

- In India, the GM crops that are under regulatory consideration — apart from the already commercialised Bt/insect-resistant cotton — include glyphosate-tolerant cotton and biotech hybrid mustard.
- Both the Bollgard II-Roundup Ready Flex (BGII-RRF) cotton event of Monsanto (incorporating Bt as well as glyphosate-tolerant genes) and transgenic mustard developed by Delhi University's Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants (harbouring three alien genes that enable higher yields through hybridisation) have undergone all the mandated bio-safety research and open field trials. Their commercial release has, however, been stuck due to opposition from environmental activists.

Facts for Prelims:

- ISAAA is a non-profit international organization that shares agricultural biotechnology, focusing on genetic engineering.

What is a GM crop?
A crop which has a gene artificially inserted into it from another species, even unrelated, to give it some desired properties. GM crops are mostly either pest-resistant or herbicide-tolerant

When did India get its first GM crop?
The first GM crop variety approved for commercialisation was Bt cotton. Bollgard-I, which provided immunity against the pink bollworm and developed by Monsanto, was given the go ahead in 2002. Monsanto released Bollgard-II in 2006. India has become the world's largest producer of cotton partly due to Bt cotton, which accounts for over 90% of the total cotton acreage in the country

Are there other GM crops in India?
No, the government has not approved commercial cultivation of other GM crops, though efforts have been made for brinjal and mustard

What's important?

- For Prelims: GM crops- meaning.
- For Mains: GM crops- significance, need, concerns and regulation.

Sources: the Indian express.

3. JUTE SECTOR

- **Context:** The outcry and ban against plastic bags and single-use plastic packaging holds potential for the jute sector.

Challenges:

- More than 100-year-old Jute sector, supporting five million families at the farm and the industry-level, may not be in a position to benefit from this opportunity, right away.
- The availability of quality raw jute and shrinking acreage on the one-hand and the failure of most jute mills to modernise has left the sector dependent on government-support like packaging reservations.
- The sector is still primitive, involves labour-intensive cultivation methods and retting (drenching raw jute in water to extract the fibre) — a crucial determinant in raw jute quality — creates problems.
- With raw jute prices remaining below the support price in 2017-18, area-under-cultivation may stagnate in 2018-19.



Efforts to support the sector:

- A recent initiative called '**The Jute Foundation**' (TJF) is trying to address many issues pertaining to the environment-friendly product. It is trying to engage all stakeholders –farmers, workers, mills, research organisations and consumers.
- The **I-CARE programme** unveiled by the National Jute Board and the Jute Corporation of India is planning to introduce a pilot project on retting technologies aimed at increasing farmers' returns.

Jute Technology Mission (JTM):

Jute Technology Mission (JTM) was approved by the government of India in 2006 and it has 4 mini Missions. The Objectives of the JTM are as follows:

- To strengthen agricultural research and technology achievements.
- Development/extension of raw jute Ministry of and transfer of improved technology.
- To develop efficient market linkages Ministry of for raw jute.
- To modernize, technologically upgrade, improve productivity, Textiles diversify and develop human resource for the jute industry.

Facts for Prelims:

- **West Bengal is India's single largest raw jute cultivator** producing almost 75 % of the crop in Nadia, Dinajpur, Murshidabad and North 24 Parganas districts.

What's important?

- For Prelims: Largest raw jute cultivator.
- For Mains: Jute sector- potential, challenges and support by the government.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3 Topic: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

1. KUDANKULAM POWER PLANT

- **Context:** The Supreme Court has granted the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL) an extension of time till April 30, 2022, to build an **Away From Reactor (AFR) facility** to store spent nuclear fuel from the Kudankulam power plant.

Background:

- The AFR facility was supposed to be built in five years, but this had not been done.
- In 2013, the court granted five years to NPCIL, till July 2018, to build the storage unit.

About Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant:

- Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant is situated in Koodankulam in the Tirunelveli district of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.
- It is **the single largest nuclear power station in India**.
- The reactors are **pressurised water reactor** of Russian design.
- KKNPP is scheduled to have six VVER-1000 reactors with an installed capacity of 6,000 MW of electricity.

What are Pressurized water reactors (PWRs)?

- They are one of three types of light water reactor (LWR), the other types being boiling water reactors (BWRs) and supercritical water reactors (SCWRs).
- In a PWR, the primary coolant (water) is pumped under high pressure to the reactor core where it is heated by the energy released by the fission of atoms.
- The heated water then flows to a steam generator where it transfers its thermal energy to a secondary system where steam is generated and flows to turbines which, in turn, spin an electric generator.
- In contrast to a boiling water reactor, pressure in the primary coolant loop prevents the water from boiling within the reactor. All LWRs use ordinary water as both coolant and neutron moderator.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** KNPP- features, PWRs, locations of nuclear power plants in India.
- **For Mains:** Nuclear power- need, concerns and challenges.

Sources: the hindu.

2. PURVANCHAL EXPRESSWAY

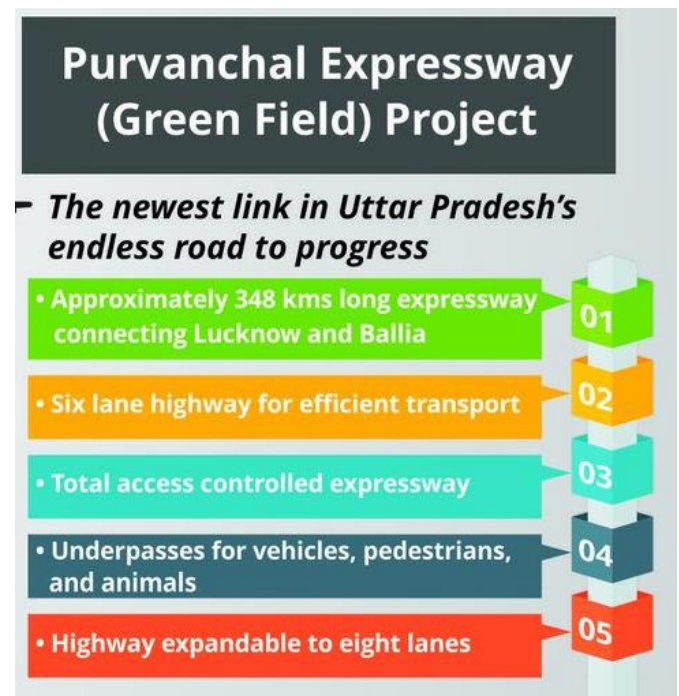
- **Context:** The 354-km **Purvanchal Expressway project, the country's longest**, is on stream with the Uttar Pradesh government awarding the eight packages of the project to five companies — PNC Infratech Limited, Gayatri Projects, GR Infra, Oriental Structural Engineering and Apco Infra.

About Purvanchal Expressway:

- The project, which will connect Lucknow with Ghazipur, will start from Chand Sarai area near NH-56 in Lucknow and is estimated to cost around Rs 23,000 crore.
- It will also be connected to Varanasi through a separate link road.
- Once completed, the Purvanchal Expressway will provide uninterrupted connectivity to 9 districts of Lucknow, Ghazipur, Amethi, Ajamgarh, Faizabad, Barabanki, Mau, Ambedkar Nagar and Sultanpur.
- It would provide seamless access to the national capital Delhi via the 302-km long Lucknow-Agra expressway and the 165-km Agra-Greater Noida Yamuna Expressway.
- The Project is being implemented on Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Mode.

Project Benefits:

- With the Construction of Purvanchal Expressway, accelerated convenient mode of Transportation shall be available between the Eastern boundary of the State and the National Capital via State capital through other similar Expressways in the State viz. 'Agra to Lucknow Expressway' and 'Yamuna Expressway'.
- Being an Access Controlled Expressway, it would provide benefits like fuel saving, time saving and Control in Pollution level, along with reduction in accidents.
- The areas covered by this Expressway would be benefited in Social & Economical way. The agriculture, commerce, tourism and other industrial development will also get a fillip.



- Industrial Training Institutes, Educational Institutes, Medical Institutes, New Townships and other various Commercial set ups shall be developed, especially near the Expressway areas, which will result into more opportunities for employment in the region. The overall social/economic development in the state will get a boost.
- The proposed Expressway will prove to be a catalyst for development of the region and State.
- The proposed Purvanchal Expressway getting connected with existing Agra-Lucknow Expressway shall become a vast Industrial Corridor connecting Eastern boundary to Western boundary of the state which will result into overall development of the state.

What is EPC model?

- EPC is a model of contract between the government and private sector players for public infrastructure building. Under this system, the entire project is funded by the government.
- The EPC entails the contractor build the project by designing, installing and procuring necessary labour and land to construct the infrastructure, either directly or by subcontracting.
- Under EPC model the contractor is legally responsible to complete the project under some fixed predetermined timeline and may also involve scope for penalty in case of time overrun.
- Under EPC, all the clearances, land acquisition and regulatory norms have to be completed by the government itself.

What's important?

- For Prelims: Purvanchal Expressway- Districts covered.
- For Mains: Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Mode, need for Expressways and their significance.

Sources: pib.

3. BANSAGAR CANAL PROJECT

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the Bansagar canal project in Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

Bansagar canal project:

- Bansagar Dam project is a joint venture between Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- Bansagar Dam is a multipurpose river Valley Project on Sone River situated in the Ganges Basin in Madhya Pradesh.
- The total canal network under it is 171 kms long.
- Canals under this project will bring waters from Shahdol district in Madhya Pradesh for Adwa Barrage, Meza Dam and Jirgo reservoir.
- The project aims to provide a big boost to irrigation in the region. It promises to be greatly beneficial for the farmers of Mirzapur and Allahabad districts of Uttar Pradesh.
- As per the projections, the project will benefit 1 lakh 70 thousand farmers of Mirzapur and Allahabad districts.

About Son River:

- Son River of central India is the second largest of the Ganges's southern tributaries after Yamuna River.
- The Son originates near Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh just east of the headwater of the Narmada River, and flows north-northwest through Madhya Pradesh state before turning sharply eastward where it encounters the southwest-northeast-Kaimur Range.
- Son is an extension of the Narmada Valley, and the Kaimur Range an extension of the Vindhya Range.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains: Bansagar Canal Project and its significance, Son river.

Sources: pib.

4. RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL (ROFR)

- **What is it?** Right of first refusal is a contractual right, but not obligation, to enter into a business transaction with a person or company before anyone else can. If the entity with the right of first refusal declines to enter into a transaction, the owner of the asset who offered the right is free to open the bidding up to other interested parties.

Why in news?

- A proposed move by the Centre to abolish the ROFR clause for transportation of Indian cargo by Indian-flagged vessels, the only benefit available to Indian shipping companies is threatening the existence of the domestic shipping industry.

Concerns:

- If the clause is scrapped, it could hurt the Indian shipping industry. Indian shipping companies have a combined fleet of 1,372 ships with a total capacity of 12.35 million Gross Tonnage (GT).
- The move may also prompt Indian Shipping firms to de-register their vessels from India and flag them in tax havens of Panama and Bahama to survive and compete with foreign lines.
- Currently, 92% of India's export import trade is carried by foreign flag ships. And the 8% that is assured to Indian ships is likely to go if the ROFR is scrapped.

Why maintain ROFR clause?

- The right of first refusal is the only incentive to the Indian flag, which suffers from many disadvantages versus foreign flags.
- De-registering of vessels from the Indian flag will be a strategic blow to Indian security as merchant naval fleet always acts as a second line of defence for coastal security.

Sources: the hindu.

5. FASTAGS

- **Context:** The Transport Ministry has proposed to dispense with fitness certificate for new vehicles and make it mandatory to have vehicle tracking system and FASTags for electronic toll collection for all commercial vehicles in its draft amendment to the Commercial Motor Vehicles Act.

What is FASTag?

- It is a device that uses Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for making toll payments directly from the prepaid account linked to it.
- It is affixed on the windscreen of vehicle and enables to drive through toll plazas without waiting.
- The tag has a validity of 5 years and after purchase, it only needs to be recharged or topped up. The service is applicable to all kinds of vehicles but use of the service is currently voluntary.

Benefits of FASTags:

- It helps quicken passage through toll barriers and helps avoid use of cash. Long queues of vehicles waiting while cumbersome cash transactions happen at the counter can be avoided. Here, it helps reduce use of fuel and pollution due to high waiting-times at the barriers.
- It can also help the government identify the quantum of road use and types of vehicles passing through, aiding budgets for road widening and other infrastructure expenses. Theoretically, it could help increase accruals to the government as some operators managing toll plazas have, in the past, have been suspected of under reporting their revenues.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains: FASTags- features and significance.

Sources: the hindu.

6. DELHI DIALOGUE

- **Context:** *10th edition of the Delhi Dialogue (DD X) was held in New Delhi.* This is the first major event to be organized after the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit, that was held in New Delhi in January 2018.
- **Theme:** “Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation”.

What is Delhi Dialogue?

- It is a premier annual track 1.5 event to discuss politico-security, economic and socio-cultural engagement between India and ASEAN.
- It has been held annually since 2009 and political leaders, policy makers, senior officials, diplomats, think tanks and academicians from both sides participate in the discussions pertaining to ASEAN-India relations.
- It is aimed at finding a common ground and expanding the scope of cooperation between India and ASEAN nations.

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations):

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand.
- It was established with the signing of an ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the ministers of the founding countries.
- Its founding countries are Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- Eventually, Brunei Darussalam then joined on 7 January 1984, Viet Nam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up to ten Member States of ASEAN.

India’s active participation in the region:

- India’s focus on a strengthened and multi-faceted relationship with ASEAN is an outcome of the significant changes in the world’s political and economic scenario since the early 1990s and India’s own march towards economic liberalisation.
- Apart from ASEAN, India has taken other policy initiatives in the region that involve some members of ASEAN like BIMSTEC, MGC etc. India is also an active participant in several regional forums like the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting + (ADMM+) and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF).

