

UPSC MONTHLY AUGUST-2017 MAGAZINE



Right to Privacy

A Fundamental Right, declares the Supreme Court.

Demonetisation

99% of demonetised notes returns - RBI Report.

Vice President Elections

Venkaiah Naidu is the new Vice President of India.

India-US-Afghanistan

New South Asian Policy.

INCREDIBLE RESULTS

- IAS 2016----

8 Ranks in Top 50

18 Ranks in Top 100

215 Ranks In The Final List



Singh Bedi



Abhilash Mishra



Rana



Prabhash Kumar



Avdhesh Meena



Singh Rank-33



Rank-42



Gautam Rank-50



Manuj Jindal Rank-53



Tanai Sultania Rank-63



Parikh Mirant Jatin Rank-67



Rohit Rank-69



Abhishek Chourasiya Rank-72



Rajarshi Rank-81



Prateek Jain Rank-82



Nair Praiit Prabhakaran Rank-87



Sushil Kumar Rank-96



Devendra Kumar Rank-97



Prabhat



Adityavikram Rank-113



Singla





Nitish Agarwal



Ann Mary Rank-123



Anand Shankar Rank-127



Kumar Jha



Prabhat Ranian Pathak Rank-137



Akanksha Rana Rank-163



Padmini Solanki Rank-170



Gopinath Rank-171



Madhav Garikapati Rank-172



Rahul Rank-182



Sagar Bagmar Rank-186



Abhay Rank-188



Tare Anuj Rank-189



Anurag Rank-198



Arpit Vijayvargiya Rank-201



Deepak Rank-202



Videh Rank-205



Akhil Mahajan Rank-213



Nitika Rank-217



Sinha



Keshav Kumar Rank-222



Kumar Rank-230



Garg Rank-238



Pansuria Toral Pravinbhai

Rank-239



Odke Digvijay Govind



Bogati jagadeeswar Rank-249



Abhishek Surana Rank-250



Pushkin Jain Rank-252



Amit Rank-253



Shrey Vats Rank-260



Suchismita Kanungoe Rank-261



Sri Hari Prasad Gopishetty Rank-268



Aditi Mor

Rank-277



Rank-247

Zade Parikshit Sanjayrao Rank-280



Prachi Rank-290



Guru Rank-299







Aaditya Mishra Rank-309



Amilineni Bhargav Teja Bishla



Singhi Rank-322



Dahiya

Rank-325



Rank-328



Aastha Suman



Kaustuva Rank-381



Punia









Raieev

Rank-358

Rank-314



Rank-365

Rank-315









Mrinal Prakash Rank-380

OUR RESULTS IN THE PAST YEARS

IAS Result 2015



IAS Result 2014



IAS Result 2013



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POLITY

1. Hard act

Context:

 Section 498A has been made to contain violence against women within the family.

Issues with Section 498A:

- Operation of IPC was weighted against husbands and their birth families, and automatically presumed the complainant to be an innocent
- Women and Child Development Ministry have acknowledged that the law has been misused too often.
- Prevalence of misuse, is reflected in the data of the National Crime Records Bureau — less than one in five charge sheets filed has resulted in conviction.

Proposals:

- Minister Maneka Gandhi has asked the National Commission for Women to be accessible to men who claim to be falsely accused.
- Apex court has issued fresh guidelines prohibiting the immediate arrest of family members, except in cases involving physical injury or death
- Maneka Gandhi has recommended a more stringent filing process which insists on identity proof, and has warned that while opening a window to the victims of false claims, the NCW should not open the door wide to false counter-claims
- The SC wants the establishment of family welfare committees in every district, to which all complaints are to be referred
- Besides, the court has prescribed that bail applications must be decided on the date of application. Since bail is a right, courts may be more inclined to grant rather than withhold, which could again increase the risk to the complainant.

Way forward?

 The law must retain its progressive bias in favour of wronged women, without inadvertently wronging men.

2. Govt to ease norms for organ donors

In news:

- Possible amendment to the Human Organs and Tissues Transplantation Act, 1994 (as amended in 2011)
- The government plans to include step-parents, step-siblings and extended family members in the definition of 'near relatives' allowed to donate critical organs
- This move is likely to benefit patients awaiting transplants.

Present scenario:

• Near relatives include: spouses, children, parents, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren.

3. Nod for Jharkhand religious Bill

In news:

• The Jharkhand Cabinet gave its approval to the Jharkhand Religious Independence Bill, 2017.

Main focus:

- discourages conversion to another religion through force or allurement
- Section 3 of the Bill prohibits forceful conversion.
- In the event of violation of the Section, there will be up to three years imprisonment or Rs. 50,000 penalty or both.
- If the crime involved a minor, a woman or a person from the SC/ST community, the prison term would be up to four years and a penalty of Rs. 1 lakh.
- Individuals voluntarily opting to switch to another religion would have to inform the local deputy commissioner/collector about the reasons and the place of conversion, failing which he will be liable for prosecution and punishment.
- Key Statistics: As per the 2011 census, the Christian population in Jharkhand rose by a whopping 29.7% in the last 10 years followed by that of Muslims 28.4%, while Hindu population rose by 21%.

4. <u>Understanding the new DNA tech Bill: All your questions answered</u>

Context:

- Centre is about to finalise a fresh version of the DNA Fingerprinting Bill, a draft of which was ready in 2015
- Law Commission of India released a revised draft of the Bill that is now called The DNA Based Technology (Use and Regulation) Bill, 2017 with some very important changes

Provisions in news bill:

 It seeks to establish regulatory institutions and standards for DNA testing, and supervise the activities of all laboratories authorised to carry out such tests.

Significance of DNA analysis:

- It is extremely useful and accurate technology in ascertaining the identity of a person from his/her DNA sample, or establishing biological relationships between individuals.
- As a result, DNA technology is being increasingly relied upon in investigations of crime, identification of unidentified bodies, or in determining parentage.



 But information from DNA samples can reveal intrusive information like their allergies, or susceptibility to diseases. As a result, there is a greater risk of information from DNA analysis getting misused

Bill provisions

- It prohibits the collection of any "bodily substance" from an arrested individual (for the purposes of a DNA test) without his/her consent, except if the individual is arrested for certain specific offences.
- However, if the consent "is refused without good cause", and a magistrate is satisfied of the need for a DNA test, he/she can order the arrested person to give a sample.
- The new Bill has also removed a provision that allowed DNA profiles in the databank to be used for "creation and maintenance of population statistics databank".
- While the penalty for misuse of data remains a prison term of up to three years and a fine up to Rs 1 lakh, a reference to a minimum prison term of one month has been removed.
- The Bill seeks to set up two new institutions a DNA Profiling Board and a DNA Data Bank.

DNA Profiling Board

- The Board, with 11 members, is supposed to be the regulatory authority that will grant accreditation to DNA laboratories and lay down guidelines, standards and procedures for their functioning.
- It will advise central and state governments on "all issues relating to DNA laboratories".
- It will also be the authority to make recommendations on ethical and human rights, including privacy, issues related to DNA testing.

DNA Data Bank

- A national databank of DNA profiles is proposed to be set up, along with regional databanks in every state
- The new draft does not specify the location of the national databank. All regional DNA databanks will be mandated to share their information with the national databank.
- Certain DNA Profiling Board-accredited labs would be authorised to carry out DNA testing and analysis.
 These are the only places to which DNA samples, picked up from a crime scene can be referred for analysis
- Data from the analyses will need to be shared with the nearest regional DNA databank which will store it and share it with the national databank.
- The databanks will maintain five sets of databases

 for DNA samples picked up from crime scenes, for suspects or undertrials, and for offenders, missing persons, and unidentified dead bodies.

Issues:

- There are chances that a wrong match is generated.
- If the DNA result is taken as the ultimate evidence, no recourse will be available to an individual who has

been wrongly matched.

- Privacy-related objections-main concerns are whose DNA can be collected and under what circumstances, who can access the database etc.
- Information like ancestry or susceptibility to a disease, or other genetic traits, is liable to be misused.
- DNA tests have not led to an improvement in conviction rates in countries where it is already being followed.

5. Don't shoot the messenger

Context:

- More than 15 whistle-blowers have been murdered in India in the past three years.
- The new amendments to Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2014. would fundamentally dilute the law

Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2014.

- It protects people who bring to the notice of the authorities concerned allegations of corruption, wilful misuse of power or commission of a criminal offence against a public servant.
- The WBP law has provisions for concealing the identity of a whistle-blower
- The law affords protection against victimisation of the complainant or anyone who renders assistance in an inquiry.
- This is critical as whistle-blowers are routinely subjected to various forms of victimisation, suspensions, withholding of promotions, threats of violence and attacks.
- The law empowers the competent authorities to accord them protection, which includes police protection and penalising those who victimise them
- The Whistle Blowers Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2015

<u>Issues</u>

- It seeks to remove immunity provided to whistleblowers from prosecution under the draconian Official Secrets Act (OSA) for disclosures made under the WBP law. Issues involved
- Offences under the OSA are punishable by imprisonment of up to 14 years.
- Threat of such stringent penalties would deter even genuine whistle-blowers.
- If whistle-blowers are prosecuted for disclosing information as part of their complaints and not granted immunity from the OSA, the very purpose of the law would be defeated.
- Amendment Bill says that complaints by whistleblowers containing information which would prejudicially affect the sovereignty, integrity, security or economic interests of the state shall not be inquired into.
- Certain categories of information cannot form part of the disclosure made by a whistle-blower, unless the



- information has been obtained under the RTI Act.
- These exemptions have been modelled on Section 8(1) of the RTI law which lists information which cannot be disclosed to citizens.

RTI Act v/s WBP Act

- The RTI Act seeks to provide information to people.
- While the WBP Act provides a mechanism for disclosures to be made to competent authorities within the government to enable inquiry into allegations of corruption and provide protection to whistle-blowers.
- Conflating the two laws is inappropriate and would preclude genuine whistle-blowing in several scenarios.
- If the intention was to ensure that sensitive information pertaining to national security and integrity is not compromised, instead of carving out blanket exemptions, the government could have proposed additional safeguards for such disclosures such as requiring complaints to be filed using sealed envelopes to the competent authorities.

6. NOTA option to stay in Rajya Sabha polls

Context:

- Election Commission circular issued in January 2014 introduced NOTA in the Rajya Sabha elections.
- Gujarat Congress's plead Supreme Court to freeze the NOTA option for elections to the three Rajya Sabha seats in the State on August 8.

In News:

- Supreme Court observation: The 'None Of The Above' (NOTA) option will remain on the ballot paper in the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections.
- Apprehensions of Congress political party: NOTA would be a "recipe for corruption".

7. NOTA's impact will be like abstention

In News:

- The impact of the decision of MLAs to exercise the NOTA (none-of-the-above) option in elections to the Rajya Sabha will be the same as that of an abstention.
- Nor does it attract the anti-defection law, though it can be a sign that an MLA is disgruntled with his party leadership or official candidate.

Elections in Rajya Sabha and NOTA:

- In the Rajya Sabha polls, a winning candidate should get a required number of votes calculated through a formula.
- The total number of votes are divided by the number of seats going to the polls from the State, adding one vote to the number. To this whole, a value of one vote is again added.
- The polls are held by means of a single, transferable vote, and the candidates reaching the requisite number are declared elected.

 If a candidate from a party exercises the NOTA option, the total votes will go down. This will bring down the number required to win.

8. It's time to enact an anti-lynching law

Context:

 The data website India Spendhas compiled instances of cow-linked violence from 2010 to 2017. It found that during this period, 28 people were killed in 63 such incidents.

Statistics

- An overwhelming 97% of these attacks took place after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government came to power in May 2014.
- About 86% of those killed were Muslims. In 21% of the cases, the police filed cases against the victims/ survivors.
- Cow-related lynchings rose sharply in 2017. This marks a 75% increase over 2016, which had been the worst year for mob lynchings since 2010.

National Campaign Against Mob Lynching (NCAML)

- It has initiated a campaign for a law against mob lynching.
- Also known as 'Masuka', short for Manav Suraksha Kanoon (law to protect humans)
- A draft of the proposed legislation is currently up on the Internet, awaiting suggestions from the public.

Why anti-lynching law is necessary?

- It fills a void in our criminal jurisprudence.
- At present there is no law that criminalises mob killings. The Indian Penal Code has provisions for unlawful assembly, rioting, and murder but nothing that takes cognisance of a group of people coming together to kill (a lynch mob).
- Under Section 223 (a) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), to prosecute together two or more people accused of the same offence committed in the course of the "same transaction".
- But the provision falls far short of an adequate legal framework for prosecuting lynch mobs

Apprehensions:

- The potential for abuse
- the underlying premise that a generic anti-lynching law could address India's lynching problem.

Reason for the rise in lynchings:

- Major reason for the recent rise in lynchings is impunity.
- The lynch mobs that murdered several people were confident of getting away with it. So far, the state has done little to shake that confidence.
- The problem is not mob lynching per se but the mob lynching of minorities, for that is where impunity kicks in.



 In the case of cow-linked lynchings, a lot depends on whether the incumbent in power considers it compatible with its political interests to crack down on such attacks.

Communalism

- Advocates of Masuka appear reluctant to name the problem –targeted communal lynchings.
- It actually is a minority issue, and that is why the majority needs to take it up.
- Any political mobilisation for the protection of minorities would be anxious about the bogey of minority appeasement.
- It could even mean that an anti-lynching Bill stands less chance of making it through Parliament

Protect minorities

- A truly 'civil' society should feel no hesitation in demanding that the state protect its minorities because protection of minorities is one of the biggest responsibilities of any democracy.
- The UN has a Special Rapporteur for minority issues precisely because it recognises that "minorities in all regions of the world continue to face serious threats"
- Ways to combat the impunity enjoyed by antiminority lynch mobs
- Prevention of Communal and Targeted Violence (Access to Justice and Reparations) Bill, 2011, or the Anti-Communal Violence Bill
- Police reforms, which are pending despite the Supreme Court ordering their implementation
- But the Anti-Communal Violence Bill was buried because it was felt that it threatened the autonomy of States by mooting a parallel structure that undermined federalism.

Anti-Communal Violence Bill:

- It fixes command responsibility for communal incidents
- It recognises that targeted communal violence disproportionately victimises minorities
- It creates a mechanism to insulate investigations of communal violence from political interference

Way forward

- The draft anti-lynching law needs to be revised to incorporate key elements of the Anti-Communal Violence Bill.
- Demand for an anti-lynching law needs to be buttressed by a parallel campaign for police reforms.

9. Aadhaar will be required for death certificates

In News:

- From October 1 onwards, Aadhaar number will be required to establish identity of a deceased person for registration of his/her death.
- Why such a move? Registrar General of India (RGI) said it would effectively prevent identity-fraud.

- Applicant is not aware of the Aadhaar No. or enrolment ID No. of the deceased: he shall have to declare that the latter did not possess Aadhaar number to the best of his knowledge.
- Any false declaration to this effect will be treated an offence under the Aadhaar Act, 2016 and Registration of Birth and Death Act, 1967.
- A reading of the Aadhaar Act indicates that the penalty for the said offence may be imprisonment up to one year and/or fine up to Rs 25,000.

10. <u>Cattle trade ban rules were not placed before</u> Parliament

Context:

- Prevention of Cruelty to Animal (Regulation of Livestock Market) Rules of 2017-notified on May 23, bans the sale of cattle in livestock markets for the purpose of slaughter or animal sacrifice.
- The rules mandate that cattle should only be sold in animal markets for farming purposes.

In news:

- RTI reply by the Lok Sabha Secretariat:
- The rules banning cattle slaughter were never placed before Parliament.

What does the law say?

- Section 38A of the Prevention of Cruelty Act of 1960 mandates that any rule made by the Centre under it ought to be laid before each House of Parliament "as soon as it is made."
- The rules are to be placed before Parliament for a total of 30 days.
- Any modification agreed upon by both the Houses should be incorporated in the rules or else they would have no effect.

11. Ordinance to give quota in promotions for SC/ST staff likely

Context:

- The Karnataka State government is likely to promulgate an ordinance to give reservation in promotions for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe employees.
- This move comes in the backdrop of a Supreme Court order that struck down reservation in promotions for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe employees.
- <u>Key Fact:</u> The State has had reservation in promotions for SC/ST employees since 1978 15% for SCs and 3% for STs which has been struck down by the apex court.

12. Restoring Parliament's primacy

Context:

- Relevance of 'Parliamentary Budget Office' in Indian Parliamentary system
- What is a Parliamentary Budget Office(PBO)?



- A PBO is an independent and impartial body linked directly to Parliament.
- A PBO is comprised of independent and specialised staff, such as Budget analysts, economists, public finance experts.
- It provides technical and objective analysis of Budgets and public finance to the House and its committees
- Its core functions include Budget approval, scrutiny of its implementation.
- The PBO must be non-partisan, independent and mandated to serve all parliamentarians.
- Its output, and the methods by which those outputs are prepared must be transparent, accessible and understandable.

Why PBO?

- Some experts have argued that Parliament does not require a functioning PBO.
- But this argument is flawed because Parliament is a Budget-approving body and its members must be well-informed for a legitimate approving process.
- PBO is an instrument for addressing bias towards spending and deficits.
- It can generate quality public debate on Budget policy and public finance, enabling parliamentarians to engage meaningfully in the Budget process.

Functioning PBOs in other countries

- The functioning PBOs are in countries such as the U.S., Canada, Australia, Austria, South Korea, Italy, and Mexico.
- There are PBOs established in subnational legislatures, such as California, Ontario, Scotland, and New South Wales.
- Also, New York City has a well-functioning Independent Budget Office (IBO).

Core functions of PBOs

The majority of PBOs have four core functions:

- a. Independent and objective economic forecasts
- b. Baseline estimate survey
- c. Analysing the executive's Budget proposal
- d. Providing medium- to long-term analysis
- The core functions of the PBO should be codified in law

The way forward

- Parliamentary scrutiny of public finance is an important aspect of governmental accountability.
- There is a legitimate democratic need in this country to strengthen the capacity of Parliament and its members.
- Parliamentarians have a role in establishing the PBO.
- As representatives of the people, Parliamentarians can help improve Budget policies by providing inputs on public needs and priorities.

13. SC for centralised system to select judicial officers

In news:

- The Supreme Court indicated a favourable attitude towards a centralised selection mechanism for appointment of judicial officers in the subordinate judiciary.
- 'No breach': The Bench tried to assuage the concern of various States and High Courts, saying there would be no breach and interference in the federal structure.

14. Nine High Courts oppose all-India judicial service

Context:

- The Narendra Modi government had given a fresh push to the long-pending proposal to set up the new service to have a separate cadre for the lower judiciary in the country.
- The idea was first mooted in the 1960s.

In news:

Law and Justice Ministry document highlights:

- Nine High Courts have opposed a proposal to have an all-India service for the lower judiciary, eight have sought changes in the proposed framework and only two have supported the idea.
- 24 High Courts wanted control over the subordinate judiciary.
- The High Courts of Andhra Pradesh, Bombay, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Patna and Punjab and Haryana "have not favoured the idea of an All-India Judicial Service".
- <u>Government suggestion:</u> a NEET-like examination, to recruit judges to the lower judiciary.
- <u>Key fact:</u> There were vacancies of 4,452 judges in subordinate courts in the country.

15. <u>Karnataka favours centralised selection for district</u> judiciary

In News:

- Proposal: Creation of a Central selection mechanism for selection to the posts of judges in the higher subordinate judiciary, for which the central examination could be conducted by a recruitment body under the supervision of the apex court.
- Supreme Court had invited the views of the State governments and the High Courts on its proposal to centralise the process for selecting judges for the district judiciary across the country.
- Karnataka Government response: filed an affidavit before the Supreme Court stating that the government has no objection to the proposal.
- <u>Concerns raised by the government:</u> centralised selection process should ensure that knowledge of local language of the State concerned has to be made compulsory for such selection.



16. <u>Bengal not for central recruitment of judiciary</u> *Context:*

- Proposed reforms: Central selection mechanism for appointing judicial officers in State subordinate judicial services.
- West Bengal Government Response: Negative.
- Reason given: against the principle of federalism practised in Indian democracy.
- Senior advocate response: central mechanism would encroach upon the constitutional duty of the State High Courts under Article 233 of the Constitution. This constitutional duty was the cornerstone of independence of State judiciary.

Basic Information:

Article 233: Appointment of district judges

- (1) Appointments of persons to be, and the posting and promotion of, district judges in any State shall be made by the Governor of the State in consultation with the High Court exercising jurisdiction in relation to such State.
- (2) A person not already in the service of the Union or of the State shall only be eligible to be appointed a district judge if he has been for not less than seven years an advocate or a pleader and is recommended by the High Court for appointment.

17. New Bill to allow States to drop no-detention policy In News:

- Ministry of Human Resource Development is looking to introduce a Bill to amend the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, to enable States to do away with the no-detention policy if they wish.
- <u>Key Fact:</u> Twenty-five States had recently agreed with the idea of doing away with or tweaking the nodetention policy wherein a child is not detained till Class 8 to give a boost to levels of learning.
- The Bill is expected to permit States to introduce exams in Classes 5 and 8.
- Students who fail in the exams to be held in March
 — will be given remedial training and offered another
 chance to pass in May. Those who still fail will be
 detained in the same class.

Why to remove no-detention policy?

- Falling standards: no-detention policy aimed at retaining students in school and giving a fillip to education — led to learning levels taking a dip.
- Key Fact: Dropout rates till Class 8 are just 4%, but they
 rise to above 20% after that. This is because of the nodetention policy.

18. A half-done reform: On LPG subsidy

Context:

 The government decided to completely do away with the subsidy offered to cooking gas used for household purposes Public sector oil companies were authorised to incrementally hike the "effective price" of LPG cylinders until the entire subsidy is wiped off by March next year.

Burden of government

- Fall in global crude oil prices, has already eased the burden on the government.
- In the latest Union budget, the government allocated about Rs 25,000 crore towards oil subsidy, which is a fourth of the total oil subsidy bill (of almost Rs 1 lakh crore) incurred in fiscal year 2013.
- The implementation of the direct transfer of cash benefits has already helped in the better targeting of subsidies to the poor, thus substantially reducing wasteful spending.

Subsidy Cut:

The cut in subsidy would further strengthen fiscal discipline.

Way forward:

- Sustainably lower the price of cooking gas once and for all, getting the government out of the business of managing subsidies.
- Deregulating the market for cooking gas, thus opening it up to more widespread market competition, would also help.

19. Naidu sweeps V-P polls with 516 votes

In News:

- M. Venkaiah Naidu was elected the 15th Vice-President of India on Saturday.
- The election saw the highest polling percentage at 98.12%.
- Mr. Naidu polled a massive 516 votes of a total of 760 valid votes.

20. <u>Hold competitive exams in regional languages: KDA</u>

In News:

- The Kannada Development Authority (KDA) urged the Centre to conduct competitive examinations in all official languages of States.
- KDA Chairman S.G. Siddaramaiah said the current policy has proved detrimental to the interests of people of various States and regions. He said that "the very fabric of federalism needs to be better appreciated in this selection as well as in any Central government recruitment process."

Demands proposed:

- Besides Central civil service examinations, all competitive examinations of national level, especially banking services, must be held in official languages of States.
- In the recruitment to any job of Central, semigovernment and public sectors, candidates should be allowed to choose question papers and answer in languages identified in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution, he said.



 The use of English should be restricted to compulsory English paper in order to avoid unwarranted English supremacy.

21. Lok Sabha passes Bill for setting up petroleum institute in Andhra

IIPE

- The Lok Sabha has passed a Bill providing for the establishment of the Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy (IIPE)
- Where: Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh
- The institute will cost the Centre Rs 650 crore
- It is part of a package promised by the Centre to Andhra after the creation of the separate state of Telangana
- It will have the status of an institute of national importance

22. Wages of being a legislator

Context:

- The Tamil Nadu Assembly recently voted to double the salaries of its legislators
- Maharashtra's Assembly passed a Bill in 2016 that raised the monthly salary of its MLAs to above that of the President (Rs. 1.5 lakh per month)
- India paid 2.7 lakh a month, which includes salaries and expenses, to every Member of Parliament in 2015.

Global examples

- Public representatives in developing countries in Africa and Asia are routinely paid far above per capita GDP
- Nigeria, pays its lawmakers more than 100 times its per capita GDP while in Kenya, its legislators get 76 times its per capita GDP.
- Gross salary of an Italian lawmaker is the second highest among developed countries after the U.S

What's the situation in India?

- India's initial start was promising. The first cabinet meeting of Jawaharlal Nehru took a collective decision not to avail of their salaries for six months, given the enormous economic suffering in India then.
- Today, parliamentary representatives have arrogated the authority to increase their own fiscal compensation by 1,250% over the last two decades

 a case of questionable moral rectitude.

Main concern?

- Allowances should be in proportion to the services that they have rendered to the nation, but in the past two decades, Parliament has seen less than 50% of Bills being scrutinised by parliamentary committees, defeating the very purpose of a deliberative Parliament
- Money Bills, like those associated with Aadhaar, have been passed without being referred to a committee.

A survey of parliamentary salaries

- It was conducted in 2013 by the Inter-Parliamentary Union across 104 Parliaments highlighted that salaries in about 55% are linked to a structured scale, typically linked to the civil service (France, Japan) or ministerial salaries
- Mature democracies typically have separate independent bodies to establish parliamentary salaries; such as the Remuneration Tribunal in Australia or the Independent Commission for the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers in South Africa.

Way forwards

- Instead of seeking pay in line with the private sector, India's public representatives should be paid a reasonable wage, which offers gratitude for their commitment to life as a public servant
- Require an external, independent body to determine parliamentary salaries.
- Salary reviews should be conducted through an institutionalised process
- Increments should be determined through a transparent and accountable process
- The issue of decline in parliamentary sittings could be partially alleviated by linking salaries to a minimum attendance of parliamentary sessions

23. Subsidise rail losses: PMO

In News:

- The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has directed the Ministry of Finance to fund the losses incurred by the Indian Railways in operating non-profitable trains on strategic lines and backward areas.
- The directive ends a tussle that began following the merger of the Railway and Union Budgets, as the Ministry of Finance had discontinued the practice of providing an annual subsidy to the Railways.
- The decision comes as a relief for the Railways which feel that the social service obligation borne by it in running non-profitable lines of national and strategic importance should be funded by the Central government.
- The losses on operating strategic lines accounts for a small fraction of the estimated over ₹34,000 crore borne by the Railways towards social service obligation.
- The Standing Committee on Railways in their reports have also recommended that the Railways should get back the money invested in loss-making lines of national importance.

24. After SC order, focus on chemicals in firecrackers

Context:

 The Supreme Court ban on the use of antimony, lithium, mercury, arsenic and lead in the manufacture of firecrackers to prevent air pollution has turned the focus on what chemicals are used to produce spectacular visual effects and noise.



- The court entrusted the Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organisation (PESO) with the responsibility of ensuring compliance particularly in Sivakasi.
- The court also noted that no standards have been laid down by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) with regard to air pollution caused by the bursting of firecrackers.

In news:

 The Tamil Nadu Fireworks and Amorces Manufacturers' Association, which produces most of the fireworks in the country, says none of the specific products banned by the court are used.

Manufacturer response:

- Sound and light show is produced by chemicals such as sulphur, aluminium powder and charcoal (used as fuel), besides potassium nitrate and barium nitrate (as oxidising agents).
- Aluminium powder, sulphur and potassium nitrate go into noise-making crackers, while barium nitrate (green) and strontium nitrate (red) emit light. Aluminium powder is used in sparklers.

25. Kerala bats for right to privacy

Context:

 The nine-judge Constitution Bench, led by Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar-hearing the question of whether the right to privacy is a fundamental right or not.

In news:

- Privacy should be declared a fundamental right to protect citizens from intrusions by the State. In the modern world, technology has advanced so much that "what is whispered in the closet is heard in the street", the LDF government in Kerala told the Supreme Court.
- Misuse of Aadhaar: the Pinarayi Vijayan government supported the case of petitioners that technology would progress so much that data collected through Aadhaar could be used for surveillance, if not now, in the future.
- Kerala said privacy, like any other fundamental right, is not "absolute". But it is a fundamental right nevertheless.
- Privacy encompassed: personal intimacies of the home, family, marriage, motherhood, procreation, child rearing, feelings, love and passion, etc.
- A person's thought process, fantasies, etc., would also necessarily come under his Right to Privacy.

