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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CONSTITUTIONAL / NON - CONSTITUTIONAL / STATUTORY / REGULATORY / VARIOUS QUASI-JUDICIAL BODIES</u>	<u>5</u>
1. Brahmputra Board	5
2. Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR).....	5
3. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).....	6
4. Central Water Commission	6
5. Committee for the Purpose of Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals (CPCSEA)	7
6. National Trust.....	7
7. Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE).....	8
8. Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)	9
9. National Commission for Minorities (NCM)	10
10. Controller General of Accounts	10
11. National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).....	11
12. 15th Finance Commission.....	11
13. National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH).....	12
14. Competition Commission of India (CCI)	12
15. Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).....	12
16. Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)	13
17. National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)	13
18. Food Corporation of India (FCI)	14
19. NCRB merged with bureau of police research	14
20. Border Roads Organisation (BRO).....	15
21. Central Public Works Department (CPWD)	15
22. Integrated Monitoring and Advisory Council	16
23. Prasar Bharati	16
24. CVC can now probe corruption cases in private sector banks	16
25. National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).....	17
26. Law Commission of India.....	17
<u>EXECUTIVE.....</u>	<u>19</u>
1. Overreach.....	19
2. Sub Categorization of Other Backward Classes	19
3. India's first full-time woman defence minister	20
4. Cabinet Secretary.....	20
<u>LEGISLATIVE</u>	<u>22</u>
1. Office of Profit	22
2. States can't enact law on parliamentary secretaries: SC	22
3. Times when the Parliament convened for a session at midnight	23
<u>JUDICIARY.....</u>	<u>24</u>
1. E-Courts Project	24
2. Nyaya Gram project.....	24
3. Commercial Courts	24

<u>CENTRE – STATE RELATIONS</u>	<u>25</u>
1. Karnataka State Flag	25
2. Polavaram Project.....	25
<u>INTER – STATE RELATIONS.....</u>	<u>26</u>
1. Mahadayi Water Dispute	26
2. Cauvery water Dispute.....	26
3. Other Inter-state water dispute	27
4. Inter-State Council	28
<u>ELECTORAL ISSUES / ELECTORAL REFORMS.....</u>	<u>29</u>
1. Model Code of Conduct (MCC)	29
2. Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT).....	29
3. Totalizer Machines.....	30
<u>EVENTS / CELEBRATIONS.....</u>	<u>31</u>
1. Republic Day 2018	31
2. All India Whips’ Conference	31
3. National Voters Day.....	31
4. National Law Day.....	32
5. Infantry Day.....	32
6. Mizoram celebrates 31st anniversary of Mizo peace accord.....	32
<u>CITIZENSHIP.....</u>	<u>34</u>
1. National Register of Citizens	34
2. OCI and PIO cards	34
<u>IMPORTANT CONSTITUTIONAL / STATUTORY PROVISIONS.....</u>	<u>36</u>
1. Uniform Civil Code	36
2. Section 33(7) of RPA	36
3. Section 126 of RPA.....	36
4. Article 35A.....	36
5. Article 370	37
6. Right to privacy.....	37
7. Preventive Detention.....	38
<u>IMPORTANT ACTS / BILLS.....</u>	<u>39</u>
1. Triple talaq draft bill	39
2. The Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill of 2017.....	39
3. National Medical Commission Bill, 2017	39
4. Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act, 2015	41
5. The Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017	41
6. Indian Institutes of Management Bill, 2017	42
7. Kapu reservation bill.....	42
8. The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Third Amendment) Bill, 2017	42
9. Women’s Reservation Bill	43

10. Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017	44
11. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill	44
12. Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Bill, 2016	45
13. RTI Act	46
MISCELLANEOUS.....	47
1. Maharashtra govt rolls out 1% reservation for orphans	47
2. Official languages of the UN	47
3. Maharashtra unveils Public cloud policy	48
4. AFSPA	48
5. Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS)	48
6. Central Road Fund	49
7. HAMESHA VIJAYEE	49
8. Transformation of 115 Backward Districts	50
9. Urdu as second official language of Telangana	50
10. Cornelia Sorabji	50
11. Indira Gandhi Peace Prize.....	51
12. Indian Army to induct women in military police	51
13. Navika Sagar Parikrama	51
14. Assam forms 'State Capital Region' around Guwahati.....	52
15. Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS)	52
16. Intelligence Wing of Sashastra Seema Bal.....	52
17. National ST Commission action on video films of Jaravas on YouTube	53
18. In the lines of INTERPOL, North-eastern states to have NEPOL.....	54
19. NATGRID.....	54
20. Important Committees.....	54

Constitutional / Non - Constitutional / Statutory / Regulatory / various Quasi-Judicial Bodies

NOTES

1. Brahmaputra Board

- The **9th meeting of High Powered Review Board of Brahmaputra Board** was recently held at Borgos, Kaziranga in Assam.
- The meeting was chaired by Nitin Jairam Gadkari, Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.
- The Brahmaputra Board is an **autonomous statutory body** which is responsible for **preparation and implementation of plans** related to flood management, erosion control, drainage management and water resource development in the Brahmaputra valley.
- The board was set up under the Ministry of Irrigation (later renamed as Ministry of Water Resources) as per the **Brahmaputra Board Act 1980**.
- The Board started functioning from January 11, 1982 and its headquarters are located at Guwahati, Assam.
- **Jurisdiction:**
 - The jurisdiction of the Board includes both the **Brahmaputra and Barak Valley** and covers **all the States of the North Eastern Region, Sikkim and part of West Bengal** falling under Brahmaputra river basin.
- **Funding:**
 - Brahmaputra Board is provided fund through **grant-in-aid by the Central Government**.
- **Composition:**
 - The Board consists of 21 Members (4 full time Members and 17 part time Members), representing seven states of the North Eastern Region, North Eastern Council, concerned Ministries and Departments of the Government of India.
 - Since creation of Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and inclusion of Sikkim and part of West Bengal within the jurisdiction of Board, some other representatives of various concerned departments or bodies are also invited as Special Invitees in the meetings of the Brahmaputra Board.

2. Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR)

- President Ram Nath Kovind appointed Rajya Sabha MP **Vinay Sahasrabudhe as President of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR)**.
- ICCR is an autonomous organisation of the government of India, tasked with **strengthening India's external cultural relations through exchanges** with other countries and their people.
- The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) was founded in **1950** by **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad**, independent India's first Education Minister.
- **Objectives:**
 - Its objectives are to actively participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes pertaining to **India's**

external cultural relations;

- To foster and strengthen **cultural relations** and mutual understanding between India and other countries;
- To promote **cultural exchanges** with other countries and people; and
- To develop relations with nations.

3. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has issued the **Telecommunication Interconnection Regulations, 2018**, that are effective from February 1.
- It lay down the ground rules for telcos to enter into initial interconnect pacts, provision points of interconnection (POIs) needed to complete calls, undertake augmentation of such points and the associated charges.
- It has termed interconnection the “lifeline of telecommunication services”.
- **TRAI:**
 - It is the **independent regulator of the telecommunications business** in India.
 - It was established in **1997 by an Act of Parliament** to regulate telecom services and tariffs in India.
 - TRAI regularly **issues orders and directions** on various subjects such as tariffs, interconnections, quality of service, Direct To Home (DTH) services and mobile number portability.
 - In January 2000, TRAI act was amended to establish the **Telecom Disputes Settlement Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT)** to take over the adjudicatory functions of the TRAI.
 - The TDSAT will resolve any dispute between a licensor and a licensee, between two or more service providers, between a service provider and a group of consumers.
 - In addition, any direction, **TRAI orders or decisions can be challenged by appealing to TDSAT.**

4. Central Water Commission

- Central Water Commission has received **Central Board of Irrigation and Power (CBIP) Special Recognition Award 2018 for Excellence in Health & Safety of Large Dams.**
- The award has been given in recognition of the contribution made by the Central Water Commission (CWC) for promoting the health and safety of large dams in India through the **World Bank aided Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP).**
- Central Water Commission is a **premier Technical Organization of India in the field of Water Resources** and is presently functioning as an attached office of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India.
- Central Water Commission is headed by a Chairman, with the status of Ex-Officio Secretary to the Government of India.
- **Functions:**
 - The Commission is entrusted with the general responsibilities of

initiating, coordinating and furthering in consultation of the State Governments concerned, schemes for control, conservation and utilization of water resources throughout the country, for purpose of Flood Control, Irrigation, Navigation, Drinking Water Supply and Water Power Development.

- It also undertakes the investigations, construction and execution of any such schemes as required.
- The work of the Commission is divided among 3 wings namely, River Management Wing (RM), Designs and Research Wing (D&R) and Water Planning and Projects Wing (WP&P).

5. Committee for the Purpose of Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals (CPCSEA)

- A one-day **National Conference on Welfare of Laboratory Animals** was recently organised by CPCSEA, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, with the theme of “**Implementation of 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement)**” while using animals in academic research and regulatory testing in India.
- The Committee for the Purpose of Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals (CPCSEA) is a statutory Committee, which is established under **Section 15(1) of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960**.
- All establishments engaged in research and education involving animals, are required to comply with the various guidelines, norms and stipulations set out by CPCSEA.
- **Background:**
 - India is one of the pioneering countries to institute Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act in 1960 whereas such Act was instituted in France in 1963 and in USA in 1966.
 - The detailed rules for experimentation on animals were first enacted by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1968 and were implemented by CPCSEA.
- **Functions of CPCSEA are:**
 - Registration of establishments conducting animal experimentation or breeding of animals for this purpose.
 - Selection and appointment of nominees in the Institutional Animal Ethics Committees of registered establishments.
 - Approval of Animal House Facilities on the basis of reports of inspections conducted by CPCSEA.
 - Permission for conducting experiments involving use of animals.
 - Recommendation for import of animals for use in experiments.
 - Action against establishments in case of violation of any legal norm/stipulation.

6. National Trust

- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal to amend Section 4(1) and Section 5(1) of the **National Trust for the Welfare of Person with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999** to fix

the term of the Chairperson and Members of the Board of National Trust for three years.

- The proposed amendments are aimed at eliminating any chance of prolonged continuation in the same post by any incumbent.
- The **National Trust is a Statutory Body under Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)**, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- The National Trust was envisaged with a core mission of providing opportunities for **capacity development of Persons with Disabilities and their families**, fulfilling their rights, facilitating and promoting the creation of an enabling environment and an inclusive society.
- **Functions:**
 - The National Trust has been set up to discharge two basic duties – legal and welfare.
 - Legal duties are discharged through **Local Level Committee (LLC)** set up at district level under the chairmanship of the District Collector / District Magistrate.
 - Welfare duty is discharged through the schemes and activities.
 - The schemes and activities of the National Trust inter-alia include training, awareness and capacity building programmes and shelter, care giving and empowerment.

7. Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE)

- The **65th Meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE)** was recently held under the Chairmanship of Union Human Resource Development Minister Shri Prakash Javadekar.
- The board has decided to launch '**Operation Digital Board**' in all schools in five years.
 - This will be undertaken **jointly by Centre, State, CSR, and community**.
 - This will improve the quality of education.
 - Students will be empowered with 360 degree information with interesting learning experience and teacher accountability will also increase.
- **Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE):**
 - The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) is the highest advisory body to **advise the Central and State Governments in the field of education**.
 - The idea that there should be a central Advisory Board of Education was first put forward by the **Calcutta University Commission (1917-19)**.
 - It is the oldest and the most important advisory body of the Government of India in education which was first established in 1920 and dissolved in 1923 as a measure of economy. It was revived in 1935 and has been in existence ever since.
 - **Chairman** of the board shall be **Union Minister of Human Resource Development**. Minister of State for Human Resource Development shall be the Vice- Chairman.