Significance of India-ASEAN relations for India:

- ASEAN is our fourth largest trading partner and India is their seventh largest trading partner.
- The South-East Asian region is economically very vibrant; this is a vibrant economic commercial space for India.
- India’s investment in the last two decades has been \$70 billion. So, there is a lot of potential in engaging them further.
- Many countries in the region have people of Indian origin among their citizens—most notably Malaysia and Singapore.

Facts for Prelims:

- The theme of ninth edition of dialogue was “ASEAN-India Relations: Charting the Course for the Next 25 Years”. It had marked the 25th anniversary of ASEAN-India Partnership.
- The term track 1.5 diplomacy is used by some analysts to define a situation where official and non-official actors cooperate in conflict resolution.

What’s important?

- For Prelims: Delhi Dialogue- theme and key facts.
- For Mains: ASEAN- features, significance for India and challenges in the changing world.

Sources: pib.

7. NATIONAL WATERWAYS PROJECTS IN THE NORTH EAST

What to study?

- For Prelims: Operational Waterways in North East, overview of proposed National Waterways in the North East, National waterways Act.
- For Mains: Need for development of Infrastructure in the North East.
- **Context:** 20 National Waterways out of 111 are in North Eastern Region (NER). NW-2 (river Brahmaputra) from Dhubri to Sadiya (891 km) is operational for transport and cruise and cargo vessels are moving on it.

Facts for Prelims- Proposed waterways in the North East:

Sl. No.	Name of the Waterways	States	Length of the Waterway (km)
1	SUBANSIRI RIVER (NW-95)	Assam	111
2	DHANSIRI / CHATHE RIVER (NW-31)	Assam	110
3	TIZU – ZUNGKI RIVERS (NW-101)	Nagaland	42
4	LOHIT RIVER (NW-62)	Assam & Arunachal Pradesh	100
5	AAI RIVER (NW-6)	Assam	71
6	BEKI RIVER (NW-18)	Assam	73
7	DEHING RIVER (NW-30)	Assam	114
8	DIKHU RIVER (NW-32)	Assam	63
9	DOYANS RIVER (NW-33)	Assam	61
10	KOPI LI RIVER (NW-57)	Assam	46
11	PUTHIMARI RIVER (NW-82)	Assam	72
12	TLWANG (DHALESWARI) RIVER (NW-102)	Assam & Mizoram	86
13	GANGADHAR RIVER (NW-38)	Assam & West Bengal	62
14	JINJIRAM RIVER (NW-50)	Assam & Meghalaya	43
15	GANOL RIVER (NW-39)	Meghalaya	49
16	UMNGOT (DAWKI) RIVER (NW-106)	Meghalaya	20
17	SIMSANG RIVER (NW-93)	Meghalaya	62
18	KYN SHI RIVER (NW-61)	Meghalaya	28

National Waterways Act:

- The National Waterways Act 2016 declared 106 new waterways as national waterways (NWs) in addition to the existing five NW.
- The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has estimated that approximately Rs 25,000 crore would be required for development of identified projects on NWs till 2022-23.

Sources: pib.

8. WESTERN DEDICATED CORRIDOR (WDFC)

What to study?

- For Prelims: Maps of proposed DFCs, DFCCIL.
- For Mains: DFCs- significance, need and challenges in construction.
- **Context:** Indian Railways set to get its first dedicated freight corridor on Independence Day. The 190-km dedicated freight railway line between Dadri in Uttar Pradesh and Phulera in Rajasthan falls under the Western Dedicated Corridor (WDFC).

Western Dedicated Freight Corridor

- From Dadri, Uttar Pradesh to Jawaharlal Nehru Port, Mumbai.
- Total length 1,468 kms.
- The DFC Project is an important part of “Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) initiative”, to create industrial parks and logistics bases with well-developed infrastructures in the area 150 kms to either side of the Western Corridor.
- Japan showed interest in WDFC and provide loan in 2006 to India.
- At terminal Dadri, this line further extended to connect EDFC
- Total land for acquire 6000 Ha and 94.5% land has been acquired upto June'16.

What are Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFC)?

- These are freight-only railway lines to move goods between industrial heartlands in the North and ports on the Eastern and Western coasts.
- The dedicated freight-only lines are being built along the four key transportation routes – known as the Golden Quadrilateral and connecting Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Howrah and its two diagonals (Delhi – Chennai and Mumbai – Howrah).

Western Dedicated Freight Corridors:

- The 1,504-km-long route — from JNPT to Dadri via Vadodara-Ahmedabad- Palanpur-Phulera- Rewari — Western DFC will pass through Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.
- It is proposed to **join the Eastern Corridor at Dadri**.

Why do we need DFCs?

- **Increased burden:** Covering a total of 10,122 km, these corridors carry the heaviest traffic and are highly congested. The route carries 52% of passenger traffic and 58% of freight traffic, according to the Make-in-India report of 2017. Also, these routes are highly saturated, with line capacity utilisation reaching as high as 150%.
- **Rise in demand:** Considering increased transport demands, overtly congested routes and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with road transport, these freight corridors will help reduce the cost and allow faster transportation.
- **Revenue generation:** They will open new avenues for investment, as this will lead to the construction of industrial corridors and logistic parks along these routes.

About Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCIL):

- The DFCCIL is a corporation run by the Ministry of Railways (India) to undertake planning & development, mobilisation of financial resources and construction, maintenance and operation of the Dedicated Freight Corridors. DFCC has been registered as a company under the Companies Act 1956 on 30 October 2006.

Sources: BS.

9. 'MUKHYANMANTRI KISSAN AAYE BADHOTRI SOLAR YOJNA'

- **Context:** Delhi government has approved 'Mukhyanmantri Kissan Aaye Badhotri Solar Yojna', a scheme under which farmers in the national capital will be able to lease out a part of their agricultural land for setting up of solar panels to get additional income.

About 'Mukhyanmantri Kissan Aaye Badhotri Solar Yojna':

- Under the scheme, any farmer can rent out not more than one-third of his land to a private firm to set up solar panels at a rate of Rs one lakh per annum per acre. The panels will be set up at a height of 3.5 metres, so that the land can also be used for agriculture.
- The Delhi Government departments will buy solar power from the companies participating in the scheme.

Benefits of the scheme:

- The annual income of the beneficiary farmers, which is estimated at present to be between Rs 30,000 and Rs 50,000 per acre per year, will increase to between Rs 1.30 lakh and Rs 1.5 lakh following the implementation of this scheme.
- Besides getting additional income, the farmers will also get 1,000 units of free solar power without any investment.
- The departments currently buy electricity at Rs 9 per unit but with the implementation of the scheme, the expense will come down to Rs 5 per unit, saving the department Rs 400 crore to Rs 500 crore annually.

What to study?

- For Prelims: 'Mukhyanmantri Kissan Aaye Badhotri Solar Yojna'- key features.
- For Mains: Solar power potential and ways to harness it.

Sources: the hindu.

10. CENTRAL ROAD AND INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (CRIF)

What to study?

- For Prelims: Features of Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF).
- For Mains: Infrastructure funding in India- potential, constraints and solutions.
- **Context:** The administrative control of Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF) has been transferred to the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Finance Ministry. So far, it was under the domain of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

Background:

- Over the last one and a half decade, the Central Road Fund (CRF) was a major revenue for the government to finance ambitious road projects. **The CRF launched in 2000 is basically a cess imposed along with excise duty on petrol and diesel.**
- The cess revenue was accrued to the CRF which was uniquely created and out of this major road projects were financed ever since its launch.

Conversion of CRF into Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF):

- The budget 2018 has amended the Central Road Fund Act, 2000, and has renamed the Central Road Fund as Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF).
- **Main purpose of the amendment** is to use the proceeds of the road cess under CRIF to finance other infrastructure projects including waterways, some portion of the railway infrastructure and even social infrastructure including education institutions, medical colleges etc.
- The amendment prescribes that **road cess is first credited to the Consolidated Fund of India and later, after adjusting for the cost of tax collection, should go to the CRIF.**
- As per the amendment, **the share for each infrastructure areas and projects from the CRIF shall be finalised by a Committee, constituted by the Central government. The Committee will be headed by the Finance Minister.**

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3 Topic: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life
Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

1. AGNI-V

- **Context:** India's longest-range ballistic missile, Agni-V, will be inducted into the nuclear arsenal very soon. It is a strategic asset which will act as a deterrent.

About Agni-5 Ballistic Missile:

- It is a surface-to-surface missile which can carry nuclear warhead weighing 1.5 tonnes to a distance of over 5,000 km and is the longest missile in India's arsenal capable of reaching most parts of China.
- The missile features many new indigenously-developed technologies, including the very high accuracy Ring Laser Gyro based Inertial Navigation System (RINS), and the most modern and accurate Micro Navigation System (MINS) which improves the accuracy of the missile.

Facts for Prelims:

- **Agni series:** At present, India has in its armoury the Agni series — Agni-1 with 700 km range, Agni-2 with 2,000 km range, Agni-3 and Agni-4 with 2,500 km to more than 3,500 km range.

Sources: the hindu.

2. ISRO CONDUCTS PAD ABORT TEST

- **Context:** ISRO recently conducted the first 'pad abort' test critical for a future human space mission. The Pad Abort Test demonstrated the safe recovery of the crew module in case of any exigency at the launch pad.

What is PAT?

- PAT (pad abort test) is the first in a series of tests to qualify a crew escape system technology of a manned mission in the future.

What is Crew Escape System?

- It is an emergency escape measure to quickly pull the astronaut cabin along with crew out to a safe distance from launch vehicle during a launch abort.



Sources: the hindu.

3. NASSCOM UNVEILS CENTRE FOR DATA, AI

- **Context:** The National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom), India's premier software lobby, has opened a Center of Excellence (CoE) for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence in Bangalore.
- Nasscom also signed a MoU with NITI Aayog to collaboratively foster applied research, accelerating adoption and ethics, privacy and security.

Centre of excellence:

- The CoE initiative is a nationwide programme on innovation, focusing on solutions in smart manufacturing, automotive, healthcare, agriculture, energy, IoT, banking and financial services, retail, telecom, and host of emerging technologies.
- The center aims to "support SMBs, by fast-tracking their product development, provide market access to enterprises and assist them by co-creating programs along with other industry partners and start-ups to solve complex and real-world business problems."

Significance:

- With the aim to strengthen the country's AI ecosystem, the CoE and MoU, both aim to serve as a platform for intelligence-sharing and technology collaboration between stakeholders to build collective capabilities for the industry and country in the cutting-edge areas artificial intelligence.

About Nasscom:

- It is a trade association of Indian Information Technology (IT) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry.
- Established in 1988, NASSCOM is a non-profit organisation.
- NASSCOM facilitates business and trade in software and services and encourages the advancement of research in software technology. It is registered under the Indian Societies Act, 1860.
- It has over 2000 members, of which over 250 are companies from China, EU, Japan, the U.S. and the UK.

Sources: pib.

4. EINSTEIN'S THEORY OF RELATIVITY

- **Context:** Einstein's Theory of Relativity Proven to Work Even in Three-star Systems. A study conducted by scientists proved that the legendary scientist was correct about gravity even in the most extreme scales.

The experiment:

- The researchers observed gravitational behaviour in a three-star system known as PSR J0337+1715. The massive system located 4,200 light years away consists of two white dwarfs and a neutron star, an ideal example of an extreme scale.
- After years of study, the researchers reported finding no detectable difference indicating no alternative theories of gravity were in motion. The results were consistent with Einstein's theory of relativity.

The theory of general relativity:

- In 1915, Albert Einstein presented his theory of general relativity, which proposed that gravity itself was the result of a warping of spacetime by massive objects like stars and planets.
- Einstein's theory of relativity indicates that all objects fall the same way regardless of mass or composition.

Things predicted by General relativity include:

- **As light gets closer to the sun, it bends towards the sun** twice as much as classical physics (the system used before general relativity) predicts.
- **The perihelion of the planet Mercury rotates along its orbit more than is expected under Newtonian physics.** General relativity accounts for the difference between what is seen and what is expected without it.
- **Redshift from gravity.** When light moves away from an object with gravity (moving away from the center of the valley), it is stretched into longer wavelengths. This was confirmed by the Pound-Rebka experiment.
- **The Shapiro delay.** Light appears to slow down when it passes close to a massive object. This was first seen in the 1960s by space probes headed towards the planet Venus.
- **Gravitational waves.** They were first observed on 14 September 2015.

Alternatives to Einstein's general theory of relativity:

- Alternatives to Einstein's general theory of relativity predict that compact objects with extremely strong gravity, like neutron stars, fall a little differently than objects of lesser mass. That difference, these alternate theories predict, would be due to a compact object's so-called gravitational binding energy – the gravitational energy that holds it together.
- However, to date, Einstein's equations have passed all tests, from careful laboratory studies to observations of planets in our solar system.

What's important?

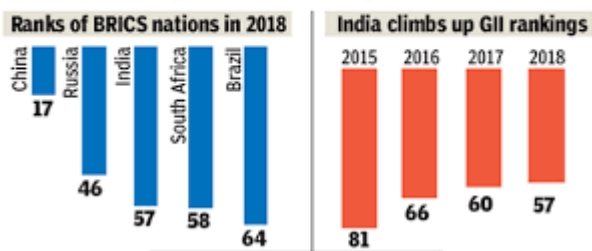
- For Prelims and Mains: Theory of general relativity and related predictions.

Sources: the hindu.

5. GLOBAL INNOVATION INDEX

TOP 10 COUNTRIES (Rank in 2018)

- 1 Switzerland 2 Netherlands 3 Sweden 4 UK 5 Singapore
6 USA 7 Finland 8 Denmark 9 Germany 10 Ireland



- **Context:** Global Innovation Index 2018 has placed India at the **57th position** among 130 countries. GII is jointly released by Cornell University, INSEAD and World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). GII ranks 126 economies based on 80 indicators.