26. Failing our children

Context:

 Recent decision of Government on scrapping Nodetention policy in school and its possible implication on primary education on India

What is the 'no-detention policy'?

 The right to education act provides the guarantee of uninterrupted schooling under sections 16 and 30(1) is founded on the no-detention policy until Class 8

Why is scrapping 'no-detention policy' a bad decision?

- The no-detention policy to promote students automatically to higher classes every year till Class VIII was instituted to check the high number of dropouts.
- The socially and economically disadvantaged sections were getting the benefits of this policy.
- According to many experts, the NDP was wrongly interpreted to create an environment in which the significance of evaluating a student's learning outcomes was undermined.

Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE)

- It is aimed to assess the child's understanding of what was being taught in class at periodic intervals.
- This is the reason behind the decision of scrapping NDP, as this evaluation process shows bad results of evaluations of students.

CCE and its drawbacks:

- Teachers were not given adequate training to undertake this reform of CCE.
- Schools are not fully compliant with the RTE's requirements on infrastructure and teacher availability.
- In fact, about 8 per cent primary schools have just one teacher.
- These situations made CCE, an ineffective reform.

The way forward

- The RTE Act has a provision for continuous and comprehensive evaluation, the government should work on it.
- But transferring the responsibility of performance to children, many of whom come from underprivileged backgrounds, can only produce a less literate citizenry.
- The move to scrap the NDP will make the RTE's goal of inclusive education a very difficult one.
- · The government should rethink the move.

27. States cold to stricter anti-racial law

Context:

- The Home Ministry has proposed to amend the law to insert two stricter anti-racial discrimination provisions in the Indian Penal Code
- · Lukewarm response from the States.

States and UT's agreed to the proposal:

- Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram
- Three Union Territories Andaman and Nicobar, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Lakshwadeep.

What is the proposed amendment?

 The Home Ministry has proposed to amend two provisions in the IPC, that is, Section 153A and Section 509A.



These are proposed to be inserted into the IPC sections.

Why states consent is necessary?

- The proposed matter comes under the Concurrent List.
- The opinion of majority of the States was required to push through the legislation.

Panel recommendations

 The proposed amendments were based on the recommendations of the Bezbaruah Committee, constituted by the Centre in February 2014 in the wake of a series of racial attacks on persons belonging to the northeast.

Draft 153 CIPC says:

 Whoever promotes or attempts to promote, on the ground of race, racial features, behaviour, culture, customs or way of living, any act which is prejudicial to human dignity or dignity of members belonging to particular race and uses criminal force or violence in furtherance of such act, or, participates in such act intending to use criminal force or violence or knowing that participants in such act is likely to use criminal force or violence against the member of a race or cause or likely to cause fear or feeling of insecurity amongst the members of such race, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years and fine.

Section 509A IPC:

 509A seeks to make any word, gesture or act intended to insult a member of a particular race with imprisonment that may extend to three years with fine.

28. <u>Supreme Court seeks Centre's reply on validity of special status to J&K</u>

In News:

 The Supreme Court sought response from the Centre on a plea against a Delhi High Court order by which it had rejected a petition challenging validity of Article 370 of the Constitution giving special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

Petitioner contention:

- Article 370 was a temporary provision that had lapsed with the dissolution of the state's Constituent Assembly in 1957.
- The continuance of the temporary provision of Article 370 even after dissolution of the state's Constituent Assembly and its Constitution which has never got the assent of the President of India or Parliament or the Government of India, "amounts to fraud on the basic structure of our Constitution".
- Previously: In July 2014, the Supreme Court had dismissed a plea challenging the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir and had asked the petitioner to move the High Court.

Basic Information:

Article 370

- Under the Part XXI of the Constitution of India, which deals with "Temporary, Transitional and Special provisions", Article 370 is a temporary provision granting special autonomous status to Jammu and Kashmir
- Article 370 specifies that except for Defence, Foreign Affairs, Finance and Communicationsthe Indian Parliament needs the State Government's concurrence for applying all other laws
- The Jurisdiction of the Parliament of India in relation to Jammu and Kashmir is confined to the matters enumerated in the Union List, and also the concurrent list. There is no State list for the State of Jammu and Kashmir.
- At the same time, while in relation to the other States, the residuary powerof legislation belongs to Parliament, in the case of Jammu and Kashmir, the residuary powers belong to the Legislature of the State, except certain matters to which Parliament has exclusive powers such as preventing the activities relating to cession or secession, or disrupting the sovereignty or integrity of India.
- No preventive detention law made in India extends to Jammu & Kashmir.

29. New system for rating bureaucrats open to bias: Anand Sharma

In News:

 According to the committee, the government's new system of rating officers on the basis of a 360-degree approach is susceptible to bias, manipulation and lacks fairness.

360 degree approach:

- The 360-degree approach is a new multi–source feedback system for performance appraisal of bureaucrats.
- It relies on feedback of juniors and other colleagues for an all-round view, other than appraisal reports written by senior officers.

Counter arguments:

- Feedback in this process is obtained informally, making the process susceptible to being manipulated
- The report notes that the 360-degree approach does not have any statutory backing, or supported by any Act.

30. Kerala, Haryana top sanitation survey

<u>Data from Government survey commissioned on</u> <u>Sanitation</u>

- According to the survey, almost all rural households in Kerala and Haryana had access to a toilet
- Bihar and Uttar Pradesh has least access to toilets when compared to other states
- The survey is released by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.



 The survey was carried out by the Quality Council of India (QCI).

Other best performers

- Northeastern States of Sikkim, Manipur and Nagaland were top performers with 95% rural households covered by toilets.
- The Himalayan States of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand with over 90% toilet coverage of the rural houses.

Worst performers

- In Bihar, only 30% of the rural households had access to toilets while Uttar Pradesh was marginally better at 37%.
- Jharkhand, too scored the same as Uttar Pradesh.

31. No more vehicle insurance without pollution certificate In News:

- PUC) certificates would not be eligible for the annual insurance.
- The Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control)
 Authority (EPCA) recommended for mandatory
 linking of PUC certificates with annual insurance.
 This recommendation was made by the EPCA in its
 report on assessment of the Pollution Under Control
 programme in Delhi and the National Capital Region.
- Supreme Court has now accepted this particular recommendation made by EPCA.
- The court also directed the linking of PUC centres with an online network and data centres to prevent manual tampering. It asked the State governments to audit PUC centres and set up a strong oversight system to ensure credible tests and emission results.
- Advantages of linking: ensure compliance with respect to emission norms and a subsequent dip in vehicular emission levels.
- Key fact: In Delhi, only 23% of vehicles come for PUC tests.

32. RTE's heart is in the right place—but not its head

In News:

Situation after RTE Act

- · RTE was supposed to bring millions to school.
- Building the foundations upon which a modern, progressive and prosperous nation was to rise.
- But after 7 years, Education level is deteriorated and schools are being closed.
- According to some experts, the RTE has proved to be a disastrous piece of legislation.
- But Government decision to scrap the no-detention policy (NDP), is an important first step towards mitigating some of its worst consequences.
- · Deteriorating Educations standards due to NDP.
- According to the "Annual Status of Education Report" (Aser), less than 48% of children in class V can read a class II-level textbook.

- Only 43.2% of class VIII students in rural India can do simple divisions.
- Only one out of every four students in class V could read an English sentence.

Views of Other Government Authorities on NDP

- The NDP has also been found to be faulty by the comptroller and auditor general as well as the Central Advisory Board of Education.
- More than 20 states and union territories have asked for the policy to be either scrapped or modified.

Arguments in favor of NDP

- NDP supporters claim that the objective of the policy was to keep students in school and prevent dropouts and in that, it has succeeded.
- But, What is the point of students staying in school if they are barely learning anything at all?

Other issues with RTE that worsen the effect of NDP

- One of the main issues with the RTE Act is that it heavily focus on inputs while effectively ignores outputs.
- It doesn't offer any benchmarks for learning outcomes or link teacher assessment to student performance.

33. There must be a common NEET question paper. SC

Context:

- NEET(National Eligibility and Entrance Test) -2017: questions in vernacular languages in the NEET 2017 examination were not identical translations of the questions in English or Hindi.
- But difficulty level of questions was the same.
- Besides English and Hindi, the NEET exam was conducted in eight vernacular languages.

In news:

- The Supreme Court has questioned the CBSE about the setting of different questions for students taking NEET in regional languages and said there must be a common question paper.
- Supreme Courts observations: identical questions should be asked for students writing their NEET in English and other regional languages. The same questions can be translated from English to the regional languages concerned.

Basic Information:

- The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test
- The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test or NEET-UG is an entrance examination in India, for students who wish to study any graduate medical course (MBBS/ dental course (BDS) or postgraduate course (MD / MS) in government or private medical colleges in India.
- NEET-UG (Undergraduate), for MBBS and BDS courses, are conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).
- NEET-UG replaced the All India Pre Medical Test (AIPMT) and all individual MBBS exams conducted by states or colleges themselves in 2013.



34. SC seeks details of convictions under Child Marriage Act

In News:

- Centre said Parliament must have thought it 'pragmatic' to reduce the age of consent for sexual relations for married girls from 18 to 15 as the child marriage system still exists in the country.
- The Supreme Court asked the government to provide details of the number of child marriage prohibition officers and prosecutions initiated under the Child Marriage Act in the past three years.
- Petition filed by NGO challenging the Exception 2 to Section 375 (rape) of IPC, which permits "intrusive sexual intercourse with a girl aged between 15 and 18 only on the ground that she is married."

Discriminatory law

- Statutory exception to rape was violative of right to life, liberty, equality and was discriminatory.
- The Exception is part of the Criminal Law (Amendment)
 Act of 2013 and is contrary to the Protection of
 Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012 (POCSO).
- Law "violates the health of not only the girl child concerned, but also generations to come
- A girl under 18 as a child in POCSO, but once she is married, she is no more a child under the Exception 2 to Section 375 of the IPC. This is totally inconsistent.

Basic Information:

 The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012: The Act is gender-neutral and defines a child as any person below the age of eighteen years.

It provides:

- Precise definitions for different types of Child abuse crimes
- Stringent punishments
- Mandatory reporting
- Child-friendly procedures
- Under Section 45 of the Act, the power to make rules rests with the Central Government
- · Qualifications and experience of interpreters
- · Arrangements for care and protection
- Criteria for award of compensation by the Special Court
- The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commissions for the Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have been made the designated authority to monitor the implementation of the Act

35. TN appeal on NEET quota dismissed

Context:

 Tamil Nadu State Government Notification: provided 85% reservation for students from State Board schools in admissions to undergraduate medical courses under the State quota and 15% to students from other boards.

 Madras High Court quashed the above order: The HC had found the government order violative of the right to equality and discrimination.

In news:

- · Supreme Court Order:
- Merit remains the sole criterion in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test for State Board and CBSE students.
- Upheld Madras High Court order.

36. Push for law to ensure transparency rules

In News

- The government could consider introducing a new law to ensure transparency of rules.
- Present problems faced by citizens: it is not easy for ordinary citizens [and businesses] in India to navigate the multitude of rules, regulations, forms, taxes and procedures imposed by various tiers of government. Moreover, these rules frequently change and sometimes contradict each other.
- Transparency of Rules Act (TORA)- recommended by the Economic Survey, stressing that the 'opaque mesh' of regulations prevalent in India not only make life difficult for citizens who cannot feign ignorance of the rules as a valid defence, but also act as a magnet for corruption and endless litigation.
- The TORA is an attempt to change in some ways the relationship between the average normal citizen and the State.

37. <u>Allow payment, live-in couples: House panel for more liberal surrogacy Bill</u>

In News:

- Recommendation of a Parliamentary Standing Committee.
- More liberal norms that will allow live-in couples, divorced women, and widows to choose surrogates is the need of the hour.
- It has recommended that couples should be allowed to choose surrogates from both within and outside the family.
- The Panel also favoured the decision to debar foreigners from availing of surrogacy services in India.
- <u>Committee:</u> The committee is a 31 member Parliamentary Committee on Health and Family Welfare.
- Criticism of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016 by the panel.
- It criticized the exclusion of live-in partners from the ambit of the legislation.
- According to the panel, the bill talks about compensation rather than altruism as the guiding principle of surrogacy, the panel finds this antiwomen.



Basic Information:

- The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016.
- The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016 was introduced in Lok Sabha on November 21, 2016 and referred to the standing committee.
- According to the bill, surrogacy is allowed for infertile Indian married couples where the woman is between 23-50 years and the man is between 26-55 years.
- Also, couple cannot have a surviving child, either biological or adopted.

38. Do not touch

Context

 The government's reply last month to the Supreme Court, saying that the questions raised in a petition challenging Article 35A require a larger debate

What is Article 35A?

- It was added by a 1954 presidential order issued under Article 370, the constitutional provision that mediates the relationship between the Union of India and Kashmir
- Article 35A of the Indian Constitution is an article that empowers the Jammu and Kashmir state's legislature to define "permanent residents" of the state and provide special rights and privileges to those permanent residents.

Who is a permanent resident?

• The 1956 J&K Constitution defines a Permanent Resident as one who, apart from being an Indian citizen, was a state subject on May 14, 1954, or a resident of the state for 10 years, and owns immovable property in the state.

Apprehensions

- Government's new legal pro-activism against Articles 35A or 370 will lead to more alienation in the Valley.
- In the Valley, the government's reply on 35A is being seen as paving the way for moves to do away with Article 370 that excludes J&K from most laws enacted by Parliament, except through presidential orders that have the concurrence of the J&K Legislative Assembly
- Court has also asked the Centre to respond to a petition challenging Article 370.
- All this has served to strengthen suspicions that the Centre is using the legal route to bring about the changes that it wants

39. <u>Group of Secretaries recommendation: One govt English-medium school per block, HRD Ministry advises states</u>

In News:

Human Resource development Ministry:

- Advised all states and Union territories to have at least one government-run English-medium school in each block.
- English should be taught as a compulsory subject from Class VI.

- Key Fact: There are a total of 6,612 blocks in the country.
- Since establishment of schools is a matter of state policy, the HRD can issue only advice in this regards.

Why this move?

• The number of students enrolling in English–medium schools has doubled from 1.5 crore in 2008-09 to 2.9 crore in 2013-14. As a consequence, more states have started offering the option of English as a medium of instruction in government schools.

40. Agency to fund higher education set to take off

In News

- The Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) is set to take off soon.
- Funding from HEFA is expected to boost infrastructure, especially state-of-the-art laboratories, in key institutions such as IITs, IIMs, and IIITs.
- As per the funding mechanism, an institution can claim 10 times the sum it escrows in the first year. "If an institution escrows ₹10 crore, it can get approval for a ₹100-crore project

Basic Information:

Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA)

- It will be formed as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) within a PSU Bank or the Government-owned-NBFC (Promoter).
- HEFA will have an authorised capital of 2,000 crore rupees and the government equity would be 1,000 crore rupees.
- The HEFA will also mobilise CSR funds from Corporates/ PSUs which will in turn be released for promoting research and innovation in these institutions on grant basis.
- The principal portion of the loan will be repaid through the 'internal accruals' of the institutions earned through the fee receipts, research earnings etc.
- All the Centrally Funded Higher Educational Institutions will be eligible to join as members of the HFFA.
- For joining as members, the educational institution must agree to escrow a specific amount from their internal accruals for a period of 10 years to the HEFA.

41. Now, passport sans police verification

In News:

 The physical police verification for getting a passport may soon be dispensed with as the Centre plans to connect the procedure with Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems Project (CCTNS).

CCTNS and Passport verification:

 Police will be given handheld devices to go to an applicant's address and his or her details will be uploaded on the network.



 It will minimise contact of an individual with police and reduce time (for getting passport).

Basic Information:

- CCTNS
- The Crime and Criminal Tracking Networks and Systems, abbreviated to CCTNS, is a project under Indian government for creating a comprehensive and integrated system for effective policing through e-Governance. The system includes nationwide online tracking system by integrating more than 14,000 police stations across the country. The project is implemented by National Crime Records Bureau.

National Crime Records Bureau

 The National Crime Records Bureau, abbreviated to NCRB, is an Indian government agency responsible for collecting and analysing crime data as defined by the Indian Penal Code (IPC). NCRB is headquartered in New Delhi and is part of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India.

42. <u>First-past-post: House panel asks parties if election</u> <u>system should change</u>

In News:

- · Discussions on "different systems of elections".
- An all-party Parliamentary panel is exploring "different systems of elections", other than the first-past-thepost (FPTP) system.
- FPTP is currently followed in the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls.
- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, has sent a six-page "Questionnaire on Electoral Reforms" to all parties and the Election Commission.

What is 'First Past the Post' system?

- A first-past-the-post (abbreviated as FPTP, 1stP, 1PTP or FPP) voting method is one in which voters indicate on a ballot the candidate of their choice, and the candidate who receives most votes wins.
- First-past-the-post voting is one of several plurality voting methods.
- It is a common, but not universal, feature of electoral systems with single-member electoral divisions; in fact, first-past-the-post voting is widely practiced in close to one third of the world's countries.
- Some notable examples include the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, India and most of the colonies and protectorates either currently or formerly belonging to these countries.

Why is the PSC exploring different systems of elections?

- According the PSC, in recent years the FPTP system is not the best suited system as is evident from the recent Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh.
- Many Opposition leaders have reminded the BJP that it won the 2014 Lok Sabha polls because of the FPTP system.

 As the party polled only about 31 per cent of the vote share.

Other issues discussed by the panel

- The views of parties and the EC have been sought under five heads: (1) 'Electoral Funding', (2) 'Systems of Elections', (3) 'Media/ Free Airtime', (4) 'Internal Democracy in Political Parties', and (5) 'Miscellaneous'.
- On the issue of electoral funding, the panel has sought views on the electoral bonds and on the proposal regarding state funding of elections.

43. Government clears proxy vote move for NRIs

In News:

- The Government has approved changes in electoral laws to permit Non-Resident Indians to cast their vote in assembly and Lok Sabha elections from overseas.
- If the proposal passes in Parliament, NRIs will be able to exercise their voting rights through "proxy".
- Currently, only service personnel are permitted to vote through proxy.

Why is proposed facility of proxy for NRIs different from service personnel?

- The facility for NRIs will not be the same as that enjoyed by service personnel.
- For example, voters in the armed forces can nominate their relatives as permanent proxy to vote on their behalf.
- Facility for NRIs: Overseas electors will have to appoint a nominee afresh for each election.
- One person can act as proxy for only one overseas voter.

44. Rajya Sabha passes RTE amendments

Context

 The Rajya Sabha unanimously passed the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2017, which aims to provide a two-year window to around 11 lakh private and government teachers to get prescribed minimum qualifications for appointment.

Amendments:

- The Bill gives them an opportunity to acquire professional qualification by enrolling themselves in the Swayam platform, which will be an online medium.
- Those living in rural areas would be taught through Swayam Prabha television channels in 32 languages, and they would have to buy a set top box worth ₹ 1300.

Basic Information:

- SWAYAM platform
- It stands for Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds.
- It is the Indian electronic e-education platform which proposes to offer courses from the high school stage



to Post-Graduate stage in an interactive electronic platform.

45. How to curb 'invisible money'

Context

- The reforms suggested by Election and Law Commission, and Government's non-compliance on them
- This non-compliance is increasing Invisible money in Elections

Power given to EC, under the RP Act

- The Election Commission (EC) works in accordance with
- · (1) Article 324 of the Constitution of India,
- (2) the Representation of the People Act (RP Act), 1951
- (3) the rules framed by the government thereunder, and various judgments of the Supreme Court and High Courts
- The power to frame rules under the RP Act has not been given to the EC by successive governments

Status of reforms suggested by the EC

- Most of the reform proposals by the EC have not been acted upon
- It sent 22 proposals in 2004
- In December 2016, it sent 47 proposals including those for "Election expenses and election petitions", "Election campaign and advertisements", and "Reforms relating to political parties"
- There are also instances where the Supreme Court has directed reforms in its decisions, with the government and Parliament attempting to amend laws to prevent implementation of the judgments

Two proposals by the government which increase invisible money in Elections

- The other significant proposals that the Budget made were
- (a) to remove the limit of 7.5% on profits that a company can donate to a political party, and
- (b) to remove the requirement that the company making a donation to a political party disclose the name of the party and the amount donated

Suggestions by the Law commission

- A logical and simple way of introducing financial transparency and accountability in the working of the political parties is recommended by the Law Commission
- <u>Suggestion</u>: is to bring political parties under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005
- The Central Information Commission (CIC) had also said in a full bench decision in June 2013 that six national political parties were indeed 'public authorities' under the RTI Act

- Why: Because they fulfilled all conditions specified in Section 2(h) of the RTI Act which defines 'public authority'.
- Reaction from Political Parties: Despite this decision, political parties, including the ruling party now, refused to accept RTI applications

46. <u>Govt moves to check benami, Aadhaar to be made must for property deals</u>

In News

- Move to curb Benami Transactions and the use of black money in Property Deals.
- The government is planning to make Aadhaar-based authentication mandatory at the time of registration of documents such as agreement for sale, power of attorney,etc.
- The government has also firmed up plans to enable electronic registration of properties, for which Aadhaar-based authentication will be a prerequisite.
- For this, the government is planning to amend Sections 32 and 32A of the Registration Act, 1908.
- Also, the Aadhaar law allows the Central Identities Data Repository, under the UIDAI, to offer authentication services.

Expected benefits:

- This is expected to ensure foolproof property titles for the buyers.
- It will also minimise the scope of fraudulent and benami transactions.
- Other steps taken by the Government to curb black money in real state.
- The government also enacted the Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amended Act, 2016 last year.
- This law empowers authorities to provisionally attach and eventually confiscate benami properties.

47. <u>Supreme Court appoints panel to frame scheme for rehabilitation, remarriage of abandoned widows</u>

In News

- The Supreme Court appointed a committee of comprising of social workers and a lawyer.
- Why?: suggest measures to be taken for rehabilitation of widows abandoned by their family members and to deliberate on framing a policy to promote widow remarriage in the country.

Court observation:

- Widow remarriage should be encouraged in society as it "might enable our society to give up the stereotype view of widows".
- The essential things, like food and drinking water, were not being provided to them.

Court directives to the committee:

To prepare a common working plan for the welfare of widows



 Examine all the prevailing schemes for widows and reports filed before the court by government and National Commission for Women.

Key fact:

- The number of widows in the country has increased tremendously between 2001 and 2011.
- As per census data, the number of widows in the country was only 18.5 lakh, which was 0.7% of the total population in 2001, but in 2011, it went up to 5.6 crore, which was 4.6% of the entire population.
- India is the home of the largest number of widows in the world, followed by China with around five crore widows.
- As per census, 0.45% of the total widows are the child widows in the age group of 10-19 years. 9.0% are in the age group of 20-39 years, 32% in the age group of 40-59 years and 58% are above 60 years. Despite a law banning child marriages, there are still 1.94 lakh child widows in the country.

48. Instant talaq: Unlawful, Unlawful, Unlawful

Context

Supreme Court verdict regrading validity of triple talaq.

In News:

- Supreme Court verdict (Main observations):
- Struck down the controversial Islamic practice of instant talaq.
- Talag is unconstitutional.
- Talaq is arbitrary and whimsical mode of ending marriage violated Muslim women's fundamental right to equality.
- Talaq should be erased from the 1,400-year-old Sharia-dictated divorce manual.
- · 3:2 majority:
- The verdict was delivered by a 3:2 majority.
- All the five judges agreed on the broad issue of the undesirability of instant talaq, or divorce pronounced in one sitting simply by uttering talaq thrice.

Main Observations:

- In view of the different opinions recorded, by a majority of 3:2, the practice of 'talaq-e-biddat' triple talaq is set aside.
- Triple talaq was part of Islamic religious practice for 1,400 years and hence got the protection of the Constitution under Article 25. But at the same time, since most Islamic countries, including Pakistan and Bangladesh, had abolished triple talaq, it was time the legislature brought a bill to correct the anomaly in personal law.

49. United against triple talag, divided on legal points

Context

 Supreme Court Verdict set the practice of triple talaq as 'manifestly arbitrary'.

Observations:

- The Court said that triple talaq is not in the Quran.
 But the Sharia is not what the entire Quran is. It is a mixture of Quran, Hadees and Ijma. This is where they have faulted.
- Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar used the Supreme Court's rare and extraordinary jurisdiction under Article 142 to injunct Muslim husbands from divorcing their wives for the next six months through the same instant talaq.
- Supreme Court issued the direction after observing that even theocratic Islamic States had corrected their Shariat to banish instant talaq.
- Supreme Court ordered the government to frame a ruling to address the issue of Muslim women under the yoke of triple talaq.
- Verdict compared triple talaq to social evils such as sati, infanticide and devadasi system, which were cast out by way of legislation and not by judicial orders.
- However, the direction under Article 142 in the minority verdict failed to come alive as the majority of the judges on the Bench set aside instant talaq with immediate effect. This is the clear mandate of Article 14 (equality before law) of the Constitution. India is also committed to eradicate discrimination on the ground of sex.

Basic Information:

- Article 142: Enforcement of decrees and orders of Supreme Court and unless as to discovery, etc
- (1) The Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it, and any decree so passed or orders so made shall be enforceable throughout the territory of India in such manner as may be prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament and, until provision in that behalf is so made, in such manner as the President may by order prescribe
- (2) Subject to the provisions of any law made in this behalf by Parliament, the Supreme Court shall, as respects the whole of the territory of India, have all and every power to make any order for the purpose of securing the attendance of any person, the discovery or production of any documents, or the investigation or punishment of any contempt of itself.



50. It's good and bad, says AIMPLB

In News

- The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has interpreted the judgment as "vindication" of its stand that personal laws needed to be protected even as it disagreed with the court's decision to hold triple talaq as unconstitutional.
- The AIMPLB has decided to hold internal discussions before responding in detail to the judgment, as it had affected the religious rights of minority groups.
- AIMPLB accused that personal laws cannot be tested by courts on the grounds of violation of fundamental rights.

51. Centre will issue advisory on talaq order compliance

Context:

- SC striking down triple talaq.
- · In news:
- The home ministry will soon send an advisory to all 29 states and seven Union Territories asking them to monitor the situation and ensure compliance of the Supreme Court's order declaring triple talaq as void, illegal and unconstitutional.
- · What next?
- As soon as the home ministry issues an advisory, state governments are likely to sensitise the police and other authorities on the triple talaq issue on how to deal with a Muslim woman's complaint in case there is a violation.
- The cops can book the violator under domestic violence charges for now, until a proper law is brought by the government in Parliament.

52. Follow NEET for medical admission, SC tells Tamil Nadu

In News

- Supreme Court directive to T.N:
- Complete the counselling process for medical admissions in the State on the basis of the NEET merit list by September 4.
- Previously, T.N state government had passed an ordinance freezing the implementation of NEET in the State for this year.
- Centre rejected the ordinance: on the ground that it would give one particular State undue advantage over the others.

53. <u>Liquor sale ban does not extend to municipal areas:</u> <u>SC</u>

Context:

• Supreme Court has clarified its order on 500-metre limit along National and State Highways.

In news:

Clarifications:

 The nationwide ban on sale of liquor within a distance of 500 metres along National and State Highways

- does not extend to municipal areas (does not prohibit licensed establishments within municipal areas).
- Ban on liquor sale only extends along and in proximity to highways which provide connectivity between cities, towns and villages.

Implication of the clarification:

- Stretches of highways running within city limits are now, by default, exempt from the liquor ban.
- Litigation infructuous: effectively made infructuous any pending litigation in High Courts on declassification of State or National Highways to district roads by State governments or local authorities.
- Huge relief for bar and hotel owners who were forced to shut down operations post the ban orders.

54. OBC list to be sub-categorized

In News

- The Union Cabinet approved a proposal to set up a commission which will examine the issue of subcategorization of the Other Backward Classes (OBC).
- The actual reservation will continue to be 27% and within this the committee will have to do the rearranging.

Committee mandate:

- To examine the "extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation" among various castes and communities that comes under the Central OBC list.
- Work out the mechanism, criteria and parameters for the actual sub-categorization.
- To bring order to the Central list of OBCs by removing any repetitions.

Creamy layer cap enhanced:

• Increased the "creamy layer" ceiling for the Other Backward Classes to ₹8 lakh per annum from the existing ₹6 lakh for Central government jobs.