- The tenure of office of members of the Board, other than the ex-officio members, shall be three years.
- **Functions of CABE would be:**
 - To review the progress of education from time to time.
 - To appraise the extent and manner in which the education policy has been implemented by the Central and State Governments, and other concerned agencies, and to give appropriate advice in the matter.
 - To advise regarding coordination between the Central and State Governments/UT Administrations, State Governments and non-governmental agencies for educational development in accordance with the education policy.
 - To advise, suo motu, or on a reference made to it by the Central Government or any State Government or a Union Territory Administration or any educational question.

8. Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)

- The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has simplified '**Make II**' procedure, which prescribes guidelines to be followed to develop and manufacture defence equipment through Indian Industry.
- **Changes introduced:**
 - Since **no government funding is involved in 'Make II' project**, the DAC felt it necessary to simplify the procedure to make it industry friendly, with minimal government control.
 - The revised procedure will now allow Ministry of Defence to accept suo-motu proposals from the industry and also allows start-ups to develop equipment for Indian Armed Forces.
 - The minimum qualification criteria to participate in 'Make II' projects has also been relaxed by removing conditions related to credit rating and reducing financial net worth criteria.
 - As per the earlier 'Make II' procedure, only two vendors were shortlisted to develop prototype equipment.
 - Now, all vendors meeting the relaxed eligibility criteria will be allowed to participate in the prototype development process.
- **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)**
 - To **counter corruption and speed up decision- making in military procurement**, the government of India in **2001** decided to set up an integrated DAC.
 - It is headed by the **Defence Minister**.
 - The objective of the DAC is to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces, in terms of capabilities sought, and time frame prescribed, by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.
 - The DAC is responsible to give policy guidelines to acquisitions, based on long-term procurement plans.
 - It also clears all acquisitions, which includes both imported and those produced indigenously or under a foreign license.

9. National Commission for Minorities (NCM)

- The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has formed a three-member committee to look into whether Hindus should get minority status in eight states where they are not the dominant religious group.
- **Background:**
 - Hindus are in a minority in Lakshadweep (2.5%), Mizoram (2.75), Nagaland (8.75), Meghalaya (11.53), J&K (28.44), Arunachal Pradesh (29), Manipur (31.39) and Punjab (38.4).
 - It is argued that in the absence of the “minority” tag, benefits meant for the minority communities were being given away to majority community in each state in an illegal and arbitrary manner.
- **NCM:**
 - The Union Government set up the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) under the **National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992**.
 - **Six** religious communities, viz; **Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians** (Parsis) and **Jains** have been notified in Gazette of India as minority communities by the Union Government all over India.
 - Original notification of 1993 was for **five** religious communities Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, Christians and Muslims.
 - The NCM adheres to the **United Nations Declaration** of 18 December 1992 which states that “States shall protect the existence of the National or Ethnic, Cultural, Religious and Linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.”

10. Controller General of Accounts

- The Controller General of Accounts, Department of Expenditure has launched the upgraded version of **Central Pension Accounting Office (CPAO)** primarily to cater to the needs of central civil pensioners and other stakeholders in the Ministries/Departments and Banks.
- The website has been developed in-house by the NIC Wing of CPAO.
- The website provides a single window for both accessing pension related information and facilitating grievance Redressal of pensioners.
- **Controller General of Accounts:**
 - The Controller General of Accounts is the **apex Accounting Authority of the Central Government** and exercises the powers of the President under Article 150 of the constitution for prescribing the forms of Accounts of the Union and State Governments on the advice of the Comptroller & Auditor General of India.
 - CGA works under the **Ministry of Finance**, Government of India.
 - Though it is **not a constitutional body**, it derives its mandate from Article 150 of the constitution.
- **Functions:**
 - It is the **Principal Accounting Adviser to Government of India** and is responsible for establishing and maintaining a technically sound Management Accounting System.

- The Office of CGA prepares monthly and annual analysis of expenditure, revenues, borrowings and various fiscal indicators for the Union Government.
- Under Article 150 of the Constitution, the Annual Appropriation Accounts (Civil) and Union Finance Accounts are submitted to Parliament on the advice of Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

11. National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)

- National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) is a **quasi-judicial body** that will govern the companies in India.
- It was established under the **Companies Act, 2013** and is a successor body of the Company Law Board.
- NCLT will have the same powers as assigned to the erstwhile Company Law Board (which are mostly related to dealing with oppression and mismanagement), Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR)(revival of sick companies) and powers related to winding up of companies (which was available only with the High Courts).
- The setting up of NCLT as a specialized institution for corporate justice is based on the recommendations of **the Justice Eradi Committee on Law Relating to Insolvency and Winding up of Companies**.
- Decisions of the NCLT may be appealed to the **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal**. The decisions of NCLAT may be appealed to the Supreme Court of India.

12. 15th Finance Commission

- The Union Cabinet has approved the setting up of the 15th Finance Commission under the **chairmanship of N.K. Singh**.
- Under **Article 280 (1)** of the Constitution, it is a Constitutional obligation.
- Finance Commission recommend measures and methods on how revenues need to be distributed between the Centre and states.
- **Constitutional provisions:**
 - Article 280(1) of the Constitution lays down that a Finance Commission (FC) should be constituted "...within two years from the commencement of this Constitution and thereafter at the expiration of every fifth year or at such earlier time as the President considers necessary..."
 - In keeping with this requirement, the practice has generally been to set up next Finance Commission within five years of the date of setting up of the previous Finance Commission.
- **Composition of Finance Commission:**
 - The Constitution provides that Finance Commission shall consist of a **Chairman and four other members** to be appointed by President. The Chairman or members are eligible for reappointment.
 - The **Constitution authorizes Parliament to make provisions** related to qualifications, conditions of service of members or powers of Finance Commission.
 - So Parliament enacted **Finance Commission Act in 1951** to determine

provisions related to qualifications or disqualifications, conditions of service or miscellaneous powers to perform functions provided under constitution.

- **Qualifications:** The Chairman shall have vast experience in Public affairs and other four members shall be selected among persons who a) have qualifications as par with a judge of HC, b) has special knowledge of Finance and Accounts of govt, c) have vast experience in financial matters and d) have special knowledge of economics.

13. National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH)

- The National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH) observed the **Communal Harmony Campaign and Fund Raising Week** from November 19-25, 2017.
- The National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH) is an **autonomous organisation with the Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- ***It organises the Communal Harmony Campaign*** coinciding with the Qaumi Ekta Week and also observes the Communal Harmony Flag Day.
- The Foundation promotes Communal Harmony and strengthens National Integration.
- ***Under its Project 'Assist'***, the NFCH also provides financial assistance for relief and rehabilitation of children rendered orphan or destitute in communal, caste, ethnic or terrorist violence.

14. Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- Competition Commission of India is a body responsible for **enforcing The Competition Act, 2002** throughout India and to **prevent activities that have an adverse effect on competition in India**.
- CCI consists of a **Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government**.
- The duty of the Commission is to eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition, **promote and sustain competition**, protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.
- The Commission gives **opinion on competition issues on a reference received from a statutory authority** established under any law and to undertake competition advocacy, create public awareness and impart training on competition issues.
- The Competition Act, 2002 prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and Merger and acquisition), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

15. Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)

- A **Joint Action Plan** was recently signed between the **Narcotics Control Bureau**, Ministry of Home Affairs of India and the **Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation** for the period 2018-20.
- The **first-ever National Conference on Drug Law Enforcement** was held in New Delhi which was organized by Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).

NOTES

- NCB is **nodal drug law enforcement and intelligence agency** of India. It is responsible for fighting drug trafficking and the abuse of illegal substance.
- It was established in March 1986 to enable full implementation of **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985**.
- Its mandate is to fight drug trafficking on an all-India level.
- It works in close cooperation with Customs and Central Excise, State Police Department, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Central Economic Intelligence Bureau (CEIB) and other Indian intelligence and law enforcement agencies both at the national and states level.
- The **National Policy on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances** is based on the **Directive Principles, contained in Article 47** of the Indian Constitution, which direct the State to endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption, except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drugs injurious to health.
- **India is a signatory to three United Nations Conventions**, namely:
 - Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961;
 - Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971; and
 - Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988.

16. Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)

- The **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** has raised Rs660 crore through a bond sale to finance the development of national waterways.
- It is the second time that the authority has raised money through a bond sale.
- **IWAI:**
 - The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) came into existence on 27th October 1986 for development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation.
 - Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) is **the statutory authority in charge of the waterways in India**.
 - It is under the **Ministry of Shipping**.
 - Its headquarters is located in Noida, UP.
 - It does the function of building the necessary infrastructure in these waterways, surveying the economic feasibility of new projects and also administration.

17. National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)

- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) celebrated its 13th formation day. **The theme of 2017 Formation Day is "School Safety"**.
- On 23 December 2005, the Government of India enacted the **Disaster Management Act**, which envisaged the creation of **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**, headed by the Prime Minister, and **State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs)** headed by respective Chief Ministers.
- NDMA, as the apex body, is mandated to lay down the policies, plans and guidelines for Disaster Management to ensure timely and effective response to disasters.

- **Towards this, it has the following responsibilities:**
 - Lay down policies on disaster management.
 - Approve the National Plan.
 - Approve plans prepared by the Ministries or Departments of the Government of India in accordance with the National Plan.
 - Lay down guidelines to be followed by the State Authorities in drawing up the State Plan.
 - Lay down guidelines to be followed by the different Ministries or Departments of the Government of India for the Purpose of integrating the measures for prevention of disaster or the mitigation of its effects in their development plans and projects.
 - Coordinate the enforcement and implementation of the policy and plans for disaster management.
 - Recommend provision of funds for the purpose of mitigation.
 - Provide such support to other countries affected by major disasters as may be determined by the Central Government.
 - Take such other measures for the prevention of disaster, or the mitigation, or preparedness and capacity building for dealing with threatening disaster situations or disasters as it may consider necessary.
 - Lay down broad policies and guidelines for the functioning of the National Institute of Disaster Management.

18. Food Corporation of India (FCI)

- FCI is the main agency for **procurement, storage and distribution of food grains.**
- It was set up in **1965 under the Food Corporations Act 1964** to implement the following objectives of the National Food Policy:
 - **Effective price support operations** for safeguarding the interests of the farmers.
 - **Distribution of food grains** throughout the country for Public Distribution System.
 - Maintaining satisfactory level of **operational and buffer stocks** of food grains to ensure National Food Security.
 - Regulate market price to provide food grains to consumers at a reliable price.

19. NCRB merged with bureau of police research

- The government has merged the National Crimes Records Bureau (NCRB) with the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D).
- **NCRB's functions will now be placed under the Director General of BPR&D**, who will oversee all the data collection related to Crime in India, Accidental Deaths and Suicides, Prison Statistics and Fingerprints.
- NCRB has been the principal source of reference by policy makers, police, criminologists, researchers and media – both in India and abroad.
- The **BPR&D was established in 1970** as the national police organisation to study, research and develop on subjects and issues related to policing.

- Both the organisations function under the aegis of Union Home Ministry.
- **Why was the merger necessary?**
 - It was felt that if the researchers of BPR&D, which conducts its own researches and commissions many to private institutes/bodies to study the crime patterns, policing and other related aspects, and statisticians of NCRB work together, there will be more accurate and research based data collection.
- **NCRB:**
 - The NCRB was established in 1986 with a mandate to empower Indian police with **information technology solutions and criminal intelligence** to enable them to enforce the law effectively.
 - It also compiles data on crimes, prosecutions, traffic related prosecutions, and prisons, suicides etc and its annual report were extensively globally to present India's crime figures.
 - It also has the database of all the fingerprints in India and also plays a role in capacity building for – **Crime and Criminal Tracking Networks and Systems (CCTNS)**.
 - NCRB's data on crimes against women, particularly rapes, has shaped government's policies on safety of women in last few years.