GII 2018:

- **The GII 2018 marks the 11th edition of the GII**, and the beginning of its second decade providing data and insights gathered from tracking innovation across the globe.
- **This year's edition, is dedicated to the theme of Energizing the World with Innovation.** It analyses the energy innovation landscape of the next decade and identifies possible breakthroughs in fields such as energy production, storage, distribution, and consumption.
- It also looks at how breakthrough innovation occurs at the grassroots level and describes how small-scale renewable systems are on the rise.

Performance of India:

- This year, India has moved up 3 places as compared to 60th rank in GII 2017 and emerged as top-ranked economy in Central and South Asia. It has consistently moving up on global ranking from 81st in 2015 to 57th this year.
- India is a top performer in the lower middle income group, where it is ranked at fifth position. It is the most innovative country in its region of central and southern Asia.
- In the indicators that capture the quality of innovation inputs and outputs, India is ranked second after China in the lower and upper middle income group combined.
- However, India has fared badly on indicators such as ease of starting business, political stability and safety, overall education and environmental performance.

Other countries:

- Switzerland is at the top. Since 2011, Switzerland has been ranked at the top every year.
- This year, Netherlands follows at second place and Sweden at third. The US drops down to sixth from fourth last year.
- Four of the top five innovation clusters are in Asia, based on patents and publishing. San Francisco is the only innovation cluster outside Asia among the top five.
- Tokyo is at the top, and two of the top five clusters are in China.
- China, at 17, broke into the world's top 20 most-innovative economies.
- On a new indicator – mobile-app creation – Cyprus, Finland and Lithuania emerged as global leaders in development of mobile apps relative to GDP.

What's important?

- For Prelims: GII- performance of India and other countries.
- For Mains: Need for innovation and government efforts to promote innovation.

Sources: the hindu.

6. BRAHMOS MISSILE

- **Context:** BrahMos, the supersonic cruise missile was successfully test-fired recently. The test-firing conducted from a Mobile Autonomous Launcher was part of service life extension programme for Indian Army under extreme weather condition.

About BrahMos missile:

- Weighing 2.5 ton, BrahMos ALCM is **the heaviest weapon to be deployed on India's Su-30 fighter aircraft**. It has been modified by HAL to carry weapons.
- It is **a world-class weapon with multi-platform, multi-mission role and is capable of being launched from land, sea and air**.
- BrahMos is **a joint venture between the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) of India and NPOM of Russia**.
- The name Brahmos has been taken from **two rivers – Brahmaputra and Moskva**.
- The heavyweight missile, integrated with the long-range fighter, is seen as a force multiplier for the IAF.
- The Brahmos cruise missiles have an effective **strike range of around 290-300 km**.
- The land and warship versions have already been inducted by the armed forces.

What's important?

- For Prelims: BrahMos- key features.

Sources: the hindu.

7. IIT-MADRAS UNVEILS WORLD'S FIRST REMOTELY OPERABLE LEAP MICROSCOPE

- **Context:** The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Madras has commissioned remotely operable Local Electrode Atom Probe (LEAP) microscope. **It is claimed to be world's first remotely operable LEAP microscope**, as it can be remotely operated through special terminal by researchers divided geographically.

About LEAP microscope:

- LEAP is high-performance microscope that can provide **a precise atom-by-atom view of materials**. It provides atomic-scale insights into metallic, which will influence wide spectrum of industries ranging from steel to automobiles and energy to transportation sector.
- It will also give major thrust to research in nanotechnology, among other fields

Who developed it?

- The remotely operable LEAP microscope has been developed in a collaborative exercise involving eight top research institutions in country, spearheaded by IIT-M.
- Other partner institutions are IITs of Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur and Ropar, International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Materials (ARCI) and Board of Research in Nuclear Sciences (BRNS).

Potential applications:

- Local Electrode Atom Probe (LEAP) allows the user to extract atoms from materials sequentially and are detected using a Time of Flight Mass spectrometer.
- This facility will be able to provide atomic-scale insights into metallic materials thereby impacting a wide spectrum of industries ranging from steel to automobiles and energy to transportation sector.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains: LEAP- features, significance and potential applications.

Sources: the hindu.



8. INDIA TO EXPAND POLAR RESEARCH TO ARCTIC

- **Context:** Three decades after its first mission to Antarctica, the government is refocusing priorities to the other pole — the Arctic—because of opportunities and challenges posed by climate change.

Efforts in this regard:

- The government has **renamed the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR)** — since 1998, charged with conducting expeditions to India's base stations to the continent — as **the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research**.
- It's also in talks with Canada and Russia, key countries with presence in the Arctic circle, to establish new observation systems, according to a source. Now, India only has one Arctic observation station near Norway.

What made India refocus its priorities?

- Climate change was a decisive factor in India re-thinking priorities. Sea ice at the Arctic has been melting rapidly — the fastest in this century.
- That means several spots, rich in hydrocarbon reserves, will be more accessible through the year via alternative shipping routes.

Facts for Prelims:

- India is already an observer at the Arctic Council — a forum of countries that decides on managing the region's resources and popular livelihood.
- In 2015, set up an underground observatory, called IndARC, at the Kongsfjorden fjord, half way between Norway and the North Pole.

Sources: the hindu.

9. 'RENT-A-LAB' POLICY TO BRING REVENUES TO INSTITUTIONS

- **Context:** The government has proposed a new policy that could transform scientific instruments in government labs into lucrative assets generating a steady rental income. The policy is called the **Scientific Research Infrastructure Management and Networks (SRIMAN)**.

Highlights of the policy:

- Under the policy, the government plans to hire out to researchers all lab equipment that cost more than ₹10 lakh. This would also reduce the amount of time such expensive instruments remain idle.

How it works?

- The new system, according to the policy, envisages institutions declaring on a website how often their instruments would be available for use by those outside the department or university. Those who would like to use, for example, a DNA-sequencing machine, would have to pay a fee and specify the purpose and time they would want it for.

Rationale behind the policy:

- Currently, the practice of researchers bidding for time-slots to use lab instruments is typically seen more with very expensive equipment, such as radio telescopes and particle-accelerators, which cost crores of rupees.
- Therefore, it was "common" to find in Indian laboratories, expensive equipment lying idle. A "large number" are not shared and are plagued by issues such as maintenance and availability of spares. This adds to the burden of research infrastructure costs.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains: Features and significance of the policy.

Sources: the hindu.

10. INNOVATE INDIA PLATFORM

What to study?

- For Prelims: Features of “Innovate India Platform”, Atal Innovation Mission.
- For Mains: Promotion of innovation at global level and efforts by India in this regard.
- **Context:** Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog & MyGov (a citizen centric platform of the Government of India) have launched “Innovate India Platform”.

About InnovateIndia portal:

- **Aim:** It aims to serve as the common point for all the innovation happening across the nation.
- **How?** It creates the much-needed innovations platform for registering both grassroots and deep-tech innovators at a national level. Those searching for a critical innovation can leverage the portal advantageously for the benefit of the economy as well as national social needs.”

Some of the features of this platform are:

- The platform is open to all Indian citizens.
- The users can View, comment, share, and rate the innovations crowdsourced on the #InnovateIndia platform.
- View the leaderboard which is calculated based on the votes on each innovation.
- Citizens can share their/organizations/someone else’s innovation on the platform by login to the MyGov website.
- These innovations can also be shared on various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter.

Significance of the portal:

- India has been a very innovation-oriented society, but our challenge has been a structured approach to innovation, capturing them and building an ecosystem to take them global.
- The new initiative to capture and support innovation from ground up, is **aimed at creating a structured ecosystem to encourage, enhance and develop India’s innovative character.**

About AIM:

- The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is the Government of India’s flagship initiative **to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.**
- AIM is mandated **to create an umbrella structure to oversee innovation ecosystem of the country** and revolutionizing the innovation eco-system – touching upon the entire innovation life cycle through various programs.

The Atal Innovation Mission shall have two core functions:

- Entrepreneurship promotion through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization, wherein innovators would be supported and mentored to become successful entrepreneurs.
- Innovation promotion: to provide a platform where innovative ideas are generated.

Sources: pib.

11. DEEP OCEAN MISSION (DOM)

- **Context:** Ministry Of Earth Sciences Plans Rs 8000 Crore ‘Deep Ocean Mission’ To Boost India’s Sea Exploration Capabilities. The mission proposes to explore the deep ocean similar to the space exploration started by ISRO about 35 years ago.

Features of the Mission:

- The **focus of the mission** will be on deep-sea mining, ocean climate change advisory services, underwater vehicles and underwater robotics related technologies.
- **Two key projects** planned in the ‘Deep Ocean Mission’ report include **a desalination plant** powered by tidal energy and **a submersible vehicle** that can explore depths of at least 6,000 metres.

Significance of the Mission:

- The 'Deep Ocean Mission' plan will enable India to develop capabilities *to exploit resources in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB)*.
- *India has been allotted 75,000 square kilometres in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) by UN International Sea Bed Authority* for exploration of poly-metallic nodules. CIOB reserves contain deposits of metals like iron, manganese, nickel and cobalt.

Potential:

- It is envisaged that 10% of recovery of that large reserve can meet the energy requirement of India for the next 100 years.
- It has been estimated that 380 million metric tonnes of polymetallic nodules are available at the bottom of the seas in the Central Indian Ocean.

What are PMN?

- **Polymetallic nodules** (also known as manganese nodules) are potato-shaped, largely porous nodules found in abundance carpeting the sea floor of world oceans in deep sea.
- Besides manganese and iron, they contain nickel, copper, cobalt, lead, molybdenum, cadmium, vanadium, titanium, of which nickel, cobalt and copper are considered to be of economic and strategic importance.

What to study?

- For Prelims: Polymetallic nodules, features of Deep Sea Mission, ISA.
- For Mains: Significance and relevance of such missions, usefulness for India's energy security.

Sources: the hindu.

About ISA:

- International Seabed Authority (ISA) is a **UN body set up to regulate the exploration and exploitation of marine non-living resources of oceans in international waters**.
- India actively contributes to the work of International Seabed Authority. Last year, India was re-elected as a member of Council of ISA.
- India's nominees on Legal and Technical Commission and Finance Committee of the ISA were also elected last year.

Paper 3 Topic: Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

1. HUBBLE SPACE TELESCOPE

- **Context:** NASA's Hubble Space Telescope has detected a stunning image of a huge collection of ageing stars, believed to be 10 billion-years-old. This rich and dense smattering of stars is a massive globular cluster, a gravitationally bound collection of stars that orbits the Milky Way.

About the Hubble Space Telescope:

- The Hubble Space Telescope is a large telescope in space. **NASA** launched Hubble in **1990**.
- It was built by the United States space agency NASA, with contributions from the European Space Agency.
- Hubble is the only telescope designed to be serviced in space by astronauts.
- Expanding the frontiers of the visible Universe, the Hubble Space Telescope looks deep into space with cameras that can see across the entire optical spectrum from infrared to ultraviolet.

Globular clusters

- Globular clusters are denser and more spherical than open star clusters like the famous Pleiades.
- They typically contain **hundreds of thousands of stars** that are thought to have formed at roughly the **same time**.

Sources: the hindu.

2. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY APPELLATE BOARD

- **Context:** The Union Ministry of Finance has amended Intellectual Property rules to revoke the power vested with Customs authorities to seize imported products based on complaints of patent infringement.

Background:

On June 22, the Ministry made two amendments to the Intellectual Property Rights (Imported Goods) Enforcement Rules, 2007.

- Firstly, the Intellectual Property Rights (Imported Goods) Enforcement Amendment Rules, 2018, omits all reference to the Patents Act, 1970.
- Another amendment incorporates further conditions that oblige the right-holder to notify the Commissioner of Customs of any amendment, cancellation, suspension or reaction that concern Intellectual Property rights, and require the Customs authorities to accordingly amend, suspend or cancel the corresponding protection provided by them.
- It permitted the Customs authorities to cancel his patent from its records based on the order passed by the Intellectual Property Appellate Board (IPAB).

What is Intellectual Property Appellate Board (IPAB)?

- It was constituted on September 15, 2003 by the Indian Government to hear and resolve the appeals against the decisions of the registrar under the Indian Trademarks Act, 1999 and the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
- Since April 2, 2007, IPAB has been authorized to hear and adjudicate upon the appeals from most of the decisions, orders or directions made by the Patent Controller under the Patents Act. Therefore, all pending appeals of Indian High Courts under the Patents Act were transferred to IPAB.
- **Organization of an IPAB Bench:** Each Bench of the IPAB includes a Judicial Member and a Technical Member. The qualifications for appointment as a technical member of the IPAB are mentioned in The Trade Marks Act and the Patents Act.
- **Jurisdiction:** Appeals from the decision of the Controller to the IPAB must be made within three months from the date of the decision/ order or direction, according to the, or within such further time as the IPAB permits, with the appropriate fees. An extension is available for filing the appeal by way of a Condonation of Delay (COD) petition.

What's important?

- For Prelims: IPAB- composition, jurisdiction.
- For Mains: IP related reforms in India.

Sources: the hindu.

3. WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION (WIPO) TREATIES

- **Context:** Cabinet approves accession to WIPO Copyright Treaty, 1996 and WIPO Performance and Phonograms Treaty, 1996. The treaties extend coverage of copyright to the internet and digital environment.