Key Fact:

- The Scheduled Castes have a 15% quota and the Scheduled Tribes have 7.5% quota.
- States having sub- categorization: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Puducherry, Karnataka, Haryana, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

55. Right to privacy verdict: Privacy realms span from abortion to euthanasia

Context:

- · right to reproductive choice.
- · right to active euthanasia.

In News:

- Justice J. Chelameswar observations in his judgement on privacy:
- The realm of the fundamental right to privacy span from women's reproductive choice and choice of food or faith to euthanasia.



 Neither the State nor private persons have any business to intrude.

Present scenario:

Right to reproductive choice:

- Women and girl children, including victims of rape, are fighting a battle for the right to abort their foetuses.
- Abortion is legally barred if the pregnancy has crossed 20 weeks.

Right to active euthanasia

- It is a crime under attempt to suicide.
- A person who helps a terminally ill person to take his own life is booked under abetment to suicide.

56. Target Section 377: On decriminalising gay sex

Context:

- Same-gender sex remains a crime in the country due to a flagrant judicial mistake committed by the Supreme Court in 2013.
- Section 377. Unnatural offences: Whoever voluntarily
 has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with
 any man, woman or animal shall be punished with
 imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either
 description for term which may extend to ten years,
 and shall also be liable to fine.

List of Cases and their verdict:

 Naz Foundation v. Govt. of NCT of Delhi- is a landmark Indian case decided by a two-judge bench of the Delhi High Court, which held that treating consensual homosexual sex between adults as a crime is a violation of fundamental rights protected by India's Constitution. The verdict resulted in the decriminalization of homosexual acts involving consenting adults, in the jurisdiction of the Delhi High court. This was later challenged in the Supreme Court of India.

Suresh Kumar Koushal (2013) Case Observations:

- Supreme Court has upheld the validity of Section 377 of Indian Penal Code.
- LGBT "minuscule minority": no need to challenge Section 377 because the LGBT community constitutes only a minuscule minority

National Legal Services Authority (2014) Case observations:

- Transgenders, even though insignificant in numbers, are entitled to human rights.
- Section 377 had been an instrument of harassment and abuse.
- Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity must end. Sexual orientation is not only a freedom flowing from the right to privacy, but also a demanding of non-discriminatory treatment
- Adoption of the Yogyakarta Principles norms on gender identity and sexual orientation adopted by human rights experts in 2006 in Indonesia.
- <u>Latest:</u> In the Aadhaar case the Supreme Court Observations are as follows:

- It has upheld the right to privacy as a fundamental right and an inherent component of human liberty and dignity.
- The nine-judge Bench has observed that the rationale behind the Koushal judgment is flawed and unsustainable.
- Rights of LGBT persons are real rights founded on sound constitutional doctrine and not "so-called rights" as the earlier Bench had described.
- Sexual orientation is an aspect of the right to privacy and an inalienable part of human dignity, freedom, and personal liberty.

57. SC verdict to affect ban on slaughter

Context:

· Right to privacy a fundamental right.

In news:

 Supreme Court observation: The landmark judgment declaring right to privacy a fundamental right would have "some bearing" in matters relating to slaughter of cows, bulls and bullocks in Maharashtra.

Background:

- The Bombay High Court had struck down Sections 5(D) and 9(B) of the Maharashtra Animals Preservation (Amendment) Act, 1995.
- Section 5(D) criminalises possession of flesh of cows, bulls or bullocks, slaughtered outside Maharashtra
- Section 9(B) imposed burden on the accused to prove that meat or flesh possessed by him/her does not belong to these animals.
- A batch of appeals was filed before Supreme Court, against the HC verdict decriminalising the possession of beef in case of animals slaughtered outside the state.
- Senior advocate observation after the privacy verdict: the right to eat food of one's choice was now protected under privacy.
- The Supreme Courts observations while deciding Right to privacy issue: "nobody would like to be told what to eat or how to dress", these activities come under the realm of right to privacy.

58. Panel to decide on breach of privilege by DMK MLAs

In News

- Background: On the last day of the Budget session on July 19, the DMK MLAs produced sachets of gutkha in the Assembly to substantiate their charge that the banned tobacco products were being illegally sold in Chennai.
- The Committee of Privileges of Tamil Nadu Assembly will meet on August 28 to discuss whether some DMK MLAs committed a breach of privilege by bringing banned gutkha sachets into the House.



Basic Information:

What is parliamentary privilege?

 Parliamentary privilege refers to rights and immunities enjoyed by Parliament as an institution and MPs in their individual capacity, without which they cannot discharge their functions as entrusted upon them by the Constitution.

Are these parliamentary privileges defined under law?

 According to the Constitution, the powers, privileges and immunities of Parliament and MP's are to be defined by Parliament. No law has so far been enacted in this respect. In the absence of any such law, it continues to be governed by British Parliamentary conventions.

What is breach of privilege?

 A breach of privilege is a violation of any of the privileges of MPs/Parliament. Among other things, any action 'casting reflections' on MPs, parliament or its committees; could be considered breach of privilege. This may include publishing of news items, editorials or statements made in newspaper/magazine/TV interviews or in public speeches.

What is the punishment in case of breach of privilege or contempt of the House?

• The house can ensure attendance of the offending person. The person can be given a warning and let go or be sent to prison as the case may be.

Committee of Privileges

- <u>Function</u>: The functions of this committee are semijudicial in nature. It examines the case of breach of privileges of the House and its members and recommends appropriate action.
- <u>Composition</u>: The Lok Sabha committee has 15 members, while Rajya Sabha committee has 10 members.
- <u>Nomination:</u> The member are nominated by the respective chair of the houses i.e. Speaker in case of Lok Sabha whereas Chairman in case of Rajya Sabha.

59. Stalin urges Governor to call for floor test

In News

 Tamil Nadu: Leader of the Opposition has urged Tamil Nadu Governor Ch. Vidyasagar Rao to immediately direct Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to prove his majority in the Assembly.

Basic Information:

President's Rule:

- Article 356 of the Indian Constitution states that a
 governor can request for the President to take control
 of the state -- President's Rule -- if he feels that the state
 machinery has broken down. Since the President is
 usually appointed by the Centre, President's Rule may
 be looked as the Centre running the state.
- Supreme Court Ruling: In order to protect the federal structure and prevent misuse of power by the Centre, the constitutional machinery should be tested on the

floor of the Legislative Assembly of the state by votes.

What is floor test?

- A chief minister appointed by the governor can be asked to prove his majority in case of doubt.
- In that case, the chief minister has to move a vote of confidence and win a majority among those present and voting.

What is composite floor test?

- If there is more than one person staking claim to form the government and the majority is not clear the governor may call for a special session to see who has the majority.
- Some legislators may be absent or choose not to vote.
- The majority is then counted based on those present and voting.

Modes of voting:

- Voice vote, where the legislators respond orally, or through a division vote.
- Division vote: voting can be done using electronic gadgets, slips or in a ballot box. Ballot box is usually a secret voting - just like how people vote during state or parliamentary elections. The person who has the majority will be allowed to form the government. In case there is a tie, the speaker can cast his vote.

60. Rajiv Kumar appointed as the second Vice-Chairman of the NITI Aayog

Key Points:

- Rajiv Kumar has been picked as the 2nd Vice-Chairman of the NITI Aayog, the think tank which replaced the Planning Commission.
- He is an Oxford-educated economist with extensive experience - both in and outside the government - in shaping the contours of public policy.
- The Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog reports directly to the Prime Minister and wields a powerful influence on the management of the economy and the Centre's policy priorities.
- Reviving the formal economy, spurring private investment and creating jobs is likely to be the focus of Mr. Kumar and he feels all other economic priorities must make way for employment creation.
- Mr. Kumar believes higher employment will automatically push the Indian economy close to double digit growth. He holds strong views about India's foreign trade policy and could prioritise the overhaul of the export incentives system.
- He could bring some relief for citizens as he believes the government could lower the high taxes on petroleum products to encourage consumption and investment demand.
- He is also a firm supporter for a voluntary twoyear social service scheme for the youth to ensure unemployment doesn't lead them astray. This programme would have to be run by the armed forces and national integration has to be its principal objective.



61. <u>Justice Dipak Misra takes oath as the 45th Chief</u> Justice of India

In News:

 Justice Dipak Misra took oath as the 45th Chief Justice of India, succeeding Chief Justice J S Khehar in India's top court.

Basic Information:

Appointment:

 Article 124 of the Constitution of India provides for the manner of appointing judges to the Supreme Court. Though no specific provision exists in the Constitution for appointing the Chief Justice, who, as a result, is appointed like the other judges conventionally, the outgoing CJI recommends the name of the seniormost judge (i.e. by date of appointment to the Supreme Court) for appointment by the President of India, as his successor.

<u>Seniority at the apex court is determined not by age, but by:</u>

- The date a judge was appointed to the Supreme Court.
- 2. If two judges are elevated to the Supreme Court on the same day,
 - a. The one who was sworn in first as a judge would trump another;
 - b. If both were sworn in as judges on the same day, the one with more years of high court service would 'win' in the seniority stakes;
 - c. An appointment from the bench would 'trump' in seniority an appointee from the bar.

Removal:

- Article 124(4) of Constitution of India lays down the procedure for removal of a Judge of Supreme Court which is applicable to Chief Justice as well. Once appointed, the Chief Justice remains in office until the age of 65 years. He can be removed only through a process of impeachment by Parliament as follows:
- A Judge of the Supreme Court shall not be removed from his office except by an order of the President passed after an address by each House of Parliament supported by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than twothirds of the members of that House present and voting has been presented to the President in the same session for such removal on the ground of proved misbehavior or incapacity.

62. <u>Top court sets aside HC order on riot recompense</u>

In News:

- <u>Gujarat High Court:</u> directed the State to pay compensation to shrines destroyed in the 2002 communal riots.
- The Supreme Court set aside this particular order of Gujarat High Court.
- State governments view accepted by the court: taxpayers' money cannot be spent to promote a

particular religion.

 Gujarat government scheme: pay up to ₹50,000 as ex-gratia assistance to authorised religious places damaged, destroyed or desecrated during the riots.

Other cases:

Prafull Goradia judgment:

- Supreme Court observation: using "substantial part" of the tax-payers' money for paying damages to destroyed religious structures would violate Article 27 of the Constitution.
- Article 27. Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion: No person shall be compelled to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination.

63. <u>Centre argues against making marital rape a crime in</u> <u>Delhi high court</u>

Context:

NGO, RTI Foundation filed a plea before Delhi High Court:

- Strike down the exception under Section 375 (rape) of the IPC, which does not penalize sexual intercourse between a man and his wife if she is over 15 years of age.
- Such an exception would be against the interest of married women as it is violative of Article 14 (equality under law) and 21 (right to life) of the Constitution.

In news:

Center's response:

- If marital rape is recognized as a crime then it would-
- Destabilize the institution of marriage, apart from being an easy tool for harassing husbands.
- The courts too would find it difficult to rely upon evidence in such circumstances as there could be "no lasting evidence in case of sexual acts between a man and his own wife".

Basic Information:

- Section 375 in The Indian Penal Code
- 375. Rape.—A man is said to commit "rape" who, except in the case hereinafter excepted, has sexual intercourse with a woman under circumstances falling under any of the six following de¬scriptions:—
- (First) Against her will.
- (Secondly) —Without her consent.
- (Thirdly) With her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her or any person in whom she is interested in fear of death or of hurt.
- (Fourthly) —With her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband, and that her consent is given because she believes that he is another man to whom she is or believes herself to be law¬fully married.
- (Fifthly) With her consent, when, at the time of giving such consent, by reason of unsoundness of



mind or intoxication or the administration by him personally or through another of any stupe—fying or unwholesome substance, she is unable to understand the nature and consequences of that to which she gives consent.

- (Sixthly) With or without her consent, when she is under sixteen years of age. Explanation.—Penetration is sufficient to constitute the sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of rape.
- (Exception) —Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape.] STATE AMENDMENT
- (Manipur) (a) in clause sixthly, for the word "sixteen" substitute the word "fourteen";

64. Consumer is king if new law gets nod

In News:

- The new Consumer Protection Bill 2016:
- It seeks to replace a 31-year-old archaic law, the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

Highlights of the Bill:

- It provides a mechanism for redressal of complaints regarding defect in goods and deficiency in services.
- Consumer Dispute Redressal Commissions will be set up at the district, state and national levels for adjudicating consumer complaints.
- The Bill establishes a Consumer Protection Authority to investigate into consumer complaints, issue safety notices for goods and services, and pass orders for recall of goods and against misleading advertisements.
- If a consumer suffers an injury from a defect in a good, he may file a claim of product liability against the manufacturer.
- The Bill classifies six contract terms as 'unfair'. These cover terms such as (i) payment of excessive security deposits; (ii) disproportionate penalty for a breach ; (iii) unilateral termination without cause; (iv) one which puts the consumer at a disadvantage.
- <u>Product liability:</u> If defects in the manufacture, construction, design, testing, service marketing etc. of a product results in any personal injury or property damage to a consumer, the manufacturer is liable in a product liability action.
- Rights of consumers: The rights of consumers include
 the right to: (i) be protected against marketing of
 goods and services which are hazardous to life and
 property, (ii) be informed of the quality, quantity,
 potency, purity, standard and price of goods or
 services, (iii) be assured of access to a variety of goods
 or services at competitive prices, and (iv) to seek
 redressal against unfair or restrictive trade practices.
- Consumer Mediation Cell: The Bill introduces mediation as a mode of consumer dispute resolution.
 Consumer Mediation Cells will be established and attached to the redressal commissions at the district, state and national levels.

 <u>Penalties:</u> Any person who fails to comply with an order of either of the Commissions would be liable for imprisonment from one month to three years, or with a fine from 10,000 rupees to 50,000 rupees.

65. Religion At State Expense

Context:

- SC judgment in the Gujarat shrines compensation case raises important questions.
- Article 32 is the "soul of the Constitution" as it guarantees the citizens of their fundamental rights under it.

The questions at the wake of the judgement are:

- Should the court give relief in writ jurisdiction only when one's right to life or personal liberty under Article 21 is violated?
- Or can the state be held liable even with respect to violation of other fundamental rights such as the freedom of religion?
- Will an order for the payment of compensation for the repair of religious places be contrary to Article 27 of the Constitution?
- Article 27 prohibits the state from imposing any religious tax and the imposition of any tax whose proceeds are used for the maintenance of any particular religion.

Keypoints:

- In the 2002 communal riots in Gujarat, as many as 567 religious places were either desecrated, damaged or destroyed.
- On February 8, 2012, the Gujarat High Court ordered the state government to get these religious places repaired and reimburse their owners/managers if they had already got them repaired.
- The Gujarat government appealed to the Supreme Court stating that for any loss of property, the remedy is in civil law and in its writ jurisdiction under Article 226, cannot pass such an order as the right to property after the 44th Amendment is not a fundamental right but simply a constitutional right.
- The state government admitted that for the violation of the right to life and personal liberty, writ jurisdiction of high courts could be invoked. But it argued that since India is a secular state it couldn't spend government money for any religious purpose due to Article 27.
- But the writ jurisdiction of high courts is wider than the apex court's powers as while the SC can issue writs just for the violation of fundamental rights, the HCs can do it additionally for the violation of other rights.
- The respondents claimed that the right to equality and right to personal liberty was at stake during the riots.
- The maintenance of law and order is the primary duty of the state government and the compensation is not being sought for the maintenance of any particular religion but for the failure of the government in



fulfilling its basic duty.

All seven parliamentary secretaries of Mizoram resign in deference to SC ruling which held their appointment unconstitutional

Context:

Supreme Court observations:

- Struck down the practice of appointing parliamentary secretaries.
- State assemblies do not have the power to enact a law that enables them to appoint parliamentary secretaries
- All seven parliamentary secretaries of Mizoram resigned from their posts.
- Mizoram became the first state in the Northeast to implement the SC ruling.

Basic Information:

Parliamentary secretaries:

- Secretaries is ultra vires the 91st Amendment of the Indian Constitution which introduced Article 164 (1A) to the Constitution.
- Article 164 (1A) provides for limiting the number of ministers in the state cabinets. The total number of ministers including the Chief Minister, has to be within 15 per cent of the total number of members of the legislative assembly of the state.
- Article 164 (1A) was inserted in the Constitution on the recommendation of the National Commission for Review of the Working of the Constitution headed by former Chief Justice of India, M.N. Venkatachaliah on misuse and drainage of public money to put a ban on over-sized cabinet.

67. <u>Delhi HC no to order granting SCs, STs quota in promotion</u>

In News:

- The Delhi High Court has quashed a Central notification granting reservation in promotion for SCs and STs beyond the five-year period
- It was stipulated in the Indira Sawhney case, by the Supreme Court

Court's observation:

- Court said such a move made under Article 16 (4A) was not permissible without adequate data to prove inadequacy of representation and backwardness
- It made the observation while quashing Department of Personnel and Training's Office Memorandum dated August 13, 1997
- Indra Sawhney Case 1992

The opinion of the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney case is summarized as:

- 1. Backward Classes of the Citizens of in Article 16(4) can be identified on the basis of caste and not only on the economic basis.
- 2. Article 16(4) is not an exception to Article 16(1)

- 3. The backward classes in Article 16(4) are not similar to as socially backward classes in Article 15(4) i.e. SC and ST
- 4. Creamy layer can be and must be eliminated from the Backward Classes
- 5. Article 16(4) permits the classification of backwards classes into more backward classes.
- 6. Reservation shall not exceed 50%. The court said that this rule should be applied every year. However, it may be relaxed in favour of people from far flung and remote areas because of their peculiar conditions. However, extreme caution should be exercised in doing so
- 7. Carry forward rule is valid but it is subject to 50%
- 8. There should be NO reservation in the Promotions.

68. Privacy is a fundamental right, declares SC

Context:

- Life and liberty are intrinsic to human life and it is not an absolute right says Court in a nine-judge Constitution Bench verdict.
- It will have effects on matters ranging from collection and sharing of personal data in Aadhar cards to the cases of homosexuality (possibly).
- The SC has overruled its earlier verdicts which held that right to privacy was not protected by the Constitution
- Natural rights like privacy exist equally in all individuals, irrespective of class, strata, gender or orientation.
- Central executive claimed against the acknowledgment of privacy as a fundamental right but assured the court that it would be safeguarded through parliamentary statutes.
- Nevertheless, the court held that privacy is not an absolute right. The government can introduce a law, which "intrudes" into privacy for public and legitimate state reasons.
- A person can challenge this law in any of the constitutional courts of the land for violation of his fundamental right to privacy.

Judgment's implication on Aadhar.

- The judgment was regulated to the issue of right to privacy.
- The five-judge bench hearing the petitions since 2015 will deal with whether Aadhaar violates the right to privacy.

69. New Rs 200 note to be issued from today. Here is everything you need to know

Context:

- RBI will issue new Rs 200 denomination banknotes from hand-picked RBI offices.
- New Rs 200 note may not be accessible through ATMs.
- The induction of Rs.200 note is with respect to various factors like ease of transactions for the common man, replacement of soiled banknotes, inflation and the



need for combating counterfeiting

 The notes will be in the Mahatma Gandhi(new) Series, bearing the signature of RBI Governor Urjit R Patel.

70. Govt tweaks RCS to attract more bidders

Context:

- Center takes steps towards Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) to make it more feasible for airlines.
- The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) to make some changes for the bidding in commercially viable existing routes under the scheme.
- The viability gap funding (VGF) for helicopter operators is also provided under the scheme by MoCA.
- Steps to increase the connectivity in priority areas, which include: J&K, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, the North-East, and Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep Island through major rebuilding work.



ECONOMY

1. Core sector growth slows to 0.4% in June

In News:

- The year-on-year growth of the core sector has slowed to 0.4% in June from 3.6% in May and 6.92% in June 2016 — owing to a decline in output of coal, refinery products, fertilizer and cement.
- The performance in June is the lowest since the growth of 0.18% in November 2015.

Basic Information:

- The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is an index for India which details out the growth of various sectors in an economy such as mineral mining, electricity and manufacturing.
- The all India IIP is a composite indicator that measures the short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products during a given period with respect to that in a chosen base period.
- It is compiled and published monthly by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) six weeks after the reference month ends.
- The current base year is 2011-2012
- Within IIP, following 8 are core industries because they've impact on almost all other economic activities: Coal, fertilizer, electricity, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, steel, and cement.
- The eight core industries comprise 40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

2. What is NHB Residex?

In News:

NHB Residex from the National Housing Bank

- It is a set of benchmarks that aims to track housing price indicators across Indian cities
- It is designed by a technical advisory committee comprising Government representatives, lenders and property market player

Two sets of indices

• The NHB Residex currently offers two sets of quarterly Housing Price Indices (HPIs) across the cities it tracks

Basic Information:

- · National Housing Bank (NHB).
- It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Reserve Bank of India (RBI), was set up on 9 July 1988 under the National Housing Bank Act, 1987.
- NHB is an apex financial institution for housing.
- NHB has been established with an objective to operate as a principal agency to promote housing finance institutions both at local and regional levels and to provide financial and other support incidental to such

- institutions and for matters connected therewith.
- NHB registers, regulates and supervises Housing Finance Company (HFCs), keeps surveillance through On-site & Off-site Mechanisms and co-ordinates with other Regulators.

3. Niti Aayog's Appraisal of the Twelfth Five Year Plan: Low manufacturing growth holds back job creation

In News:

- · Issues with Manufacturing sector
- According to NITI Aayog's report, the sector's growth rate has remained constant for the past 25 years
- Whereas countries such as Taiwan and China recorded more than double the rate of expansion in India

Around the world:

- In Taiwan and South Korea in the 1960s and 1970s and in China in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, manufacturing grew at rates approaching or exceeding 15 per cent
- It lead to transformation of these economies from primarily agrarian and rural character to modern urban ones in around three decades

Scenario in India:

- The fast-growing sectors in India have been automobile and its parts, two-wheelers, machinery, chemicals, petroleum refining, telecommunications, software and pharmaceuticals
- None of these sectors employs low-skilled workers in large numbers
- As a result, the vast majority of Indian workers remain concentrated in agriculture, unorganised industry or low-paying services

Challenges in front of India

- To achieve rapid growth in manufacturing sector
- Ensuring healthy growth in labour-intensive sectors such as clothing, leather manufactures, food processing and electronic assembly.
- Growth in these sectors would help create good jobs for workers with limited skills.
- Suggestions by the Niti Aayog in its three-year action plan.

Suggestions:

- Easing entry barriers and reducing duties on synthetic fibres to make India's apparel industry competitive in global market
- · Reducing custom duty on gold.
- · Increasing investment in skill training.
- Expediting creation of integrated mega food parks and lower duties on key inputs of final electronics products.



4. Post GST Launch: Manufacturing PMI slumps to the lowest since 2009

In News:

- India's manufacturing activity in July slumped to its lowest level since February 2009, dragged down by disruptions to business activity following the introduction of Goods and Services Tax (GST)
- The Nikkei India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) stood at 47.9 in July, down from 50.9 in June, and highlighted the first deterioration in business conditions in 2017 so far
- July also marked the biggest month-on-month decline since November 2008, just after the collapse of Lehman Brothers triggered the global financial crisis
- This contraction is likely to put pressure on the Reserve Bank of India to lower interest rate at its policy meet.

GST Effect

- The GST launch, the survey said, affected demand.
- The reductions in output, new orders and purchasing activity were all the steepest since early 2009.
- However, foreign demand for India-manufactured goods improved in July as new export orders continued to rise.
- While some business segments have protested against the GST, many are struggling with the new compliance requirements that require them to file at least three returns every month.

Basic Information:

- What is the 'Purchasing Managers' Index PMI'
- The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is an indicator of the economic health of the manufacturing sector.
- The PMI is based on five major indicators: new orders, inventory levels, production, supplier deliveries and the employment environment.
- The purpose of the PMI is to provide information about current business conditions to company decision makers, analysts and purchasing managers.

5. Centre mulls changing minimum wages formula

In News:

- The Central government is mulling a revision in the formula to calculate minimum wages that may increase income levels of workers across the country.
- The Central Advisory Committee on Minimum Wages, headed by Labour and Employment Minister Bandaru Dattatreya, met here and decided to constitute a committee to deliberate the proposed changes in the calculation of minimum wages for workers.

Committees Task:

 The committee would deliberate upon the following factors while recommending a new formula for minimum wages — number of units per family, inclusion of dependant parents and "treatment of women and children at par with the male family member."

Indian Labour Conference in 1957

- The norms for fixing minimum wages today are based on recommendations of the Indian Labour Conference in 1957.
- Under it, the minimum wage level for industries is fixed based on spending estimates for a working class family on 2,700 calories of food per person, 72 yards clothes, minimum housing rent and education and light and fuel.
- A standard working class family consists of three consumption units for one earner with earnings of women, children and adolescents being disregarded.

6. What is the impact of floods on India's GDP?

Context:

- From Assam in the north-east to Rajasthan and Gujarat in the west, floods are taking a heavy toll on lives and property this year.
- As per latest reports, 82 and over 100 flood-related deaths have been recorded in the states of Assam and Gujarat, respectively.

Flood -related damges:

- Flood-related loss of both human and cattle lives and economic damages have come down over time.
- However, there has been a significant change in the nature of flood-related losses in India.

Changes:

- Central Water Commission (CWC) gives detailed estimates of economic loss and loss of human and cattle lives due to floods from 1953-2016
- The 1970s was the worst decade in terms of loss human and cattle lives due to floods in India. These losses have come down since then.
- Although absolute economic losses have been increasing, the relative economic damage has come down

Flood related losses:

- Floods resulted in loss of 86% of the total GDP in the 1970s and 1980s.
- In the present decade, this share has come down to 1% of the GDP.
- Until the 1970s, damage to crops was the biggest component of economic loss due to floods. Over time, damage to public utilities has acquired the biggest share in flood-related losses.
- A 2015 World Resources Institute study had shown that expanding cities and worsening climate challenges can significantly increase flood-related risks in India.



7. Price of rapacity: On SC rules against illegal mining

Context:

The Supreme Court has laid down a benchmark for action against illegal mining

Supreme Court ruling

- Lease-holders should pay compensation to the extent of 100% of the price of the quantum of minerals they had illegally extracted, the Supreme Court has gone beyond a mere affirmation of the 'polluter pays' principle.
- It has also set a significant benchmark for stringent action against those who indulge in mining without environmental or forest clearance

Current provisions

- Central Empowered Committee had recommended compensation to the extent of 30% of the value of the iron ore and manganese ore illegally mined in Odisha.
- Court's reasoning that the defaulter or violator should bear the consequences of the illegality, and therefore cannot be allowed the benefit of "pocketing 70% of the illegally mined ore".

Excess extraction in leased area

- Court has firmly ruled that any excess extraction within the leased area would also amount to unlawful mining.
- It has clarified that every renewal of a mining lease would require such clearance, even if there is no expansion, modernisation or increase in the pollution load.
- The apex court has been passing a series of orders on illegal mining activity, notably in Goa and Karnataka.

Main concerns of the court

- It has often voiced concern over the extent to which mining laws are being flouted and how illegal mining is depleting the country's natural resources.
- It has asked the Centre to revisit its National Mineral Policy, 2008, which "seems to be only on paper and is not being enforced, perhaps due to the involvement of very powerful vested interests or a failure of nerve.
- Country is already paying a heavy price for its failure to regulate mining operations in an effective manner.
- It has become a source for corruption, excessive exploitation of natural resources and a scourge in the lives of forest dwellers and tribals.
- Follow the principles of intergenerational equity, the responsibility of every generation to conserve resources with subsequent generations in mind while exploiting nature.

8. China's RCEP push veils grand plan

Context:

- Community social media platform 'LocalCircles' survey shows Indian consumer's perception about items imported from China.
- 52% of participants opined that quality of a 'Made in India' version was superior to the one from China.
- 83% said they buy Chinese products as those items were the cheapest and 98% said there should be better screening and ensure that imports meets the Indian (BIS) standards.
- The poll assumes significance as it comes amid ongoing negotiations for Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- It is a FTA between the 10-member ASEAN bloc and its six FTA partners — India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.
- When inked, it would become the world's biggest free trade pact
- Boost goods trade by eliminating most tariff and nontariff barriers — and provide the region's consumers greater choice of quality products at affordable rates.
- Liberalise investment norms and do away with services trade restrictions.