20. Border Roads Organisation (BRO)

- The Union Defence Ministry has approved **delegation of administrative and financial powers** to the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- The purpose of delegation of powers is to **improve the functioning of the BRO and speed up works to avoid delays in projects**.
- Functioning under the control of the Ministry of Defence since 2015, the BRO is engaged in **road construction to provide connectivity to difficult and inaccessible regions in the border areas** of the country.
- It is staffed by officers and troops drawn from the Indian Army's Corps of Engineers, Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Army Service Corps, Military Police and army personnel on extra regimental employment.
- Officers from the Border Roads Engineering Service and personnel from the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) form the parent cadre of the Border Roads Organisation.
- Currently, the organisation maintains operations in twenty-one states, one UT (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), and neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.

21. Central Public Works Department (CPWD)

- The public sector construction major, Central Public Works Department (CPWD) turned 163 on July 12th, 2017.
- It is housed under the Ministry of Urban Development now MoHUA (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs).
- CPWD came into existence in **July, 1854** when Lord Dalhousie established a central agency for execution of public works and set up Ajmer Provincial Division.
- It is headed by Director General (DG) who is also the Principal Technical

Advisor to the Government of India.

- The regions and sub-regions are headed by Special DGs and Additional DGs respectively, while the zones in all state capitals (except a few) are headed by Chief Engineers.
- CPWD has **PAN India presence** and has ability to undertake construction of complex projects even in difficult terrain and maintenance in post construction stage.
- CPWD had been involved in construction of stadiums and other infrastructure requirements for Asian Games 1982 and Commonwealth Games 2010.
- **CPWD consists of three wings in execution field:**
 - B&R (Buildings and Roads).
 - E&M (Electrical and Mechanical).
 - Horticulture.

22. Integrated Monitoring and Advisory Council

- The first meeting of the newly formed Integrated Monitoring and Advisory Council (IMAC) was held in New Delhi.
- IMAC is an **inter-ministry monitoring and advisory body** for policy formulation and implementation of '**Roadmap to achieve target of 10% reduction in import dependency in oil and gas by 2021-22**'.
- IMAC is envisaged to facilitate better coordination and comprehensive strategy for all energy resources by focusing on **supply and demand side management**.
- IMAC consists of Secretary, Petroleum & Natural Gas and other Senior Officers from various Ministries such as Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Urban Development, Road and Transport, Agriculture, Power/Bureau of Energy Efficiency, Rural Development, Finance, Petroleum Planning Analysis Cell, PCRA, DGH etc.

23. Prasar Bharati

- **Shri Shashi Shekar Vempati** has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Prasar Bharati for a period of five years from the date of assumption of office.
- **Appointment:** The appointment was made on the recommendation of **the three member committee headed by the Hon'ble Vice President**, and consisting of Chairman, Press Council of India and the President's nominee i.e. Secretary, Information and Broadcasting.
- Prasar Bharati is a **statutory autonomous body established under the Prasar Bharati Act** and came into existence on 23.11.1997.
- It is the **Public Service Broadcaster** of the country.
- The objectives of public service broadcasting are achieved in terms of Prasar Bharati Act through All India Radio and Doordarshan.

24. CVC can now probe corruption cases in private sector banks

- The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) can now probe allegations of corruption in private sector banks and against their employees.
- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has given the necessary approval** to the CVC

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on this.

- The move comes after the **Supreme Court in 2016 ruled that the chairman, managing directors and other officers of a private bank could be seen as public servants when it came to the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, 1988.**
- The apex court had said all officials working in banks operating under an RBI licence would be defined as public servants under the PC Act.
- It had said bank employees, private or public, were on public duty and therefore came under the law.
- The Supreme Court had also referred to Section 46A of the Banking Regulation Act and said that such bank officials were considered public officials.

25. National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)

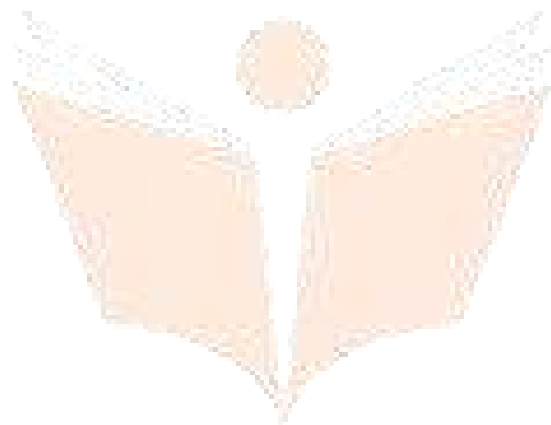
- National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has launched a **Web Application for free Legal Services to Prisoners** and the Legal Services Management System developed through the NIC.
- NALSA has been constituted under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**, to provide free legal services to weaker sections of society.
- NALSA is headed by the **Chief Justice of India** while **second seniormost judge of Supreme Court of India is the Executive-Chairman.**
- In every State, **State Legal Services Authority** has been constituted to give effect to the policies and directions of the NALSA and conduct Lok Adalats in the State.
- The State Legal Services Authority is headed by Hon'ble the Chief Justice of the respective High Court.
- The **District Legal Services Authority** is situated in the District Courts Complex in every District and chaired by the District Judge of the respective district.
- **Important functions performed by NALSA:**
 - NALSA **organises Lok Adalats** for amicable settlement of disputes.
 - NALSA identifies specific categories of the marginalised and excluded groups and formulates various schemes for the implementation of preventive and strategic legal service programmes.
 - **Free legal aid in civil and criminal matters** for the poor and marginalised people who cannot afford the services of a lawyer in any court or tribunal.
 - Free legal services include provision of **aid and advice to beneficiaries** to access the benefits under the welfare statutes and schemes and to ensure access to justice in any other manner.

26. Law Commission of India

- Law Commission of India is an **executive body** established by an order of the Government of India.
- The Law Commission shall, on a reference made to it by the Central Government or suo-motu, undertake **research in law and review of existing laws** in India for **making reforms** therein and enacting new legislations.
- It shall also **undertake studies and research** for bringing reforms in the **justice delivery systems** for elimination of delay in procedures, speedy disposal of cases, reduction in cost of litigation etc.

- 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**.
- **21st Law Commission** of India was constituted for a period of three years w.e.f. 1st September, 2015 to 31st August, 2018.
- Former Supreme Court (SC) judge **Justice Balbir Singh Chauhan** was appointed as Chairman of the 21st Law Commission of India (LCI).
- **The first Law Commission** was established during the British Raj era **in 1834 by the Charter Act of 1833**.
- The first Law Commission of **independent India** was established in **1955** for a three-year term.

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Executive

1. Overreach

- Breaking convention, Tamil Nadu governor Banwarilal Purohit had held a meeting with officials of various government departments.
- The move invited criticism from some political parties, which accused the governor of **interfering in the state government's functioning**.
- Experts say, it is an act of **constitutional impropriety** for the Governor of a State to review the work of government officials when an elected regime is in place.
- **What the constitution says?**
 - **Article 167 of the Constitution** says it is the Chief Minister's duty to communicate to the Governor all decisions of the Council of Ministers relating to the administration and proposals for legislation.
 - It enjoins the Chief Minister to furnish such information relating to the administration as the Governor may call for.
 - There may be occasions when the Governor may need to ask a top bureaucrat or the head of the police force for a report on a major incident or development, but even that should be for the limited purpose of getting an accurate picture before sending a report to the Centre.
 - So, according to experts, if the Governor wanted to understand how schemes are being implemented, he could have sought details from the Chief Minister instead of holding meetings in the districts.

2. Sub Categorization of Other Backward Classes

- The Union Cabinet has approved extension of term of Commission to examine the issue of sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes (OBCs).
- The President of India, in exercise of the powers conferred by **article 340 of the Constitution**, had appointed a Commission to examine the sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes.
- **Former Delhi High Court Chief Justice G. Rohini has been appointed by President of India as the head of the Commission.**
- The exercise will involve sub-categorisation of 5,000 castes in central OBC list.
- Sub categorization of the OBCs will ensure that the more backward among the OBC communities can also access the benefits of reservation for educational institutions and government jobs.
- **Is sub-categorisation permissible under the law?**
 - The Supreme Court in its order in **Indra Sawhney and others vs. Union of India** observed that there is no constitutional or legal bar to a State categorizing backward class as backward or more backward and observed that sub-categorization is **not impermissible in law**.
- **How are OBC reservations offered at present?**
 - At present, there is a **single Central OBC list**, with entries from each State.
 - People belonging to all of these castes can seek reservation from within the **single 27% OBC reservation** pie for Central government

jobs and Central educational institutions.

- **Over 11 States** including Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Puducherry, Karnataka, Haryana, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir and Tamil Nadu **already sub-categorised OBCs**.
- OBC reservation became a reality after the implementation of the **Mandal Commission report**, which categorised many castes as constituting backward classes and deserving of quotas.

3. India's first full-time woman defence minister

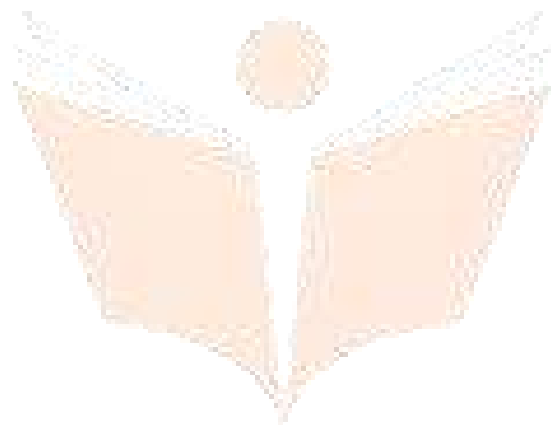
- Nirmala Sitharaman has become ***the first woman to become a full-time defence minister of the country***. She is a member of the crucial **Cabinet Committee on Security**.
- **1st full time and overall 2nd woman to become defence minister:** Sitharaman is the second woman to take charge of the crucial ministry as Indira Gandhi, as the prime minister, had also held the portfolio in the '70s.
- **The current members of the Cabinet Committee on Security** includes the prime minister, home minister, external affairs minister, finance minister and defence minister.

4. Cabinet Secretary

- Cabinet Secretary is the **top most executive official and senior-most civil servant in India**.
- The Cabinet Secretary is the **ex-officio head of the Civil Services Board, the Cabinet Secretariat, and head of all civil services under the rules of business of the Government of India**.
- The Cabinet Secretary is under the **direct charge of the Prime Minister**.
- Though there is no fixed tenure, the average tenure of the Cabinet Secretary has been less than 3 years. His or her tenure however, can be extended.
- He doesn't belong to any particular ministry.
- **Functions of a Cabinet Secretary:**
 - Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister of India.
 - Provide assistance to the Council of Ministers.
 - Handle senior appointments.
 - Prepare the agenda of the Cabinet.
 - Attend the meetings of the Cabinet.
 - Ensure that the Cabinet decisions are implemented.
 - Act as the Chairman of the Committee of Secretaries on Administration.
 - Act as the Chairman of the Chief Secretaries Committee.
 - Provide an element of continuity and stability to administration during crises.
 - Ensuring Inter-Ministerial coordination, ironing out differences amongst Ministries/Departments.
 - The Cabinet Secretariat ensures that the President of India, the Vice-President and Ministers are kept informed of the major activities of all Departments.
 - **The Cabinet Secretariat has 3 wings: Civil, Military and Intelligence.**

- The Civil wing is the main wing and provides aid, advice and assistance to the Union Cabinet.
- Military wing is to provide better coordination in Intelligence and to provide secretarial assistance to the Defence Committee of the Cabinet and the National Defence Council.
- The Intelligence wing deals with matters pertaining to the Joint Intelligence Committee of the Union Cabinet.