Meeting the demand of the copyright industries, the treaties will help India:

- To enable creative right-holders enjoy the fruit of their labour, through international copyright system that can be used to secure a return on the investment made in producing and distributing creative works;
- To facilitate international protection of domestic rights holder by providing them level-playing field in other countries as India already extends protection to foreign works through the International Copyright order and these treaties will enable Indian right holders to get reciprocal protection abroad;
- To instil confidence and distribute creative works in digital environment with return on investment; and
- To spur business growth and contribute to the development of a vibrant creative economy and cultural landscape.

WIPO Copyright Treaty:

- It came in force on March 6, 2002 and has been adopted by 96 contracting parties till date and is A Special agreement under Berne Convention (for protection of literary and artistic works). It has provisions to extend the protection of copyrights contained therein to the digital environment.
- Further it recognises the rights specific to digital environment, of making work available, to address “on-demand” and other interactive modes of access.

WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty:

- It came in force on May 20, 2002 and has 96 contracting parties as its members. WPPT deals with rights of two kinds of beneficiaries, particularly in digital environment –
 - (i) Performers (actors, singers, musicians etc.)
 - (ii) Producers of Phonograms (Sound recordings).
- The treaty empowers right owners in the it negotiations with new digital platforms and distributors. It recognizes moral rights of the performers for the first time & provides exclusive economic rights to them.
- Both the treaties provide framework for creators and right owners to use technical tools to protect their works and safeguard information about their use i.e. Protection of Technological Protection Measures (TPMs) and Rights Management Information (RMI).

What's important?

- For Prelims: WIPO and its treaties.
- For Mains: National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy ad its significance for India.

Sources: the hindu.

About WIPO:

- The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is one of the 17 specialized agencies of the United Nations.
- It was created in **1967** “to encourage creative activity, to promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world.”
- It has currently 188 member states, administers 26 international treaties, and is **headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland**.
- Non-members are the states of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands, South Sudan and Timor-Leste. Palestine has observer status.
- **India is a member of WIPO and party to several treaties administered by WIPO.**

4. PARKER SOLAR PROBE

- **Context:** NASA puts finishing touches to 430,000mph Parker Solar Probe that will launch next month to help predict devastating solar storms.

About the Parker solar probe:

- **What is it?** NASA's historic Parker Solar Probe mission will revolutionize our understanding of the sun, where changing conditions can propagate out into the solar system, affecting Earth and other worlds. Parker Solar Probe will travel through the sun's atmosphere, closer to the surface than any spacecraft before it, facing brutal heat and radiation conditions — and ultimately providing humanity with the closest-ever observations of a star.
- **Journey:** In order to unlock the mysteries of the sun's atmosphere, Parker Solar Probe will use Venus' gravity during seven flybys over nearly seven years to gradually bring its orbit closer to the sun. The spacecraft will fly through the sun's atmosphere as close as 3.9 million miles to our star's surface, well within the orbit of Mercury and more than seven times closer than any spacecraft has come before.
- **Goals:** The primary science goals for the mission are to trace how energy and heat move through the solar corona and to explore what accelerates the solar wind as well as solar energetic particles.

Parker Solar Probe has three detailed science objectives:

- Trace the flow of energy that heats and accelerates the solar corona and solar wind.
- Determine the structure and dynamics of the plasma and magnetic fields at the sources of the solar wind.
- Explore mechanisms that accelerate and transport energetic particles.

Why do we study the sun and the solar wind?

- The sun is the only star we can study up close. By studying this star we live with, we learn more about stars throughout the universe.
- The sun is a source of light and heat for life on Earth. The more we know about it, the more we can understand how life on Earth developed.

- The sun also affects Earth in less familiar ways. It is the source of the solar wind; a flow of ionized gases from the sun that streams past Earth at speeds of more than 500 km per second (a million miles per hour).
- Disturbances in the solar wind shake Earth's magnetic field and pump energy into the radiation belts, part of a set of changes in near-Earth space known as space weather.
- Space weather can change the orbits of satellites, shorten their lifetimes, or interfere with onboard electronics. The more we learn about what causes space weather – and how to predict it – the more we can protect the satellites we depend on.
- The solar wind also fills up much of the solar system, dominating the space environment far past Earth. As we send spacecraft and astronauts further and further from home, we must understand this space environment just as early seafarers needed to understand the ocean.

What's important?

- For Prelims: Parker solar probe, living with a star program.
- For Mains: Study of sun- significance and how it helps in better understanding of earth.

Sources: the hindu.

5. KEPLER SPACE TELESCOPE

- **Context:** Scientists at NASA are preparing to download the latest bit of data stored in its planet-hunting Kepler space telescope as the spacecraft is now running "very low" on fuel. NASA has placed the spacecraft in a no-fuel-use safe mode to save the remaining fuel so that data extraction can be completed.

About Kepler telescope:

- Launched in 2009, the Kepler mission is specifically designed to survey our region of the Milky Way galaxy to discover hundreds of Earth-size and smaller planets in or near the habitable zone and determine the fraction of the hundreds of billions of stars in our galaxy that might have such planets.
- Since the launch of the observatory in 2009, astronomers have discovered thousands of extra-solar planets, or exoplanets, through this telescope alone. Most of them are planets that are ranging between the size of Earth and Neptune (which itself is four times the size of Earth). Most of these planets were discovered in a small region of the constellation Cygnus, at which Kepler was pointed for the first four years of its mission.
- As of March 2018, Kepler had found 2,342 confirmed planets; add potential planets, and its find of exoworlds stands at 4,587.

What's important?

- For Prelims: Kepler space telescope, habitable zones.

Sources: the hindu.

6. RAMA (RECONSTITUTING ASTEROIDS INTO MECHANICAL AUTOMATA)

- **Context:** NASA has announced it would give funds to Made In Space's project- RAMA (Reconstituting Asteroids into Mechanical Automata), for finding ways to turn asteroids into giant, autonomous spacecrafts, which could fly to outposts in space.

About RAMA (Reconstituting Asteroids into Mechanical Automata):

- Project RAMA, Reconstituting Asteroids into Mechanical Automata, has been designed to leverage the advancing trends of additive manufacturing (AM) and in-situ resource utilization (ISRU).
- The project aims to enable asteroid rendezvous missions in which a set of technically simple robotic processes convert asteroid elements into very basic versions of spacecraft subsystems (GNC, Propulsion, Avionics).
- Upon completion, the asteroid will be a programmed mechanical automata carrying out a given mission objective; such as relocation to an Earth-Moon liberation point for human rendezvous.

Significance:

- This technique could some day create an affordable and scalable way for NASA to achieve future roadmap items for exploring the solar system.

- These techniques could be beneficial to scientific goals for understanding the solar system and its formation, as it is estimated that an order of magnitude increase in NEO targets could be explored for the same mission cost compared to the SOA.
- RAMA would enable this by removing the need to launch all spacecraft subsystems and instead converting the asteroid material in-situ.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains: RAMA Project and its significance.

Sources: the hindu.

7. GRACE-FO MISSION

- **Context:** About three weeks after their launch, the twin climate-monitoring satellites- GRACE-FO satellites (short for Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment Follow-On)- that NASA deployed in Earth's orbit have switched on their powerful lasers for the first time, showing that their systems are shipshape.

About GRACE- FO mission:

- The Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment Follow-on (GRACE-FO) mission is a partnership between NASA and the German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ).
- **GRACE-FO is a successor to the original GRACE mission**, which began orbiting Earth on March 17, 2002. The GRACE missions measure variations in gravity over Earth's surface, producing a new map of the gravity field every 30 days.
 - GRACE-FO will carry on the extremely successful work of its predecessor while testing a new technology designed to dramatically improve the already remarkable precision of its measurement system.
 - GRACE-FO will continue the work of tracking Earth's water movement to monitor changes in underground water storage, the amount of water in large lakes and rivers, soil moisture, ice sheets and glaciers, and sea level caused by the addition of water to the ocean. These discoveries provide a unique view of Earth's climate and have far-reaching benefits to society and the world's population.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains: GRACE- FO- mission objectives.

Sources: the hindu.

8. PAK SPY SATELLITES LAUNCHED BY CHINA

- **Context:** China successfully launched two remote sensing satellites PRSS-1 and PakTes-1A of Pakistan on board of Long March-2C rocket from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre.
- **It was overall 279th mission for the Long March rocket series** (mainly used to send satellites into low Earth or Sun-synchronous orbits) and **first international commercial launch** in nearly two decades after it carried Motorola's Iridium satellites into orbit in 1999.

The satellites:

PRSS-1:

- It is China's first optical remote sensing satellite sold to Pakistan. It can carry out day and night monitoring. It also has viewing capacity even in clouded conditions.
- It will be used for land and resources surveying, agriculture research, urban construction, monitoring of natural disasters and to provide remote sensing information for (CPEC) under China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- It is China's first optical remote sensing satellite sold to Pakistan and overall 17th satellite developed by China Academy of Space Technology (CAST) for an overseas buyer.

PakTES-1A:

- It is Pakistan's indigenously developed scientific experiment satellite developed by engineers from its space agency SUPARCO (Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission).

Sources: the hindu.

9. FIRST-EVER COLOUR X-RAY ON A HUMAN

- **Context:** New Zealand scientists have performed the first-ever 3-D, colour X-ray on a human, using a technique that promises to improve the field of medical diagnostics.

Medipix:

- The technique used is known as Medipix. The technology is developed by CERN.
- It works like a camera detecting and counting individual sub-atomic particles as they collide with pixels while its shutter is open. This allows for high-resolution, high-contrast pictures.
- The machine's "small pixels and accurate energy resolution meant that this new imaging tool is able to get images that no other imaging tool can achieve. The images very clearly show the difference between bone, muscle and cartilage, but also the position and size of cancerous tumours, for example.

About CERN:

- CERN is the world's largest nuclear and particle physics laboratory, where scientists and engineers are probing the fundamental structure of the Universe by using the most sophisticated scientific instruments and advanced computing systems.
- CERN is based in Geneva on the French-Swiss border. Presently CERN has 22 member states, four associate member states, and the observer status is given to four states and three International Organizations.

What's important?

- For Prelims: First-Ever Colour X-Ray On A Human, Medipix, CERN.

Sources: toi.

10. MEERKAT RADIO TELESCOPE

- **Context:** South Africa has unveiled **MeerKAT- a super radio telescope**, a first phase of what will be the world's largest telescope in a project to try to unravel the secrets of the universe. The telescope was inaugurated in the remote South African town of Carnarvon.

About MeerKAT:

- MeerKAT is **a followup to the KAT 7 (Karoo Array Telescope)**, built in the vast semi-desert Karoo region north of Cape Town to demonstrate South Africa's ability to host the SKA. It will be the biggest radio telescope of its kind in the southern hemisphere.
- Built at a cost of 4.4 billion rand, **MeerKAT will be incorporated into the complex Square Kilometre Array (SKA) instrument**, which when fully operational in the late 2020s would be the world's biggest and most powerful radio telescope.
- MeerKAT will address some of the key science questions in modern astrophysics – how did galaxies form, how are they evolving, how did we come to be here.



The SKA Project:

- The Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project is **an international effort to build the world's largest radio telescope**, with eventually over a square kilometre (one million square metres) of collecting area.
- The SKA will eventually use thousands of dishes and up to a million low-frequency antennas that will enable astronomers to monitor the sky in unprecedented detail and survey the entire sky much faster than any system currently in existence.
- Its unique configuration will give the SKA unrivalled scope in observations, largely exceeding the image resolution quality of the Hubble Space Telescope. It will also have the ability to image huge areas of sky in parallel a feat which no survey telescope has ever achieved on this scale with this level of sensitivity.
- **Both South Africa's Karoo region and Western Australia's Murchison Shire were chosen as co-hosting locations for many scientific and technical reasons**, from the atmospheric conditions above the desert sites, through to the radio quietness, which comes from being some of the most remote locations on Earth.

- Whilst 10 member countries are the cornerstone of the SKA, around 100 organisations across about 20 countries are participating in the design and development of the SKA.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains: SKA and MeerKAT- objectives and key features.

Sources: the hindu.

11. NASA'S 'REMOTE SENSING TOOLKIT'

- **Context:** The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has launched the 'Remote Sensing Toolkit' to promote commercial use of satellite data.

'Remote Sensing Toolkit'- What is it?

- It is an online toolkit launched with an aim to make it easier for users to find, analyse and utilise the relevant satellite data for their research, business projects or conservation efforts. The toolkit provides a simple system that quickly identifies relevant sources based on user input.

Background:

- Through its constellation of Earth observation satellites, NASA collects petabytes of data each year. The variety of open source tools created to access, analyse and utilise the data from these satellites is familiar to millions of science users, but accessing and utilising this data remains daunting for many potential commercial users.
- This prompted the US space agency to introduce the Remote Sensing Toolkit. The Toolkit will help grow the number of users who put NASA's free and open data archive to work for people.

NASA's Technology Transfer program:

- It is managed by the NASA's Space Technology Mission Directorate. The program ensures technologies developed for missions in exploration and discovery are broadly available to the public, maximising the benefit to the nation.

What's important?

- For Prelims: The toolkit- features, significance and benefits for stakeholders.

Sources: the hindu.

12. WORLD'S FASTEST MAN-MADE SPINNING OBJECT

What to study?

- For Prelims: The fastest man- made spinning object, who developed it, what is Quantum mechanics?
- For Mains: Significance and potential applications of the object.
- **Context:** Scientists have developed the *fastest man-made rotor in the world*, which they believe will help them study *quantum mechanics*.

The fastest man- made spinning object:

How was it developed?

- The scientists synthesised a *tiny dumbbell from silica* and levitated it in high vacuum using a laser. The laser can work in a straight line or in a circle – when it is linear, the dumbbell vibrates, and when it is circular, the dumbbell spins.
- *A spinning dumbbell functions as a rotor*, and *a vibrating dumbbell* functions like an instrument for measuring tiny forces and torques, known as *a torsion balance*.