India's concerns over RCEP

- China is keen on an agreement on a 'high level' of tariff liberalisation — eliminating duties on as much as 92% of traded products.
- India's offer is to do away with duties on only 80% of the lines and that too, with a longer phase-out period for Chinese imports
- India already has separate FTAs with the 10-member ASEAN bloc, India feels that on account of the RCEP, India may not gain much on the goods side with existing FTA partners

Duty impact on India

- A highly ambitious level of tariff elimination without enough flexibility would affect India the most on the goods side.
- This is because in the RCEP group (except Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR), India has the highest average 'Most Favoured Nation (MFN) tariff' level at 13.5%.
- MFN tariff, as per the WTO, refers to normal, nondiscriminatory tariff charged on imports, excluding preferential tariffs under FTAs and other schemes
- India is the only participant that has a high level of merchandise trade deficit

Trade deficit woes

 Even without a bilateral FTA, India was already affected by China's overhang of excess capacity in sectors including metals, chemicals and textiles.



- Goods imports from China have been far outpacing India's shipments to that country.
- This has led to goods trade deficit with China widening from just \$1.1 billion in 2003-04 to a whopping \$52.7 billion in 2015-16.
- The initiative could provide a means for Chinese industries with excess capacity to export equipment that is currently idle.

9. Let's talk about a supplemental income

Context:

Applicability of the concept of basic income to India.

Universal Basic Income

- The primary objective is to enable every citizen to have a certain minimum income.
- The term 'universal' is meant to connote that the minimum or basic income will be provided to everyone irrespective of whatever their current income is.

Problem with UBI:

 Adoption of UBI can impose a burden on the fisc which is well beyond the capabilities of most developing countries, including India.

Cash v/s Services: Whether support to vulnerable sections should be in the form of goods and services or as cash?

Cash

 It gives the discretion to beneficiaries to spend it any way they like

Services

 Provision of services or goods directly to beneficiaries may be directed to achieve certain objectives in terms of nutrition or health or education.

Concerns

- In the provision of services, the concern is about leakages and quality of service
- There are a whole lot of services provided by the state, and it would be impossible to knock them off and substitute them with general income support
- Poor quality of services from government-run institutions.

Universal' or restricted?

 It is necessary to first decide whether income supplements should be 'universal' or limited to certain easily identifiable groups.

Universal

Pros

· Universal scheme is easy to implement

Cons

- Income to one and all are beyond the capabilities of the present Central government Budget unless the basic income is fixed at too low a level.
- · It is extremely difficult to cut so-called implied

subsidies or hidden subsidies in order to fund resources.

Restricted

 The attempt must be to think in terms of reducing the number of beneficiaries using easily definable criteria.

Cons

Strict targeting will run into complex problems of identification.

Minimum increase?

- Whether the scheme should be universal or restricted depends on the level of basic income that is proposed to be provided.
- If we were to treat the cut-off used to define poverty as the minimum income, then the total fiscal burden would be enormous.
- Analysis using different poverty lines shows that poverty is concentrated around the poverty line. In fact, more than 60% of the total poor lies between 75% of the poverty line.

Way out:

- What is needed is a supplement to fill the poverty gap
- One alternative would be to determine the required income supplement from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).
- The total annual income supplement can be equivalent to 100 days of the wages that is ₹20,000 per year. This amount can be treated as the income supplement.

Feasibility:

- It is difficult to cover the entire population. Even providing one person per household with this income will mean ₹5 lakh crore per annum, which is 3% of GDP
- What is feasible is a scheme which limits the total expenditure to around 1.5 to 2% of GDP.
- One way of restricting the total cost to this amount is to limit it to all women above the age of 45.
- Restricting the beneficiaries to the elderly or widows or those with disabilities may have only a limited impact.

Financing the scheme?

- · Remove all exemptions in our tax system.
- Tax experts advocate removing exemptions so that the basic tax rate can be reduced.
- Phase out the MGNREGS, which will realise close to Rs 40,000 crore.
- Fertilizer subsidies are another item of expenditure which can be eliminated.
- Requesting higher income groups to forego supplemental income will reduce the expenditure, as has been done successfully in the case of cooking gas.



10. <u>Loan-pricing systems: For better transmission, RBI in</u> <u>search of yet another benchmark</u>

Context:

- In 1994 Reserve Bank of India (RBI), announced a landmark decision to fully deregulate interest rates on advances above Rs 2 lakh.
- Since then, the RBI has introduced four benchmark lending rates for proper pricing of loans and transmission of rates. However, these rate structures have been found to be ineffective for various reasons.
- The RBI has now formed a committee to formulate market-determined benchmarks to ensure a better transmission of interest rates.

What is Monetary transmission?

 Monetary transmission refers to the process by which a central bank's monetary policy decisions are passed on, through financial markets, to businesses and households.

Base rate system

- It included all those elements of the lending rate that are common across all categories of borrowers.
- Banks are allowed to determine their actual lending rates on loans and advances with reference to the base rate and by including such other customerspecific charges as considered appropriate.
- While all categories of loans are required to be priced only with reference to the base rate, transmission of the RBI rate cuts moved at snail's pace
- Banks and markets also briefly experimented with the Mumbai inter-bank offer rate (Mibor) on the lines of London's Libor

Mumbai inter-bank offer rate (Mibor)

- · It is a major global interest rate indicator
- In June 1998, the National Stock Exchange had developed and launched the Mumbai inter-bank bid (Mibid) rate and Mibor for the overnight money market.
- However, banks found it difficult to use external benchmarks for pricing their loan products, as the available external market benchmarks (Mibor, G-Sec) are mainly driven by liquidity conditions in the market, and do not reflect the cost of funds of the banks
- MCLR was experiment which was kicked off when Raghuram Rajan was the RBI Governor.

MCLR System

- RBI Governor Urjit Patel said experience with the MCLR system, introduced in April 2016 for improving the monetary policy transmission, has not been entirely satisfactory
- Banks have been selective in their rate cuts in aggressive segments such as home and auto loans, but in many other segments, borrowers are still tied to the base rate, where they can ease more.
- RBI's rate cuts have not been passed on to borrowers in many segments of the economy.

- The base rate of some banks after the introduction of MCLR has moved significantly less than MCLR.
- The RBI says that the rigidity of the base rate is a matter of concern for an efficient transmission of monetary policy to the real economy
- MCLR failed to bring any cheers to old customers who were stuck with BPLR or base rate-linked rates.
- The RBI is likely to come up with another benchmark lending rate for borrowers, speeding up the transmission of rate cuts to the customers.

11. ATM expansion slows due to note ban

Expansion of ATMs:

- Cash crunch following demonetisation, have led to commercial banks cutting down on the number of automated teller machines (ATMs).
- According to Reserve Bank of India (RBI), there were 98,092 off-site ATMs in June 2017 against 99,989 in the same month last year.
- However, on-site (located within a branch) ATMs rose to 110,385 from 101,346 in the same period.
- According to bankers, demonetisation was one of the factors that impacted ATM expansion.

12. Logistics Data Bank project to expand to South India

Context:

 The Logistics Data Bank (LDB) project, unveiled in July 2016 to make India's logistics sector more efficient through the use of Information Technology, will soon expand to country's southern region

What is The Logistics Data Bank (LDB) project?

- The logistics Data Bank Service would bring efficiency in the current Logistics & Supply Chain through use of information technology that would be helpful for tracking and viewing the movement of containers across the port to the ICD and end users.
- Every container is attached to a Radio Frequency Identification Tag (RFID) tag and then tracked through RFID readers — aids importers and exporters in tracking their goods in transit.
- This has, in turn, cut the overall lead time of container movement as well as reduced transaction costs that consignees and shippers incur.
- It is billed as a major 'ease of doing business' initiative aimed at boosting India's foreign trade and ensuring greater transparency.
- The project covers "the entire movement (of containers) through rail or road till the Inland Container Depot and Container Freight Station.



13. GST impact on the logistics sector

Context:

Goods and services tax (GST), could affect profitability
of the logistics sector in the short run, but operational
efficiency is bound to improve in the long run.

Logistic sector:

 The logistics sector broadly comprises the road transport sector, the storage and warehousing sector and finally third-party logistics (3PL).

Logistic performance

- Two key performance measures—profit after tax (PAT)
 as percentage of income and profit before interest,
 taxes, depreciation and amortization (PBITDA) as
 percentage of income.
- Between 2010 and 2015, PAT has declined for all sub sectors and shows volatility for the logistics and the storage sector.
- PBITDA is an important measure that reflects operating efficiency ranges between a low of 7% for the road transport sector to a high of 20% for the storage sector.

GST impact on Logistics

- For manufacturers, GST has now replaced the multiple state VATs and the need to have a hub across all states will cease to exist.
- Allow firms to redesign supply chains and centralize hub operations to take advantage of scale economies.
 It will also allow firms to employ efficient practices such as bulk-breaking and cross-docking from a central location.
- For transport services, the "reverse charge mechanism" can be levied as before but the taxpayer will not be able to claim input tax credit, as the main input cost is fuel which is outside the purview of GST.
- Under GST, the tax on warehouse, storage and other labour services has increased from 15% to 18%. So a third-party logistics provider will now have more incentive.
- Ease of entry across states will reduce transportation delays with measures such as the e-way bill.
- GST will bring a lot of alignment of value-added services in the logistics sector. This will make way for cutting-edge investments and mergers and can see a phenomenal increase in asset utilization and increase in operational efficiency.
- There will be new investment opportunities for technology-enabled mini warehouses along the highways and technology enabled start-ups."
- This will result in uncertainties and affect the profitability of the sector in the short run. In the long run, operational efficiency is bound to improve.

14. Growth likely to be in the lower range, closer to 6.5%

Context:

 Key highlight of Second volume of Economic Survey: Macroeconomic indicators pointing to a deceleration trend.

In News:

- The second volume of the Economic Survey was tabled in Parliament.
- The Indian economy's growth in 2017-18 is more likely to be closer to 6.5% than 7.5%, according to Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian.
- Many indicators credit growth, index of industrial production, Gross Value Added, manufacturing, investment – all point to the same direction of deceleration in growth.
- <u>Demonetisation impact:</u> demonetisation of highvalue currency notes by the government last November, could be one possible reason which intensified deceleration in real activity.
- Short –term challenge ahead: The real challenge now is short-term growth and we need to bring to bear all the policy tools that we have to revive short-term growth.
- Farm loan waivers: waivers will act as a 'drag on growth' rather than have an inflationary impact.

Growth drag reasons:

- Rising stress in the telecom and power sectors: new entrant in telecom reducing prices for consumers and in power, renewable (energy) shocks would help climate change in the long run. But in the short run, both are having an impact on balance sheets of companies, demand and growth.
- The appreciation in the rupee's exchange rate and the high real interest rates, especially when inflation targets have been 'over-achieved' for nearly a year and are likely to stay below the 4% target on an average through 2017-18, are also dragging down growth.

15. 'Ease norms for airlines to fly abroad'

Context:

 The Economic Survey has suggested a mix of protectionism for domestic airlines and liberal norms for flying abroad to bolster their share in international air traffic.

Economic Survey report observations:

• Large increase in capacity entitlements under bilateral air service agreements with foreign countries has helped the foreign carriers in gaining a large share in the international traffic to and from India as the domestic carriers have underutilised their rights.

Key fact:

- Roughly 38% people fly in and out of India through Indian carriers and the rest 62% from foreign carriers.
- UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and the South East Asian countries - Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand as the top destination of passenger traffic to and from



India.

- These countries were invariably used as stop-overs or hubs by their respective airlines to carry passengers onward to USA, Canada, Europe, among others.
- Indian domestic airlines have a very lower share in international traffic to and from India.

Factors responsible:

- · Foreign airlines utilising the sixth freedom of the air
- Expansion of capacity entitlements under bilateral air service agreements with foreign countries
- · Lower utilisation of India's own capacity entitlements
- The 0/20 rule and fleet constraints.

What is Sixth freedom?

- Sixth freedom is the bilateral air traffic right to fly from a foreign country to another foreign country while stopping in one's own country.
- For instance, Emirates operates flight between India and the UK while stopping at Dubai, its home state.
- The Survey said this has reduced the share of direct long haul flights for Indian carriers from 25% in 2011-12 to 20.5% in 2015-16.

0/20 rule:

- A domestic airline needs to deploy at least 20 planes on the domestic sector before getting the right to fly on international routes from India.
- The Economic Survey said the 0/20 rule should be further diluted.

Diluted 5/20 rule:

- In its National Civil Aviation Policy released in 2016, the Central government had diluted the contentious '5/20 rule' that required an Indian airline to have five years of domestic flying experience and 20 aircraft in its fleet before it can fly to overseas destinations.
- According to the present norm, known as the 0/20 rule, a domestic airline needs to deploy at least 20 planes on the domestic sector before getting the right to fly on international routes from India. The Economic Survey said the 0/20 rule should be further diluted.

Air India's disinvestment plans:

- According to the survey Air India's disinvestment will also help India regain international share.
- There is a need for committed action plan on privatization or disinvestment of national carrier Air India to enhance its operational and management efficiency because it is a major carrier of international traffic to and from India, accounting for 11.4 per cent of the total international travel.

16. All you need to know about the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2017

Context:

 The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2017 passed by Rajya Sabha. The Bill seeks to replace the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance, that was passed in May 2017

Why was the ordinance passed?

- To address high levels of stress faced by the banking sector at the time.
- Previously in the month of June, The RBI had identified 12 'defaulters' who account for around 25% of India's non-performing assets (NPA) and informed banks to take up insolvency proceedings against them.
- Steel, Infrastructure, Power and Textiles are the sectors with the most NPAs.
- Public sector banks were hit the most as large modern and foundation programs were bolstered by them with the expectation that there would be further extension.

What does the Bill do?

- It empowers RBI to give directions to banks to act against loan defaulters.
- The Bill seeks to amend the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 by inserting provisions for handling cases related to stressed assets.
- Stressed assets are loans on which the borrower has defaulted or it has been restructured.
- The Central Government can authorise the RBI to issue directions to banks for initiating proceedings in case of a default in loan repayment. These proceedings would be under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016
- The RBI may also form committees to advise banks on the resolution of stressed assets. The members will be appointed or approved by the RBI.

17. Draft pharma policy calls for trade margins cap

Context:

Draft Pharmaceutical Policy 2017 highlights:

 Key objective: to make essential drugs accessible at affordable prices to common people while providing a long-term stable policy environment for the pharmaceutical sector.

cap on "unreasonable trade margins":

- The government is planning to fix the trade margins on drugs.
- <u>Impact:</u> move is aimed to bring down the costs and create a level-playing field for the pharma industry.
- Ending "unethical marketing practices": of pharmaceutical firms and marketing companies by luring doctors to recommend particular brands through all-expenses-paid 'educational conventions' and other incentives.
- New Agency for regulation of marketing: regulation for marketing practice which is at present voluntary will be made 'mandatory' and an agency for the implementation would also be assigned.



Practice at present:

- The government fixes ceiling prices of all drugs under the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM).
- Price fixation of these drugs is carried out by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA).

18. Cause for caution, not gloom

Context:

- Economic Survey II presents a mixed picture of the Indian economy.
- It highlights some obvious strengths but optimism about the medium-term is moderated by a near term deflationary impulses

Key Highlights:

Growth

- Volume 1 forecast real GDP growth of 6.75%-7.5% this year, it suggests that the balance of risk has shifted to the downward side of the range. This means a sub-7% rate of growth.
- Medium-Term Expenditure Framework statement in pursuance of the FRBM Act, 2003 assumes that nominal GDP growth for the current (2017-18) and subsequent two years would be 75%, 12.3% and 12.3%, respectively.
- Assuming inflation to be in the acceptable range of about 4%, the expected growth would be 7% plus.
- The projections also implicitly accept the fiscal deficit of 3.2% in the current year and 3% for the subsequent two years.
- Savings and investment ratio has declined in recent years. To sustain the projected rates of growth, the savings-investment ratio would need to be increased

Savings and investment ratio:

Structural reforms

- Reducing public dissavings through privatisations such as Air India and other measures mid-thirties.
- The demand boost inevitably comes from domestic consumption which accounted for about 96% of GDP growth in FY 2017

Inflation targets

- Economic Survey seeks to demonstrate that for sustained 14 quarters the actual inflation (WPI-CPI) has undershot the projections made by the Reserve Bank (RBI).
- It argues that India has moved to a low inflation trajectory

Reasons:

- · Supply-side elasticity in agriculture
- Long-term softening of global oil prices due to alternatives such as shale and
- Increasing competitiveness of renewable fuels, particularly solar.

Measures that could be taken:

• A deeper cut in the interest rates would be warranted, given that current inflation at 1.5% is running well below the 4% target.

Exchange rate

- Real effective interest rates have appreciated significantly.
- The RBI has the challenge of managing significant inward capital flows with exchange rates.
- However, export competitiveness needs interventions which go beyond dependence on the exchange rate by way of improved logistics, infrastructure and altering the mix of commodities and destinations to meet new demand preferences.

Deflationary pressures-Causes

- Fiscal tightening by States due to Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY),
- Farm loan waivers
- Declining profitability of some key sectors like power and telecom
- · Unresolved twin balance sheet problems
- Transitional issues of the GST are contributory to deflationary pressures.

Stabilise farm incomes:

- Fertilizer mix through extensive soil-testing along with the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana
- · Extending assured irrigation benefits
- Better market linkages for producers to prolong the shelf life of perishable commodities
- Improving the sale of commodities deserve priority action.

Way forwards:

- Faster resolution of the twin balance sheets is critical to rekindling private investment.
- Accelerating the pace of agricultural reforms
- Targeted capital expenditure
- Improving ease of doing business and the multiple infrastructure initiatives, particularly in roads and power, are integral to any coherent action.
- Stressed sectors like telecom and power need speedier resolution

19. Corporate governance: focus on SEBI

In News:

- Market Participants are discussing the issue of 'corporate governance'.
- This issue has become the topic of discussion due to the recent exit of Vishal Sikka from the Infosys.
- Many market participants wants SEBI to intervene in such matters to protect the interest of investors, especially the retail segment



Committee on corporate governance

- SEBI had constituted a committee on corporate governance under the chairmanship of Uday Kotak in June this year.
- The committee is expected to submit its report within four months.

Basic Information:

- · Corporate governance.
- Corporate governance is the system of rules, practices and processes by which a company is directed and controlled
- Corporate governance essentially involves balancing the interests of a company's many stakeholders, such as shareholders, management, customers, suppliers, financiers, government and the community.
- Since corporate governance also provides the framework for attaining a company's objectives, it encompasses practically every sphere of management, from action plans and internal controls to performance measurement and corporate disclosure.

20. The impact of caste on economic mobility in India Context:

· The impact of caste in economic mobility in India

Indian society

- The caste system is the most distinctive feature of Indian society.
- The Indian population is divided into four hierarchical classes, or varnas, with a large sub-population of untouchables excluded entirely from the system.
- Within each of these classes, and among the untouchables, are thousands of castes, or jatis.

How caste system supports occupational and spatial mobility?

- The exploitation, prejudice, and discrimination that are associated with the hierarchical aspect of the caste system have stifled mobility among the lower castes.
- Lower castes remained locked in unskilled, low-paying occupations for centuries in the traditional economy.
- There is also evidence of continuing discrimination in the labour market
- Convergence between upper and lower castes in education and jobs

Reasons

- Affirmative action policy: It has been in place since Independence, reserving seats in institutions of higher education and the central government for former untouchables and other disadvantaged groups
- Caste-based networks: It facilitate economic activity and support the mobility of their members in an economy where markets function imperfectly.
- · Particular castes: They found particular niches in the

- urban labour market, and once networks in the city were established, they supported the movement of fresh migrants from the hinterland
- Structural change has created new economic opportunities over the past 25 years
- There is a movement of castes from agriculture and administrative occupations into business in recent decades.
- Once caste networks form, they will strengthen relatively rapidly in historically disadvantaged castes.
- Caste networks can also be a hindrance to mobility?
 How? The same networks that can be so effective in
 supporting the movement of groups of individuals
 across space and occupations can also restrict
 the mobility of individual members once they are
 established
- Schooling choice is a strong predictor of future occupations.
- Particular castes historically occupied niches in Mumbai's mills and factories with the support of their networks.
- When the Indian economy restructured in the early 1990s, shifted economic activity in Mumbai from manufacturing to services
- But in the schooling choices of the children, that these blue-collar networks turned out to be a hindrance in this economy, keeping their members in the traditional (now less remunerative) occupations and preventing them from taking advantage of the new opportunities that became available.
- Rural mutual insurance networks, which have smoothed consumption within castes for centuries, can restrict the migration of individual members to the city.
- When a household suffers a negative income shock, it receives monetary transfers from caste members
- In the future, it is expected to provide transfers to other households when they receive a negative shock.
 But a household with migrants will be less insured by its rural network
- The restriction on mobility which leads to inefficiency in the labour market, arises because formal substitutes for the rural insurance network, such as private credit or government safety nets, are unavailable

Community based networks-Features

- It is active in all developing countries where markets are functioning imperfectly.
- These networks are exceptional with respect to their size and scope in India, because of the special castebased structure of its society.
- Caste networks thus play an unusually important role in shaping economic mobility in the Indian economy
- Whether these networks support or hinder mobility will depend on the circumstances
- Networks are effective in supporting the movement



- of groups, but they can restrict the mobility of individuals trying to follow a path of their own.
- The caste networks will disappear when the market economy starts to function efficiently.

Way forward

 Policies aimed at fostering growth would be more effective if they took account of the underlying caste networks that continue to shape educational, occupational, and locational choices in the Indian economy.

21. Space for a cut: On RBI repo rate cut

Context:

 Reserve Bank of India did cut the policy repo rate by 25 basis points, and has opted to play safe while nominally acceding to the clamour for softer lending rates.

Bimonthly policy statement

- It refers to the significant slowdown over the past three months in core inflation — retail price gains excluding those for food and fuel
- Monsoon has so far been normal, and the initial rollout of GST has been "smooth".
- Monetary policy committee chosen to retain the "neutral" stance, given that it expects the trajectory of inflation to rise from current lows amid a welter of uncertainties

Chances for Inflation:

- Due to the implementation of farm loan waivers by States
- State governments will implement salary and allowance increases following the Centre's implementation of the seventh pay panel-related hikes.
- A second successive normal monsoon that could checkfood costs and a stable international commodity price outlook — that could help keep the inflation trajectory favourable.

Way forward

- Impulses for growth in industry and services are weakening, so the Centre and the States to take enabling steps, through policy measures and directed fiscal actions, to give a thrust for the revival of private investment
- It will serve nobody's interests if the rate reduction doesn't have "the desired amplifier effects on the economy" and ends up only temporarily masking the true problems in the banking and real sectors.

22. <u>Unhappy with MCLR, RBI may link rates to market determined benchmarks</u>

Context:

 Reserve Bank of India is reviewing the MCLR system and exploring linking of the bank lending rates directly to market determined benchmarks to ensure a better transmission of interest rates.

- The experience with the MCLR system
- It introduced in April 2016 for improving the monetary transmission but it has not been entirely satisfactory, even though it has been an advance over the Base Rate system.
- An internal Study Group has been constituted to study MCLR system from the perspective of improving the monetary transmission and exploring linking of the bank lending rates directly to market determined benchmarks.

Current problems with monetary transmission:

- Banks not doing enough to pass on the full benefit of its rate actions to the borrowers and help revive the sagging private investment for economic growth.
- Banks have been selective in their rate cuts in aggressive segments like home and auto loans, but in other segments, borrowers are still tied to the base rate.
- Ongoing resolutions on the NPA front will help in better transmission as the banks' balance sheet stress is resolved.

RBI plan:

- RBI will be coming out with final guidelines on tripartite repo to deepen the corporate bond market, which, by working as an alternative to the bank lending, will also force banks to tinker with the rates quickly.
- RBI is forming a high level task-force to help develop a "comprehensive near real-time public credit registry.

Public credit registry:

- It will evaluate the existing public and private infrastructure for credit information, assess any data gaps, study the best international practices and provide a roadmap.
- It can potentially help banks in credit assessment and pricing of credit as well as in making risk-based, dynamic and countercyclical provisioning.
- The PCR can also help the RBI in understanding if transmission of monetary policy is working, and if not, where are the bottlenecks.
- It can help supervisors, regulators and banks in early intervention and effective restructuring of stressed bank credits.

Basic Information:

- The marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR)
- It refers to the minimum interest rate of a bank below which it cannot lend, except in some cases allowed by the RBI.
- It is an internal benchmark or reference rate for the bank. MCLR actually describes the method by which the minimum interest rate for loans is determined by a bank – on the basis of marginal cost or the additional or incremental cost of arranging one more rupee to the prospective borrower.



 This new methodology replaces the base ratesystem introduced in July 2010.

Reasons for introducing MCLR

- RBI decided to shift from base rate to MCLR because the rates based on marginal cost of funds are more sensitive to changes in the policy rates.
- This is very essential for the effective implementation of monetary policy. Prior to MCLR system, different banks were following different methodology for calculation of base rate /minimum rate – that is either on the basis of average cost of funds or marginal cost of funds or blended cost of funds. Thus, MCLR aims.
- To improve the transmission of policy rates into the lending rates of banks.
- To bring transparency in the methodology followed by banks for determining interest rates on advances.
- To ensure availability of bank credit at interest rates which are fair to borrowers as well as banks.
- To enable banks to become more competitive and enhance their long run value and contribution to economic growth.

23. No level playing field

Context:

 The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code has loopholes to close down businesses.

Need for Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code:

- It was enacted to improve the ease of doing business in India
- It aims to overhaul laws relating to reorganisation and insolvency resolution of corporate persons, partnership firms, and individuals
- Attempts to ease the process of recovery of money by operational and financial creditors in a timely manner.
- Places the onus on professionals to put forth resolution plans within 180 days

A quick procedure

- Code looks to wrap up the process in 180 days.
- It warrants a notice of dispute to be issued followed by a response period of 10 days for the corporate debtor, failing which the creditor is entitled to file an insolvency application before the National Company Law Tribunal.
- Upon admission of the application, the moratorium period commences.
- At this stage, the existing management of the company loses complete control and all powers vest with an interim resolution professional, who has merely 30 days to put together all the relevant information and call for a meeting of the financial creditors.
- Once the financial creditors meet, they must appoint a resolution professional who will propose a resolution plan for the company.
- · All such resolution plans are placed before the

financial creditors. When at least 75% of the financial creditors approve, the plan is implemented by way of an order by the NCLT. If the financial creditors fail to arrive at a consensus, the default plan is to liquidate the company.

Drawbacks:

- The Code has enough loopholes to close down businesses instead of assisting entrepreneurs.
- It fails to provide adequate safeguards to protect the rights of the company before handing over the management in its entirety to the resolution professional.
- Neither does the corporate debtor have an opportunity to put forth his/her case nor is there any scope of discretion provided to the adjudicating authority itself.
- At various stages, the Code fails to provide any opportunity to the corporate debtor to make a representation
- The Code is also deficient in providing a yardstick for the qualification of insolvency resolution professionals
- It allows for any person to access the information memorandum put together by the insolvency professional. There is no law protecting confidentiality and vitiates the fundamental right to business under Article 19(1)(q).
- Code prohibits withdrawal of the application once the same has been admitted. This means that there is no scope whatsoever for settlement.

24. Ministerial group to oversee disinvestment

- A ministerial group chaired by Finance Minister would be the deciding authority on particulars of strategic disinvestment of public sector firms.
- It will be the authority responsible to state the terms of sale and also inviting financial bids from prospective buyers.
- The suggestion from Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) got a nod from the CCEA for establishing an Alternative Mechanism (AM) comprising of the Finance Minister, Minister for Road Transport & Highways and Minister of Administrative Department in order to agree on the complications, terms and conditions of the sale from the stage of welcoming to the end process of financial bid.
- The Core Group of Secretaries (CGD) to take policy judgments on procedural issues and deviations.

About DIPAM

- Union Government has renamed Department of Disinvestment as Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM).
- DIPAM is under Union Finance Ministry.
- Its function is to advise the Union with respect to the financial restructuring of PSUs and also for appealing investment through capital markets.