NOTES



Legislative

1. Office of Profit

- President Ram Nath Kovind on the recommendation of Election Commission of India (ECI) has disqualified 20 Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs from Delhi, citing that they held offices of profit.
- **What is an 'office of profit'?**
 - If an MLA or an MP holds a government office and receives benefits from it, then that office is termed as an "office of profit".
 - A person will be disqualified if he holds an office of profit under the central or state government, other than an office declared not to disqualify its holder by a law passed by Parliament or state legislature.
 - It has **not been defined in Constitution or Representation of the People Act, 1951.**
- **What are the basic criteria to disqualify an MP or MLA?**
 - Basic disqualification criteria for an MP are laid down in **Article 102** of the Constitution, and for an MLA in **Article 191**.
 - **They can be disqualified for:**
 - Holding an office of profit under government of India or state government;
 - Being of unsound mind;
 - Being an undischarged insolvent;
 - Not being an Indian citizen or for acquiring citizenship of another country.
- **What is the underlying principle for including 'office of profit' as criterion for disqualification?**
 - Makers of the Constitution wanted that legislators should not feel obligated to the Executive in any way, which could influence them while discharging legislative functions.
 - In other words, an MP or MLA should be free to carry out her duties without any kind of governmental pressure.

2. States can't enact law on parliamentary secretaries: SC

- The Supreme Court has ruled *that state assemblies hold no power to enact a law that enables them to appoint parliamentary secretaries.*
- **What's the issue?**
 - The question posed before the court was whether **Article 194(3) and Entry 39 of List II of the 7th Schedule** authorised the state legislature to make the impugned Act.
 - *Entry 39 indicates the field of legislation regarding the powers, privileges, and immunities of the house of legislatures.*
- **Parliamentary Secretary:**
 - A Parliament Secretary is **similar to a Minister of State** who assists a Minister in his or her duties.
 - Manipur, HP, Mizoram, Assam, Rajasthan, Punjab, Goa are some of the states where MLAs have been appointed Parliament Secretaries by the Government.

- Over the last few years, courts across the country have struck down the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries for violating the Constitution.
- Parliamentary Secretary's post is also in **contradiction to Article 164(1A)** which specifies that the number of ministers including the Chief Minister has to be within 15% of the total number of members of the Assembly (10% in the case of Delhi) because a **Parliament Secretary holds the rank of Minister of State**.

3. Times when the Parliament convened for a session at midnight

- The midnight session of Parliament to **launch the goods and services tax (GST)** marked a first in India's history.
- While Parliament was convened for a midnight session several times in the past, **all those occasions were celebratory in nature**.
- It's the first time that a session has been convened to mark the implementation of a government policy, the GST.
- **Midnight sessions in the past:**
 - August 14-15, **1947**: The Constituent Assembly of India met in the Constitution Hall (now the Central Hall of Parliament) on the eve of the country's Independence. It started at 11 p.m. and went on till after midnight.
 - August 14-15, **1972**: To celebrate the silver jubilee of India's Independence.
 - August 9, **1992**: To mark 50th anniversary of Quit India Movement.
 - August 14-15, **1997**: To celebrate the golden jubilee of India's Independence.

Judiciary

1. E-Courts Project

- The eCourts Mission Mode Project (Phase I 2010-15; Phase II 2015-19) is a **national eGovernance project** for ICT enablement of district and subordinate courts of the country.
- It is being implemented by the Government of India with a total outlay of 1670 crores (Phase II).
- **The major objectives of the Project are:**
 - To **make whole judicial system ICT enabled** by putting in place adequate and modern hardware and connectivity;
 - Automation of workflow management in all courts;
 - **Electronic movement of records** from taluka/trial to appeal courts;
 - Installation of **video conferencing (VC) facility** and recording of witness through Video Conferencing;
 - Connecting all courts in the country to the **National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG)** through WAN and additional redundant connectivity;
 - Citizen centric facilities such as **electronic filing, e-payment and use of mobile applications** in all courts;
 - Touch screen based kiosks in each court complex, full computerisation of State and district level judicial and service academies and centres.

2. Nyaya Gram project

- President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, recently laid the foundation stone of the **Nyaya Gram project of the High Court of Allahabad**.
- It is a **model township** of High Court in Allahabad. The township includes a judicial academy, an auditorium and residences for judges and staff.

3. Commercial Courts

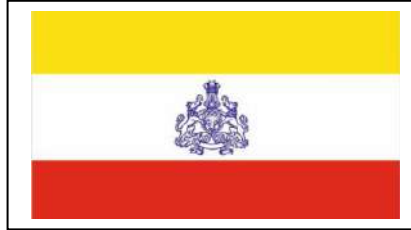
- The Union government has proposed to establish **commercial courts** in districts to further improve the ease of doing business parameters.
- On January 1, 2016, the **Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts Bill, 2015** received Presidential assent.
 - It contemplates setting up commercial courts at the district level and commercial divisions and appellate divisions at the high court level.
- **Functions of various stakeholders:**
 - All state governments have to ensure that adequate infrastructure is provided for commercial courts and commercial divisions.
 - **Chief justices have huge responsibility in implementing this Act** by setting up commercial courts in various districts and setting up commercial divisions in the high courts.
- **What is a commercial dispute?**
 - Any dispute related to transactions between merchants, bankers, financiers, traders, etc.
 - Such transactions deal with mercantile documents, partnership agreements, intellectual property rights, insurance, etc.

Centre – State Relations

NOTES

1. Karnataka State Flag

- The government of Karnataka unveiled the **State flag (*nada dhwaja*)** for Karnataka.
- The state flag was proposed and designed by 9-member committee constituted by state Kannada and Culture department.
- It will be **official flag** in place of an unofficial red and yellow flag that is currently used in the state.
- If adopted with **clearance from Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA)**, Karnataka will be the **second state after Jammu and Kashmir** to have an official state flag.
- **Are states permitted to have their own flags?**
 - In **S.R. Bommai v/s Union of India (Supreme Court 1994)** case, the Supreme Court has declared that **federalism is a basic feature** of the Constitution and States are supreme in their sphere.
 - This being the Constitutional position, **there is no prohibition in the Constitution for the State to have its own flag.**
 - However, the manner in which the State flag is hoisted should not dishonour the national flag. It has to be always below the national flag.
 - The **national flag code** specifically authorises use of other flags subject to the regulation by the court. So, State flag is not unauthorised.



2. Polavaram Project

- Polavaram Project is a **multi-purpose irrigation project** which has been accorded **national project status** by the union 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 Odisha States also.

Inter – State Relations

NOTES

1. Mahadayi Water Dispute

- The **Mahadayi water-sharing dispute** has the states of **Goa, Maharashtra and Karnataka** vying for water from the **Mahadayi River**.
- **River Mahadayi**
 - Mahadayi, the **west-flowing inter-state river in the Western Ghats**, takes birth in Degaon village, Karnataka.
 - The river travels 35 km in Karnataka; 82 km in Goa before joining the Arabian Sea.
 - The River Mahadayi is **called Mandovi in Goa**.
- **What is Kalasa-Banduri Nala project?**
 - The Kalasa-Banduri Nala is a project **undertaken by the Government of Karnataka** to improve drinking water supply to the Districts of **Belagavi, Dharwad and Gadag**.
 - Karnataka seeks to divert water from tributaries of the river through the Kalasa-Bhanduri Nala project towards the parched Malaprabha river basin (a tributary of River Krishna), which is being strongly opposed by Goa.
 - Goa has said that any attempt to divert water from one river basin to the other will cause irreparable environmental damage.



2. Cauvery water Dispute

- The sharing of waters of the Cauvery River has been the source of a serious conflict between the two states of **Tamil Nadu and Karnataka**.
- Recently the apex court directed the Karnataka government to release 177.25 TMC of water to Tamil Nadu, 14.75 TMC lesser than what was allotted by the tribunal in 2007.
- Karnataka will now get 284.75 TMC and Tamil Nadu will get 404.25 TMC of Cauvery water.
- A certain quantity of water was reduced from the quantum allocated to Tamil Nadu, because of **availability of groundwater in the state**.
- **Drinking water requirement** was placed on a higher pedestal.
- **Background:**
 - The **Cauvery River originates in Karnataka's Kodagu district**, flows into Tamil Nadu and reaches the Bay of Bengal at Poompuhar.
 - Parts of three Indian states – **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka – and the Union Territory of Pondicherry lie in the Cauvery basin**.
 - Initially, the dispute was between Karnataka and TN but later Kerala and Puducherry also entered the fray.
 - The genesis of this conflict rests in two agreements in 1892 and 1924 between the erstwhile Madras Presidency and Kingdom of Mysore.

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- Owing to Tamil Nadu government's appeal, the Central government under **Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956**, constituted the **Cauvery Waters Tribunal** on June, 2, 1990.
- **Constitutional provisions on inter-state river water sharing:**
 - River waters use is included in states jurisdiction (**entry 17 of state list**).
 - However, union government can make laws on regulation and development of inter-State rivers and river valleys when expedient in the public interest.
 - Whenever the riparian states are not able to reach amicable agreements on their own in sharing of an interstate river waters, **section 4 of The Interstate River Water Disputes Act, 1956 (IRWD Act) provides dispute resolution process in the form of Tribunal.**
 - In case the constitutional rights of states are ingressed upon by the tribunal award in any manner, central government, for extending purview of its enactment to implement the tribunal order, **is obliged to take the consent of all riparian states under Article 252 of the constitution** before publishing the tribunal awards in the official gazette.
- **Powers of the tribunal:**
 - **Ambit:** As per the Act, the tribunal shall not only adjudicate but also investigate the matters referred to it by the central government and forward a report setting out the facts with its decisions.
 - **Verdict:** When the tribunal final verdict is accepted by the central government and notified in the official gazette, the verdict becomes law and binding on the states for implementation.
 - The tribunal's verdict after its publication in the official gazette is equivalent to Supreme Court verdict as per section 6 of IRWD Act.
- **Inter State Water Disputes Act, 1956:**
 - IRWD Act was **enacted by the parliament** of India under **Article 262** of Constitution to resolve the water disputes that would arise in the use, control and distribution of an interstate river or river valley.
 - Article 262 also says that the parliament can also provide that **neither the Supreme Court nor any other court shall exercise jurisdiction in respect of inter-state water disputes.**
 - Scope of the IRWD Act is **applicable only to interstate rivers / river valleys.**
 - **Creation of the Tribunal** takes place when the riparian states are not able to reach amicable agreements.
 - The Tribunal shall have the **same powers as are vested in a civil court.**

3. Other Inter-state water dispute

- **Krishna Water Dispute** – Between Telangan, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- **Mahanadi Water Dispute** – Between Chhattisgarh and Odisha.
- **Vamsadhara Water Dispute** - Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

4. Inter-State Council

- The Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh chaired the **12th meeting of the Standing Committee of Inter-State Council (ISC)**.
- Recommendations of the **Punchhi Commission** on Centre-State Relations were discussed during the meeting.
- **Background:**
 - The Punchhi Commission was set up by the Government under the chairmanship of Justice (Retd.) Madan Mohan Punchhi, former Chief Justice of Supreme Court of India in 2005.
 - The Punchhi Commission submitted its report in 2010.
 - The Central government constituted the Punchhi Commission to look into the new issues of Centre-state relations keeping in view the changes that have taken place in the polity and economy.
- **Inter-state council:**
 - The Council is a **recommendatory body** to investigate and discuss subjects, in which some or all of the states or the union government have a common interest.
 - **Article 263** of the Constitution of India provides for the **establishment of an Inter-State Council**.
 - It considers recommendations for the better coordination of policy and action, and also matters of general interest to the states.
 - The inter-state council is **not a permanent constitutional body** for coordination between the states and union government.
 - It can be **established 'at any time' if it appears to the President** that the public interests would be served by the establishment of such a council.
- **The Council shall consist of:**
 - **Prime minister who is the chairman.**
 - Chief Ministers of all states who are members.
 - Chief Ministers of union territories and administrators of UTs as members.
 - Six union ministers of cabinet rank in the union council of ministers nominated by the prime minister are also members.