Speed:

- At more than 60 billion revolutions per minute, this machine is more than 100,000 times faster than a high-speed dental drill.

Potential applications:

- With this, scientists will be able to study things like quantum mechanics and the properties of vacuum.
- Understanding these mechanisms is an essential goal for the modern generation of physics.

Sources: the hindu.

13. DRAFT OF DATA PROTECTION BILL

- **Context:** A committee headed by former Supreme Court judge BN Srikrishna recently submitted its **recommendations and a draft law titled the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018** to the government. These are two separate outcome documents submitted to the ministry of electronics and information technology that will steward a legislative effort and define the legal boundaries of the use of personal data.

Background:

- The 10-member committee was set up in July 2017 to recommend a framework for securing personal data in the digital world.

Highlights of the Personal Data Protection 2018 Bill:

- The draft bill notes that “the right to privacy is a fundamental right and it is necessary to protect personal data as an essential facet of informational privacy.”
- The bill also notes that it is necessary to create trust between the individual who provide their data and those who process this.
- On the right to be forgotten, the bill notes that that ‘data principal’ which means the individual or the person providing their data, has a right to “right to restrict or prevent continuing disclosure.” But the bill does not allow for a right of total erasure like the European Union does.
- It also gives a data processor considerable leeway when it comes to deciding on this ‘right to be forgotten.’ The bill notes that “the data fiduciary may charge a reasonable fee to be paid for complying with requests.”
- The Bill also calls for privacy by design on part of data processors, and defines terms like consent, data breach, sensitive data, etc.
- Data Protection Authority of India (DPA): It proposes setting up of a DPA, an independent regulatory body responsible for the enforcement and effective implementation of the law, consisting of a chairperson and six full-time members.
- In case of any appeal against an order of the DPA, an appellate tribunal should be established or an existing appellate tribunal should be granted powers to hear and dispose of any appeal.

Other recommendations by the committee:

- The committee has recommended phased timelines for the adoption of different aspects of the privacy law, making data protection a critical component in India’s security posture rather than a mere compliance prerequisite.
- Also, the stringent penalties proposed on the misuse of data would create deterrence and also compel organizations to build a controls-led environment while processing or storing personal data.

A COMPARISON OF DATA LAWS IN OTHER COUNTRIES:EUROPE (EUROPEAN UNION):

- Has an all-encompassing law ‘General Data Protection Regulations,’ which came into effect on May 25, 2018.
- User consent needs to be explicit n Right to be forgotten, a concept that arose in the EU.
- Right to be forgotten, a concept that arose in the EU.
- Applies to businesses anywhere in the world that handle European data.
- Penalties for non-compliance are up to 4 percent of the company’s global turnover, or 20 million Euros, whichever is higher.

UNITED STATES:

- Data protection fragmented in various federal and state laws.
- Each sector will deem what is private or personal data.
- A movement to pass a new law on consumer privacy protections failed in the Congress in 2017.
- California, with ‘Shine the Light Law,’ was one of the first states in the US to implement privacy laws.

AUSTRALIA:

- The Privacy Act of 1988 regulates the handling of personal information of individuals.
- Privacy is not a fundamental right.
- Does not apply to government agencies, political parties.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3 Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

1. 4 SPECIES ADDED TO RECOVERY PROGRAMME BY WILDLIFE BOARD

- **Context:** National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) recently added four species into the center's recovery Programme for critically endangered species. This decision will lead to targeted conservation of these species whose population is on the decline.
- **The species are** Northern River Terrapin, Clouded Leopard, Arabian Sea Humpback Whale and Red Panda.

Background:

- Terrapins have been exploited for illegal trade across borders, especially for its meat and carapace. Clouded leopard and Red Panda are facing habitat loss and poaching threat for their meat, medicine and pelts.
- While the Northern River Terrapin is largely found in West Bengal, the clouded leopard is found in Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim and Assam while the Red Panda is largely found in Sikkim, western Arunachal Pradesh, North Bengal and parts of Meghalaya.
- Arabian Sea Humpback Whale is facing threats from accidental entanglement in fishing gears, ship strikes and seismic explorations. Humpback whales migrate towards India's west coast from Oman and there have been several instances of these gargantuan species getting beached on Maharashtra's long coastline.

**Species recovery programme:**

- The species recovery programme of the Union Environment Ministry is implemented under **Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats** — a centrally sponsored umbrella scheme for management and conservation of parks, wildlife habitats and conservation.
- Started in 2008-09, IDWH is meant for providing support to protected areas (national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation reserves and community reserves except tiger reserves), protection of wildlife outside protected areas and recovery programmes for saving critically endangered species and habitats.

Facts for Prelims:

- **Species already included in the recovery programme:** Snow Leopard, Bustard (including Floricans), Dolphin, Hangul, Nilgiri Tahr, Marine Turtles, Dugongs, Edible Nest Swiftlet, Asian Wild Buffalo, Nicobar Megapode, Manipur Brow-antlered Deer, Vultures, Malabar Civet, Indian Rhinoceros, Asiatic Lion, Swamp Deer and Jerdon's Courser.
- **India is a party to the International Whaling commission** that is committed to the protection of whales and its habitats in Indian waters.
- **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)** is a statutory Board constituted in September 2003 under Section 5 of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. The NBWL is chaired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

Sources: the hindu.

2. NILGIRI TAHR

- **Context:** As per the latest studies, climate change is threatening the Nilgiri tahr. It is estimated that the endangered wild goat could lose approximately 60% of its habitat, starting from the 2030s.

Background:

- There are only around 2,500 tahrs left in the wild and their population — “small and isolated, making them vulnerable to local extinction” — shows a “decreasing” trend, as per the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Nilgiri Tahr- Key facts:

- IUCN status- EN
- It is listed in **Schedule I** of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.
- Endemic to the Nilgiri Hills and the southern portion of the Western Ghats in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in Southern India.
- It is the State animal of Tamil Nadu.
- Currently, the only populations with more than 300 individuals are in Eravikulam National Park and in the Grass Hills in Anamalai.



Sources: the hindu.

3. PETCOKE

- **Context:** The Petroleum Ministry has told the Supreme Court that it is in favour of a ban on the import of petroleum coke. However, the environment ministry is yet to take the final call and will consult with all stakeholders before arriving upon a decision.

Background:

- The apex Court had, in December last year, refused to lift the ban on the use of pet coke and furnace oil in many industrial units in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana keeping in view the increasing level of pollution.
- It had also refused to give any relief to industrial units like the National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC) and Hindalco.

What is petcoke?

- Petroleum coke, the bottom-of-the-barrel leftover from refining Canadian tar sands crude and other heavy oils, is cheaper and burns hotter than coal.
- But it also contains more planet-warming carbon and far more heart- and lung-damaging sulphur.



Concerns:

- The petcoke burned in factories and plants is contributing to dangerously filthy air in India, which already has many of the world's most polluted cities. It contains 17 times more sulfur than the limit set for coal, and a staggering 1,380 times more than for diesel.

Need for regulation:

- The country has seen a dramatic increase in sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide emissions in recent years, concentrated in areas where power plants and steel factories are clustered. Those pollutants are converted into microscopic particles that lodge deep in the lungs and enter the bloodstream, causing breathing and heart problems.
- Petcoke, critics say, is making a bad situation worse across India. About 1.1 million Indians die prematurely as a result of outdoor air pollution every year, according to the Health Effects Institute, a nonprofit funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and industry.

What's important?

- For Prelims: What is petcoke.
- For Mains: Petcoke- concerns, need for ban and regulation.

Sources: the hindu.

4. GANGA VRIKSHAROPAN ABHIYAN

- **Context:** The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) recently organised the 'Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan' in five main Ganga basin states – Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. The State Forest Departments of these five states acted as the Nodal Agencies for the smooth and effective execution of the campaign.

About Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan:

- The campaign was initiated as part of the Forest Interventions in Ganga (FIG) component of Namami Gange Programme.
- It was aimed at bringing greater awareness among people and other stakeholders regarding the importance of afforestation for the task of Ganga Rejuvenation.
- As part of the campaign, schools, colleges and departments were requested to "Adopt a Plant" for turning this campaign into a people's movement.

Forest Interventions in Ganga (FIG):

- The afforestation is part of the Forest Interventions in Ganga (FIG) which is significant as it aims to bring greater awareness among people and other stakeholders regarding the importance of afforestation for the task of Ganga Rejuvenation.

Why is Afforestation in Ganga Basin important?

- Forests cause higher rainfall and raise water level in the rivers. Through their foliage, craggy bark and abundant leaf litter, trees and forests decrease the speed of water dispersion and favour slow but greater infiltration of rainwater to ensure smooth functioning of the hydrological cycle.
- Moreover, presence of healthy forest cover along the river provides self-cleaning ability to the river. Thus, afforestation and augmentation of existing forest along the Ganga holds the promise to strengthen the riparian ecosystem thereby contributing to the overarching cause of Ganga Rejuvenation.

About NMCG:

- The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is the implementation wing of National Ganga Council which was set up in October 2016 under the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities order 2016. The order dissolved National Ganga River Basin Authority.
- **NMCG has a two tier management structure** and comprises of Governing Council and Executive Committee. Both of them are headed by Director General, NMCG. Executive Committee has been authorized to accord approval for all projects up to Rs.1000 crore.
- **The order envisages five tier structure** at national, state and district level to take measures for prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution in river Ganga and to ensure continuous adequate flow of water so as to rejuvenate the river Ganga as below:
 - National Ganga Council under chairmanship of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.
 - Empowered Task Force (ETF) on river Ganga under chairmanship of Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.
 - National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).
 - State Ganga Committees.
 - District Ganga Committees in every specified district abutting river Ganga and its tributaries in the states.

Sources: the hindu.

5. SAFAR (SYSTEM OF AIR QUALITY AND WEATHER FORECASTING)

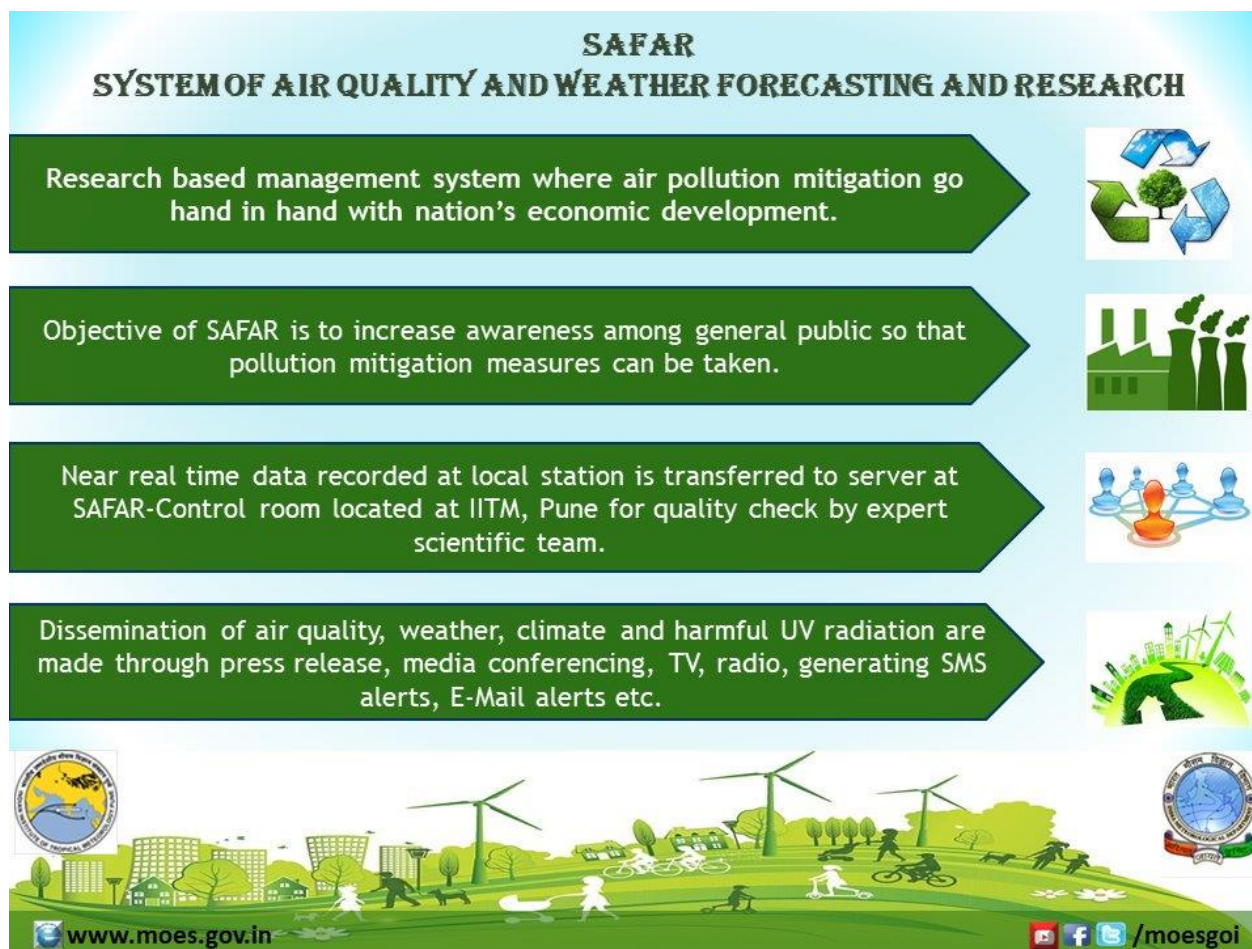
- **Context:** Ministry of Earth Sciences has unveiled state-of-the-art Air Quality and Weather Forecast System–SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting) at Chandni Chowk in Delhi. It is first of its kind and most advanced system in India.