- It will deal with all matters relating to sale of Union Government's equity through private placement or offer for sale or any other mode in the erstwhile Central PSUs.
- Henceforth all other post disinvestment matters will continue to be handled by the Union Finance Ministry or concerned department in consultation with DIPAM on necessity.

25. <u>Bad loan levels unacceptable, state banks need recapitalisation: Urjit Patel</u>

In News:

- Reserve Bank Governor Urjit Patel called for recapitalisation of state-run banks
- Why? to help them resolve the NPAs issue in a timebound manner.
- Matter of concern: Gross NPA ratio of the banking system at 9.6 per cent and stressed advances ratio at 12 per cent as of March 2017.
- Lenders to be blamed for the menace: poor credit appraisal systems have led to the pile of bad loans, which tops over Rs 9 lakh crore
- <u>Key fact:</u> 86.5 per cent of GNPAs are accounted by large borrowers.
- Possible measures: combination of capital rising from the market, dilution of government holding, additional capital infusion by the government, merger based on strategic decision and sale of noncore assets.

Basic Information:

What is 'Recapitalization'?

 Recapitalization is restructuring a company's debt and equity mixture, often with the aim of making a company's capital structure more stable or optimal. Essentially, the process involves the exchange of one form of financing for another, such as removing preferred shares from the company's capital structure and replacing them with bonds.

Non-performing Assets

 Non-performing assets (NPA) are loans where borrower payments have remained overdue for a period for over 90 days. Banks are required to classify NPAs further into substandard — when the loan is overdue for 90 days; doubtful asset — when the loan is overdue for 12 months; and loss asset — loans that are considered uncollectible.

Gross NPA

- Gross NPA is the amount outstanding in the borrowal account, in books of the bank other than the interest which has been recorded and not debited to the borrowal account. Net NPAs is the amount of gross NPAs less (1) interest debited to borrowal and not recovered and not recognized as income and kept in interest suspense (2) amount of provisions held in respect of NPAs and (3) amount of claim received and not appropriated.
- The Reserve Bank of India defines Net NPA as

 Net NPA = Gross NPA - (Balance in Interest Suspense account + DICGC/ECGC claims received and held pending adjustment + Part payment received and kept in suspense account + Total provisions held).

26. Use coal while economical, says CEA

Context:

 Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian's talk about costs of moving away from coal to renewable energy

Highlights

- India should leverage its coal assets while it is still economical to do so before ramping up its renewable energy capacity.
- India should not be influenced by 'coal imperialism', with developed countries trying to influence developing countries to cut their fossil fuel consumption at a rate not in keeping with historical factors and equity.
- Properly costed, renewables will achieve true parity in social terms with coal only in the future
- We should maximise the use of natural assets while economics permits it, and then ramp up the free assets such as renewable sources when needed

Costs of moving away from coal to renewable energy

- It will impact employment, and the regional economies where coal mines are located.
- Increasingly using renewable sources would further reduce the plant load factors of coal power plants, which, in turn, could further worsen their finances and the non-performing assets problem.
- If India achieves its target in renewable energy (of 175 GW by 2022), the plant load factor will decline by 13 percentage points, which is significant since the PLF is already so low
- The low tariffs seen in the renewable sector do not include several implicit costs that are, so far, being subsidised.
- Among the costs of adopting renewable energy that are not factored into the tariff included the cost of intermittent supply of power from solar and wind sources, the land acquisition costs, the upgradation of the grid to support energy from renewable sources, and the cost of stranded coal assets.

27. <u>Tougher foreign investment norms for pharma</u> companies likely

In News:

- The government is contemplating tougher foreign investment norms for multinational firms to acquire existing pharmaceutical facilities in India.
- <u>Purpose</u>: to protect the Indian drug manufacturing sector.
- Manufacturing in India is cheaper and most of the facilities have state-of-the-art infrastructure, foreign



firms acquire these units and then stop manufacturing drugs for use in India.

New draft pharma policy proposals:

- · Continuation of manufacturing of essential medicines.
- · Expenditure on R&D and
- Technology transfer to seek approval for foreign direct investment (FDI).

Governments' recent decision: June 2016

- Government allowed up to 74% FDI in brownfield projects through automatic route, with an aim to promote investment in the sector.
- At present there is no mechanism or system to monitor the post-acquisition (FDI) activities of the company.
- New draft pharma policy proposal: A system would be developed to monitor the adherence to these conditions.

Key facts:

- Many neighboring countries like Vietnam, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are emerging as generic drug manufacturers and posing competition to India.
- India, which is known for its ability to supply low priced quality generic medicines, is witnessing a decline in its compounded annual rate of growth in the pharmaceutical industry. It has seen a decline from 14.36% in 2010-11 to 8.68% in 2014-15.
- Pharmaceutical industry is the third largest export revenue churner for India.

28. FDI jumps 37% to \$10.4 billion during April-June 2017

In News:

- Foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country grew by 37 per cent to USD 10.4 billion during the first quarter of the current fiscal.
- Since the launch of 'Make in India' initiative (October 2014 – June this year), foreign inflows jumped 64 per cent to USD 110.12 billion from USD 67.26 billion in the same period last year.
- Sectors which attracted the highest foreign inflows include services, telecom, trading, computer hardware and software and automobile.
- Bulk of the FDI came in from Singapore, Mauritius, the Netherlands and Japan.
- The government has announced several steps to attract foreign inflows. The measures include liberalisation of FDI policy and improvement in business climate.

Importance of FDI in India:

- India needs around USD 1 trillion for overhauling its infrastructure sector such as ports, airports and highways to boost growth.
- A strong inflow of foreign investments will help improve the country s balance of payments situation

 It will strengthen the rupee value against other global currencies, especially the US dollar.

29. <u>Govt puts urad, moong dal imports under restricted</u> category

In News:

- The government on Monday put imports of urad and moong dal under the restricted category and fixed a cap for its in-bound shipments up to three lakh tonnes.
- India is the world's largest pulse producer and importer.
- Earlier this month, the government had also put imports of pigeon peas and toor dal under the restricted category.
- This restriction will not apply to the government's import commitments under any bilateral and regional agreement.

How this restriction will help?

 The move will help in stabilising domestic prices that have fallen below the minimum support level and are hurting farmers.

30. New mechanism to spur PSB mergers

In News:

- The Cabinet has approved 'in-principle' the constitution of an alternative mechanism- ministerial group, that will oversee the proposals for mergers among banks.
- Why? For quicker consolidation among public sector banks.

Crisil observations:

- Cabinet decision regarding constitution of an alternative mechanism is an important first step towards kick starting the consolidation process
- Such mergers would improve NPA resolution following swifter decision making and an unified strategy.
- Adds commercial strengths, prevents multiplicity of resources being spent in the same areas, and it improves the capacity of the banking system to absorb shocks that the market throws up

Key Fact:

- Gross NPA (GNPA) ratio of the banking system is at 9.6% and the stressed advances ratio at 12% as of March 31, 2017.
- The Indian banking sector has been battling a surge in bad loans over the last three years with gross NPAs climbing to about ₹8 lakh crore.

31. Economy doing well on strong fundamentals, reforms: FSDC

In News:

 According to the deliberations at a meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC), India's macro-economic stability remains strong on the back of



- Improvement in fundamentals
- Structural reforms with the launch of the goods and services tax
- Steps to tackle the twin balance sheet problems
- The Council, consisting mostly of regulators and secretaries of the finance ministry, also took note of investor confidence in financial markets, which is reflected in high and rising bond and stock valuations and long-term positive consequences of demonetization

Basic Information:

Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)

- It is an apex-level body constituted by the government of India.
- FSDC has replaced the High Level Coordination Committee on Financial Markets (HLCCFM), which was facilitating regulatory coordination, though informally, prior to the setting up of FSDC. It is not a statutory body.

Chairperson: The Union Finance Minister of India

 Members: Heads of the financial sector regulatory authorities (i.e., RBI, SEBI, IRDA, and PFRDA), Finance Secretary and/or Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs (Union Finance Ministry), Secretary, Department of Financial Services, and Chief Economic Adviser. FSDC can invite experts to its meeting if required.

The objectives of FSDC would be to deal with issues relating to:

- · Financial stability.
- · Financial sector development.
- Inter-regulatory coordination.
- Financial literacy.
- Financial inclusion.

32. 'RBI not for NBFCs taking deposits'

In News:

- Deputy Governor N.S. Vishwanathan of the RBI, has said that RBI is not in favour of allowing non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) to accept deposits.
- Previously, RBI has given a few NBFCs licenses to accept deposits; it would not do so in the future.
- 'No cancellation': the licenses already given will not be revoked.
- <u>Key Facts:</u> NBFCs are one of the bright spots of the Indian economy, with the rate of growth of advances growing by 14-15%, which is higher than banks.

Basic Information:

Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)

 A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956 engaged in the business of loans and advances, acquisition of shares/stocks/bonds/debentures/ securities issued by Government or local authority or other marketable securities of a like nature, leasing, hire-purchase, insurance business, chit business but does not include any institution whose principal business is that of agriculture activity, industrial activity, purchase or sale of any goods (other than securities) or providing any services and sale/purchase/construction of immovable property.

 A non-banking institution which is a company and has principal business of receiving deposits under any scheme or arrangement in one lump sum or in installments by way of contributions or in any other manner, is also a non-banking financial company (Residuary non-banking company).

What is difference between banks & NBFCs?

- NBFCs lend and make investments and hence their activities are akin to that of banks; however there are a few differences as given below:
 - i. NBFC cannot accept demand deposits;
 - ii. NBFCs do not form part of the payment and settlement system and cannot issue cheques drawn on itself;
 - iii. deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is not available to depositors of NBFCs, unlike in case of banks.

33. <u>India facing problem of severe under-employment, says Niti</u> <u>Aayog</u>

Context:

 Making a case for promoting highly productive and well paid jobs, Niti Aayog has said that not unemployment but a "severe under-employment" is the main problem facing the country.

In News:

- The government think-tank in its three-year action plan, released last week, has said that a focus on the domestic market through an import-substitution strategy would give rise to a group of relatively small firms behind a high wall of protection.
- Contrary to some assertions that India's growth has been 'jobless', the Employment Unemployment Surveys (EUS) of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) has consistently reported low and stable rates of unemployment over more than three decades.
- Indeed, unemployment is the lesser of India's problems. The more serious problem, instead, is severe underemployment.

Need of the hour:

- What is needed is the creation of high-productivity, high-wage jobs.
- Citing examples of top manufacturing countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and China, it said, "The 'Make in India' campaign needs to succeed by manufacturing for global markets.
- Noting that with Chinese wages rising due to an ageing workforce and many large-scale firms in labour-intensive sectors currently manufacturing in



that country are looking for lower-wage locations, the Aayog said, "with its large workforce and competitive wages, India would be a natural home for these firms.

• Therefore, the time for adopting a manufactures- and exports-based strategy could not be more opportune.

Solutions:

- The Aayog in its 'Three Year Acsssssssssstion Agenda' also recommended for the creation of a handful of Coastal Employment Zones (CEZ), which may attract multinational firms in labour-intensive sectors from China to India.
- The presence of these firms will give rise to an ecosystem in which local small and medium firms will also be induced to become highly productive thereby multiplying the number of well-paid jobs.
- Making a case for reforming labour laws, the Niti Aayog also noted that recently fixed-term employment has been introduced in the textiles and apparel industry.
- This option may be extended to all sectors. The change will encourage employers to rely on regular fixed-term employment instead of contract workers, especially when hiring workers for specific projects or for meeting seasonal demand.
- Besides, the Aayog pointed out that unifying the existing large number of labour laws into four codes without reform of the laws themselves will serve little purpose.
- Unless we bring about substantive change either by amending the existing laws or rewriting them afresh, we cannot expect to change the current situation where low-productivity and low-wage jobs dominate the landscape.

34. <u>'Centre ready to provide capital support for PSU banks'</u> merger'

In News:

- The Finance Ministry is open to providing capital support for facilitating consolidation among state owned banks, which are reeling under mounting bad loans.
- The Union Cabinet has approved the setting up of an alternative mechanism, or a panel of ministers, to decide on consolidation proposals for state-run banks.
- The government is keen that at least one merger proposal reaches a logical conclusion by the end of the current fiscal.
- There are now 20 public sector banks (PSBs) other than SBI. These state-owned banks are grappling with Rs.6 lakh crore worth of non-performing assets (NPAs) or bad loans, which is about 75% of the total distress.

35. 'Reform labour laws to ease compliance'

In News:

NITI Aayog: Ease of Doing Business report.

- Highlights:
- The government should reform labour laws and make them more flexible to make it easier to do business in the country.
- More enterprises in labour-intensive sectors reported that finding skilled workers, hiring contract labour and terminating employees was a major or a severe obstacle.
- Pitched for accelerating power sector reforms to ensure that power-intensive enterprises have access to steady and uninterrupted power without undue delays or regulatory burden.
- Half of the enterprises do not borrow from financial institutions and about a third consider lack of access to finance as a major source of obstacles for business in the country

Recommendation:

- More flexible labour laws will allow enterprises to grow larger and reap economies of scale, generating productivity improvements, jobs creation and higher growth.
- If India is to enter the 'double digit' economic growth club, it will need to continually streamline and improve the business environment.

36. <u>Under-employment severe in India: NITI</u>

In News:

- NITI Aayog: not unemployment but a "severe underemployment" is the main problem facing the country
- NITI Aayog's goal: promoting highly productive and well-paid jobs.

NITI Aayog's recommendations:

 Creation of a handful of Coastal Employment Zones, which may attract multinational firms in labourintensive sectors from China to India

Basic Information:

What is Underemployment?

- Underemployment, or disguised unemployment, refers to a job that is insufficient in some important way for a worker, relative to a standard, which results in the under-utilization of the worker
- Examples include holding a part-time job despite desiring full-time work, and overqualification, where the employee has education, experience, or skills beyond the requirements of the job.



37. New norms for solar power bids to enhance transparency. MNRE

In News:

- The Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) had issued the new guidelines for tariff based competitive bidding process for procuring solar power
- The guidelines have been issued under the provisions of Section 63 of the Electricity Act, 2003 for long term procurement from grid-connected Solar PV Power Projects of 5 MW and above, through competitive bidding.

Salient features of the guidelines issued:

- Generation compensation for offtake constraints for reducing offtake risks
- The 'must-run' status for solar projects has been stressed upon.
- Besides, to ensure lower tariffs, minimum PPA (power purchase agreement) tenure has been kept at 25 years. Moreover unilateral termination or amendment of PPA is not allowed.
- Provides for termination compensation to increase bankability of projects by securing the investment by the generator and the lenders against any arbitrary termination of PPA.
- The risk of generator's revenue getting blocked due to delayed payment/non-payment by the procurers has been addressed through provision of Payment Security Mechanism through instruments like Letter of Credit (LC), Payment Security Fund and State Guarantee.
- It also provides for change in law provision to provide clarity and certainty to generators, procurers, and investors/lenders.
- The penalties have been rationalised so as to reduce the overall cost to the generator, while at the same time, ensuring compliance with the Commissioning Schedule/Scheme Guidelines.
- The norms provide that generators are free to repower their plants.

Significance of this move:

- New Guidelines for Tariff Based Competitive Bidding Process to reduce risk, enhance transparency and increase affordability of Solar Power.
- It will also provide standardisation and uniformity in processes and a risk-sharing framework between various stakeholders involved in the solar PV power procurement.
- This will also help reduce off-taker risk and encourage investments, enhance bankability of the Projects and improve profitability for the investors.
- The guidelines also streamline the provision for project preparedness to expedite and facilitate the setting up of projects.

38. Forex reserves: The problem of plenty

Context:

- India's forex reserve is reaching the \$400 billion mark on the back of a stronger rupee against the US dollar.
- · Key points:
- In 2013, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was struggling to save the rupee from a free fall and was compelled to raise emergency foreign currency deposits from non-resident Indians.
- Today's concerns are with respect to appreciating currency and the problems the central bank is facing in managing the strong rupee.
- Strong foreign inflows contributed to a rise by over \$23 billion so far in the current financial year.
- A recent report by Edelweiss Securities Ltd stated that continuous interference by the RBI brought India close to getting in the currency maneuvering watch list of the US.
- The accommodative monetary policy in the developed world and the global financial system is flush with cheap money and investors are in a desperate search for yield.
- For example, \$1 billion worth of bonds issued by the government of Iraq were oversubscribed and sold at a lower than expected yield.
- Rupee has been appreciated by about 6% since the beginning of this year, despite persistent intervention by the RBI
- Non-intervention or insufficient intervention would result in further appreciation of the rupee and affect India's competitiveness.
- The external competitiveness is not exclusively dependent on the exchange rate. Therefore, there is no harm in suppressing volatility if possible, and giving businesses a more stable economic environment.
- The present liquidity situation is making things more difficult for the RBI.
- The banking system has excess liquidity of around Rs3 trillion and currency market intervention will increase this.
- Even though there is no imminent threat of high inflation, persistent surplus liquidity can affect monetary policy operations.
- The yields on foreign assets are much lower than government bonds and sterilized intervention is in effect a switch in central bank holdings from rupee to dollar securities.

So how can the central bank deal with this problem of plenty?

- Work on government instrument like market stabilization scheme bonds and continue to build reserves.
- But, the cost would keep rising, as higher reserves would attract more flows, which will reduce the currency risk for foreign investors.



- The other option is to reassesses the kind of foreign funds it wants.
- India's external debt is at about 20% of gross domestic product, and about 37% of this is commercial borrowing.
- Policy rationalization on this front can ease the pressure on both the RBI and the rupee.

39. Consolidated FDI policy document released

Context:

 The government has come out with the latest edition of its consolidated FDI policy document – a compilation of the changes made in the past one year in a single document.

Importance:

 It is an initiative aimed at ensuring greater ease of doing business in India and an investor-friendly climate to foreign investors so that the country attracts more FDI.

Consolidated FDI policy:

- For the first time, the document has included startups.
- As per the norms, start-ups can raise up to 100 per cent of funds from Foreign Venture Capital Investor (FVCI).
- The document said the start-ups can issue equity or equity linked instruments or debt instruments to FVCI against receipt of foreign remittance.
- Person residing outside India (other than citizens/ entities of Pakistan and Bangladesh) will be permitted to purchase convertible notes issued by an Indian start-up company for an amount of Rs 25 lakh or more in a single tranche.
- Non Resident Indians can also acquire convertible notes on non-repatriation basis.
- The start-up issuing convertible notes would be required to furnish reports as prescribed by the RBI.

40. Centre to unveil 'future-ready' industrial policy in October

Context:

 The government is all set to announce the new 'future-ready' Industrial Policy in October

Policy aim:

- To facilitate the use of smart technologies such as the internet of things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics for advanced manufacturing.
- To make India a manufacturing hub by promoting 'Make in India'
- · To subsume the National Manufacturing Policy.
- Six thematic focus groups: manufacturing and MSME; technology and innovation; ease of doing business; infrastructure, investment, trade and fiscal policy; and skills and employability for the future, would facilitate inputs.

Constraints to Industrial growth:

- · Inadequate infrastructure
- · Restrictive labour laws
- · Complicated business environment
- · Slow technology adoption
- Low productivity
- Challenges for trade including the Indian MSME sector facing tough competition from cheap imports from China and FTA countries,
- Inadequate expenditure on R&D and Innovation.

41. Minimum wage to vary across states

Context:

The Code on Wages Bill proposed by the Union government.

In News:

- Proposed bill will not fix a single national level minimum wage for the whole country, but will vary across-states and geographies.
- Code on Wages Bill 2017: "It provides for national minimum wage for different geographical areas so as to ensure that no State Government fixes the minimum wage below the national minimum wage, notified for that area by the Central Government,"
- The Centre will fix different wages through a notification after consulting the Central Advisory Board.
- As per the new provisions of the bill- if the minimum wages fixed by the states are already higher than the 'national minimum wage', the states will not be allowed to lower their wage levels.
- The Code on Wages Bill combines four labour laws

 Payment of Wages Act, 1936, Minimum Wages
 Act, 1948, Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 and Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.

42. 99% of demonetised notes returned, says RBI report

Context:

• Demonetization of high-value Currency.

In News:

- RBI's revelation in its final annual report: approximately, Rs 15.28 lakh crore of the high-value currency that was demonetised in November returned to the central bank.
- Stats: 98.96% of the withdrawn currency at the time of demonetization, the value of old Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes in circulation was ₹15.44 lakh crore was deposited with the banks.
- <u>Key fact:</u> Demonetization which involved withdrawal of high-value banknotes was a means to combat counterfeiting, black money and the financing of terrorist activities.



43. First GST data in: 65 per cent pay Rs 92,000 crore

Context:

- The Centre and states have collected Rs 92,283 crore as Goods and Services Tax (GST) in July, the first month of the implementation of the indirect tax regime.
- The amount is marginally higher than the projected target.
- 42 per cent of the total registered taxpayers, excluding composition dealers and registrants in August, filed GST returns for July.
- The tax collection number would "somewhat increase" with more compliance.
- For those who haven't yet paid the GST, a late filing penalty of Rs 100 per day for CGST and SGST each will be levied.



AGRICULTURE RELATED

From plate to plough: Everybody loves a good crop Context:

- The sums insured under National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS), modified NAIS, and Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS) were too low, as premiums were kept low and it was not based on any robust scientific system and had its own loopholes.
- Introduction of 'Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana' was a path breaking scheme for farmers' welfare.

<u>Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY)- a game</u> <u>changer</u>

- Raised the sums insured to realistic levels, basically to cover the cost of cultivation of farmers.
- The premiums were heavily subsidised by the Centre and the states in equal proportions.
- compared to kharif year2013, the number of farmers opting for the scheme increased by 210 per cent in kharif 2016, and the area covered increased by 126 per cent.
- But the effectiveness of crop insurance scheme is based on how fast it can settle the claims of farmers. It is here that the governance of the state is tested.

Three critical steps in this process:

- The state has to notify the crops, make clusters of districts, determine the sums to be insured based on district level committees, and invite tenders from insurance companies;
- The state and the Centre have to pay premium to the companies providing insurance; and
- In case of crop damages, quickly assess the damages and ask companies to pay the claims of farmers.

Challenges in the implementation

- If states delay notifications, or payment of premiums, or crop cutting data, companies cannot pay compensation to the farmers in time.
- Similarly, most states failed to provide smartphones to revenue staff to capture and upload data of crop cutting, which continues to come with enormous delay.
- There is hardly any use of modern technology in assessing crop damages.

Way forward

 There is an urgent need to link the insurance database with Core Banking Solution (CBS) so that when premium is deducted from a farmer's bank account, the bank sends him a message informing about the premium, sum insured and name of insurance company.

2. <u>Farmer suicides in India may be linked to climate change, says study</u>

Context:

 The increase in temperature during the cropping season reduces crop yields, thus resulting in increased suicides, says a study published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Key Findings:

- Climate change has led to over 59,000 farmer suicides over the last 30 years in India.
- For every 1 degree C increase in temperature above 20 degrees C during the crop growing season in India, there are about 70 suicides on average.
- The increase in temperature during the cropping season reduces crop yields, thus resulting in increased suicides.
- Additional deaths reported when a single day's temperature increased by 1 degree C above 20 degree C was seen only during the crop-growing season. Similar increase in temperature during seasons when crops were not grown did not result in increased suicides among farmers.
- An increase in rainfall by 1 cm during the crop growing season leads to a decrease of about 0.8 deaths per 100,000, thus lowering the suicide rate by 7% on average, she writes.
- The effect of climate variation reveals that past growing season temperature strongly influences suicide rates in the following years up to about five years. For instance, when there is abundant rainfall during one growing season, the suicide rates dip for the next 2-3 years. Drought apparently does not seem to have any effect on suicide rates, she found.
- South India which is generally hotter has higher farmer suicide rates.
- States where the yields are more affected by high temperatures are also the States which report higher suicide rates. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh not only show severe suicide responses to temperature but also the crop yield is more negatively affected by higher temperature.

Cautious approach:

 India's average temperature is expected to increase by 3 degree C by 2050. Without investments in adaptations, India might face increased number of lives lost due to suicides.



3. Studying the climate of farm suicides

- Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).
- According to a study by the PNAS of the US, over 1,900 farm suicides were triggered every year over the last 30 years in India by warming related to climate change.
- Name of the Study: "Crop-damaging temperatures increase suicide rates in India".

Other points from study

- The study calculates that "warming a single day by 1 degree Celsius during India's agricultural growing season leads to roughly 65 suicides across the country, whenever that day's temperature is above 20 degrees Celsius".
- Warming a day by 5 degrees Celsius has five times that effect.

4. A field of her own

Context:

• Growing contribution of Indian women in farming and issues related to it

Current Scenario

- Presently, women constitute close to 65 per cent of all agricultural workers
- Also, 74 per cent of the rural workforce, is female

Why are women not counted as Farmers?

- Women are not officially counted as farmers because they are either labelled "agricultural labourers" or "cultivators"
- Why: this is because the government does not recognise as farmers those who do not have a claim to land under their name in official records
- As many as 87 per cent of women do not own their land, only 12.7 per cent of them do

Reason behind less rights to women in farming system

- · There are two primary reasons behind this:
- First, land being a state subject is not governed by the constitution under a uniform law that applies equally to all citizens but rather is governed by personal religious laws. It tends to discriminate against women when it comes to land inheritance
- Second, the cultural aspect hinder women's ownership of land in patriarchal societies cannot be discounted

Why are women with land ownership good for Indian farming society?

- According to many studies, women have a greater tendency to use their income for the needs of their households
- Land-owning women's offspring receive better nourishment
- Land-owning mothers also tend to invest in their children's education

<u>Possible impact of giving land ownership to the women(at micro level)</u>

- The chance of propertied women being physically abused is reduced from 49 per cent to 7 per cent due to an increase in the wife's bargaining power.
- If female farmers are provided security of land tenure, they will be officially recognised as farmers.

The way forward

- India has the intention to ensure food security for its citizens and boost women's rights.
- These intentions constitute goals two and five of the Sustainable Development Goals that our country committed to in 2015.
- Giving more empowerment to women farmers is critical in realising these outcomes.

5. The difficult economics of the Indian farmer

Context:

 The hardships faced by Indian farmers on different fronts due to climate, price risk, Government policy problems etc.

Problems

- The risks begin with sowing. The production in the months ahead is deeply dependent on weather conditions.
- <u>Price risk:</u> A bumper crop can pull down prices in wholesale markets. Farmers are reported to have not been able to even recover the cost for some crops
- Recent report that the fall in inflation has increased the real debt burden of farmers, which has risen faster than real income in recent years.
- The opportunities for risk mitigation are minimal.
- MSPs was originally conceived as a way to mitigate risk through guaranteed prices. It later degenerated into a tool to buy the political support of large farmers.
- Farmers who suffered losses in the last year have not yet received compensation for 55% of the estimated claims from Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana. Crop insurance will not benefit farmers if the compensation is not paid in time
- A more robust mechanism is needed to mitigate the price risk. The lack of future prices means that farmers base their production decisions on prices at the time of sowing.
- In majority of agri-products, the policymakers used restrictive export policies to keep domestic prices low. This showed the pro-consumer bias in the policy complex

How to reduce price risk?

- Price deficiency payment, which has been advocated by NITI Aayog
- In price deficiency payment, farmers can be compensated through direct benefit transfer if prices fall below a predetermined threshold level.



- A deeper derivative market in agricultural commodities will also help farmers in hedging against price risks.
- The market regulator has done well by allowing option contracts.
- However, the government should avoid its response of banning trading whenever prices rise.

Way forward:

- Strike a balance between the interests of both the producer and the consumer.
- The actual impact of higher remunerative farm prices can be contained by making markets more efficient and removing middlemen from the system.
- Building a common agriculture market is also necessary.
- Government policy should focus not just on higher production but also on helping farmers manage risks.

6. From plate to plough: Plan for the agri-futures

In News:

- Though we celebrate 70 years of Independence, the farmers distress regarding marketing system for agriproducts remains un-supportive.
- The e-NAM purposes to construct an pan-India spot market by crafting an electronic platform.
- For pan-India transactions to take place infrastructure more than installing a simple software is the need of the hour.
- The agri-futures market can be proposal to ensure farmers' decisions are forward thinking.
- India documented the first trade in futures in 1875 in cotton in the Bombay Cotton Exchange.
- The sequence of interruptions throughout the Second World War due to the scarcity of essential commodities broke down the India's futures market.
- This mind-set sustained post-Independence, and only pepper and turmeric were allowed to trade in 1977
- In 2003 three national exchanges were established and all supplies were permitted to be transacted in futures markets.
- But since 2003, 15 commodity futures were banned, leading to insecurity in the market.
- Markets are often disturbed by sudden prohibitions or deferments by the government due to deep mistrust in the functioning of these markets as very few farmers or farmer producer organizations (FPOs) trade on futures.