Electoral Issues / Electoral Reforms

1. Model Code of Conduct (MCC)

- These are the **guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India** for conduct of political parties and candidates during elections.
- **Aim:** To ensure free and fair elections.
- **When it comes into force?**
 - The Model Code of Conduct comes into force **immediately on announcement of the election schedule** by the commission.
 - The Code remains in force till the end of the electoral process.
- **Status:**
 - The need for such code is in the interest of **free and fair elections**.
 - However, the code **does not have any specific statutory basis**. It has only a persuasive effect.
 - It contains what is known as **“rules of electoral morality”**.
 - But this lack of statutory backing does not prevent the Commission from enforcing it.
- **Evolution:**
 - The Commission issued the code for the **first time in 1971 (5th Election)** and revised it from time to time.
 - This set of norms has been evolved with the **consensus of political parties** who have consented to abide by the principles embodied in the said code and also binds them to respect and observe it in its letter and spirit.
- **What it contains?**
 - The salient features of the Model Code of Conduct lay down how political parties, contesting candidates and party(s) in power should conduct themselves during the process of elections i.e. on their general conduct during electioneering, holding meetings and processions, poll day activities and functioning of the party in power etc.

2. Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)

- VVPAT stands for Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail. VVPAT system maintains a physical trail of all votes cast.
- When a **voter presses the button for a candidate of his choice in the EVM, a paper ballot containing the serial number, name of the candidate and poll symbol would be printed for the voter.**
- The slip will then automatically fall in a sealed safe box, attached to the EVM, thus maintaining a physical paper trail of all the votes cast.
- VVPAT is a method of providing feedback to voters.
- **Background:**
 - In 2013, **conduct of Election Rules, 1961** was amended to facilitate the introduction of VVPAT units.
 - For the first time, VVPAT with EVMs was used for the **Noksen Assembly seat in Tuensang district of Nagaland in 2013.**
 - **In the case of Subramanian Swamy vs Election Commission of India**

(ECI), the Supreme Court held that VVPAT is “indispensable for free and fair elections” and directed the ECI to equip EVMs with VVPAT systems.

3. Totalizer Machines

- A totalizer is a machine that is used in addition to the Electronic Voting Machine to facilitate the counting of votes.
- It is used for **mixing of votes from various booths** for counting.
- The machine is expected to **prevent disclosure of voting patterns** across polling stations during counting. It **enhances voter secrecy**.
- The current system reveals the voting trends in each polling station, thus leaving the voters in that vicinity open to harassment, intimidation and post-election victimisation.

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Events / Celebrations

1. Republic Day 2018

- India celebrated its **69th Republic Day**. Republic day in India is celebrated every year on **26th of January to honour the Constitution of India** as it came into force on the same day in the year 1950.
- In a first, the Republic Day celebrations had **10 chief guests - The heads the ASEAN leaders**.
- The significance of the ASEAN leaders attending the event is that **ASEAN completes 50 years of formation** and that **India completes 25 years of its partnership with the grouping**.
- **Why January 26th?**
 - 26 January was chosen as the Republic day because it was on this day in 1930 when Declaration of Indian Independence (**Purna Swaraj**) was proclaimed by the Indian National Congress as opposed to the Dominion status offered by British Regime.

2. All India Whips' Conference

- The **18th All India Whips' Conference** was recently inaugurated at Udaipur, Rajasthan.
- First All India Whips Conference was organized at Indore in 1952, in the very first year of general elections to the First Lok Sabha.
- Organizing the All India Whips Conference is one of the functions assigned to the **Ministry of Parliamentary affairs, under Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961** made under **article 77(3)** of the Constitution.
- **Who is a whip?**
 - A whip is an important member of a political party's parliamentary body, having a central role in **'Floor Management'** in both the Houses of Parliament and is responsible for discipline within the party.
 - Their main job is ensuring that their members in Parliament and legislature **vote in line with the party's official policy** on important issues and make sure that the members turn out for important votes.
 - The efficient and smooth functioning of Parliament and State Legislatures depends, to a considerable extent, upon the office of the Whip.

3. National Voters Day

- The Election Commission of India celebrated the **8th National Voters Day** on January 25th.
- **Theme: 'Accessible Elections'**, which expressed ECI's pursuit of working towards **making the electoral process more inclusive and friendly for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)**.
- **VoICE India:** on the occasion, the President also inaugurated the first edition of VoICE India – a **biannual magazine** which brings forth best practices, innovations and knowledge derived from practical experience and success stories of the election machinery that exists in every corner of India.
- **National Voters' Day:**

- National Voters' Day or **Rashtriya Matdata Diwas** is celebrated on **January 25** every year with an aim to **encourage youngsters**, who have reached the age of 18, to participate in the electoral process.
- The National Voters' Day is celebrated at all polling stations across the country to mark the importance of voting.
- It was on **January 25, 1950** that the **Election Commission of India was established**.

4. National Law Day

- The National Law Day-2017 was celebrated jointly by the **Law Commission of India and NITI Aayog**.
- The significance of the event lies in the fact that the Constitution of India was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 26th November, 1949.
- It is also known as **Samvidhan Divas** or **Constitution Day**.
- It is to spread the importance of the constitution and to spread thoughts and ideas of Ambedkar.
- The government in October 2015 decided that November 26 would be celebrated as the Constitution Day in the memory of Dr BR Ambedkar.
- On November 19, 2015, the government issued a gazette notification declaring that November 26 as the Constitution Day.
- **Background:**
 - It was in **1979**, when the first proposal was mooted to celebrate November 26 as an anniversary of the adoption of Constitution.
 - Noted jurist and former parliamentarian **LM Singhvi** proposed to in the Supreme Court Bar Association that National Law Day should be celebrated to mark the adoption of Constitution on November 26.
 - A resolution was passed by the Supreme Court Bar Association in 1979. The National Law Day was celebrated thereafter.

5. Infantry Day

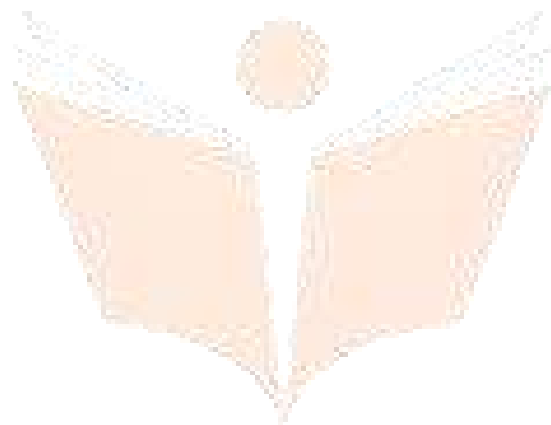
- **The Infantry Day** is observed every year in India on **27 October** to commemorate supreme sacrifices made by Indian Army's infantry against Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in 1947.
- It was first infantry action by Indian Army after independence.
- Observance of the day also commemorates infantry's exceptional courage and dedicated service to nation.

6. Mizoram celebrates 31st anniversary of Mizo peace accord

- The 31st anniversary of the signing of the historic **Mizo peace accord between the Union government and the erstwhile Mizo National Front (MNF)** was celebrated on 30th June in Mizoram.
- The Mizo Accord was signed on June 30, 1986 ushering in an era of peace after 20 years of violence and disturbance in the state.
- Under the Accord, the **government agreed to grant full statehood to Mizoram**, along with its own High Court. A university was proposed.
- The Accord promised constitutional protection for Mizo religious and social customs, and laws of the Mizo people.

- Mizo was notified as an official Indian language. The MNF agreed to break all contact with other insurgent groups in the Northeast.
- The signatories were Laldenga, leader of the movement, R. D. Pradhan, Home Secretary, and Lalkhama, Chief secretary.

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Citizenship

1. National Register of Citizens

- The first draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was published with the names of 1.9 crore people out of the 3.29 crore total applicants in Assam recognising them as legal citizens of India.
- Other applicants will be considered in the second draft.
- The exercise is undertaken to **distinguish between Indian citizens and illegal migrants in Assam.**
- **The NRC is being compiled following a Supreme Court directive to identify illegal immigrants in Assam. The Supreme Court is monitoring the entire process.**
- Assam, which faced influx from Bangladesh since the early 20th century, is the only state having an NRC, first prepared in 1951.
- **What's the issue?**
 - The NRC was last updated in Assam way back in 1951.
 - Then, it had recorded 80 lakh citizens in the State. Since then, the process of identification of illegal immigrants in Assam has been debated and become a contentious issue in the State's politics.
 - A six-year agitation demanding identification and deportation of illegal immigrants was launched by the **All Assam Students' Union (AASU)** in 1979. It culminated with the signing of the Assam Accord on August 15, 1985.
- **About NRC:**
 - The National Register of Citizens (**NRC**) **contains names of Indian citizens of Assam.**
 - The NRC was prepared in 1951, after the Census of 1951.
 - It was prepared by recording particulars of all the persons enumerated during that Census.
 - The NRC is being updated in Assam to detect Bangladeshi nationals, who may have illegally entered the State after the midnight of March 24, 1971, the cut-off date.

2. OCI and PIO cards

- The Govt has stopped the scheme of free conversion of PIO cards to OCI.
- However, the change of PIO cards to OCI cards would continue on payment of fees.
- **Who are NRIs, PIO and OCI?**
 - Non-Resident Indians (NRI), Person of Indian Origin (PIO) and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) are the three major categories in which the people from India go and live abroad can be categorised.
 - While NRIs is essentially a term used for Indians that live in another country, PIOs and OCIs are people who want to stay connected and involved with India more closely.
- **Need for conversion:**
 - Simultaneous existence of PIO and OCI cards led to confusion among People of Indian Origin residing abroad.

- Thus, merging PIO and OCI will lead to **simplification of the rules under a single umbrella.**
- It would facilitate visa-free travel to India, rights of residency and participation in business and educational activities in the country.
- The merger of the two cards could **make PIO cardholders eligible for benefits already enjoyed by OCI cardholders.**
- Merging will also facilitate travel of Indians staying abroad and their participation in various activities in India.
- **Benefits of a PIO card:**
 - A PIO card holder **doesn't need a visa to visit India.**
 - The holder also doesn't require a student or employment visa to **acquire employment or academic opportunities in India.**
 - The holder is also exempted from registering at the foreigner regional registration office (FRRO) during the duration of stay in India.
 - The holder also **enjoys parity with NRIs in concern to economic, financial and educational matters.** These may include matters related to property transfer or acquisition, holding, disposal, investment, admission of children in educational institutions under general category quota for NRIs.
 - **Separate immigration counters** are provided at all International airports in India for PIO card holders.
- **Drawbacks of PIO card:**
 - It does not provide voting rights to the holder.
 - Prior permission is needed to undertake mountaineering expeditions or any such related research work in protected areas.
- **The benefits of OCI cards are substantial:**
 - OCI is essentially a **lifetime visa status** offered by India to an Indian person who has given up his citizenship.
 - OCI cards give lifetime multiple entry visa to India.
 - If one remains an OCI for 5 years, he/she can attain Indian citizenship and then live in India for a period of one year including short breaks.
 - Special immigration counters are provided at all international airports in India for OCI card holders.
 - An OCI cards holder can open special bank accounts in India just like NRIs and make investments.
 - OCI holders can also buy non-farm property and exercise ownership rights.
 - An OCI card allows to apply for a driver's license, PAN card or open a bank account in India.
 - They get same economic, financial and educational benefits like NRIs and can also adopt children.
- **Restrictions for OCI card holders:**
 - An OCI card holder cannot vote, hold a government job or purchase agricultural or farm land.
 - The person can also not run for public office or travel to restricted areas without permission.

Important Constitutional / Statutory Provisions

NOTES

1. Uniform Civil Code

- Uniform civil Code is a proposal to have a generic set of **governing laws for every citizen** without taking into consideration the religion.
- **Article 44** of the Constitution says that there should be a Uniform Civil Code.
- According to this article, “The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India”.
- Since the Directive Principles are only guidelines, it is not mandatory to use them.

The Pros of UCC

1. Provide equal status to all citizens.
2. Promote gender parity.
3. Accommodate the aspirations of the young population.
4. To support the national integration.
5. Bypass the issue of reform of existing personal laws.