About SAFAR:

- SAFAR was developed indigenously by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune and operationalized by India Meteorological Department (IMD).
- It has been introduced for greater metropolitan cities of India to provide location-specific information on air quality in near real time and its forecast 1-3 days in advance for the first time in India.
- It is integral part of India's first Air Quality Early Warning System operational in Delhi. It will monitor all weather parameters like temperature, rainfall, humidity, wind speed and wind direction.
- Pollutants monitored: PM1, PM2.5, PM10, Ozone, CO, NOx (NO, NO2), SO2, BC, Methane (CH4), Non-methane hydrocarbons (NMHC), VOC's, Benzene, Mercury.
- Monitored Meteorological Parameters: UV Radiation, Rainfall, Temperature, Humidity, Wind speed, Wind direction, solar radiation.

Significance of the system:

- It has been introduced for greater metropolitan cities of India to provide location-specific information on air quality in near real time and its forecast 1-3 days in advance for the first time in India.
- The World Meteorological Organization has recognised SAFAR as a prototype activity on the basis of the high quality control and standards maintained in its implementation.
- The ultimate objective of the project is to increase awareness among general public regarding the air quality in their city well in advance so that appropriate mitigation measures and systematic action can be taken up for betterment of air quality and related health issues.



Facts for Prelims:

- **Air Quality Index** is a tool for effective communication of air quality status to people in terms, which are easy to understand. It transforms complex air quality data of various pollutants into a single number (index value), nomenclature and colour.
- **There are six AQI categories**, namely Good + Satisfactory, Moderately polluted, Poor, Very Poor, and Severe. Each of these categories is decided based on ambient concentration values of air pollutants and their likely health impacts (known as health breakpoints).
- **AQ sub-index and health breakpoints are evolved for eight pollutants** (PM10, PM2.5, NO2, SO2, CO, O3, NH3, and Pb) for which short-term (upto 24-hours) National Ambient Air Quality Standards are prescribed.

What's important?

- For Prelims: SAFAR, AQI- key facts.
- For Mains: Air pollution- challenges, mitigation and concerns.

Sources: the hindu.

6. ODISHA POLICE LAUNCH DRIVE TO BUST PANGOLIN SMUGGLING RACKET

- **Context:** A special unit of the Odisha Police has launched a drive to bust an international syndicate that peddles "endangered" pangolin, one of the world's most illegally traded mammals.
- **MLAT:** A process has been initiated to crack the international pangolin smuggling racket, possibly with the help of the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT). *MLAT is an agreement between nations to exchange information or provide legal assistance for enforcing laws.*

Illegal market:

- Pangolins is smuggled for its scales as it believed that they possess magic or charms and have medicinal properties. The scales serves as base component for indigenous (traditional) psychotropic substances.
- China is main illicit hub (market) for smuggled scales of Pangolins, where they have huge demand for medicinal and magical purposes.

**About Pangolin:**

- **Pangolin is only scaly mammal on the planet.** According to Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), it is also the most illegally traded vertebrate within its class (Mammalia).
- **Of the eight species of pangolin worldwide, two are found in India.** They are **Chinese pangolin**, mostly found in northeast India and **Indian pangolin**.
- **Protection Status:** Chinese pangolin has been listed as "critically endangered" by UN affiliated International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List. Indian pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) has been listed as "endangered" in IUCN Red List. It is also a Schedule I category protected animal, under the Wildlife Protection Act (1972).

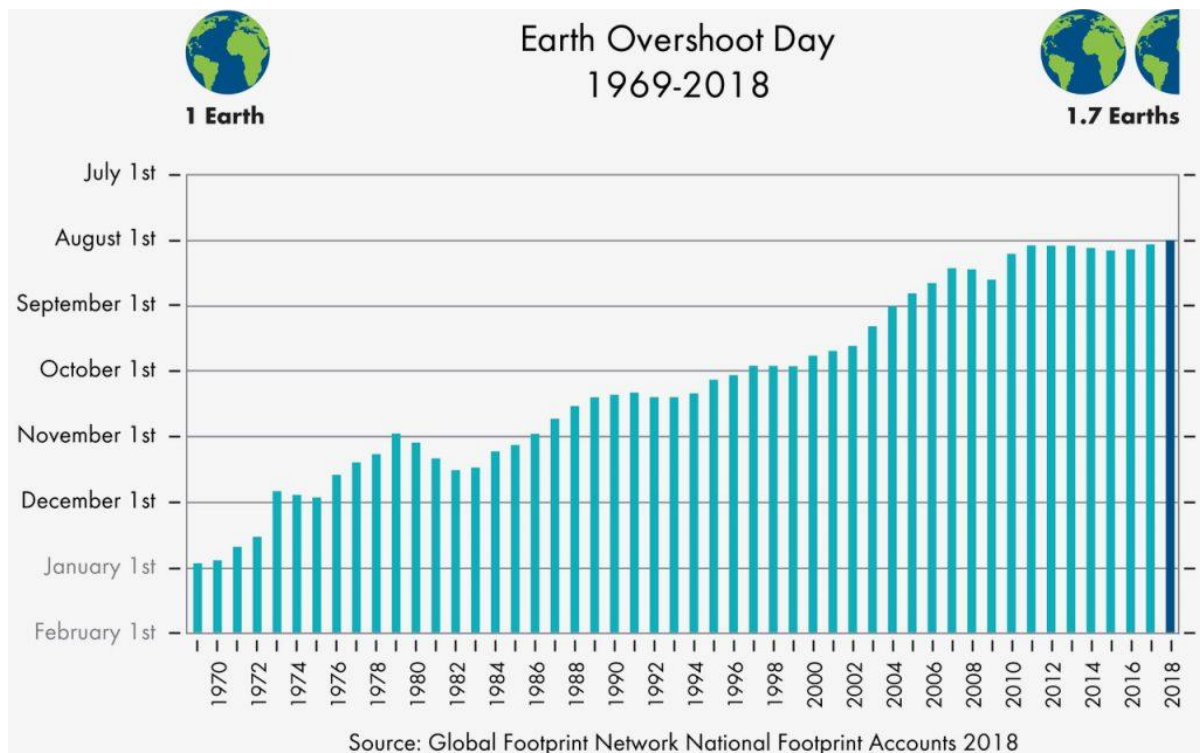
Sources: BS.

7. 2018 EARTH OVERSHOOT DAY FALL ON AUGUST 1**What to study?**

- For Prelims: What is Earth Overshoot Day and when is it celebrated?, Global Footprint Network.
- For Mains: Significance of the day and concerns associated.
- **Context:** 2018 Earth Overshoot Day will fall on August 1, the earliest date since ecological overshoot began in early 1970s. This year the overshoot day falls two days earlier than the last year's.

What is the Earth Overshoot Day?

- It is date when humanity annual demand on nature exceeds what Earth can regenerate over the entire year. It is calculated by Global Footprint Network and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).



The increasing burden on natural resources:

- Currently, **humankind is using 170% of the world's natural output**. That means we are using up the equivalent of 1.7 Earths. And, according to the Global Footprint Network, we're on track to be using two Earths by the end of the 21st Century.
- In 1963, we used 78% of the Earth's biocapacity. However by the early 1970s we began to consume more energy than the planet could produce. By 10 years ago, we were using 144% of the Earth's biocapacity.

Reasons for this and what can be done?

- The two greatest contributing factors to humanity's Ecological Footprint are carbon emissions, which accounts for 60%, and food, 26%.
- If we cut our carbon emissions by half, according to the Global Footprint Network, Earth Overshoot Day would come 89 days later in the year.
- If we cut food waste in half worldwide, we could move the date back 11 days. By eating less protein-intensive food, we could move it back 31 days.

How is it calculated?

- Earth Overshoot Day is calculated by dividing the world biocapacity (the amount of natural resources generated by Earth that year), by the world ecological footprint (humanity's consumption of Earth's natural resources for that year), and multiplying by 365, the number of days in one Gregorian common calendar year.

Global Footprint Network:

- It is an **international nonprofit organization** founded in 2003 to enable a sustainable future where all people have opportunity to thrive within the means of one planet.
- Functions:** It develops and promotes tools for advancing sustainability, including ecological footprint and biocapacity, which measure amount of resources we use and how much we have. These tools aim at bringing ecological limits to center of decision-making.

Sources: toi.

8. GREEN MAHANADI MISSION

What to study?

- For Prelims: Green Mahanadi Mission- features, Mahanadi river- tributaries.
- For Mains: Conservation of rivers in India- initiatives by government.
- **Context:** Odisha government has launched **Green Mahanadi Mission**. Under the mission, a total of two crore saplings will be planted on the banks of the Mahanadi.

Green Mahanadi Mission:

- The Green Mahanadi Mission envisages rejuvenating Mahanadi river and its **tributaries Tel and Ib** by increasing recharging capacity through massive plantation.
- Under the mission, **a green belt with width of 1 km will be created on both sides of the river** beginning from the place, where the river enters Odisha to Paradip, where it merges with the Bay of Bengal.
- The plantation will be undertaken over 75,760 hectares government land besides 47,470 hectares private land.

About Mahanadi River:

- The Mahanadi is one of the largest Indian peninsular rivers that drains into the Bay of Bengal. The 857 km long river **originates in Raipur district of the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh** and flows through the eastern state of Orissa before meeting the sea.
- The Mahanadi River is a river of eastern India. The Mahanadi rises in the **Satpura Range of central India**, and flows east to the Bay of Bengal.
- The **major tributaries** of Mahanadi are Seonath, Jonk, Hasdo, Mand, Ib, Ong, Tel etc.

Sources: IE.

9. NATURALIZED SPECIES

What are naturalised species?

- An intentionally or unintentionally introduced species that has adapted to and reproduces successfully in its new environment.
- Naturalised species reproduce naturally in the environments they colonise. Invasive species do this so prolifically that they alter the workings of the natural ecosystems they colonise or invade.
- **Why in News?** An international team — including scientists from India — have collated information on alien plant species from several sources, ranging from online plant lists to old compilations of India's national and regional flora. They found that as many as 471 plant species that are alien or exotic — not native to India — **are 'naturalised,' for they can thrive in the country's wildernesses by forming stable populations.**

Highlights of the findings:

- Scientists have developed the first lists of naturalised plants for each State; these lists reveal that 110 alien plants now naturally occur in more than 31 States in India.
- At 332, **Tamil Nadu has the highest number of naturalised exotics**, followed by Kerala (290), while Lakshadweep has the least (17).
- The distribution across Indian States of over 20 of these naturalised species (in the list of 471) is unknown.
- A majority of these naturalised plants are herbs such as the invasive Siam weed *Chromolaena odorata*, native to south and central America.
- The new list shows that many exotic species are now part of our natural flora.

India- the 'hotspots' of naturalised plant species:

- More than 13,000 plant species are now naturalised in ecosystems across the world due to human activity; many of these later turn invasive and impact local flora and fauna.
- Last year, a study identified India as one of the 'hotspots' of naturalised plant species and among the seven regions in the world that have the highest number of invasive species.
- The ENVIS Centre on Floral Diversity hosted by the BSI lists more than 170 invasive plant species in India.

Way ahead:

- Now, the government needs to strengthen quarantine measures adopted before a plant is brought to the country.

What to study?

- For Prelims: naturalised species.
- For Mains: naturalised species- concerns, threats and solutions.

Sources: the hindu.

10. ARSENIC CONTAMINATION

What to study?

- For Prelims: Arsenic contamination- state- wise level of contamination.
- For Mains: Concerns associated and government efforts to prevent water pollution.
- **Context:** A recent publication by researchers at the School of Environmental Studies (SOES), Jadavpur University, reveals not only rise in arsenic contamination of paddy plants from ground water in West Bengal, but also that concentration of 'arsenic accumulation' depends on the variety of paddy and its stage in the crop cycle.

Highlights of the study:

- The study highlights the processes and dependencies of arsenic trans-location in rice from contaminated irrigation water.
- The study shows that arsenic uptake in the paddy plant reduces from root to grain, and that its concentration is related to the variety of the rice cultivated.
- The uptake of arsenic is faster in young roots in a vegetative state than in older tissues with a higher concentrations of iron in root soil in the reproductive phase.
- The study was carried out on two commonly consumed rice varieties — Minikit and Jaya — and the latter was found to be more resistant to arsenic.
- The study has raised concerns over the disposal of the contaminated rice straw which is used as animal fodder or burnt or sometimes left in the field itself to serve as fertiliser.

Arsenic in groundwater:

- Arsenic in ground water is a geogenic contaminant i.e. caused by natural geologic processes. Incidence of high arsenic in groundwater reported from various parts of the country, particularly in the Ganga- plains is a serious threat to the health of human being.
- Over the last three decades numerous measures have been initiated which includes alternate arrangement for supply of arsenic free water to the affected populace and providing arsenic removal plants. Arsenic occurrences in ground water in these areas is highly sporadic in nature and all the sources in these areas are not necessarily contaminated.
- Technological options to combat arsenic menace, in groundwater, to ensure supply of arsenic free water, in the affected areas can be in-situ remediation of arsenic from aquifer system, ex-situ remediation of arsenic from tapped groundwater by arsenic removal technologies, use of surface water source as an alternative to the contaminated groundwater source, tapping alternate safe aquifers for supply of arsenic free groundwater or combination of above techniques.

What needs to be done?

- Technological options to combat arsenic menace, in groundwater, to ensure supply of arsenic free water, in the affected areas can be in-situ remediation of arsenic from aquifer system, ex-situ remediation of arsenic from tapped groundwater by arsenic removal technologies, use of surface water source as an alternative to the contaminated groundwater source, tapping alternate safe aquifers for supply of arsenic free groundwater or combination of above techniques.

Sources: the hindu.