Chinese success on the similar platform

- China in the early 1990s started, and by 2016, it turned to be the largest player in global agri-futures contracts.
- State participation in the futures markets, No unexpected interruptions of commodities, Emphasis on choice of commodities are a few steps taken to strengthen the same.

7. <u>Using satellite imagery, Internet to arrive at farm insurance solution</u>

Key Points:

- Space entrepreneurs plan to improve the livelihood of farmers without directly working with them by deploying a combination of satellite imagery, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), and big data analytics.
- This technology can help farmers to acquire bank loans, timely and correct insurance claims and may be even ensure a good MSP (minimum support price) for their crop.
- This can be done by syncing satellite imagery-based information with ground level data and this in turn can be used to improve the livelihood of farmers
- By reducing the risks associated with India's weather dependent, subsistence farming; this idea should make it easier for the farmer to increase his income; and get agricultural loans and insurance and its timely settlement. In return the government can spend less on insurance premium subsidies and agriculture insurance companies will have less pay-out to make and it can also serve as a scientific basis for fixing MSPs.
- Researchers are pulling data from Indian and European satellites and old imageries from the U.S. Landsat and keyed in latitudes and longitudes of remote places across the country to match them up with local socioeconomic data. To this the 'mandi'-level commodity prices, potential prices, and historical rates have been synced.
- They began their pilot project in Andhra Pradesh's Srikakulam district. They randomly chose different crops with different mixes of fertilizer and water. At the end of the 2016 cropping seasons — the summer Kharif and the winter Rabi — they could predict crop yields that were 85-90% accurate and this has been now fine-tuned to 95%. Conventional or manual estimate methods are said to be less than 80% accurate.

Forecasting crop yields

- An accurate forecast of crop yields are crucial and will help the farmer and as well as all the stakeholders: the bank that lends him credit; the government that pays premiums on crop insurance and fixes MSPs; and the insurance agency that must compensate the farmer if crops fail.
- In July, the CAG identified gaps in the implementation
 of agricultural insurance scheme during the 2011–16
 period and pointed out delays in settling claims. The
 CAG report also said that the farmers did not get
 the full benefit of the ₹36,000 crore-plus subsidies
 that the Union and State governments had declared
 towards crop insurance premium.
- The tool being developed has a Google Earth-like navigable online dashboard and will be customised to be offered to end users such as district collectors, decision makers, crop insurance companies, banks, and large single farmers.



 The new Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana mandates all stakeholders to deploy technologies such as satellite remote sensing, ICT, and mobile phones to identify risks and settle farmers' claims quickly.

8. Food security: SC raps Centre, States

Context:

- According to SC judgement, the State Food Commission set up under the National Food Security Act in Haryana, has been sitting "jobless" and "without proper infrastructure".
- Reason: Due to the state government's dull response to the Act.

Other observations

- The judgment also listed nine other States viz. Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Bihar and Chhattisgarh.
- Reason: Due to their dull response to the food security law meant to help those living below the poverty line.

Directions from SC

- The SC directed the government to frame rules and designate independent officials for a grievance redressal mechanism under the Act within a year.
- It directed the states to set up State Food Commissions and vigilance committees in every state by the end of the year and set up a social audit machinery.

9. Food for action: on food security in India

Context:

- National Food Security Act, 2013, has met with prolonged political indifference
- Supreme Court directed Centre to ensure that States implement key aspects of the progressive law

Key Aspects:

- Directives in the Swaraj Abhiyan case underscore that several State governments have not met key requirements in the legislation.
- Sections 14, 15 and 16, require the setting up of a grievance redress mechanism and a State Food Commission with responsibility to monitor the implementation of the law
- Article 256, which casts a responsibility on the States and the Union to ensure compliance with laws made by Parliament, also provides the remedy, as it can be invoked by the Centre to set things right.
- NFSA, which is vital for social security through the Public Distribution System and child welfare schemes, has suffered due to a lack of political will.

Way forward

- Food security through the principle of universal access, though not every citizen would need it
- An in-built mechanisms to allow for the entry of new households that suddenly find themselves in financial distress, while others can exit it based on changed

circumstances.

- Full-fledged, independent machinery in the form of a Food Commission, and district-level grievance redress, besides social audits. All these are provided for under the Act, but have been ignored
- Modernisation of the PDS, could incorporate dynamic features to the supply of subsidised food to those who need it, and eliminate deficiencies and fraud.

10. Survey backs U.P. model on farm loan waivers

In news:

• The Economic Survey assumes that other States will follow Uttar Pradesh's example and waive farm loans, taking the full waiver amount to ₹2.2-2.7 lakh crore.

Survey Observations:

- Only a few States have the fiscal space for such waivers, and so most will have to either cut expenditure or increase taxes
- The total impact of waivers could be to lower demand by as much as 0.7% of the GDP.
- Increase the net wealth of farm households: loan waivers are assumed to increase aggregate income by 28%, consumption is estimated to increase by 7% or about ₹55,000 crore.
- Andhra Pradesh, U.P, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh have no fiscal room to waive farm loans, States such as Maharashtra, West Begal, Karnataka and Gujarat have ample space.

Waiver and the Four effects:

- The Survey says the waivers will have four effects on aggregate demand:
- On private consumption impact via increases in private sector net wealth,
- Public sector impact via changes in government expenditure/taxes,
- Crowding out impact via higher borrowings by State governments, and
- Crowding in impact via higher credit availability as bank NPAs fall.



ART AND CULTURE

1. State gets cultural policy

Context:

 The Karnataka State Cabinet approved a cultural policy for the State, perhaps the first in India to have such a comprehensive policy, aimed at promoting Kannada culture and language.

Major focus areas of policy:

- Aim at formulating measures to curb the tendency of banning Kannada books for trivial reasons
- Decentralization of the Department of Kannada and Culture
- Formation of search committees to select chairpersons to various academies and authorities to de-politicise appointments
- · Establishment of art galleries in every district
- Formulation of separate programmes to help artistes in distress
- Establishment of separate Bayalata, Sugama Sangeeta and Nritya academies, and giving priority to local cinema culture.

Historical facts:

- The plan to have a cultural policy was first envisaged during the Janata Dal government in 1996.
- A Cabinet sub-committee headed by H.K. Patil, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, studied the recommendations, including the financial implications of implementing it. After the sub-committee showed the green signal, the Cabinet approved it.



ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. 5 chemicals banned in firecrackers

Prohibition of toxic chemicals:

- The Supreme Court has prohibited the use of five chemicals, in the manufacture of firecrackers.
- These chemicals are labelled as toxic by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).
- Prohibited Chemicals: antimony, lithium, mercury, arsenic and lead.

2. <u>Heat in South Asia could exceed survivable levels by</u> 2100, says study

Context:

- According to a study, South Asia could see humid heat rise beyond survivable levels by century's end if nothing is done to halt global warming.
- The densely populated farming regions of South Asia could fare the worst.
- Why: because workers are exposed to heat with little opportunity for escape into air-conditioned environments.
- The Study is published in the journal: Science Advances.
- The study is to look not just at temperatures, but at the forecast of "wet-bulb temperature", which combines temperature, humidity and the human body's ability to cool down in response.
- The survivability threshold is considered to be 35°C, or 95°F.

3. Water conservation scheme a big success

Jal Swavalamban Abhiyan (JSA)

- · It is a programme of Rajasthan Government
- It has turned out to be a success in Pratapgarh district
- In the district
- (1) The groundwater table has increased.
- (2) Green agricultural fields have expanded and
- (3) No tankers with drinking water had to be sent to as many as 94 villages this year.

NGT hails efforts

- The National Green Tribunal lauded the efforts made under the programme.
- The NGT's Bhopal declaration has described the JSA as a massive climate change adaptation programme
- The JSA is praised as an initiative which would make every village of the State self-reliant in water by using scientific tools for rejuvenating traditional water bodies

4. A gathering crisis: the need for groundwater regulation

Context:

- Urgent measures are necessary to address the water crisis in India
- While the crisis is often discussed, law and policy measures to address it remain insufficient

Why?

- Primary source of domestic water and irrigation is groundwater but the media and policymakers still focussing on surface water.
- This needs to change as water tables have been falling rapidly in many parts of the country, and use exceeds replenishment.

Reasons for excessive use of groundwater

- Legal framework governing access to the resource
- Landowner have the right to access groundwater found under their land, and they see groundwater as their own and as a resource they can exploit without considering the need to protect and replenish it since there are no immediate consequences for overexploiting it.
- Access to a source of groundwater has become a source of power and economic gain
- With the propagation of mechanical pumps, big landowners to sell water to others for economic gain

Problems with the current framework:

- Mechanical pumping led to the situation that recharge could not keep pace with use.
- 1970 model Bill focused on State-level control over new, additional uses of groundwater but did not address the iniquitous regime giving landowners unlimited control over groundwater.
- The States that have groundwater legislation based on the model Bill,1970 failed to address the problem of falling water tables due to increasing use
- There is no provision to protect and conserve groundwater at the aguifer level.
- It fails to give gram sabhas and panchayats a prevailing say in the regulation and the framework remains mostly top-down and is incapable of addressing local situations adequately.
- Planning Commission and Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation recognised that present legal regime has failed to address the ground water crisis.
- The result is the Groundwater (Sustainable Management) Bill, 2017



Groundwater (Sustainable Management) Bill, 2017

- Proposes a different regulatory framework
- Based on the recognition of the unitary nature of water, the need for decentralised control over groundwater and the necessity to protect it at aquifer level
- Recognition that water is a public trust (groundwater is a common pool resource), the recognition of the fundamental right to water and the introduction of protection principles, including the precautionary principle, that are currently absent from water legislation.
- Builds on the decentralisation mandate that is already enshrined in general legislation but has not been implemented effectively as far as groundwater is concerned and
- Seeks to give regulatory control over groundwater to local users.

5. Not everything labelled 'organic' passes muster, finds study

Context:

- Traces of new-generation chemical pesticides found in fruits and vegetables branded as 'organic'
- Samples were tested by Kerala Agricultural University.
- Organic produce is often sold at higher prices than conventional greens at separate counter in hypermarkets

In news:

 The report from Pesticide Residue Research & Analytical Laboratory (PRRAL) coming under the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) contains test results of vegetables, fruits, spices and condiments sampled from public markets, including hypermarkets, across the districts in Kerala, during the period from April to June 2017.

For Example:

- A sample of 'organic' labelled green capsicum purchased on June 16, 2017 from a prominent hypermarket in Ernakulam was found contaminated, with the presence of seven chemical pesticides including five insecticides: acetamiprid (1.12 parts per million), clothianidin (0.72 ppm), imidacloprid (0.69 ppm), buprofezin (0.12 ppm), acephate (1.78 ppm) and two fungicides, tebuconazole (0.84 ppm) and iprovalicarb (0.22 ppm).
- Baji chilli marked "pesticide-free" contained three new-generation insecticides: acetamiprid, metalaxyl and chlorantraniliprole.

New equipment used

 Detection of a number of new generation pesticides even up to trace levels of parts per billion (nanogram/ Kg), which were not previously reported, has now become possible with a new liquid Chromatograph-Mass Spectrometer (LC-MS/MS) apparatus imported from the US.

Inference:

 The results indicated regular spraying of a cocktail of new generation insecticides and fungicides at close intervals to protect the crop in farms and polyhouses in other States.

6. Lowly algae key to rise of complex life: study

In News:

- Scientists have solved the mystery of how the complex life forms appeared on the earth.
- Researchers led by the Australian National University (ANU) analysed ancient sedimentary rocks from central Australia, finding that the evolution of animals began with the rise of algae 650 million years ago.
- Rise of algae triggered one of the most profound ecological revolutions in the earth's history, without which humans and other animals would not exist.

Snowball Earth:

- The earth was frozen over for 50 million years.
- Huge glaciers ground entire mountain ranges to powder that released nutrients, and when the snow melted during extreme global heating event rivers washed torrents of nutrients into the ocean.
- It was the transition from oceans being dominated by bacteria to a world inhabited by more complex life.
- These large and nutritious organisms at the base of the food web provided the burst of energy required for the evolution of complex ecosystems, where increasingly large and complex animals, including humans, could thrive on the earth.

7. N. Bhupathi, a frog with the face of a pig

In News:

- Nasikabatrachus bhupathi, a frog with the face of a pig
- Indian scientists have discovered a new species of frog that has a snout-shaped nose, just like a pig's.
- The soiled-dwelling species, discovered by scientists from the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad, has been named after the Indian herpetologist S. Bhupathy.
- <u>Location:</u> Bhupathy's purple frog inhabits the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats, near the Srivilliputhur Grizzled Giant Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu.

Evidence in favor of continental drift theory:

- The discovery is significant as it constitutes additional evidence in favour of the theory of continental drift.
- The Purple frog is an inhabitant of Seychelles, and the discovery of Bhupathy's purple frog in India suggests that the Indian subcontinent was part of the ancient landmass of Gondwana before splitting from Seychelles 65 million years ago.



'Bonnet monkey may soon be endangered'

 Researchers have found that the common bonnet monkey of South India may soon become an 'endangered' species.

 They say the distributional range of this monkey is shrinking in eastern Maharashtra, northern parts of Karnataka, and western Telangana because of the slow incursion of the larger, more aggressive rhesus monkey from the northern region.

8. The return of the Irrawaddy dolphin

Context:

- After 30 years of removal of illegal prawn enclosures, endangered dolphins spotted back in the Chilka.
- This move by the Chilika Development Authority's (CDA) has resulted to unhindered movement of the dolphins.
- CDA cleared almost 4,000 hectare of encroachment from a portion of the lake.
- Satellite imageries found 14,590 hectare of the lagoon under manmade gheries (enclosures) for illegal prawn cultivation.

Statistics

- The total population of these dolphins in the world is estimated to be less than 7,500. Bangladesh reports the highest count with 6400.
- The population in Chilka is considered to be the highest single lagoonal.



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Turmeric can be used to fight cancer in children, find U.S. scientists

In news:

- Scientists in the US have found yet another use for curcumin, the bioactive component of turmeric that is widely used in Indian cuisine, this time to treat cancer in children.
- Nanoparticles loaded with curcumin can target and destroy neuroblastoma tumour cells. Neuroblastoma is the most common cancer in children younger than five years old.

Neuroblastoma

- The cancers start in early nerve cells and commonly form in the tissue of the adrenal glands, near the kidneys.
- They are also associated with developmental delays, hearing loss, or other disabilities even after traditional treatments have ended.
- High-risk neuroblastoma can be resistant to traditional therapy, and survival can be poor.

2. ISRO to rely on CSIR for keeping satellite clocks accurate

In News:

A step towards self-reliance:

- India's indigenously-developed global positioning system, called NavIC, will synchronise its clocks to time provided by the National Physical Laboratory, a Council of Scientific and Industrial Research body.
- Until now: the satellites on NavIC managed by the Indian Space Research Organisation — relied on the United State's GPS to ensure that the clocks aboard were working at the high-precision required in satellite-based communication.
- A memorandum was signed between the CSIR and ISRO to initiate this activity that will now require NPL to upgrade its time-keeping infrastructure and ISRO to make changes that will make NPL-provided time the default time source aboard the seven-satellite constellation.

Replacement:

- Atomic clocks aboard NavIC, more formally called the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), are foreign-made and ISRO's forthcoming satellite, IRNSS-1H, will continue using the same clocks.
- IRNSS-1H satellite is being launched as a replacement for one of the seven satellites, IRNSS-1A, which has had problems with the accuracy of its clocks.

About NavIC:

 NAVIC is an autonomous regional satellite navigation system that provides accurate real-time positioning and timing services.

- NavIC is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending up to 1500 km from its boundary, which is its primary service area.
- NAVIC will provide two levels of service, the 'standard positioning service' will be open for civilian use, and a 'restricted service' (an encrypted one) for authorized users (including military).

National Physical Laboratory (NPL):

- The National Physical Laboratory (NPL), part of the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, is host of the most accurate clocks in the country, and the only agency in India authorised to maintain Indian Standard Time (IST).
- The NPL maintains accuracy of ±20 nanoseconds through the Primary Time Scale, an ensemble of five caesium clocks and one hydrogen maser.
- The rest of the world connects to these via tele-clocks, satellite links, and Network Time Protocol services.

3. Low-cost, sensitive CO sensor from IISc

In News:

- Indian Institute of Science researchers have developed a highly sensitive nanometer-scale carbon monoxide sensor by employing an innovative fabrication technique.
- Carbon monoxide (CO) can have adverse effects on the health of people exposed to it. Hence, it becomes necessary to have good, low-cost carbon-monoxide sensors.

Working principle:

- Typically, a sensor would be a thin, current carrying plate whose resistance changes on exposure to carbon monoxide. This in turn changes the value of the current flowing through it. This change when measured indicates the level of carbon monoxide in the air.
- Most available sensors are in the micrometer range, a nanometer-sized detector would have a higher sensitivity, but the cost of manufacturing it goes up as the size decreases.

Smart cities and nano-sensors:

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has a vision of deploying such sensors in large scale for pollution monitoring in large cities like Delhi and Bengaluru.
- If the sensors are installed in all traffic intersections, we can do real time mapping of pollution hot-spots in a city. This would be an enabler in realizing smart cities.



4. Editing ourselves: On genes and ethics

Context:

- Scientists have for the first time managed to edit genes in a human embryo to repair a genetic mutation.
- · Solution to genetic mutation
- Scientists fixed a mutation that thickens the heart muscle, a condition called hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.
- The cardiac disease causes sudden death in otherwise healthy young athletes and affects about one in 500 people overall.
- It is caused by a mutation in a particular gene and a child will suffer from the condition even if it inherits only one copy of the mutated gene.

Significance of the research:

 Correcting the mutation in the gene would not only ensure that the child is healthy but it would also prevent the mutation from being passed on to future generations

Other concerns

- Though the research marks a major milestone in genome editing of embryos, it will be a long while before it becomes available as a tool to produce healthy embryos.
- Even research on embryos using federal funding is not permitted in the U.S., where the research was carried out.
- The embryos were produced with the clear intention of using them solely for research and not for implanting them in women.

Advantages of gene editing

- Several diseases can potentially be prevented by using this technique, including some cancers.
- CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing tool is safe for preventing certain hereditary disease-causing mutations, for which no other treatment is available.

<u>Issue</u>

 The main issue is the prospect of developing designer babies through gene editing.

5. Should we fear Artificial Intelligence?

Context:

 'Artificial Intelligence'and possible dangers that can come out of it

Why one must not "fear" Artificial Intelligence?

- · Such systems are actually pretty dumb
- This is because even the most intelligent systems today with artificial specific intelligence can perform one task better than any human can, but only that one task
- Any simple task that it is not specifically programmed for, such a system would find impossible to complete

Concerns related to Artificial Intelligence

(1) Jobs

- The possible negative effect of Artificial Intelligence on jobs has been a trending topic recently
- But there has been no academic or policy consensus on what the exact effect will be
- Still there can be no doubt that at least some jobs will be negatively affected by Artificial Intelligence

(2) Weapons

- The use of Artificial Intelligence in weapons leading to 'autonomous weapons' raises a number of difficult questions in international law
- A machine that has been given the ability to make life and death decisions on the battlefield can be dangerous

(3) Data Security

- The entire Artificial Intelligence ecosystem is built on the availability of great amounts of data and enhancing efficiency requires continued availability of such data
- This raises the question of where the required data comes from, and who owns and controls it

The way forward

 It is necessary to assess the practical benefits and risks associated with the increasing prevalence of Artificial Intelligence

6. <u>ISRO to develop full-fledged Earth observation</u> satellite

'Hyspex' imaging:

- A new set of future satellites called hyperspectral imaging satellites is set to add teeth to the way India is gleaned from about 600 km in space.
- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) says it plans to launch a full-fledged niche Earth observation (EO) satellite — called the Hyperspectral Imaging Satellite or HySIS — using a critical chip it has developed.
- ISRO is endeavouring to enter the domain of operational hyperspectral imaging from earth orbit with a satellite that can see in 55 spectral or colour bands from 630 km above ground.
- Application: It can be used for a range of activities from monitoring the environment, crops, looking for oil and minerals all the way up to military surveillance
 — all of which need images that show a high level of differentiation of the object or scene.
- 'Hyspex'imaging is said to enable distinct identification of objects, materials or processes on Earth by reading the spectrum for each pixel of a scene from space.
- <u>Previous attempts:</u> About a decade ago, ISRO added another EO niche with microwave or radar imaging satellites RISAT-1 and 2 that could 'see' through clouds and the dark — an important feature useful for the military and security agencies.



7. The hybrid route

Context:

 The automobile sector in India and the future of electric mobility in India

India's performance in Automobile Sector:

- India went through a radical transformation from a minor manufacturer of automobiles to the fastest growing auto-hub within a short span
- Progressive policy has led to India emerging as the fifth largest automobile manufacturing country in the world
- How: by adopting a consistent, well thought out Automotive Mission Plan 2006-2016 (AMP)

Contribution to Employment Generation:

 The auto industry provides direct and indirect employment to 32 million people with an annual turnover of nearly Rs 6,00,000 crore

How India's policy in this sector is different from that of China?

- India's has achieved success without the adoption of coercive policies for localisation of production as is done in China
- India's success is attributed to positive engagement maintained with global giants, for establishing competitive manufacturing base in India

World is now going for non-fossil fuel vehicles

- The world is still largely dependent on fossil fuels for transportation
- But there is now an increased momentum towards alternate energy sources

India's take on non-fossil fuel vehicles

- Besides the environment, India also has strategic and economic interest in shifting away from fossil fuels
- Challenge: The challenge ahead is not only on how to encourage electric automobiles but also to take the industry forward without losing India's current competitive advantage

Different types of Electric vehicles

- Pure electric vehicles (BEVs) that use energy stored in batteries obtained from the grid
- Hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs), plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) and fuel cell vehicles (FCVs)

Global experience in Electric mobility sector

- Global experience indicates that most countries have adopted a technology-neutral approach
- And supported the full range of electric vehicle technologies till such time that they attained market acceptability

The way forward

 The government should push more aggressively for the BEV option for of two-wheelers and threewheelers

- And support the full range of electric technologies for other vehicle segments with a clear roadmap for the evolution towards FCVs.
- Hopefully, to reduce fossil fuel consumption, lower pollution and encourage electric mobility, a more holistic approach will be adopted by the government.

8. <u>Internet of Things-enabled ultrasound scans: IIT</u> <u>Hyderabad</u>

In News:

- A team of researchers from IIT Hyderabad has been working to use the Internet of Things (IoT) to accurately diagnose kidney and liver disorders with the help of ultrasound scanning devices.
- The technology can identify kidney stones and cysts and also grade a "fatty liver" classification. Even it can differentiate between cysts and stones in the kidney images.

<u>Disadvantages of using Internet-enabled scanning</u> <u>systems:</u>

- In the traditional way of processing data, after the patient is scanned, a radiologist usually picks out the most relevant portions or even captures screenshots and makes these available for diagnosis by the specialist.
- In the IoT-enabled remote scanning, if the scans are uploaded to the cloud without being first analysed, there is a possibility that the doctor sees a huge amount of data, which they may find difficult to interpret.
- Preliminary classification of images is a must in case of Internet enabled scanning system.

Scientists gene-edit piglets, bringing transplants to humans closer

In News:

 Scientists have effectively altered the hereditary (genetic) code of piglets to evacuate lethargic viral contaminations.

A major Breakthrough:

- This could eventually pave the way for animal-tohuman organ transplants.
- Save lives by reducing organ donor waiting lists that have risen over the years.
- <u>Key Fact:</u> 117,000 people on the U.S. transplant waiting list alone and according to official data, 22 people die each day waiting for an organ.
- People would already be able to get pig heart valves and pancreases.

Objective of xenotransplantation stays some way off:

 Scientists still need to alter pig genes to abstain from setting off a human resistant framework response and anticipate poisonous connections in blood.

Meaning of xenotransplantation:

 the process of grafting or transplanting organs or tissues between members of different species.



10. Getting charged up

Context:

India's 'ambitious electric vehicles target'

Government's announcements:

- The Government has recently announced that only electric vehicles (EVs) will be sold in India from 2030
- The current National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) has set a sales target of only 5-7 million EVs and hybrid electric vehicles annually by 2020

Requirements:

- The Indian automobile market is expected to increase to an annual sales figure of around 23 million by 2030
- Replacing these with EVs would require a significant push as far as vehicle-charging infrastructure and batteries are concerned
- Technical Requirement: The transition would require a battery capacity of about 400 GWh (gigawatt hours) each year
- It is equivalent to increasing the current global EV battery production by a factor of five, just to cater to the Indian EV market

Can this target be achieved by imports?

- The annual EV battery market is expected to be around \$30-55 billion
- India cannot afford to fulfil the demand solely through imports

Batteries used:

- Variants of lithium-ion batteries such as lithiumtitanate, lithium-cobalt, and lithium-sulphurare predominantly used in electric vehicles
- Highlights of Study by Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)
- According to a study on India's critical non-fuel minerals by the CEEW, manufacturing lithium-ion batteries would require critical minerals
- These minerals includes cobalt, graphite, lithium and phosphate
- · Among them, lithium is of particular importance

Issues with lithium Prices

- 95% of global lithium production comes from Argentina, Australia, Chile and China
- The recent demand surge in the electric mobility market has already resulted in a twofold increase in lithium prices
- It is estimated by the CEEW that India would require about 40,000 tonnes of lithium to manufacture EV batteries in 2030
- It is important that India secure mineral supplies for its domestic industry by acquisition of overseas assets such as mineral reserves and the associated production

The Way forward:

- There is a need to formulate policies which can encourage domestic public and private mining companies to invest in overseas lithium mining assets
- Also, India must focus on creating a vibrant battery research and development ecosystem domestically
- Research should focus on developing alternative technologies containing minerals with low supply risks
- And battery recycling techniques to recover associated minerals and materials
- Recycling lithium batteries will significantly reduce the burden in procuring fresh resources

11. <u>In a scientific first, disease gene 'edited' in human embryos</u>

Context:

Repairing of Gene

- Scientists in the United States have repaired a diseasecausing mutation in the DNA of early-stage human embryos
- Why Important: This is an important step in Engineering babies free of inherited disorders
- The team successfully uses the CRISPR "gene editing" tool in viable embryos
- This research is hailed by experts around the world

Basic Information:

- Clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR) are segments of prokaryotic DNA containing short, repetitive base sequences
- These play a key role in a bacterial defence system, and form the basis of a genome editing technology known as CRISPR/Cas9 that allows permanent modification of

12. Cheaper plastics, 36% lighter, developed

Context:

- Developed: composite plastics that are up to 36% lighter than those being used
- Who? Researchers from the National Institute of Technology, Karnataka, and the New York University, U.S.

Technical details:

- Incorporated hollow microspheres into high density polyethylene (HDPE) which is the most commonly moulded plastic product.
- Density of the material was brought down from by nearly half. The end material was found to have a significantly greater ability to absorb energy.

Application:

- Production of more light-weight material and the reduced use of plastics.
- In cars and planes, for instance, the reduction in weight significantly improves fuel efficiency.



13. Claims on Bt cotton need to be probed: Panel

Context:

- Highlights of report released by Standing Committee on Science and Technology (Parliamentary panel) headed by Congress MP Renuka Chowdhury
- Bt Cotton production: Government agencies have portrayed "a rosy picture" on Bt Cotton which is far removed from the truth.
- Main highlight: "India's cotton yields increased by 69% in the five years (2000-2005) when Bt Cotton was less than 6% of total cotton area, but by only 10% in the 10 years from 2005-2015 when Bt Cotton grew to 94% of the total cotton area,"
- Key Fact: The committee noted that 20 years after introduction of GM crops in 1996, only six countries continue to account for over 90 % of all GM crop area globally including U.S., Brazil, Argentina, Canada, China and India.