The Cons of UCC

1. Practical difficulties due to diversity in India.
2. Perception of UCC as encroachment on religious freedom.
3. Interference of state in personal matters.
4. It is a sensitive and tough task to implement.
5. The Time is not yet suitable for this reform.

2. Section 33(7) of RPA

- Section 33(7) of the Representation of People’s Act permits **a candidate to contest any election** (Parliamentary, State Assembly, Biennial Council, or bye-elections) **from up to two constituencies**.
- The provision was **introduced in 1996** prior to which there was no bar on the number of constituencies from which a candidate could contest.

3. Section 126 of RPA

- Section 126 of RP Act, 1951 **prohibits displaying any election matter by means of television or similar apparatus, during the period of 48 hours before the hour fixed for conclusion of poll in a constituency**. It does not include social and new media under its ambit.
- The Election Commission (EC) has constituted 14 member committee headed by **Umesh Sinha** to suggest changes to Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act).
- It will also examine difficulties faced in regulating media platforms during the prohibitory 48 hours in a multi-phase election.

4. Article 35A

- It is a provision incorporated in the Indian Constitution giving the **Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature to decide ‘permanent residents’ of the State**.
- Grant those permanent resident **special right and privileges** in State public sector jobs, acquisition of property within the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare programmes.

- Article 35A protects certain provisions of the J&K Constitution which denies property rights to native women who marry from outside the State. The denial of these rights extends to her children also.
- Article 35A also empowers the State's legislature to frame any law without attracting a challenge on grounds of violating the Right to Equality of people from other States or any other right under the Constitution.
- **What is the issue with Article 35A?**
 - Article 35A was incorporated into the Indian Constitution in **1954 by an order of President i.e., The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954.**
 - The Presidential Order was issued under **Article 370 (1) (d)** of the Indian Constitution to add Article 35A.
 - **Parliament was not consulted** when the President incorporated Article 35A into the Indian Constitution through a Presidential Order issued under Article 370.
 - Whereas, Article 368 (i) of the Constitution mandates that only the Parliament can amend the Constitution by introducing a new Article.

5. Article 370

- **Article 370** of the Indian constitution is an article that gives **autonomous status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.**
- **The Supreme Court recently said that Article 370 of the Constitution is not a temporary provision.**
- According to this article, except for defence, foreign affairs, finance and communications, Parliament needs the state government's concurrence for applying all other laws.
- Thus the state's residents live under a separate set of laws, including those related to citizenship, ownership of property, and fundamental rights, as compared to other Indians.
- **Indian citizens from other states cannot purchase land or property in Jammu & Kashmir.**
- Centre has no power to declare financial emergency under Article 360 in the state.
- Centre can declare emergency in the state only in case of war or external aggression.
- The Union government can therefore not declare emergency on grounds of internal disturbance or imminent danger unless it is made at the request or with the concurrence of the state government.
- Under Article 370 the Indian Parliament cannot increase or reduce the borders of the state.

6. Right to privacy

- The Supreme Court has ruled right to privacy is intrinsic to the entire fundamental rights chapter of the Constitution.
- The court has held that *"the right to privacy is protected as intrinsic part of the right to life and personal liberty under **Article 21** and as a part of the freedoms guaranteed by Part III of the Constitution"*.

- The judgments of 1954 and 1962 had held that the right to privacy was not a fundamental right.

7. Preventive Detention

- Recently Supreme Court held that Preventive detention of a person by a State merely because the normal legal process is ineffective and time-consuming is illegal.
- A detainee under preventive detention can have **no right of personal liberty** guaranteed by Article 19 or Article 21.
- The **Article 22 (3)** of the Indian constitution provides that if a person is arrested or detained under a law providing for preventive detention, then the protection against arrest and detention under Article 22 (1) and 22 (2) shall not be available.
- **The grounds for Preventive detention are:**
 - Security of state.
 - Maintenance of public order.
 - Maintenance of supplies and essential services and defence.
 - Foreign affairs or security of India.

Preventive Detention

- Preventive detention is an action taken on grounds of suspicion that some wrong actions may be done by the person concerned.
- Preventive detention can however be made only on four grounds. The grounds for Preventive detention are—
 - security of the state,
 - maintenance of public order,
 - maintenance of supplies and essential services and defence,
 - foreign affair.

Important Acts / Bills

NOTES

1. Triple talaq draft bill

- Uttar Pradesh has become the first state to endorse the centre's draft bill that makes **instant triple talaq a cognisable and non-bailable offence.**
- **Talaq-e-biddat** is a custom under **Muslim personal law** that allows a man to divorce his wife by uttering the word "talaq" thrice.
- **Key features of the Draft 'Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Marriage Bill':**
 - As per the draft, triple talaq or talaq-e-biddat will be a "**cognisable and non-bailable**" offence punishable with **three years imprisonment** and the wife will be entitled to maintenance and the custody of children if they are minor.
 - The proposed law would only be applicable on instant triple talaq and it would give power to the victim to approach a magistrate seeking "**subsistence allowance**" for her and minor children.
 - The woman can also seek the custody of her minor children from the magistrate who will take a final call on the issue.
 - Under the draft law, **triple talaq in any form** — spoken, in writing or by electronic means such as email, SMS and WhatsApp — would be **bad or illegal and void.**
 - The provision of subsistence allowance and custody has been made to ensure that in case the husband asks the wife to leave the house she should have legal protection.

2. The Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill of 2017

- The Bill proposes to allow non-resident Indians (NRIs) to emerge as a decisive force in the country's electoral politics on their own terms.
- The amendment paves the way to remove an "**unreasonable restriction**" posed by **Section 20A of the Representation of the People Act**, which requires overseas electors to be physically present in their electoral constituencies to cast their votes.
- **What necessitated this move?**
 - Section 20A of the Act provides for registration and inclusion of overseas electors in the electoral rolls.
 - The **Registration of Electors Rules, 1960** provide for overseas electors to register themselves in the electoral rolls of their respective constituencies on the basis of self-attested copies of their passport and valid visa, and exercise their franchise in person on production of the original passport at the time of voting at the specified polling booth.
 - This **amendment proposes facilitating an external mode of voting**, that is, voting by proxy, whereby such electors can exercise their franchise from their places of residence abroad.

3. National Medical Commission Bill, 2017

- Recently, National Medical Commission Bill, 2017 was introduced in Lok

Sabha, which **does away with the Medical Council of India (MCI)**.

- **Key features of the Bill:**

- **Constitution of the National Medical Commission:**
 - The Bill sets up the National Medical Commission (NMC).
 - Within three years of the passage of the Bill, state governments will establish **State Medical Councils** at the state level.
 - **Medical Advisory Council:**
 - The central government will constitute a Medical Advisory Council - the primary platform through which the **states/union territories can put forth their views and concerns before the NMC**.
 - **Autonomous boards:**
 - Constitution of four autonomous boards entrusted with conducting undergraduate and postgraduate education, assessment and accreditation of medical institutions and registration of practitioners under the National Medical Commission. These boards are:
 - Under-Graduate Medical Education Board (UGMEB)
 - Post-Graduate Medical Education Board (PGMEB)
 - Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB)
 - Ethics and Medical Registration Board
 - **Entrance examinations:**
 - There will be a uniform **National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test** for admission to under-graduate medical education in all medical institutions.
 - There will be a **National Licentiate Examination** for the students graduating from medical institutions to obtain the license for practice.
 - The National Licentiate Examination will also serve as the basis for admission into post-graduate courses at medical institutions.
 - **Functions of the National Medical Commission:**
 - Framing policies for regulating medical institutions and medical professionals,
 - Assessing the requirements of healthcare related human resources and infrastructure,
 - Ensuring compliance by the State Medical Councils of the regulations made under the Bill,
 - Framing guidelines for determination of fees for up to 40% of the seats in the private medical institutions and deemed universities.
- **Background:**
 - An Expert Committee led by **Prof. Ranjit Roy Chaudhury** (2015), recommended structurally reconfiguring the MCI's functions and suggested the formation of a National Medical Commission.
 - A Committee was set up in 2016, under **Dr. Arvind Panagariya**, to review the 1956 Act and recommend changes to improve medical education.

4. Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act, 2015

- The **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015** came into force in January, 2016.
- The Act repeals the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000.
- The JJ Act, 2015 provides for strengthened provisions for both **children in need of care** and protection and **children in conflict with law**.
- **Key provisions:**
 - The Act **defines and classifies offences** as petty, serious and heinous, and defines differentiated processes for each category.
 - Special provisions are incorporated in the Act to tackle heinous offences committed by individuals in this age group of 16 to 18 years.
 - It establishes a **statutory status for the Child Adoption Resources Authority (CARA)**.
 - It also proposes several **rehabilitation and social integration measures** for institutional and non-institutional children.
 - It provides for sponsorship and foster care as completely new measures.
 - **Mandatory registration of all institutions engaged in providing child care** is required according to the Act.
 - New offences including illegal adoption, corporal punishment in child care institutions, the use of children by militant groups, and offences against disabled children are also incorporated.
 - The new law gives the Juvenile Justice Board the power to assess whether the perpetrator of a heinous crime aged between 16 and 18, had acted as a 'child' or as an 'adult.'
 - The board will be assisted in this process by psychologists and social experts.
 - It strikes a fine balance between the demands of the stakeholders asking for continued protection of rights of juveniles and the popular demand of citizens in the light of increasing incidence of heinous crimes by young boys.

5. The Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017

- With the launch of 'The Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017', Meghalaya has become the **first state in India to operationalise a law that makes social audit of government programmes and schemes a part of government practice**.
- **Key facts:**
 - The legislation provides a **legal framework for allowing citizens' participation** in the planning of development, selection of beneficiaries, concurrent monitoring of programmes, redress of grievances, and audit of works, services, and programmes on an annual basis.
 - A **social audit facilitator** will be appointed to conduct the audit

directly with the people.

- He will present findings to the Gram Sabha, who will add inputs and the result will finally go to the auditors.
- **Significance of the Act:**
 - It will make it easier to correct course as the scheme is rolling along; the audit is not after all the money has been spent.
 - It gives **people a direct say in how money will be spent** and fills an information gap for officers as they are directly in touch with the ground.
 - Social audits have been **civil society initiatives** rather than government-mandated. They are now part of the system.

6. Indian Institutes of Management Bill, 2017

- Parliament has unanimously passed the IIM Bill, 2017 that grants the Indian Institutes of Management the **power to grant degrees instead of post-graduate diplomas**.
- **Key features of the Bill:**
 - IIMs would become **institutes of national importance** with power to grant degrees.
 - The boards of the institutes are proposed to be vested with **full autonomy** including the power to appoint chairperson as well as the director.
 - Power to review the performance of each IIM is also vested with the board.
 - Board to be the **principal executive body** of each institute.
 - The IIMs' accounts will be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.
 - There will be an **IIM Coordination Forum** to be notified by the central government. It shall function as an advisory body and will be headed by an eminent person.
 - All rules and regulations framed either by the central government or the IIM Boards will need to be tabled in parliament.

7. Kapu reservation bill

- The **Andhra Pradesh** assembly has unanimously passed the Kapu reservation bill which will provide the community with a **5% quota in education and employment in the state**.
- The state government has sent the bill to the centre. As 5% of reservation to Kapus makes **total reservation exceed 50%, central govt nod is compulsory**.
- Kapus are primarily an **agrarian community**, forming a heterogeneous peasant caste.

8. The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Third Amendment) Bill, 2017

- The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Third Amendment) Bill, 2017 to bring **National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)**, set up in 1993, on a par with National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and National

Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), was passed by the Lok Sabha.