11. INTERNATIONAL TIGER DAY: 29 JULY

- **Context:** Global Tiger Day, often called International Tiger Day, is an annual celebration to raise awareness for tiger conservation, held annually on 29 July.
- It was created in 2010 at the Saint Petersburg Tiger Summit.
- The goal of the day is to promote a global system for protecting the natural habitats of tigers and to raise public awareness and support for tiger conservation issues.



Conservation efforts:

- The concentrated efforts of independent activists, government policies, amendments to the Wild Life Protection Act, and rising awareness have helped push the number of the wild cats to 2,226 in 2014, when the last tiger census was held.

Concerns and challenges:

- India has one of the **lowest per capita forest areas in the world**. Forests as carbon sinks are deemed to be a major mean of controlling climate change. Depletion of forests is responsible for reduction of tiger habitats.
- **Reduced food base:** As forestlands fall to development projects, habitable land for animals that make for the tiger's food base are also reduced.
- **Poaching:** Another issue that has hindered tiger conservation in India and globally is poaching, which will persist as long as there is an illegal market for tiger body parts.
- **Climate change:** Rising sea level as a result of climate change is on the verge of wiping out Sundarbans, one of the last remaining habitats of the Bengal tigers.

Conservation efforts:

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has launched the **M-STripes** (Monitoring System for Tigers – Intensive Protection and Ecological Status), a mobile monitoring system for forest guards.
- At the St. Petersburg Tiger Summit in 2010, leaders of 13 tiger range countries resolved to do more for the tiger and embarked on efforts to double its number in the wild, with a popular slogan '**TX2**'. The **Global Tiger Initiative (GTI) program of the World Bank**, using its presence and convening ability, brought global partners together to strengthen the tiger agenda.
- Over the years, the initiative has institutionalised itself as a separate entity in the form of the **Global Tiger Initiative Council (GTIC)**, with its two arms – **the Global Tiger Forum and the Global Snow Leopard Ecosystem Protection Program**.
- **The Project Tiger**, launched way back in 1973, has grown to more than 50 reserves amounting to almost 2.2% of the country's geographical area.
- Additionally, **improving patrolling** and doing it specifically in areas vulnerable to poaching can bring the crime rate down.

Way ahead:

- There are several infrastructure projects that will cut through tiger corridors and habitats. The future of the big cat is uncertain if we continue to violate their habitat. Unless tigers have inviolate habitats where they can breed and flourish and there are corridors linking these breeding populations, we are isolating tigers in very small reserves which is fatal in the long run.

Some controversial projects:

- Highways and railway lines are being expanded in the corridor connecting Kanha and Pench tiger reserves.
- A railway line is being constructed through Melghat tiger reserve.
- Ken-Betwa river linking project will submerge over 100 square kilometres of the Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh.)

While the number is something to be proud of, experts believe issues such as poaching, receding forest areas and development projects infringing on tiger habitat need to be tackled.

What to study?

- For Prelims: International Tiger Day- significance and theme, Tiger population- state- wise, country- wise and other key facts, Important tiger reserves, M- Stripes.
- For Mains: Dwindling tiger population- causes, concerns and conservation efforts- both national and international.

Sources: the hindu.

*Paper 3 Topic: Disaster management.***1. AMCDRR 2018**

- **Context:** The Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction 2018 (AMCDRR 2018) will be held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. It is convened by the UN Office for DRR (UNISDR) and the Government of Mongolia.
- The conference will represent a key milestone for reflection on three years into the implementation of **the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**. Specifically, the conference will enable governments and stakeholders to review progress made against the commitments at the AMCDRR 2016, i.e. the New Delhi Declaration, the Asia Regional Plan, and ten stakeholder voluntary action statements.
- **Theme of the AMCDRR 2018:** 'Preventing Disaster Risk: Protecting Sustainable Development'.

What is AMCDRR?

- Established in 2005, AMCDRR is a biennial conference jointly organized by different Asian countries and the UNISDR.
- India hosted the second AMCDRR in New Delhi in 2007.

About Sendai Framework:

- The "Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030" was adopted during the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Japan in March, 2015.

Key features of the Sendai framework:

- It is the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda, with seven targets and four priorities for action.
- **It was endorsed by the UN General Assembly** following the 2015 Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR).
- **The Framework is for 15-year.** It is a voluntary and non-binding agreement which recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and other stakeholders.
- **The new Framework is the successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015:** Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.

Implementation:

- The implementation of the Sendai Framework involves adopting integrated and inclusive institutional measures so as to work towards preventing vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery and strengthen resilience.

What's important?

- For Prelims: AMCDRR and its outcomes, Sendai framework and the targets.
- For Mains: Disaster risk reduction- need, challenges and global efforts.

Sources: pib.

2. INDIA TO GIVE FLASH FLOOD WARNING TO ASIAN NATIONS**What to study?**

- For Prelims: WMO.
- For Mains: Need and significance of early warning systems.

- **Context:** India has been designated as a nodal centre for preparing flash-flood forecasts by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). That means India will have to develop a customised model that can issue advance warning of floods in Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand.

Need for early warning:

- Like India, several southeast Asian countries depend on the monsoon and are prone to its vagaries. The WMO says flash floods account for 85% of flooding incidents across the world, causing some 5,000 deaths each year.
- The proposed model would provide forecasts by computing the likelihood of rainfall and the soil moisture levels to warn of possible floods.



About WMO:

What is it?

- The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is **a specialized agency of the United Nations** dedicated to meteorology (weather), climatology (climate), operational hydrology (water) and other related geophysical sciences such as oceanography and atmospheric chemistry.

Functions:

- WMO coordinates the activities of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services in 191 States and Territories so that basic weather, climate and water services are made available to anyone who needs them, when they need them.
- WMO guarantees the publication of observations and statistics and furthers the application of meteorology and hydrology (including the monitoring and predictions of climate change and ozone) to all aspects of human activities such as aviation, shipping, water management and agriculture.
- WMO also encourages research and training in meteorology and hydrology and their related applications and contributes towards reducing the impact of weather- and climate-related hazards. This is accomplished through regular, reliable forecasts and early warnings on flooding, drought, tropical cyclones, tornadoes and other extreme events.
- Predictions concerning locust swarms and the transport of pollutants (nuclear and toxic substances, volcanic ash) are also provided by WMO Members.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3 Topic: Security related issues.

COUNTER-DRONE STRATEGY FOR AIRPORTS READY

- **Context:** Aviation security watchdog BCAS has finalised a strategy to neutralise drones near airports, with the government set to unveil a framework to regulate unmanned aircraft systems in the country. The strategy deals with drones operating near aerodromes.

What's proposed?

- A **"soft kill" approach** instead of a hard kill approach has been suggested because destroying a drone with a payload of explosives or biochemical will result in an attack and serve the purpose of their handlers. The best approach is to entrap the drones and not destroy them.

Background:

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation had released draft rules for unmanned aircraft systems in November last year and proposed to ban their operation within 5 km radius of an airport and 50 km from an international border.

About BCAS (Bureau of Civil Aviation Security):

- The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security is an attached office of the Ministry of Civil Aviation of India.
- It is the regulatory authority for civil aviation security in India.

- It is headed by an officer of the rank of Director General of Police and is designated as **Commissioner of Security (Civil Aviation)**.
- Commissioner of security (CA) is the appropriate authority for implementation of Annexure 17 to Chicago convention of International civil aviation organization (ICAO)
- Commissioner of security (CA) is responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of the National Civil Aviation Security Programme.
- The main responsibility of BCAS are laying down standards and measures in respect of security of civil flights at International and domestic airports in India.

What's important?

- For Prelims: BCAS, ICAO and CA.
- For Mains: Need for counter- drone strategy.

Sources: the hindu.



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Facts for Prelims

1. GOLDEN GLOBE RACE (GGR)

- **What is it?** The Golden Globe Race is being conducted by Sir Robin Knox Johnston of UK to commemorate 50 years since the world's first solo non-stop circumnavigation undertaken by him in 1968 onboard the Indian built boat, Suhaili.
- The uniqueness of the race is that boat designs and technology newer than 1968 is not permitted, hence use of Global Positioning System (GPS), satellite communication, navigational aids, etc is forbidden.
- Commander Abhilash Tomy of the Indian Navy is the only invitee from Asia.

2. GST DAY – 1ST JULY

- **When?** 1st July 2018 will be celebrated as 'GST day', to commemorate the first year of the unprecedented reform of Indian taxation.

3. KALIDAS AWARD

- **Context:** Noted artist Anjolie Ela Menon has received the National Kalidas Samman for visual arts from the Madhya Pradesh government. The award was conferred in recognition of her insightful and sensitive portrayal of the identity and spirit of women through her meaningful paintings in a variety of media.

About Kalidas Samman:

- It is a prestigious arts award presented annually by the government of Madhya Pradesh in India.
- The award is named after Kālidāsa, a renowned Classical Sanskrit writer of ancient India. The Kalidas Samman was first awarded in 1980.
- It was initially conferred in alternate years in the fields of Classical Music, Classical Dance, Theatre and Plastic Arts. From 1986-87 onwards, the awards were presented in all four fields every year.

4. IN NEWS- BANKING CODES AND STANDARDS BOARD OF INDIA (BCSBI)

- The Banking Codes and Standards Board of India (BCSBI) is an independent banking industry watchdog that protects consumers of banking services in India.
- The board oversee compliance with the "Code of Bank's Commitment to Customers".
- It is an independent and autonomous body, registered as a separate society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 on 18 February 2006.
- The Reserve Bank of India extended financial support to the Board, meeting its expenses for the first five years.
- BCSBI has in collaboration with the Indian Banks' Association (IBA), evolved two codes – Code of Bank's Commitment to Customers and the Code of Bank's Commitment to Micro and Small Enterprises – which set minimum standards of banking practices for member banks to follow when they are dealing with individual customers and micro and small enterprises.

5. GLOBAL MOBILITY SUMMIT

- **Context:** NITI Aayog, in collaboration with various ministries and industry partners, is organising 'MOVE: Global Mobility Summit' in New Delhi.
- **Significance:** It will be the first Global Mobility Summit of its kind, with over 1,200 expected participants from across the world including Government leadership, Industry leaders, Research Organizations, Academia, Think Tanks and Civil Society Organisations.
- **Objectives of the summit:** To help drive Government's goals for vehicle electrification, renewable energy integration and job growth and also speed up India's transition to a clean energy economy.

6. WAPCOS LIMITED

- **Context:** WAPCOS celebrated its 50th foundation day on July 3rd, 2018.

Key facts:

- WAPCOS Limited is a MINI RATNA-I Public Sector Enterprise under the aegis of Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation.
- It was incorporated in 1969 under the Companies act. 1956.
- The company provides consultancy services in the fields of water resources, power and infrastructure.

7. CVIGIL

- **What is it?** It is a mobile app launched by the Election Commission of India to enable citizens to report on violation of election code of conduct. It will be operational only where elections are announced.

8. FIGHTER AIRCRAFT TEJAS:

- **Context:** India's homegrown fighter aircraft Tejas commences operations.

Key facts:

- Tejas is a single-seat, single-jet engine, multirole light fighter.
- It is the smallest and lightest multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft in the Indian Air Force.
- It has been designed and developed by Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

9. AGARTALA AIRPORT RENAMED:

- **Context:** Cabinet approves renaming of Agartala Airport, Tripura as Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore Airport, Agartala.
- **Background:** Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore, who ascended the throne of the erstwhile Tripura Princely State in 1923, was an enlightened and benevolent ruler. Agartala Airport was constructed in 1942 on the land donated by Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore.

10. KHAN PRAHARI

- **What is it?** It is a Mobile Application 'Khan Prahari' developed by CMPDI, Ranchi a Subsidiary of CIL and Bhaskarcharya Institute of Space Application and Geo-informatics (BISAG).

- Khan Prahari is a tool for reporting any activity taking place related to illegal coal mining like rat hole mining, pilferage etc. One can upload geo-tagged photographs of the incident along with textual information directly to the system.

11. 'SAMBAL' SCHEME

- **What is it?** It is a power bill waiver scheme and subsidised power scheme for labourers and poor families launched by the Madhya Pradesh Government.
- Under the scheme, the Below Poverty Line (BPL) families would be provided electricity at a cost of 200 rupees per month. The objective of this scheme to make sure that all the households have power facility in the state.

12. ETA CARINAE

- **What is it?** It is the most luminous and massive stellar system within 10,000 light-years. It is located about 7,500 light-years away in the southern constellation of Carina. It is famous for a 19th century outburst that briefly made it the second-brightest star in the sky.



- **Why in News?** It is accelerating particles to high energies, some of which may reach the earth as cosmic rays.

13. GAMING UNIVERSITY IN ANDHRA PRADESH

- **Context:** UNESCO has entered into an agreement with Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board (APEDB) to establish a 'Gaming Digital Learning Hub' in Vishakhapatnam.
- The Design University for Gaming will help UNSECO to develop edutech gaming in state, with the target of providing 50,000 jobs in 10 years.

14. MATTALA AIRPORT

- **Context:** India has agreed to form a joint venture with Sri Lanka to operate the country's loss-making Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport in Hambantota.

Key facts:

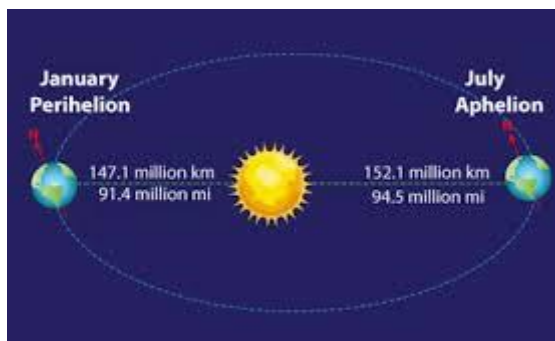
- It is dubbed as the "world's emptiest airport" due to a lack of flights.
- The airport infrastructure was funded through high interest Chinese commercial loans. The airport was officially opened in March 2013.
- The only international flight operating from there was halted in May due to recurrent losses and flight safety issues.