Contamination of nearby crops:

- The herbicide-tolerant gene may escape through pollen into nearby farm and fields, to another GM or non-GM crop.
- So if we allow GM crops in the midst of our indigenous crops there is possibility of contamination.
- No GM crop should be introduced, unless bio-safety and socio-economic desirability studies are done through a participatory, independent and transparent process.

14. A new score in waste management

Key Points:

- Scientists from CSIR have been able to produce ethanol from discarded cotton-stalks by a combination of chemical and biological techniques. India has about 9.4 million hectares under cotton cultivation and each hectare generates around 2 million tonnes of cotton stalk wastes.
- The cotton stalks were first treated with an acid, alkali and different enzymes to help breakdown the complex organic polymers. Agro-residues are generally tough in nature and it requires chemical pretreatment to help break down the complex structure of the stalk.
- The acid aids in removal of hemicellulose which a polymer of the cell wall and the alkali extracts lignin which is a binding matrix in the cell wall made up of complex phenolic. These treatments expose cellulose to the action of enzymes. By using enzymes, the cellulose was further treated to convert it into glucose.

Fermentation

 To convert the glucose into ethanol, fermentation using a novel yeast strain was carried out. Researchers isolated the yeast-Saccharomycescerevisiae-RRP-03N, from a rotting wild fruit found in the Silent Valley National Park in Palakkad, Kerala.

- The yeast displayed a glucose conversion efficiency of 76% and the entire glucose was consumed by the yeast in just 24 hours and was converted into alcohol. This performance is superior to any other organism reported for fermentation of cotton stalk.
- The final alcohol thus obtained can be converted to fuel grade bioethanol (>99% purity) after distillation and dehydration using molecular sieves.

Bioethanol

- Bioethanol has many advantages over conventional fuels as it comes from a renewable source. It is now mandatory to blend 10% ethanol with petrol.
- Bioethanol that is presently in use is obtained via fermentation of molasses which is a by-product of sugar production and it has food value.
- Most of this first generation ethanol finds its way into consumer applications, primarily as liquor/alcohol.
 By converting such agro-residues to ethanol we can reduce the food vs fuel competition.

15. <u>Ocean forecasting system for Madagascar and Mozambique</u>

In News:

- The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) of the Ministry of Earth Sciences has inaugurated the Ocean Forecasting System for Comoros, Madagascar, and Mozambique
- It was done at the third Ministerial Meeting of Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Asia and Africa (RIMES)
- The meeting was held at Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
- The Ministerial council and the WMO lauded and placed on record the initiatives of INCOIS/India in providing the ocean forecast and early warning services to the Indian Ocean countries

Sharing the benefits:

- The ocean forecast and early warming information on high wave, currents, winds, tides, sub-surface ocean conditions cater to users like
- · Fishermen,
- Coastal population,
- Tourism sector,
- · Coastal defense officials,
- Marine police,
- Port authorities,
- Research institutions and offshore industries of these countries
- The system would offer oil spill advisory services, high wave alerts, port warnings, forecast along the ship routes in addition to tsunami and storm surge warnings and help in search and rescue operations.



16. IRNSS-1H set to launch on Thursday

In News:

Background Information:

- 2013 2016: ISRO put up seven IRNSS satellites to form the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System, since called NavIC or Navigation with Indian Constellation.
- NavIC is the Indian regional version similar to the US Global Positioning System GPS. It will drive all positionbased activities on ground, sea and air by giving nearaccurate location details of persons or objects. It will be put to military, commercial and common everyday uses.
- Mid-2016: all three rubidium atomic clocks on IRNSS-1A failed.
- Now, ISRO is all set to launch country's eighth regional navigation satellite-IRNSS-1H.
- IRNSS-1H is being sent to space to back-up and mostly replace — the functions of India's first navigation satellite IRNSS-1A.

17. U.S. approves first gene therapy for cancer

In News:

- The United States approved the first gene therapy in the nation— a treatment that uses a patient's own immune cells to fight childhood leukaemia.
- The treatment is made by Novartis and is called Kymriah (tisagenlecleucel).
- This type of immunotherapy, known as a CAR-T cell therapy.
- It was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for children and young adult patients up to age 25 with a form of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia.

How the treatment works?

- It uses a patient's own immune cells, called T-cells, along with white blood cells.
- These cells are removed from a patient, sent to a lab, and encoded with a viral vector, reprogrammed, and returned to the patient.

Basic information:

What is Gene Therapy?

- Gene therapy is an experimental technique that uses genes to treat or prevent disease.
- In the future, this technique may allow doctors to treat a disorder by inserting a gene into a patient's cells instead of using drugs or surgery.
- Researchers are testing several approaches to gene therapy, including:
- Replacing a mutated gene that causes disease with a healthy copy of the gene.
- Inactivating, or "knocking out," a mutated gene that is functioning improperly.
- Introducing a new gene into the body to help fight a disease.

- Although gene therapy is a promising treatment option for a number of diseases (including inherited disorders, some types of cancer, and certain viral infections), the technique remains risky and is still under study to make sure that it will be safe and effective.
- Gene therapy is currently only being tested for the treatment of diseases that have no other cures.



HEALTH ISSUES

1. <u>8.8 million blind in India in 2015, says study in Lancet</u>

In news:

- Highlights of a Study by the Lancet Global Health journal
- According to the study, 8.8 million people in India were found to be blind in 2015
- And another 47.7 million people had moderate and severe vision impairment

Level of Problem around the world

- According to the study, there are an estimated 36 million people worldwide, who are blind and this is set to increase to almost 115 million people by 2050
- This increase will be seen in developing countries in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa

Problem trend:

- The rates of blindness and vision impairment have decreased in recent years
- The number of cases has risen as the world population has aged.

2. <u>Pfizer gets Indian pneumonia vaccine patent in blow</u> to aid group, Panacea

In News:

 India has granted Pfizer Inc. a patent for its powerful pneumonia vaccine Prevenar 13.

Consequence of the decision:

- Blow to some health groups that said this would put the treatment out of reach of thousands in poorer nations.
- The decision by India's patent office bars other companies from making cheaper copies of the vaccine and allows Pfizer to exclusively sell it in India until 2026.
- The patent grant means Indian companies won't be able to make the vaccine for domestic use, or exports.
- The decision also has international implications, as several poorer nations rely on India's robust drugs industry to supply cheaper copies of medicines and vaccines.

Key Fact:

- Pfizer's vaccine protects children and adults from 13 types of pneumococcal bacteria, and a full vaccination course costs about \$170 on India's private market.
- India started giving out the vaccine for free under its national immunisation program earlier this year, but the rollout like that of most vaccines in the program, is in phases, so only about 2.1 million of the 25 million eligible people in the country will get it this year.

 India has the world's largest number of pneumonia cases, a lung disease that kills nearly a million children a year globally.

3. It's time to focus on the toxic air we breathe

Context:

- · Niti Aayog released the draft National Energy Policy.
- Several public policy research and civil society organisations criticised the policy from various standpoints.

Public health and growth

- It ignores is public health, especially in the context of the energy mix envisaged under the NITI Ambition Scenario
- Ambition Scenario is a tool to arrive at a range of possible energy futures for the energy sector till 2040.
- National Health Policy of 2017 views reducing air pollution as vital to India's health trajectory.
- However, the National Energy Policy neither reflects nor supports the commitment outlined by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Ministry

Air pollution menace

- WHO reports that air pollution is the number one environmental health risk. In 2012, about 3 million premature deaths were attributable to ambient air pollution.
- Children are most affected by air pollution and will be the primary beneficiaries of policies to reduce fossil fuel emissions.
- Research has also established links between public health and a nation's economic growth.
- Joint study by the World Bank and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation found that the aggregate cost of premature deaths due to air pollution was more than \$5 trillion worldwide in 2013 alone.
- In East and South Asia, welfare losses related to air pollution were about 7.5% of GDP.

WHO's Health Indicators of Sustainable Energy

- It lays out a few core and expanded indicators that can help monitor the progress of a nation's energy policy.
- The core indicators address issues related to health equity where health impact assessments become an integral part of energy policy design and implementation.
- It stress on the need to develop baseline data by generating emission inventories and source apportionment of urban air pollution that can inform mitigation and intervention policies.



Way forward

- National Energy Policy have to strive to minimise the unavoidable health impacts of energy production, and their associated health costs, especially given the policy's stated objectives of sustainability and economic growth.
- It should include a health impact assessment framework to weigh the health hazards and health costs associated with the entire life cycle of existing and future energy projects and technologies
- Ensure that policies directed at energy security are compatible with public health goals.

4. North States reel under swine flu

In News:

 States worst-hit by swine flu this year: Gujarat (highest with 242 deaths), Rajasthan, Punjab and Delhi

Basic Information:

- Swine influenza
- Swine influenza, also called pig influenza, swine flu, hog flu and pig flu, is an infection caused by any one of several types of swine influenza viruses. Swine influenza virus (SIV) or swine-origin influenza virus (S-OIV) is any strain of the influenza family of viruses that is endemic in pigs.

The swine flu virus (H1N1):

- Influenza A (H1N1) virus is the subtype of influenza A virus that is the most common cause of human influenza.
- It is an orthomyxovirus that contains the glycoproteins haemagglutinin and neuraminidase. For this reason, they are described as H1N1, H1N2 etc. depending on the type of H or N antigens they express with metabolic synergy. Haemagglutinin causes red blood cells to clump together and binds the virus to the infected cell. Neuraminidase is a type of glycoside hydrolase enzyme which helps to move the virus particles through the infected cell and assist in budding from the host cells.
- Some strains of H1N1 are endemic in humans and cause a small fraction of all influenza-like illness and a small fraction of all seasonal influenza. Other strains of H1N1 are endemic in pigs (swine influenza) and in birds (avian influenza).

Orthomyxoviruses

 The Orthomyxoviruses are a family of RNA viruses that includes seven genera: Influenza virus A, Influenza virus B, Influenza virus C, Influenza virus D, Isavirus, Thogotovirus and Quaranjavirus.

Endemic

 Endemism is the ecological state of a species being unique to a defined geographic location, such as an island, nation, country or other defined zone, or habitat type; organisms that are indigenous to a place are not endemic to it if they are also found elsewhere.

Pandemic:

 A pandemic is an epidemic of infectious disease that has spread through human populations across a large region; for instance multiple continents, or even worldwide.

Encephalitis, its causes, prevention and prevalence in India, explained

Context:

 No less than 60 children have lost their lives over the most recent five-days at the state-run Baba Raghav Das Medical College Hospital in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh because of different reasons, among them diseases emerging out of encephalitis.

What is encephalitis?

- Encephalitis is a potentially life-threatening but rare disease causing "acute inflammation" of the brain.
- Meaning of Acute: when a disease appears abruptly and grows at a fast pace.
- A person afflicted with encephalitis requires serious medical attention.

What are the causes of encephalitis?

- The disease can occur in people of all ages, but children and the elderly are more at risk of being afflicted with the disease.
- The usual cause of the rare disease is either a viral infection.
- Sometimes it is caused when the brain's own immune system mistakenly attacks brain tissue.
- In rare cases, encephalitis is caused due to bacterial infection, parasites, or may be prompted from other infectious diseases.
- · It is a non-communicable disease.

What is Japanese encephalitis?

- One of the most common form of viral encephalitis in Asia is the Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV), caused by mosquito-borne flavivirus.
- The disease belongs to the same genus as dengue, yellow and West Nile viruses.
- JEV primarily affects children as most adults tend to attain natural immunity from the disease, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

How can the disease be prevented?

- There are several vaccinations that are effective in preventing the disease, including vaccines for measles, mumps, rubella
- People should also use proper clothing to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes in mosquito-infested areas.

Is the disease prevalent in India? How severe is it?

- Japanese Encephalitis is recognised as the leading cause of the disease in India.
- <u>Region affected:</u> West Bengal, Uttar Praesh, Assam, Bihar, Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Pondicherry



and Karnataka.

 Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are two states, which have seen the most number of encephalitis cases in recent years.;

 The Uttar Pradesh government in May this year launched a vaccination campaign in 38 sensitive districts of the state to combat the JE virus.

6. Centre set to roll out new treatment for encephalitis

Context:

 Gorakhpur incident: several children died of encephalitis-related complications at the Baba Raghav Das (BRD) Medical College.

In news:

- The Centre is looking to introduce a new drug, traditionally used for acne, to deal with the seasonal outbreaks of acute encephalitis.
- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recommended the drug as a standard treatment for treating patients afflicted with the Japanese encephalitis (JE) virus.
- In 2008, researchers at the National Brain Research Centre (NBRC), Manesar found that Minocycline an antibiotic typically used to treat severe acne surprisingly seemed to cure rats infected with the JE virus.
- <u>Drawback:</u> medicine use reduced hospital stay but didn't significantly improve overall mortality.



INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

INDIA-U.S

1. <u>Indian government cuts down on US lobbying to lowest in 7 years</u>

In news:

- The Indian government has slashed its expenses towards lobbying in the US with a total payment of USD 120,000 to its registered lobbyist firm in the second quarter of 2017 — the first cut in nearly seven years.
- The disclosure has been made by BGR Government Affairs, which lobbied on behalf of Republic of India on issues relating to "bilateral US-India relations.

Basic Information:

Lobbying

- Lobbying is a communication process used by members of a pressure group for persuasion.
- Lobbying is used to influence governmental policy process.
- It also acts as an instrument that links citizens and decision-makers.
- Lobbying takes place when a few members of pressure groups loiter in the corridors of power with a view to securing an opportunity to interact with legislators and to influence the decisions of the policy makers.

Pros of lobbying:

- They use a democratic process.
- · Check the power of majorities.
- · They have the ability to motivate legislators.
- Allow for better representation of interests.
- Provide positive solutions.
- They serve as an avenue for political involvement.
- · Ensure an outspread dispersal of expenses

Cons of lobbying:

- They would often seek for the minority of people.
- They only have one track in mind.
- · They are only effective for themselves.
- · They would commit serious crimes
- They lead to "hyperpluralism."

2. Trump offers India a role in Afghanistan

In News:

New U.S. strategy for South Asia:

- · unveiled by President Donald Trump
- U.S. commits troops in Afghanistan for an openended period of time.
- Policy sets stage for a new wave of U.S. offensive against Islamist forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

India's role:

- Trump urged India to play a larger role in providing economic and development assistance to the wartorn Afghanistan.
- Put forward a proposal for India playing a bigger role in the war-torn country to its trade surplus with the United States.

Key support:

- America would no longer tolerate Pakistan's policy of harbouring terrorists.
- India is the ninth biggest trading partner of the U.S. and India had a trade surplus of around \$26 billion with the U.S. in goods trade alone last year.

3. The Trump discontinuity

Context:

· New South Asian policy unveiled by US President

Key points:

- Trump's new Afghan strategy could be a gamechanger for South Asia.
- For Delhi it is all about seizing the opportunity to raise India's profile in Afghanistan.
- There is an opportunity for India in President Donald Trump's new assertive policy but skeptics in Delhi are doubtful if Washington has the political will to carry through the promised pressure on Pakistan to stop hosting terror sanctuaries on its soil.
- India with respect to Afghanistan ought to do more despite its significant efforts in the past to promote economic reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Shift in Washington's thinking

- The Bush Administration's- was expansive towards India in the Afghan strategy but cautioned against too large a role in Afghanistan.
- It invested enormous political capital in getting the world to lift a four decades-old nuclear blockade (Pakistan) against Delhi.
- The Obama Administration began with the intention that the answer to Afghanistan is in promoting a resolution of Pakistan's Kashmir dispute with India.



- Consequently Indian diplomacy must necessarily keep its eyes open for a return of these familiar themes in the US approach to Pakistan.
- Therefore positive Indian diplomatic approach should involve economic, security and diplomatic elements.

Role of Pakistan

- Despite the China card against the US, Pakistan is highly conscious of the dangers of being treated as a rogue state by the West.
- Pakistan displays dead silence in response to the Trump speech which suggests that Rawalpindi has chosen to avoid a public argument with Washington.
- The Pakistan Army will try and find ways to counter Trump's New South Asian Policy but it will not be easy for Pakistan to abandon its investments in crossborder terror.
- Only gate presently open for Rawalpindi is to offer some cooperation in countering terror and make new promises to bring the Taliban to the table.
- But it will urge US pressure on India to start talks on Kashmir at the backend.

4. Welcome US terror tag for Hizbul Mujahideen: MEA

Context:

 United State designated Hizbul Mujahideen as a foreign terrorist organization.

In news:

- India has welcomed this move.
- The move reflects the joint commitment of India and the US to firmly deal with terrorism in all its forms and manifestation.
- Pakistan stance: Pakistan which calls Hizbul a group of freedom fighters.
- India should essentially ramp up its economic diplomacy in Afghanistan to bring immediate benefits to Kabul amongst the deteriorating conditions in the country. Delhi must step up security cooperation with Afghanistan.
- India must offer training of its police and armed forces and intelligence sharing.
- On the diplomatic front, India must counter the emerging argument that Trump's new approach will intensify the "Indo-Pak rivalry" in Afghanistan and the old one that Kashmir holds the key to peace in Afghanistan.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi had articulated this vision in an address to the Afghan parliament that Delhi must remind the world of India's commitment to regional cooperation with Afghanistan and Pakistan, in an atmosphere free of terrorism.

Way forward:

 Trump's new Afghan strategy could be a potential game-changer for South Asia or a brief exception to the familiar pattern of US-Pak relations. While comprehending the potential shadow between Trump's words and deeds, Delhi needs to activate its own activism to stimulate positive outcomes in Afghanistan.

INDIA-SOMALIA

Somalia signs pact on convicts

In news:

- India and Somalia signed an agreement for transfer of sentenced convicts.
- The new agreement bids to open a new front for collaboration in anti-piracy operation in Eastern Africa.

Significance:

- The collaboration between two sides will be significant due to the incidents of piracy that have affected Indian interests in the Indian Ocean region near the Horn of Africa.
- India has in recent years extended development assistance to Somalia which has included mini buses to the war-battered country.

INDIA-NEPAL

1. Pressure on Nepal over Doklam standoff

Context:

- Prime Minister of Nepal Sher Bahadur Deuba, upcoming visit to Delhi.
- Visit is likely to highlight Nepal's position on bilateral issues between India and China.
- 15th meeting of foreign ministers of the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation):
- The Nepali Prime Minister's visit will be preceded by a visit of External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj who will visit Kathmandu to participate in the 15th meeting of foreign ministers of the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) on August 10.
- India has announced that the visit will have a bilateral component.

Basic information:

BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation)

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is an international organisation involving a group of countries in South Asia and South East Asia.
- These are: Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan and Nepal. The BIMSTEC states are among the countries dependent on the Bay of Bengal.



- BIMSTEC has Fourteen priority sectors cover all areas of co-operation. Six priority sectors of co-operation were identified at the 2nd Ministerial Meeting in Dhaka on 19 November 1998. They include the following:
- · Trade and Investment, led by Bangladesh
- Transport and Communication, led by India
- · Energy, led by Myanmar
- · Tourism, led by India
- · Technology, led by Sri Lanka
- · Fisheries, led by Thailand
- After the 8th Ministerial Meeting in Dhaka on 18–19
 December 2005, a number of new areas of co operation emerged. The number of priority sectors
 of co-operation increased from 6 to 14. The 7 new
 sectors were discussed in the 1st BIMSTEC Summit
 and there has been various activities to enhance those
 co-operations ever since. The sectors are as follows,
- · Agriculture, led by Myanmar
- · Public Health, led by Thailand
- · Poverty Alleviation, led by Nepal
- Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime, led by India
- Environment and Natural Disaster Management, led by India
- Culture, led by Bhutan
- · People to People contact, led by Thailand
- · Climate change, led by Bangladesh

2. Repair and recover

Context:

 Nepal's Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba to visit India.

Key points:

- Nepal's PM Deuba's five-day visit to be seen as an opportunity for India to take a relook on the diplomatic ties between the countries.
- Nepal-India relations have been sinusoidal for decades, however the two Modi visits did not help in restoration.
- India continues to be seen in Nepal as the interfering Big Brother, who "micromanages" the country's politics and installs puppet governments.
- If anything, anti-India sentiment was strengthened by the The 2015 Great Blockade by the Madhesis was seen to have Delhi's tacit support and the end result was strengthening of anti India sentiment. The quest of their demand lies in greater representation in the Nepal Parliament.
- But then China poured money into Nepal for several infrastructure projects, and sewed up trade and transit deals during the same period.
- Secondly, the Mahakali Multipurpose Project Daube signed when he was PM in 1996 but no progress seen till present.

 Thirdly the consequences of the November 2016 demonetization also impacted Nepali traders and businessmen.

Way forward:

- New Delhi should comfort Deuba's first foreign visit.
- MoUs and other agreements to be signed should project that India is a friend, even in the absence of China.
- India's challenge will be to persuade both the premier and Nepal that India can really keep out of the country's internal affairs.

3. Rebooting India-Nepal ties

Context:

- Indian interventionism in Nepal having backfired, the Nepal PM's visit is an opportunity to raise the level of bilateral ties
- India's interest to secure its own neighbourhood, and that can only be through letting national politics and governance of the smaller neighbours evolve without interference.

India's Nepal policy

- India played a valued role in ending the Maoist insurgency in 2006, but the period thereafter was marked by escalating micro-meddling in Nepal's internal affairs.
- In Constitution-writing, there were attempts to define the new provincial boundaries according to Indian dictates
- The presence of India's heavy hand contributed to the distortion of consensual governance needed in transitional times.
- India 'noted' rather than welcomed the Constitution.
- A society trying to emerge from the April 2015 Great Earthquake was slapped with the punitive Great Blockade
- While keeping silent for years on Nepal's postconflict transitional justice process, in 2015 India's representative in Geneva cynically utilised the forum of the Human Rights Council to influence government change in Kathmandu.
- Indian interlocutors pushed the Nepali Congress to renege on its promise to continue in coalition with the mainstream left Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)
- Indian strategists are seeking ways to get Kathmandu to allow the construction of high dams and deep reservoirs on Nepal's rivers — for flood control, navigation, urban use and irrigation in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.
- New Delhi made deep inroads into Nepal's political class, but none did it use more than the Madhesbaadi parties
- The Great Blockade, forced the Kathmandu to reach out to Beijing and sign a slew of trade, transit and infrastructural agreements with it.



 Nepal is today better connected by air to Chinese cities than to India.

Matters pending:

- Nepal and India have to concentrate on the numerous matters that need concentration and resolution
- <u>Open border</u> -While it is Nepal's Left that has traditionally demanded restrictions on the border, the call now rises from the Indian security establishment.
- Massive floods in Nepal plains have also affected downstream areas across the border. A permanent bilateral mechanism is required to save the plains population of Nepal from suffering
- The Kosi Barrage and attendant embankments have the possibility of wreaking havoc because siltation of six decades has raised the riverbed within the levees far above the outlying tracts
- The easy answer for the Indian politician is to demand a high dam in the hills of Nepal even as alternatives are not studied, such as redistribution of waters into various older channels of the Kosi in Bihar.
- The rights of migrant Indian labour in Nepal and Nepali labour in India is a topic that rarely comes up
- Border disputes pending between the two countries
 at Susta, Kalapani and the 'tri-junction' of Lipulekh
- Nepal has planned to sell electricity to India once it has a hydropower surplus.
- But Indian government directive that it will not allow import of electricity other than from power companies with more than 51% Indian equity.
- Neglect by the Kathmandu intelligentsia, such as regarding the impact of demonetisation and the application of Goods and Services Tax on Nepal's economy and citizenry.
- The arbitrary blockages and go-slow at Indian Customs at border points, the selective use of quarantine for the export of Nepali agricultural produce, the increasing high-handedness of the Sashastra Seema Bal in dealing with Nepalis crossing over.

INDIA-UAE

1. UAE joins chorus of concern over Doklam

Context:

• India-Bhutan-China tri-junction and the current standoff at Doklam.

In news:

- United Arab Emirates response: Any military escalation between India and China would be "potentially very disruptive" for the region, said Anwar Gargash, the visiting Minister of Foreign Affairs from the United Arab Emirates.
- Reasons for UAE Investment delay: The movement on proposed investment from the UAE sovereign wealth fund (SWF) into Indian infrastructure projects had been delayed over procedural negotiations, and

specifically the mandate of the governing body of the National Infrastructure Investment Fund (NIIF).

INDIA-BANGALDESH

1. Dhaka to open mission in Chennai

In News:

- Bangladesh will soon open a new diplomatic mission in Chennai.
- Main aim is to focus on medical tourism and educational centres that drew thousands of Bangladesh citizens to India every year.
- The decision to open mission in Chennai was part of a bilateral agreement between India and Bangladesh.

Key fact:

- Bangladesh emerged as the largest overseas user of India's health services sector during 2015-16.
- Out of the 4,60,000 foreign patients treated in Indian hospitals, nearly 165,000 were from Bangladesh.
- The total number of Bangladeshi patients generated \$0.34 billion in revenue for India during the period.
- Bangladeshis have also emerged as the largest number of foreign tourists to India mainly due to medical tourism.

INDIA-BHUTAN

Giving Bhutan its due

Context:

- Bhutan rescues India's interests at its own cost in the Doklam stand-off.
- In the Doklam stand-off, it was India's security that was at stake, its "chicken neck" on the line.

Keypoints:

- China came up with a "package deal" in 1990's, where in return for the smaller disputed Doklam area, it was willing to give bigger territorial concessions in disputed territories in central Bhutan.
- It was an occasion for Bhutan to resolve its border dispute with China and also benefit Chinese "goodwill".
- Importance of Doklam, from the Bhutanese point of geography, is neither strategically important nor does it hold any economic value, as the stand-off area is frozen for most of the year and nothing can grow up there
- Bhutan in 1996 turned down the package deal offer mainly on the basis of Indian security concerns over Doklam.
- As a result China was building six roads towards Bhutan with four roads already intruding well into Bhutanese territory. Bhutan protested against this move and it resulted in agreement to freeze the construction of roads.



- China, over the decades, has applied pressure on Bhutan, using various tactics so that Bhutan lets go of the Doklam area.
- India never raised its voice in the past, about numerous Chinese incursions into the Bhutanese side, including the more serious road-building activities. This is because they did not affect Indian security, unlike Doklam.

INDIA-CHINA

1. No data from China on Brahmaputra this year

Context:

- India blames China for the current spate of floods across the northeastern States
- China's responsibility: It should share water-related data about the Himalayan Rivers. But in the current year it has not shared any data with India.
- Agreement between India and China: India-China Expert-Level mechanism
- Started in 2006, China had committed to share hydrological data during the flood season for Brahmaputra and Satluj rivers.
- The hydrological data is to be shared between May 15 to October 15 every year.

2. China wants to go back to '1959 LAC'

Context:

 Last week's scuffle between troops of the two (India and China) countries along the Pangong lake in Ladakh.

In news:

- China's stand: urged India to abide by the Line of Actual Control (LAC) position of 1959.
- India's stand: India has rejected the proposal in 1959 and again in 1962.

Basic Information:

Line of Actual Control:

- The Line of Actual Control (LAC) is a demarcation line that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory.
- There are two common ways in which the term "Line of Actual Control" is used. In the narrow sense, it refers only to the line of control in the western sector of the borderland between the two countries. In that sense, the LAC forms the effective border between the two countries together with the (also disputed) McMahon Line in the east, and a small undisputed section in between. In the wider sense, it can be used to refer to both the western line of control and the MacMahon Line, in which sense it is the effective border between India and the People's Republic of China (PRC)
- The demarcation existed as the informal cease-fire line between India and China after the 1962 conflict until 1993, when its existence was officially accepted

as the 'Line of Actual Control' in a bilateral agreement.

3. Doklam standoff ends as India, China step back

Context:

· India- China-Bhutan Doklam Plateau standoff.

In News:

- After prolonged diplomatic negotiations, India and China finally agreed to disengage from the standoff on the Doklam plateau.
- Indian government sources confirmed that India had agreed to withdraw troops first as a "goodwill gesture"
- China promised to make "necessary adjustments" to their troop deployments, after Indian troops withdrew back to their posts in Sikkim.

Way forward:

- More robust border management mechanism is put in place.
- Expanding the confidence-building measures.
- Add more border personal meeting points beyond the six.
- DGMO- level hotline should be in place.
- More visits from both the sides and tactical-level exchanges
- Political establishment needs to wake up to engage in a more intense bilateral exchange with China.