- **The Constitution Amendment Bill is for:**
 - The bill will insert **Article 338B** into the Constitution.
 - Constitution of a Commission under Article 338B for socially and educationally backward classes by name of National Commission for Backward Classes.
 - Insertion of a new **Clause (26C) under Article 366** to define socially and Educationally Backward Classes.
- **Significance of this move:**
 - The NCBC currently plays a recommendatory role to the government on inclusion or exclusion of a community in the Central list of OBC.
 - It will grant constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes.
 - The proposed legislation will allow the NCBC to look at grievance redressal and safeguarding the interest of OBCs, powers that until now vested with the SC Commission.
- **National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)**
 - NCBC was established in pursuance to the **Supreme Court judgement in the Indra Sawhney case (Mandal case)** as per the NCBC Act, 1993.
 - **Function of NCBC:**
 - Examine requests for inclusion of any class of citizens as a backward class in the lists.
 - Hear complaints of under-inclusion or over-inclusion of any backward class in such lists.
 - Tender such advice to the Central Government as it deems appropriate.

9. Women's Reservation Bill

- The Women's Reservation Bill was first conceived more than 20 years back on September 12, 1996.
- This bill pushed for a **33% reservation of all Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies for women.**
- The Rajya Sabha passed the bill on 9 March 2010. However, the Lok Sabha never voted on the bill. The bill lapsed after the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha in 2014.
- **Highlights of the Bill:**
 - **The Constitution (One Hundred and Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2008** seeks to reserve one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies.
 - The allocation of reserved seats shall be determined by such authority as prescribed by Parliament.
 - **Total reservation:** One third of the total number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be reserved for women of those groups in the Lok Sabha and the legislative assemblies.
 - **Rotation:** Reserved seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the state or union territory.
 - Reservation of seats for women shall cease to exist 15 years after the

commencement of this Amendment Act.

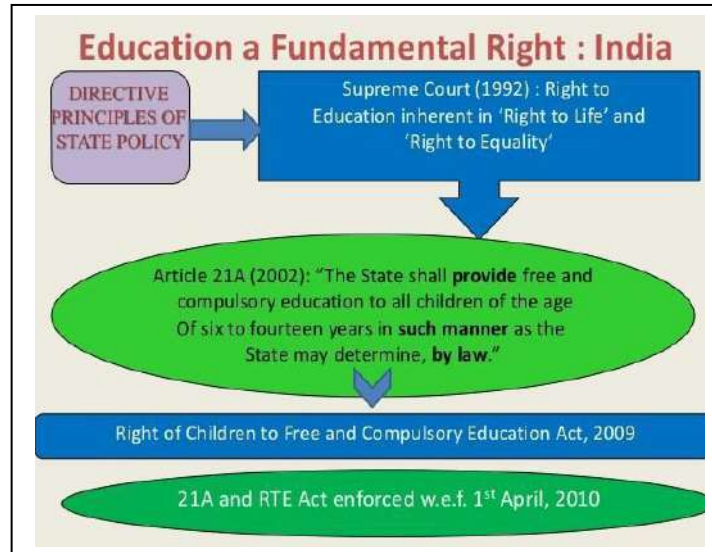
NOTES**10. Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017**

- The Parliament has passed Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017 to empower government to fix period of **maternity leave and tax-free gratuity amount** with an executive order.
- The Bill seeks to amend Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972.
- **Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972:**
 - **The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 applies to establishments employing 10 or more persons.**
 - The Act allows for the payment of gratuity to employees in any establishment, factory, mine, oilfield, plantation, port, railways, company, or shop.
 - Employees are paid gratuity if they have provided **at least five years of continuous service** at the time of termination.
- **Key features of Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017:**
 - The 2017 Bill empowers the central government to
 - Notify the period of maternity leave eligible for qualifying as continuous service; and
 - Determine the amount of gratuity available to employees.
 - The maximum maternity leave, for the purpose of calculating continuous service under the Act, was based on the maternity leave provided under the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961.
 - The maximum maternity leave under the 1961 Act was changed from 12 weeks to 26 weeks by the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017.
 - The Bill removes the reference to 12 weeks in the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 and empowers the central government to notify the maximum maternity leave.
 - Under the 1972 Act, the maximum amount of gratuity payable to an employee cannot exceed Rs 10 lakh.
 - The Bill removes the existing ceiling and states that the ceiling may be notified by the central government.
 - It will allow revision from time to time with the increase in wage and inflation and future pay commissions.
 - The implementation of 7th Central Pay Commission has increased ceiling gratuity for Central Government employees from Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 20 lakh.

11. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment)**Bill**

- The Parliament has passed **the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill**.
- The Bill amends the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.

- The bill allows **teachers appointed on or before March 31, 2015 to acquire minimum qualifications within a period of four years from the date of commencement of the Act.**
- This gives the 8.5 lakh unqualified teachers, appointed after implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) law, another chance to get recognized degrees.



- **Background:**

- According to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, which came into force on April 1, 2010, a teacher, who did not possess minimum qualifications, was required to acquire them in five years.
- **The Act was enacted to provide free and compulsory education to all children between the age of six and 14 years.**
- The central government subsequently received requests from states for extension of the period to enable them complete the training process for in-service untrained teachers.

12. Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Bill, 2016

- Parliament has passed The Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Bill, 2016.
- Admiralty laws deal with **cases of accidents in navigable waters** or involve **contracts related to commerce on such waters.**
- The Bill aims to establish a legal framework for **consolidation of related laws to replace the age old archaic laws** with modern Indian legislation and to **confer admiralty jurisdiction on all High Courts of the coastal states** of the country.
- As per the new Bill, High Courts of all the coastal states shall exercise admiralty jurisdiction over maritime claims which include several aspects not limited to goods imported and chattel as earlier, but also other claims such as payment of wages of seamen, loss of life, salvages, mortgage, loss or damage, services and repairs, insurance, ownership and lien, threat of damage to environment etc.
- The Bill accords highest priority to payment of wages of the seafarers.
- The Bill also provides for protection against wrongful and unjustified arrest and has provision for transfer of cases from one High Court to other High Court.
- **What is admiralty jurisdiction?**
 - Admiralty jurisdiction relates to powers of the High Courts in respect

of claims associated with transport by sea and navigable waterways.

13. RTI Act

- **Right to Information Act 2005** mandates timely response to citizen requests for government information.
- It replaces the erstwhile Freedom of information Act, 2002.
- Under the provisions of the Act, **any citizen may request information** from a “public authority” (a body of Government or “instrumentality of State”) which is required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days.
- The Act also requires every public authority to **computerise their records** for wide dissemination and to proactively certain categories of information so that the citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.
- The Act covers the **whole of India except Jammu and Kashmir**, where J&K Right to Information Act is in force.
- It has been accorded as a **part of fundamental right under article 19(1)** of the constitution.
- Private bodies are not within the Act’s ambit directly.
- In a decision of **Sarbajit Roy versus Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission**, the Central Information Commission affirmed that privatised public utility companies continue to be within the RTI Act.
- A person who desires to seek some information is required to pay Rs. 10. If the applicant belongs to below poverty line (BPL) category, he is not required to pay any fee. However, he should submit a proof in support of his claim for belonging to the below poverty line.
- **Information exempted under RTI** include the following category:
 - National Security or Sovereignty.
 - National Economic Interests.
 - Relations with Foreign States.
 - Law Enforcement and the Judicial Process.
 - Cabinet and Other Decision-Making Documents.
 - Trade Secrets and Commercial Confidentiality.
 - Individual Safety.
 - Personal Privacy.

NOTES

Miscellaneous

NOTES

1. Maharashtra govt rolls out 1% reservation for orphans

- Maharashtra government has announced a 1% reservation in the open category for orphans in the state. Officials say Maharashtra is, perhaps, the first state to bring such a policy.
- **Eligibility:** Only children who have no idea who their parents were and what their caste is will be covered under this reservation.
- It is aimed at social and economic empowerment of such children.

2. Official languages of the UN

- India is pushing forward its proposal to include Hindi as one of the official languages of the United Nations.
- **Procedure for language to be recognised as an official one of UN:**
 - The procedure involves obtaining **approval of the General Assembly**.
 - Such a proposal has to be approved by more than half of the members of the General Assembly where every member-State has a vote.
 - In addition, recognizing any language as the official language of the UN entails a substantial increase in the expenditure of the UN necessitating an enhanced contribution by every member country, which is why most of the members remain reluctant to support such a proposal.
- **Need for recognition:**
 - According to the estimates around 340 million to 500 million speak, and as many as 800 million people understand Hindi language.
 - Outside India there are countries like Nepal South Africa, Mauritius, the United Kingdom, the United States, Yemen, and Uganda where a significant number people speak Hindi.
- **Official languages of the UN:**
 - There are **six official languages of the UN: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish**.
 - These languages are used at meetings of various UN organs, particularly the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the Security Council.
 - Each representative of a country may speak in any one of these six languages, or may speak in any language and provide interpretation into one of the six official languages.
 - The six official languages are also used for the dissemination of official documents.
 - Until a document is available in all six official languages, it is not published.
- **What's India doing in this regard?**
 - The ministry of external affairs (MEA) has set up the **World Hindi Secretariat** in Mauritius along with the MHA has prepared Hindi-Chinese, Hindi-Arabic, Hindi-French, and Hindi-Spanish dictionaries to promote Hindi.

- A consolidated Hindi-based dictionary of UN languages is also under compilation.

3. Maharashtra unveils Public cloud policy

- Maharashtra has unveiled a public cloud policy, virtually **mandating its departments to shift their data storage onto the cloud**, which intends to make them available for free to the general public.
- The policy is a **first by any State**.
- The objective is to use public cloud in cases wherever the Right to Information Act is applicable, and then go in for enhanced security features for private and sensitive data, which will also be stored on the cloud.

4. AFSPA

- AFSPA, enacted in 1958, gives **powers to the army and state and central police forces** to shoot to kill, search houses and destroy any property that is “likely” to be used by insurgents in areas declared as “disturbed” by the home ministry.
- The Act provides army personnel with safeguards against malicious, vindictive and frivolous prosecution.
- Security forces can “**arrest without warrant**” a person, who has committed or even “about to commit a cognizable offence” even on “reasonable suspicion”.
- **What are ‘disturbed’ areas?**
 - The **state or central government** considers those areas as ‘disturbed’ “by reason of differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.
- **How a region is declared ‘disturbed’?**
 - **Section (3) of the Afspa** empowers the governor of the state or Union territory to issue an official notification in The Gazette of India, following which the Centre has the authority to send in armed forces for civilian aid.
 - Once declared ‘disturbed’, the region has to maintain status quo for a minimum of three months, according to The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976.”
- At present **AFSPA is in 6 states viz. Assam, Nagaland, Manipur** (except the Imphal municipal area), **Arunachal Pradesh** (only the Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts plus a 20-km belt bordering Assam), **Meghalaya** (confined to a 20-km belt bordering Assam) and **Jammu and Kashmir**.

5. Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS)

- The CCTNS project was initiated in 2009 as part of **police modernisation programme** under the **national e-governance project**.
- The Project will interconnect about 15000 Police Stations and additional 5000 offices of supervisory police officers across the country and **digitize data related to FIR registration, investigation and charge sheets in all Police Stations**.
- The core objective of CCTNS is to connect all the police stations so that any of the police stations can contact any other police station; thereby facilitate

collection, storage, retrieval, analysis and transfer the information among police stations, state headquarters and central police organizations.

- It will not only **automate Police functions** at Police station and higher levels but will also create facilities and mechanism to **provide public services** like registration of online complaints, ascertaining the status of case registered at the police station, verification of persons etc.
- In 2015, an additional objective of establishing a basic platform for an **Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)** was added to the Project.
- **Union Home Minister launched the Digital Police Portal under CCTNS project:**
 - A digital police portal under the CCTNS project, aims to **create a national database of crimes and criminals**.
 - The portal is a **smart policing initiative** of the Government to provide services to citizens and aid efficient police investigation.
 - The police portal is a platform for **citizens to file online crime related complaints** and also request for antecedent verification.
 - Central investigating and research agencies also have been provided logins to the portal to access crime statistics.