15. CIVIL AVIATION RESEARCH ORGANIZATION AT BEGUMPET AIRPORT, HYDERABAD

- **What?** State-run Airports Authority of India (AAI) will set up a Civil Aviation Research Organisation (CARO).
- **Where?** CARO will be set up at Begumpet Airport, Hyderabad.
- **Why?** CARO is aimed at "finding indigenous solutions" to meet the challenges posed by the growing air traffic.

16. WHAT IS APHELION?

- **Context:** On July 6, Earth was at aphelion, officially at its farthest from the sun, orbiting at a distance of 94,507,803 miles, as opposed to its usual 93 million miles.



- **What is it?** Aphelion Day is a special event that takes place once a year. On this date, the Earth is at its biggest distance from the sun. This point is called the aphelion. At aphelion, Earth receives about 7% less sun than it does in January.

17. FIRST EVER 'INDIA TOURISM MART'

- First ever 'India Tourism Mart' will be hosted in New Delhi from 16th to 18th September by the **Ministry of Tourism in partnership with the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH)**. India Convention Promotion Board (ICPB) shall coordinate the whole event.
- **The objective of the event** is to create an annual Global Tourism Mart for India in line with major international travel marts being held in countries across the world.
- ITM will be the best platform for the States to showcase their products to international buyers, opinion makers and bloggers and attract more tourists to their respective states.
- The Mart will provide a platform for all stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industries to interact and transact business

18. WORLD'S OLDEST COLOR DISCOVERED IN ROCKS DEEP BENEATH SAHARA DESERT

- **What?** Scientists have discovered the oldest color in the geological record- the bright pink pigment aged 1.1 billion years old. The bright pink pigments are the molecular fossils of chlorophyll that were produced by ancient photosynthetic organisms inhabiting an ancient ocean that has long since vanished.
- **Where?** The ancient pigment was extracted from marine black shales of the Taoudeni Basin in Mauritania, West Africa.

19. IN NEWS- MARSHALL ISLANDS

- **Context:** The Union Minister of State (MoS) for Human Resource Development Shri Upendra Kushwaha is on an Official Visit to the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI). This is the first ever Ministerial visit from India to Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI).

Key facts:

- It is a country in the central Pacific Ocean.
- It consists of some of the easternmost islands of Micronesia.
- The Marshalls are composed of more than 1,200 islands and islets in two parallel chains of

coral atolls—the Ratak, or Sunrise, to the east and the Ralik, or Sunset, to the west.

- Majuro atoll is the nominal capital of the republic.

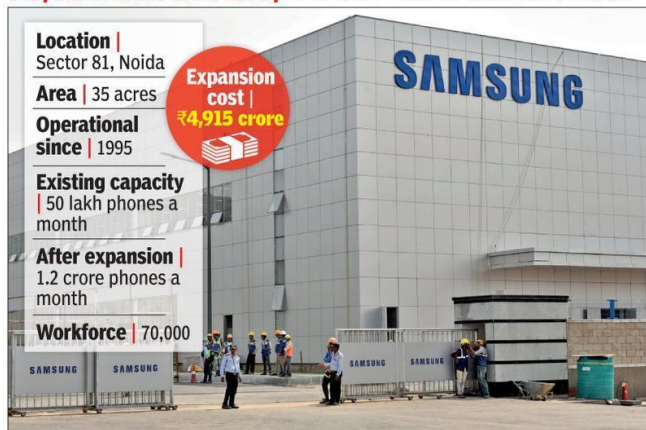
20. FIRST CHAIRMAN OF RAJYA SABHA TO SIGN AN MOU

- Rajya Sabha has, for the first time in 76 years since it came into being, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a foreign counterpart for promoting inter-parliamentary dialogue.
- Shri Venkaiah Naidu, has, in the process, become the first Chairman of Rajya Sabha to sign such an agreement when he inked an MOU with the visiting President of the Senate of the Republic of Rwanda, Mr. Bernard Makuza.

21. WORLD'S LARGEST MOBILE PHONE FACTORY

- **What?** Samsung Electronics has opened the world's largest mobile phone manufacturing plant by production capacity.
- **Where?** In the industrial city of Noida, India.

70,000 EMPLOYEES, TWICE THE PRODUCTION



22. LONELY PLANET'S TOP FIVE "2018 BEST IN ASIA" LIST

- **What is it?** It is a collection of 10 of the best destinations to visit in the continent for the year. It is considered a Bible by travellers worldwide.

Top destinations:

- Busan, South Korea.
- Ancient cities and jewelled architecture of Uzbekistan.
- Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
- Western Ghats, India.

23. 'ANNA' CANTEENS

- Drawing inspiration from the highly-successful 'Ammma' canteens in Tamil Nadu, the Andhra Pradesh government has launched its own 'Anna' canteens across the state.
- The intention behind launching these canteens is to tackle hunger in urban areas. The canteens will offer breakfast, lunch and dinner at Rs 5 a meal.

24. SHWET ASHWA DRASS EXPEDITION

- **What is it?** Shwet Ashwa is the elite motorcycle display team of the Corps of Military Police.



- **Why in News?** It has commenced a motorcycle expedition from Bengaluru to Drass as a tribute to the soldiers who laid down their lives during the Kargil war.

25. SANGITA KALANIDHI AWARD

- **Context:** Renowned Carnatic vocalist Aruna Sairam has been selected for 2018 Sangita Kalanidhi award of Music Academy for her contribution to Carnatic music.

About the award:

- Sangita Kalanidhi Award was instituted by the Music Academy, Chennai.
- It is the title awarded yearly to a Carnatic Musician.

26. VIKAS ENGINE

- **Context:** ISRO has successfully conducted ground test of its high thrust version of Vikas Engine.

Key facts:

- **Vikas Engine is the workhorse liquid rocket engine** powering the second stage of India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), second stage and the four strap on stages of Geosynchronous Launch Vehicle (GSLV) and the twin engine core liquid stage (L110) of GSLV Mk-III.

27. GOLDEN JACKAL

- **Context:** Destruction of mangrove cover in the Bandar Reserve Forest is forcing the golden jackal (*Canis aureus*) out of its habitat, triggering a conflict with the local communities.

Key facts:

- The Golden Jackal is a wolf-like canid that is native to Southeast Europe, Southwest Asia, South Asia, and regions of Southeast Asia.
- The conservation status of the animal is the 'least concern' and it preys on wild crab and fish.

28. FAIR AND REMUNERATIVE PRICE (FRP)

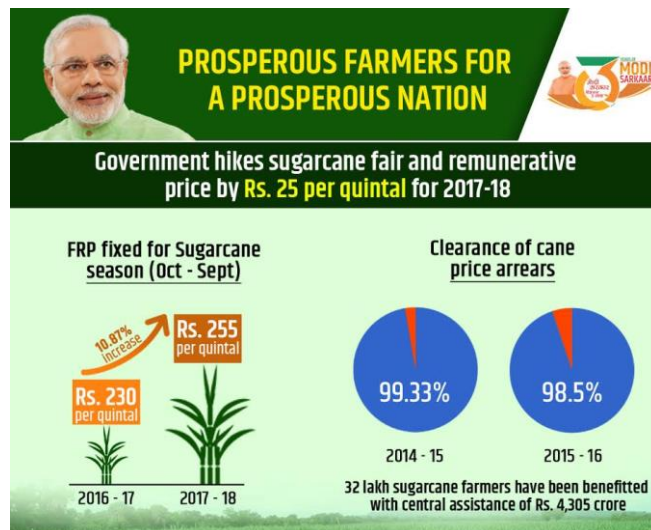
- **Context:** Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane.

What is FRP?

- FRP is the minimum price that the sugar mills have to pay to farmers.
- It is supposed to signal to farmers the need to plant more or less cane for the coming year.

Approved by:

- CACP recommends the fair and remunerative prices based on inter-crop price parity, inflation considerations, fair return to farmers and a host of other factors. It is the cabinet Committee on Economic affairs that finally approves it.



29. EX PITCH BLACK

- **What is it?** It is a biennial multi-national large force employment warfare exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). The aim of the exercise is to practice Offensive Counter Air (OCA) and Defensive Counter Air (DCA) combat, in a simulated war environment.
- **Why in News?** The Indian Air Force for the first time is participating with fighter aircraft in Exercise Pitch Black 2018.

30. ALL INDIA COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION (AICTE)

- **Why in News?** Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved renewal of appointment of Prof Anil D Sahasrabudhe as the chairman of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) till he attains the age of 65 years.
- **AICTE:** AICTE is a **statutory body** established in November 1945. It comes under the aegis of Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resources Development. It is a national-level council for technical education responsible for planning and coordination of technical education and management of education system in the country. It accredits graduate and post graduate programs at Indian institutions.

31. INDIA-ASSISTED AMBULANCE SERVICE LAUNCHED IN SRI LANKA

- **Context:** PM Modi recently launched India-assisted emergency ambulance service in Sri Lanka through video conferencing from New Delhi.

Key facts:

- The service was earlier introduced in two provinces of Sri Lanka with grant assistance from India and it will now be expanded to the remaining seven provinces.
- In total, India has given a grant of \$22.8 million- \$7.6 million for the first phase and \$15.2 million for the country-wide expansion.
- This is the largest Indian grant project in Sri Lanka after Indian housing project.
- Besides providing ambulances, the grant covers training of manpower in India and meeting operational costs for one year.

32. IRAN BECOMES INDIA'S NO. 2 OIL SUPPLIER

- **Context:** Iran was the second-biggest oil supplier to Indian state refiners between April and June. India is now Iran's top oil client after China.

33. TRIBAL ATLAS OF ODISHA

- **Context:** Odisha Government has unveiled first-ever 'Tribal Atlas of Odisha', a compilation of demographic and cultural information of the tribal population in the state. This book will help provide comprehensive data on tribal population.
- It is claimed to be first-of-its-kind tribal compilation in the country. The book was published by SC and ST Research and Training Institute in collaboration with Academy of Tribal Language and Culture (ATLC).
- **Background:** As per Census 2011, Odisha has the second highest tribal population in the country after Madhya Pradesh.

34. PLACES IN NEWS

- PM Modi recently visited two African Nations- **Rwanda and Uganda**.
- **What's important?** Geographical locations of these countries.

35. KARGIL VIJAY DIWAS

- **Context:** Indian Army declared the Kargil mission successful on July 26, 1999; since then the day has been celebrated annually as Kargil Vijay Diwas.
- **India launched 'Operation Vijay'** to clear the Kargil sector of infiltration by Pakistani soldiers and Kashmiri militants on the Indian side of the Line of Control.



- **Background:** The war took place between May and July of 1999 in Jammu and Kashmir's Kargil district. It began with the infiltration of both Pakistani troops and terrorists into Indian territory. The infiltrators positioned themselves in key locations that gave them a strategic advantage during the start of the conflict.
- **Safed Sagar**, the Indian Air Force's operation, was a major part of the Kargil war. It used air power at the height of 32,000 feet for the first time.

36. 2018 RAMON MAGSAYSAY AWARD

- **Context:** Two Indians Bharat Vatwani and Sonam Wangchuk are among six who have been declared winners of 2018 Ramon Magsaysay Award.



About Ramon Magsaysay Award:

- It is Asia's highest honour and is often regarded as the region's equivalent of the Nobel Prize.
- It was established in 1957 by trustees of the New York City based Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Philippine government in the memory of Philippines' third President Ramon Magsaysay.

- It is awarded annually to individuals or organizations from Asia region for their altruistic and philanthropic service.
- It carries Medallion bearing the likeness of the late President Ramon Magsaysay, cash prize and a certificate.

37. MISSION SATYANISHTHA

- **Context:** Indian Railways has launched "*Mission Satyanishtha*".
- **Aim:** This mission aims at sensitizing all railway employees about the need to adhere to good ethics and to maintain high standards of integrity at work.

Objectives of the Mission are:

- To train every employee to understand the need and value of ethics in Personal and Public life.
- To deal with ethical dilemmas in life and Public Governance.
- To help understand the policies of Indian Railways on ethics and integrity and the employee's role in upholding the same.
- To develop inner governance through tapping inner resources.

38. COUNTRY'S FIRST STATE-RUN ALL-WOMAN HOTEL IN KERALA

- **Context:** The Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) is all set to launch India's first public sector hotel run entirely by women for women in the state's capital city, Thiruvananthapuram.
- The hotel is named '*Hostess*'. The all-woman hotel is the first such initiative from a government institution in the country.

39. NASAMS-II

- **Context:** India is in talks with United States to procure National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System-II (NASAMS-II).

About NASAMS-II:

- It is an advanced air defence system.
- It is highly adaptable mid-range solution for any operational air defence requirement.
- It provides tailorable, state-of-the-art defence system that can maximise the ability to quickly identify, engage and destroy current and

evolving enemy aircraft, UAV or emerging cruise missile threats.

- It is part of the air defence network guarding US capital city Washington DC. It is also deployed in several NATO countries.

40. INDIA'S FIRST MOBILE OPEN EXCHANGE ZONE TO BE AT NOIDA

- **Context:** Country's first Mobile Open Exchange (MOX) zone will be opened in Noida. UP government had signed MoU with World Trade Centre, Noida at UP Investors Summit to develop Tech Zone which will act as catalyst for growth of mobile and allied sectors in the state.
- MOX will be *a dedicated ecosystem for mobile industry*, providing an integrated platform to mobile manufacturers, research and development and allied industries.
- It brings infrastructure service providers, handset manufacturers, mobile content, application and service providers, retailers and distributors at one place which promotes *indigenous R&D in hardware and start-ups in app development and other domains of the industry*.