6. Central Road Fund

- The Central Road Fund was established by the government as per the **Central road fund act 2000** to fund the development and maintenance of **National Highways, State Highways and Rural roads**.
- In order to mobilise the fund, the Central Road Fund Act 2000 proposed to levy and collect by way of cess, a duty of excise and duty of customs on petrol and high speed diesel oil.
- This collected amount is then released to **National Highways Authority of India**, and to the state/union territory governments for the development of national and state highways.
- The fund is utilised for the development and maintenance of National highways, State roads, Rural roads and for provision of road overbridges/under bridges and other safety features at unmanned Railway Crossings.
- **The Lok Sabha has passed the Central Road Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2017:**
 - The Bill amends the Central Road Fund Act, 2000.
 - The Bill seeks to allocate a share of this cess towards the development of **inland waterways**.

7. HAMESHA VIJAYEE

- It is an **exercise by armed forces** being conducted in the deserts of Rajasthan to evaluate the capability of the armed forces to strike deep into enemy territory in an integrated air-land battle.
- Unique in scope and scale, the exercise being conducted in battle like conditions, aims at fine tuning surveillance and destruction mechanisms to support precision strikes and manoeuvres by network enabled forces.

8. Transformation of 115 Backward Districts

- For creation of a **New India by 2022**, Government has identified 115 backward districts for rapid transformation by 2022.
- For each of the Districts, a senior official in the rank of Additional secretary and Joint secretary has been nominated as **Prabhari officer**.
- These 115 backward districts include 35 districts affected by Left Wing Extremists (LWE) violence, 55 districts just affected by LWE and another 15 including districts in Jammu and Kashmir and northeast affected by terrorism.
- **Role of Prabhari officers in developing these districts:**
 - Prabhari officers would take it up as a challenge and succeed in their mission by making a difference in the lives of millions of citizens in these districts.
 - Prabhari officers would form a team with State representatives and bring convergence in their effort.
 - Prabhari officers will **assist the District administration** in sharing the vision for 2022, to ensure the **convergence of the efforts of central and state government** and to set up a robust mechanism to **monitor the improvements** in key outcomes in the district.
- **Funding:**
 - Funds are not a constraint in this program since large funds are available under different Schemes.
 - The officers will explore the availability of funds in **District Mineral funds**, wherever available for this purpose.
 - In addition, they will also use flexi-fund which are significant in amount and are available under different Schemes of the Government.

NOTES

9. Urdu as second official language of Telangana

- Telangana government has declared Urdu as the state's second official language.
- The state government will appoint Urdu officers in all the offices to receive petitions from public and reply them in Urdu.
- The **Indian constitution does not specify the official languages to be used by the states** for the conduct of their official functions, and leaves each state free to, through its legislature, adopt Hindi or any language used in its territory as its official language or languages.
- The language need not be one of those listed in the Eighth Schedule, and several states have adopted official languages which are not so listed.

10. Cornelia Sorabji

- Google Doodle on **November 15th** paid tribute to Cornelia Sorabji, the **first woman to practice law in the country**, on the occasion of her **151st birth anniversary**.
- She created history by becoming first woman lawyer in 1924.
- She was the first woman permitted to attend Bombay University, where she excelled.
- She then went on to become the first Indian woman to study law at Oxford

University in 1892.

NOTES

11. Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

- **Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh** was the recipient of 2017 Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development.
- The award is given annually to individuals and organisations in recognition of creative efforts toward promoting international peace, development and a new international economic order, ensuring that scientific discoveries are used for the larger good of humanity, and enlarging the scope of freedom.
- The award, comprising a cash prize of ₹25 lakh and a citation, was instituted by the Indira Gandhi Memorial trust in 1986.

12. Indian Army to induct women in military police

- The government has decided to recruit women jawans into the Army's **Corps of Military Police (CMP)**
- This will help in **investigating gender specific crimes**.
- Currently, women are allowed in select areas such as medical, educational, legal, signals and engineering wings of Indian Army.
- The role of military police includes policing cantonments and army establishments, preventing breach of rules and regulations by soldiers, maintaining movement of soldiers.
- It also provides logistical support during peace and war, handle prisoners of war, extend aid to civil police whenever required and handle basic telecommunication equipment such as telephone exchanges.

13. Navika Sagar Parikrama

- This is **the first ever Indian circumnavigation of the globe by an all-women crew**.
- The project is considered essential towards **promoting Ocean Sailing activities** in the Navy while depicting Government of India's thrust for '**Nari Shakti**'.
- The crew comprises of six-member all women team on board the sailing vessel **INSV Tarini** and will circumnavigate the globe in approximately 165 days.
- It was flagged-off at the INS Mandovi naval training base near Panaji, Goa.
- Navika Sagar Parikrama would cover the expedition in five legs with stop-overs at four ports (Fremantle, Australia; Lyttleton, New Zealand; Port Stanley, the Falklands; and Cape town, South Africa) before returning to Goa
- **Aims of the Expedition are as follows:**
 - **Nari Shakti:** In consonance with the National policy to empower women to attain their full potential, the expedition aims to showcase 'Nari Shakti' on the world platform.
 - **Environment and Climate Change:** Sailing encourages the use of environment friendly non-conventional renewable energy resources which affects the life of women.
 - **Make in India:** The voyage also aims to show case the 'Make in India' initiative by sailing onboard the indigenously built INSV Tarini.

- **Meteorological/ Ocean/ Wave Data Observation:** The crew would also collate and update Meteorological/ Ocean/ Wave data on a daily basis for subsequent analysis by research and development organisations.
- **Marine Pollution:** The crew would monitor and report marine pollution on the high seas.

14. Assam forms 'State Capital Region' around Guwahati

- In line with the National Capital Region, Assam will have a **State Capital Region** encompassing Guwahati and its peripheral areas with the passing of a bill in the state Assembly.
- The Assembly passed **Assam State Capital Region Development Authority (ASCRDA) Bill 2017** to set up the regional authority for preparation of a plan for rapid development of the SCR.
- ASCRDA will be the overall authority to direct, implement and monitor the development of SCR.
- ASCRDA will be headed by the State Chief Minister.

15. Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS)

- The purpose of the CIBMS is to eventually **replace manual surveillance/patrolling** of the international borders by electronic surveillance and organising the BSF personnel into quick reaction teams to enhance their detection and interception capabilities.
- CIBMS is expected to **counter infiltration and cross-border terror attacks**.
- The system employs latest technology which would detect infiltration via land, underwater, air and tunnels.
- **The concept of CIBMS is the integration of manpower, sensors and command and control to improve situational awareness and facilitate quick response to emerging situations.**
- **Components of CIBMS:**
 - Among major components of CIBMS is the '**virtual fence**'.
 - The second component is the **command and control**, which will help in optimum use of resources for border management.
 - Another component is **power management** to keep CIBMS running.

16. Intelligence Wing of Sashastra Seema Bal

- The **Union Ministry of Home Affairs** has launched the SSB's first ever intelligence wing.
- The SSB has been mandated to guard the **Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan borders** where there are no restrictions on the movement of people on either side.
- The SSB has also been declared as the **lead intelligence agency** for both the borders.
- This was also essential as the SSB's operations are based on intelligence to prevent criminals and smugglers from taking advantage of the friendly borders with Nepal and Bhutan.
- The border with Nepal touches Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West

Bengal and Sikkim and the border with Bhutan touches Sikkim, West Bengal, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

- **Sashastra Seema Bal:**

- The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) is a **paramilitary police force under the Ministry of Home affairs** responsible for guarding India's international borders with Nepal and Bhutan.
- It is one of India's Central Armed Police Forces, which includes ITBP, BSF, CRPF and CISF.
- When it was created in 1963, it was called Special Services Bureau.
- The name was changed to Sashatra Seema Bal in 2001 after it was given charge of the Nepal border.
- Besides this, the force is also deployed in Jammu and Kashmir for counter insurgency operations and anti-Naxal operations in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bihar.
- It also provides **internal security** during elections in various states.

- **Role of the SSB:**

- The primary role is to **physically guard and manage the international border**.
- Besides this, SSB undertakes construction of schools, buildings, toilets, roads under border area developmental plan.
- It also gives regular guidance and training to unemployed youth in general studies and physical training.
- In border villages, SSB teaches the border population the best agricultural practices, horticulture, pisciculture etc.
- SSB has also taken up a unique and important task to adopt and fund the education of the girl child in poor villages along the border and teach them unarmed combat training.

17. National ST Commission action on video films of Jaravas on YouTube

- Taking suo-moto cognizance of objectionable video films and pictures of protected Jarava and other tribal communities of Andaman Islands on YouTube social media platform, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribe (NCST) initiated action on it.
- As per provisions of **Andaman and Nicobar Island (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956 (PAT)**, the Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges, Sentinelese, Nicobarese and Shom Pens have been identified as **"aboriginal tribes"**.
- The PAT contains the provisions of protection of these communities from the outside interference.
- Penalty provisions for promoting tourism through advertisement relating to aboriginal tribes have also been made in the year 2012.
- Whoever enters these areas in contravention of the notification under section 7 (which prohibits entry into reserve areas) for taking photographs or making videos shall be punishable with imprisonment up to three years.
- Besides, Section 3 (i) (r) of the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities Act) also accords protection.

18. In the lines of INTERPOL, North-eastern states to have NEPOL

- NEPOL is a proposed **police organization by the North eastern states including West Bengal** in the lines of International Police Organization (INTERPOL).
- It will facilitate **cooperation between the states** of the region in **tackling insurgency, cross border crime and smuggling**.
- **Need for NEPOL:**
 - North eastern militants have come together and formed United Liberation Front of Western South East Asia (UNLFW), an umbrella organization comprising of the United Liberation Front of Assam (Independent), Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), Kamatapur Liberation Organization (KLO) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (Songbijit).
 - This organisation has orchestrated several strikes on security forces.
 - Also, North eastern states share over 4500km long border with Bangladesh, China, Myanmar and Bhutan.
 - Hence, cooperation among the police forces between the states is necessary.

19. NATGRID

- The **National Intelligence Grid** or **NATGRID** is the **integrated intelligence grid connecting databases** of core security agencies of the Government of India to collect comprehensive patterns of intelligence that can be **readily accessed by intelligence agencies**.
- It was proposed in the **aftermath of the terrorist attacks on Mumbai in 2008**.
- It is established to bolster **India's counter-terrorism capabilities** by combining **21 sensitive databases** of personal information related to various domains.
- The domains are banks, credit cards, cellphone usage, immigration records, motor vehicle registrations, Income Tax records and National Crime Records Bureau.
- The single database will be accessed by authorised officers from 10 central agencies like IB, R&AW, CBI, ED and DRI.

20. Important Committees

1) High Level Committee on Making India Hub of Arbitration	The government had constituted a High Level Committee under the Chairmanship of Justice B.N.Srikrishna , to review the institutionalization of arbitration mechanism and suggest reforms thereto.
2) TSR Subramanian committee	For formulation of the National Policy on Education . It also suggested that 'no detention' policy should be discontinued after Class V.
3) Subhash Chandra Garg Committee	Regulation of the financial technology (fintech) sector in India.
4) N Gopaldaswami Committee	To select 20 Institutions of Eminence.

5) Y H Malegam Committee	To monitor bad loans, rising cases of frauds, audits.
6) Uday Kotak Committee	Corporate Governance.
7) Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) headed by Dr Bibek Debroy	Provides advice on economic issues to the government, specifically to the Prime Minister.
8) B N Srikrishna Committee	Study issues related to data protection.
9) Madhav Chitale Committee	Measures for De-silting Ganga.
10) Madhukar Gupta Committee	Border protection.
11) Malimath Committee report	Reforms in the criminal justice system (CJS)
12) Ratan Watal Committee	Review of Autonomous Bodies.
13) T.K. Viswanathan committee	To deal with cybercrimes especially online hate speech.