INDIA-SWITZERLAND

1. Swiss happy with India's data security

In news:

- Switzerland found India's data security and confidentiality laws "adequate" for entering into an automatic exchange of information pact, which will open a continuous access to details about alleged black money hoarders in once secret Swiss banks.
- The Swiss Federal Council ratified automatic exchange of financial account information with India and 40 other jurisdictions to facilitate immediate sharing of details about suspected black money.

2. Switzerland President on 3-day visit

In News:

- Swiss President Doris Leuthard began his three-day visit to India.
- Why the visit is significant? Switzerland is the chair
 of the Nuclear Suppliers Group where India has been
 seeking membership. The visit is likely to help closer
 consultation on NSG membership.

Basic Information:

Nuclear Suppliers Group:

 Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a group of nuclear supplier countries that seek to prevent nuclear proliferation by controlling the export of materials, equipment and technology that can be used to



- manufacture nuclear weapons.
- As of 2017 the NSG has 48 participating government.
- The NSG Chair for 2017-2018 is Switzerland.

INDIA-SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi job scheme favouring locals to hit Indians hard In news:

Nitagat (or Saudisation) scheme

- Saudization or Saudisation of the workforce—the replacement of foreign workers with Saudi nationals in the private sector—is the official national policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- This new revised scheme is a blow to Indian migrants.
- The Nitaqat system was first introduced in mid-2011 to encourage employment of Saudi nationals.
- Employers are divided into four categories, Platinum, Green (with three sub categories of high, medium and low), Yellow and Red. Those in Platinum have a higher proportion of Saudi nationals as employees

New revised rules and its impact:

- From September 2017, only a handful of organisations with high grades ('Platinum' and 'High Green' categories) based on number of Saudi nationals employed by them and other criteria will be able to apply for new block visas for migrant employees.
- Construction and hospitality, sectors which falls under low category have a predominantly blue collar Indian workforce, are unlikely to gain from such rules.
 Workers already employed in companies falling in low categories cannot be transferred from one employer to another.
- <u>Key Fact:</u> In 2016, there were nearly 25 lakh Indians working in Saudi Arabia

WORLD AFFAIRS

1. BRICS Summit

In news:

 Mr. Narendra Modi is all set to visit China for the BRICS summit.

9th BRICS summit:

- · Location: Xiamen, China's Fujian province.
- Date: September 3-5, 2017.

Basic Information:

BRICS:

- BRICS is the acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- Originally the first four were grouped as "BRIC" (or "the BRICs"), before the induction of South Africa in 2010.
- The BRICS members are all leading developing or newly industrialized countries, but they are distinguished by their large, sometimes fast-growing economies and significant influence on regional affairs; all five are G-20 members.
- The term does not include countries such as South Korea, Mexico and Turkey for which other acronyms and group associations were later created.
- <u>Financial structure</u>: Currently, there are two components that make up the financial architecture of BRICS, namely, the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). Both of these components were signed into treaty in 2014 and became active in 2015.
- New Development Bank:
- The New Development Bank (NDB) is based in Shanghai.
- The New Development Bank (NDB), formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, is a multilateral development bank operated by the BRICS states.
- The bank's primary focus of lending will be infrastructure projects with authorized lending of up to \$34 billion annually.
- South Africa will be the African Headquarters of the Bank named the "New Development Bank Africa Regional Centre".
- The bank will have starting capital of \$50 billion, with capital increased to \$100 billion over time.
- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa will initially contribute \$10 billion each to bring the total to \$50 billion.

BRICS CRA:

 The BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) is a framework for providing protection against global liquidity pressures.



- This includes currency issues where members' national currencies are being adversely affected by global financial pressures.
- It is found that emerging economies that experienced rapid economic liberalization went through increased economic volatility, bringing uncertain macroeconomic environment.
- The CRA is generally seen as a competitor to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and along with the New Development Bank is viewed as an example of increasing South-South cooperation.
- It was established in 2015 by the BRICS countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- The legal basis is formed by the Treaty for the Establishment of a BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement, signed at Fortaleza, Brazil on 15 July 2014.

2. <u>US formally initiates investigation of China's intellectual property practices</u>

In News:

- US Trade Representative has formally initiated an investigation of China's intellectual property practices under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974.
- Investigation main aim: to determine if China (America's largest trading partner) has been engaging in unfair practices.
- Key Fact: China is America's largest trading partner, with annual trade in goods and services worth about US\$ 663 billion.

USTR observations:

- The Chinese government reportedly uses a variety of tools, including opaque and discretionary administrative approval processes, joint venture requirements, foreign equity limitations, procurements, and other mechanisms to regulate or intervene in US companies' operations in China, in order to require or pressure the transfer of technologies and intellectual property to Chinese companies.
- Many US companies report facing vague and unwritten rules, as well as local rules that diverge from national ones, which are applied in a selective and non-transparent manner by the Chinese government officials to pressure technology transfer.
- The Chinese government's acts, policies and practices reportedly deprive US companies of the ability to set market-based terms in licensing and other technology-related negotiations with Chinese companies and undermine US companies' control over their technology in China.

3. Trump's Pakistan test

Context:

As the Iraqi war of 1991 began to descend, the spirit
of history positioned the son of a small village near
Azamgarh at the helm of the General Headquarters in
Rawalpindi.

- The big new idea was called "strategic defiance". When the United States turn inevitable, Pakistan would lead a battle on mid-sized powers like Iraq and Iran, helped by China.
- Presently President Donald Trump's new South Asia doctrine is frightening Pakistan with severe effects. Henceforth should it fail to turn on its jihadist proxies, has made strategic defiance relevant again.
- The pillars of the new South Asia strategy:
- Open-ended guarantee to the Afghan war with the use of all the instruments of American power,
- A greater role for New Delhi and strategic partnership with India
- Annihilating terror safe-havens in Pakistan to destroy jihadism, and with it, growing Iranian, Chinese and Russian influence.
- General Pervez Musharraf was communicated that Pakistan would be bombed "back into the stone age" if the country did not desert its al Qaeda and Taliban proxies.
- Past records depict that each time the United States has slashed aid to Pakistan, geopolitical coincidence compelled it to reverse course.
- Aid dropped to near-zero levels after Pakistan's nuclear-weapons programme in 1980.
- The 1990s saw a sharp reduction in aid after the anti-Soviet jihad ended and President George Bush refused to certify Pakistan did not possess nuclear weapons. Then, it surged after 9/11, rising to historic levels of \$4.5 billion in 2010.
- The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimates that over 68 per cent of Pakistan's arms imports in 2012-2016 came from China.
- The United States has the capacity to target jihadist infrastructure and individuals deep inside Pakistan to unleash its Afghan allies' covert assets to execute retaliatory terrorism in Pakistan.
- The end state of the Afghan war involves degrading the jihadist movement, not just a defined group of terrorists, thus denying space for great-power competitors to assert influence in a strategicallyimportant region.
- Strategic defiance shows the defensive game well.
- Trump must beware the fact that a foul or two can go a long way in leveling the odds against superior opposition.

4. Nepal tightens laws against dowry, menstrual exile

In News:

- A new Bill has been passed by Nepal's Parliament toward making women safer by strengthening laws against acid attacks along with the ancient Hindu customs of demanding dowry payments for marriage and exiling women who are menstruating.
- Stringent punishment: violators who force women into exile facing punishments of up to three months in jail or a fine of 3,000 Nepalese rupees, or about ₹1,875.



 Prevailing practice: Many menstruating women are still forced to leave their homes and take shelter in insecure huts or cow sheds until their cycle ends, though the practice called Chhaupadi was actually outlawed a decade ago. But without any assigned penalties, the custom continued in many parts of the majority Hindu Himalayan country, especially in the western hills.

5. MPs fret over trade deficit with ASEAN

In News:

 The Parliamentary Standing Committee or Commerce:

Ouestions:

- The government for suggesting that the country's increasing trade deficit with ASEAN nations is due to imports of essential commodities.
- Imposition of safe guard and tariff barriers on Indian goods.
- Recommendation: India should seek better market access for its products and services like leather goods and pharmaceuticals, with the 10-nation bloc.

Key fact:

- Examination of the Indo-ASEAN trade dynamics assumed significance given that this year marks 25 years of the formal partnership.
- ASEAN is India's fourth largest trading partner with total trade in 2016-17 at \$71.69 billion.
- Exports of agricultural products from India faced high import tariffs and barriers
- <u>Trade deficit</u>: the amount by which the cost of a country's imports exceeds the value of its exports.
- India has suffered a trade deficit in respect of five ASEAN members — Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei and Lao PDR — over 2015-16 and 2016-17, with the biggest deficit emerging in trade with Indonesia
- Essential commodities imported from ASEAN: coal, petroleum and edible oils.
- India's food processing sectors objection: Near absence of quality norms for import of cheap processed food products from ASEAN countries.

Basic Information:

ASEAN:

- The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) comprises of Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam.
- ASEAN has been establishing itself as a platform for Asian integrations and cooperations, working with other Asian nations to promote unity, prosperity, development and sustainability of the region, as well as working on solutions to resolve disputes and problems in the region. While mainly focusing on the Asia-Pacific nations, ASEAN also established communications with other parts of the world, to

better promote world peace and stability.

ASEAN Plus Three

- "ASEAN Plus Three" was created to improve existing ties with the People's Republic of China, Japan, and South Korea.
- East Asia Summit (EAS) includes ASEAN Plus Three countries as well as India, Australia, New Zealand. This new group acted as a prerequisite for the planned East Asia Community which was supposedly patterned after the now-defunct European Community.

6. NHRC issues notice on Rohingyas

In News:

- Union Ministry of Home Affairs plans to deport 40,000 Rohingya immigrants from Myanmar.
- NHRC Observation regarding the deportation issue:
- Refugees are no doubt foreign nationals but they are human beings.
- Fear of Persecution: Before taking a big step, the Government of India has to look into every aspect of the situation, keeping in focus the fact that the members of the Rohingya community, who have crossed into India and are residing here for long, have a fear of persecution once they are pushed back to their native country.
- Highlighted the Supreme Court's decisions: the Right to Life and Personal Liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution apply to all, irrespective of their citizenship.
- Key Fact: India is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention on Refugees and the 1967 Protocol

Basic Information:

- Rohingya people
- The Rohingya people are Muslim Indo-Aryan peoples from the Rakhine State, Myanmar.
- According to the Rohingyas and some scholars, they are indigenous to Rakhine State, while other historians claim that the group represents a mixture of precolonial and colonial immigrations.
- The official stance of the Myanmar government, however, has been that the Rohingyas are mainly illegal immigrants who migrated into Arakan following Burmese independence in 1948 or after the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971.
- The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees
- The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention, is a United Nations multilateral treaty that defines who is a refugee, and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum.
- The Convention also sets out which people do not qualify as refugees, such as war criminals.
- The Convention also provides for some visa-free travel for holders of travel documents issued under the convention



 The Refugee Convention builds on Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries. A refugee may enjoy rights and benefits in a state in addition to those provided for in the Convention.

Definition of refugee"A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

NHRC

- The Rights Commission (NHRC) of India is an autonomous public body constituted on 12 October 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Ordinance of 28 September 1993
- The NHRC is the National Human Rights Commission of India, responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights, defined by the Act as "rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants"



SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Unique initiative to promote small family norm

New Initiative:

- The Rajasthan government's Medical and Health Department has decided to organise "Saas-Bahu Sammelans" in over 16,200 villages of 14 districts.
- Why: to promote the small family norm with emphasis on development of local communities.
- · And to achieve the family planning targets.

Step against high fertility rate.

 The 14 districts of the State have reported a high fertility rate in the past.

2. <u>Understanding context of SC ruling on triple talaq:</u> Divorce rate of Muslim women is thrice that of men

Context:

 Supreme Court Ruling on the issue of triple talaq, which questions the women dignity.

Key points:

- The largest percentage of divorces takes place among Muslim women. Stats say that the majority is n the age group 20-34 (43.9%), in which only 24% of the total Muslim female population lies.
- Recently the five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court verdict that struck down instant triple talaq describes the social context.
- The rate of divorce was significantly lower among men than among women, as per the Census data of India, 2011.
- But the disparity was particularly stark among Muslims where the "refined divorce rate", or rate of divorce per 1,000 marriages, was 1.59 among Muslim men, among Muslim women, it was more than three and a half times higher — 5.63.
- Buddhists came next on the disparity scale, followed by Christians.
- On a broad view, the number of divorces per 1,000 marriages in India are 1.58 for men, and for women, double that at 3.10.
- But with respect to the duration of staying divorced as per the Census data, men tend to re-marry at a far quicker rate than women.

Analysis:

- Supreme Court verdict striking down talaq-e-biddat or instant triple talaq has been rightly hailed as a victory for gender justice.
- But bringing it to the notice, there are no concrete data on the prevalence of this form of divorce thus the impact of the judgment is difficult to measure.
- Muslim couples have several other ways to divorce including the intervention of religious institutions such as the Qazi and Dar-ul-Qaza.
- · The definitive assessment shows that the social,

- educational and economic backwardness and deprivation status of Muslims women is both the reason and consequence of such social evils.
- Legal provision to settle the cases of Divorce
- The Divorce Act, 1869 (4 of 1869),
- The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936 (3 of 1936),
- The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939 (8 of 1939),
- The Special Marriage Act, 1954 (43 of 1954), and
- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

3. <u>Marital rape a crime in many countries, an exception in many more</u>

Context:

- Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, which defines rapes, makes an exception for marital rape by stating, "Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape."
- Central government had filed an affidavit in Delhi High Court, arguing against the decriminalization of marital rape on the ground that it may "destabilise the institution of marriage".
- The grounds for "marital immunity" for rape prosecution were laid by Chief Justice Sir Matthew Hale in The History of the Pleas of the Crown, published in 1736, which is called as 'Implied Consent Theory of Sir Hale'.
- This theory found its way into the legal system of all former British colonies.
- Australia in 1970's, was the first common law country to pass reforms criminalizing rape in marriage.
- In 1950's, several Scandinavian countries and countries in the Communist bloc passed laws criminalizing spousal rape including Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and the former Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. (Poland in 1932 was the first)
- Since the 1980s, many common law countries (include South Africa, Ireland, Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Malaysia, Ghana, and Israel) have legislatively abolished the marital rape immunity.
- In the US all 50 states made marital rape a crime.
- UK repealed its common law code that a marriage contract implied a woman's consent to all sexual activity.
- In 2002, Nepal got rid of the marital rape exception after its Supreme Court held that it went against the constitutional right of equal protection and the right to privacy.
- According to the UN Women's 2011 report, out of 179 countries for which data was available, 52 had amended their legislation to explicitly make marital rape a criminal offence.



INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

1. Only Indian phones for defense officials?

Context:

Prevention of data theft

In news:

 The Centre is considering the creation of a secure communications ecosystem for its officials, especially those working in the defence sector.

Proposals:

- Mandating the use of mobile phones manufactured by Indian companies for official communication.
- Secure email service to its officials. The email will offer enhanced security authentication mechanisms such as geo-fencing and device mapping.

Basic Information:

- Geo-fencing is a feature in a software program that uses the global positioning system (GPS) or radio frequency identification (RFID) to define geographical boundaries.
- Geo-fencing allow an administrator to set up triggers so when a device enters (or exits) the boundaries defined by the administrator, an alert is issued. Many geo-fencing applications incorporate Google Earth, allowing administrators to define boundaries on top of a satellite view of a specific geographical area. Other applications define boundaries by longitude and latitude or through user-created and Web-based maps.

2. Navy gets amphibious landing craft

Context:

- The second Landing Craft Utility (LCU) L52 of Mk-IV class-An amphibious ship to transport combat equipment and troops of the Navy was commissioned at Port Blair.
- It is capable of transporting various kinds of combat equipment such as Arjun main battle tanks.
- <u>Designed and built:</u> Garden Reach Ship Builders (GRSE).
- <u>Usability:</u> deployed for multi-role activities such as beaching operations, search and rescue, disaster relief operations, supply and replenishment and evacuation from distant islands.

3. BRO gets more powers for road construction along China border

- Efforts to improve the functioning of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO)
- The Defence Ministry has delegated administrative and financial powers right up to the level of Chief Engineer and task force commander, of the BRO

• Why: To bring in transformational changes in the BRO

Enhanced Powers

- Now, a Chief Engineer of BRO can accord administrative approval up to Rs. 50 crore.
- Additional Director-General (ADG) up to Rs. 75 crore.
- Director-General (DG) up to Rs. 100 crore.
- Earlier, a Chief Engineer in the BRO could give administrative approval of works up to Rs. 10 crore and ADG up to Rs. 20 crore for departmental works.

Basic Information:

- The BRO is engaged in road construction to provide connectivity to difficult and inaccessible regions.
- It was brought under the control of the Defence Ministry in 2015.

4. Kovind dedicates Leh trip to jawans

 President Ram Nath Kovind awarded the Presidential Colours to Ladakh Scouts

Basic Information:

- Ladakh Scouts
- The Ladakh Scouts is an infantry regiment of the Indian Army, nicknamed the "Snow Warriors" or "Snow Tigers". Specializing in mountain warfare, the regiment's primary role is to guard India's borders in the high altitude areas of the Ladakh region, as well as Jammu & Kashmir in general.
- The Ladakh Scouts was set up to thwart the Pakistani attack in 1947-48.

Presidential Colours

 Presidential Colours is one of the greatest honours conferred upon a unit for their extraordinary service.

5. Govt. approves plan to deploy more troops on the frontline

 D.B. Shekatkar committee: appointed by then Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar in May last year and the report was submitted to the Defence Ministry in December 2016.

Recommendations:

- Increase teeth-to-tail ratio for enhancing combat capability and rebalancing defence expenditure of the Armed Forces.
- Areas of reform: optimisation of signal establishments, restructuring of repair echelons including base workshops, redeployment of ordnance depots, better utilisation of supply and transport echelons and animal transport units, closure of military farms and Army postal establishments in peace locations, and improving efficiency of the National Cadet Corps (NCC).



 Impact: if recommendations are implemented over the next five years, the recommendations can result in savings of up to ₹25,000 crore in defence expenditure.

Governments move: increased soldiers available for active combat in the Indian Army by over 57,000. This restructure by the Indian Army is aimed at enhancing combat capability in a manner that personnel will be used for improving operational preparedness and civilians will be redeployed in different wings of the Armed Forces for improving efficiency.



GEOGRAPHY RELATED

<u>Largest volcanic region on Earth discovered under</u> Antarctica

In news:

- The largest volcanic region on Earth discovered by Scientists
- It consists of almost 100 volcanoes two kilometers below the surface of the vast Antarctic ice sheet.
- · Height range: 100 to 3,850 metres.
- · All of them are covered in thick layers of ice.
- <u>Region:</u> concentrated in a region known as the west Antarctic rift system, which stretches 3,500 km from Antarctica's Ross ice shelf to the Antarctic peninsula.

Importance:

- Volcanic activity in this range poses crucial implications for the rest of the planet.
- It could further destabilize west Antarctica's ice sheets.

2. Geological stresses seen in Indian Ocean

Fifth national conference of the Ocean Society of India (OSI):

- N. Purnachandra Rao, Director, National Centre for Earth Science Studies in his speech said, geological stresses building along the Indo-Australian tectonic plate boundary in the Southern Indian Ocean have the potential to cause a powerful earthquake up to a magnitude of 8, triggering a tsunami across much of South India.
- The largest strike-slip earthquake on record had happened along the Indo-Australian plate boundary in 2012. The phenomenon occurred when tectonic plates slipped horizontally along a fault line, unlike most large earthquakes which were caused when two plates collided at their boundaries and one plate slid beneath the other.

Key Fact:

- Burmese Arc, north of the Andaman islands, had been identified as another region with the potential to generate a quake triggered tsunami that could affect Bangladesh and devastate the northern Bay of Bengal.
- The Andaman subduction zone in the Bay of Bengal and the Makaran subduction zone in the Arabian Sea were the other tsunamigeic zones in the Indian plate region.



DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Washed out: On the floods in eastern and western India

Context:

 The recent floods in eastern and western India and some suggestions for better disaster management

Capacity-building programme:

- At least 600 people are dead and thousands of people are displaced due to recent floods in eastern and western India
- To deal with such frequent, destructive weather events we need a massive capacity-building programme

There are many actions people need on the ground

- 1. short-term housing.
- 2. food and safe water.
- 3. access to health care and protection for women, children and the elderly.

Problem in using disaster relief funds

- Some States have not been able to use disaster relief funds as intended
- And the Centre has asked them to set off the unutilised portion when making fresh claims

Mitigate Damage:

- A review of the deployment of National Disaster Response Force teams near waterbodies is needed.
- The experience NDRF together with data compiled by the Central Water Commission can reveal the hotspots where better management can mitigate damage.
- · The way forward.
- Governments cannot expect that people with good incomes will take calamitous losses, with neither social support nor financial instruments available to rebuild lives.
- A vigorous monsoon is vital for the economy, but governments should be prepared to deal with the consequences of excess rainfall.

2. Behind Mumbai flood, cruel August

 Ceaseless shower in the financial capital of India over the last two days has paralyzed the city.

Keypoints:

- Mumbai recorded 315.8 mm of rainfall between 8:30 am and 8:30 pm Tuesday.
- Had so much rainfall occurred in May or June, the condition in Mumbai might have been less severe, says meteorological office.
- Despite these rains being forecast well in advance, no mitigative/preventive steps were taken.

- Mumbai has recieved about 2,000 mm of rainfall this monsoon season (since June), which is more than normal.
- Larger impact of the rains on city life could be due to the moisture saturated soil whose ability to absorb water is diminished.
- Reason behind Intense rainfall
- The strong low-pressure area that had developed over southern Madhya Pradesh, is one of the several reasons behind the intense monsoon this year.
- The regional distribution of monsoon rainfall has been quite even.
- Only Kerala, south-interior Karnataka, Vidarbha, eastern Madhya Pradesh, western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi, and Punjab have had deficient rainfall this season.
- Bengaluru had received massive rains previous week, about 180 mm in a single day, and was faced with similar flooding and resultant chaos.
- Earlier, huge parts of Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha have also faced floods this season.

3. When it pours

Context:

- The total rainfall (2017)in the country, is beyond the IMD's forecast of a "normal" monsoon.
- The flood governance in India is still about ad hoc relief measures. Its time to change.

Keypoints:

- Parts of Assam, Bihar and Gujarat are submerged in historic levels of floodwater.
- Urban areas like Mumbai and Bengaluru were lashed with heavy rainfall.
- Mount Abu, got over 50% of its annual rainfall in two days.
- Bengaluru got about 30 per cent of its monsoon rainfall on one day.
- Chandigarh received nearly 15 per cent of its annual rainfall in a few hours.
- The weather patterns during this rainy season where days of severe downpour sandwiched between spells of dry weather, raise questions about our understanding of the monsoon, as well as about the ways in which we prepare for and deal with floods.

Study and Warnings:

- A 2013 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report warned that Mumbai remains vulnerable to rainfall of the kind that led to the 2005 floods.
- · The indiscriminate destruction of wetlands has



bargained the city's capacity to deal with floods which holds true for Bengaluru, Guwahati, and several other cities of the country.

Governance efforts

- Steps taken for the restoration of wetlands at the center of flood control programs remains minimal.
- Flood governance in the country has not gone beyond ad hoc relief measures and building embankments.
- Thus it's the need of the hour that we require fresh thinking on how to prepare for the monsoons and deal with floods.



NATIONAL PARKS

1. Dachigam National Park

Location:

 Dachigam National Park is located about 22 Kilometers from Srinagar District of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Facts:

- · Total area of the park is about 141 sq.km
- This National park is well known for its unique and diverse wildlife and bird species. It habitats the endangered Hangul population in the world, which is characterized by its white rump patch and impressive spread of antlers.
- · Hangul also called as Kashmiri Stag.
- Other wildlife includes Leopard, Common Palm Civet, Jackal, Red Fox, Yellow-throated Marten and Himalayan Weasel.
- Over 145 different bird species including the Lammergeier, colourful species like Monal Pheasant and Blue Magpie are seen.

2. Salim Ali National Park

Location:

· Salim Ali National Park is located in Srinagar.

Facts:

- This National park covers an area of 9.07 sq. km.
- This park habitats various wildlife species such as Hangul, Musk Deer, Himalayan Black Bear and about seventy species of birds including Paradise flycathcher, Himlayan Snow Cock.

3. Hirpora Wildlife Sanctuary

Location:

 Hirpora Wildlife Sanctuary or Heerpora Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Shopian district of Kashmir, 70 kilometers south of Srinagar.

Facts:

- It spreads over an area of 341 km2.
- It is bounded to the north by Lake Gumsar, northeast by Hirpora village, east by Rupri, south by Saransar and to the west by the Pir Panjal pass.
- The slopes are gentle to moderately steep on the eastern aspect and very steep with many cliffs on the higher northern and western aspect. The southern and southeastern portions are moderately steep.
- critically endangered Pir Panjal markhor is found here.

4. Hemis National Park

Location:

 Hemis National Park (or Hemis High Altitude National Park) is a high altitude national park in the eastern Ladakh region of the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India.

Facts:

- World famous for being the best place to see the snow leopard in the wild.
- It is believed to have the highest density of snow leopards of any protected area in the world.
- It is the only national park in India north of the Himalayas, the largest notified protected area in India (and thus the largest national park of India), and is the second largest contiguous protected area after the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve and surrounding protected areas.

5. Jim Corbett National Park

Location:

Nainital district of Uttarakhand.

Facts:

- Jim Corbett National Park is the oldest national park in India and was established in 1936 as Hailey National Park to protect the endangered Bengal tiger
- The park was the first to come under the Project Tiger initiative.

6. Gangotri National Park

Location:

· Uttarkashi District, Uttarakhand.

Facts:

 It was third largest National park of India. The park provides majestic beauty of coniferous forests and grandeur of glacial world combined with lush green meadows.

7. Gangotri National Park

Location:

• Uttarkashi District, Uttarakhand.

Facts:

 It was third largest National park of India. The park provides majestic beauty of coniferous forests and grandeur of glacial world combined with lush green meadows.

8. Nanda Devi National Park

Location:

 National park situated around the peak of Nanda Devi (7816 m) in the state of Uttarakhand in northern India..

Facts:

 The National Park was inscribed a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

9. Rajaji National Park

Location:

• Shivaliks, near the foothills of the Himalayas. The park is spread over 820 sq.km in the state of Uttarakhand.

Facts:



 Indian national park and tiger reserve. The park is most renowned for its elephants.

10. Valley of Flowers National Park

Location:

located in West Himalaya, in the state of Uttarakhand.

Facts:

- known for its meadows of endemic alpine flowers and the variety of flora. This richly diverse area is also home to rare and endangered animals, including the Asiatic black bear, snow leopard, musk deer, brown bear, red fox and blue sheep.
- This Reserve is in the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves since 2004.

11. Great Himalayan National Park

Location:

- The Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP), is located in Kullu region in the state of Himachal Pradesh.
- The park is at an altitude of between 1500 and 6000 m.

Facts:

 In June 2014, the Great Himalayan National Park was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. The Unesco World Heritage Site Committee granted the status to the park under the criteria of "outstanding significance for biodiversity conservation".

12. Pin Valley National Park

Location:

- Pin Valley National Park is a National park of India located within the Lahaul and Spiti district, in the state of Himachal Pradesh, in far Northern India.
- The park is located in the desert habitat of the Spiti Valley, within the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve, in the Himalayas region.

Key Fact:

 the Park forms a natural habitat for a number of endangered animals including the snow leopard and Siberian ibex.

IUCN RED LIST

1. Nilgiri langur

- Scientific Name: Trachypithecus johnii
- IUCN Classification: Vulnerable
- · Habitat:
- The Nilgiri langur is a a type of Old World monkey found in the Nilgiri Hills of the Western Ghats in South India.
- Its range also includes Kodagu in Karnataka, Kodayar Hills in Tamil Nadu, and many other hilly areas in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- Threats: habitat destruction and poaching for its fur and flesh.

2. Valley of Flowers National Park

- Scientific Name: Macaca Silenus
- IUCN Classification: Threatened
- Habitat:
- The Lion-tailed macaque is a type of Old World monkey endemic to the Western Ghats of South India.
- Avoid human presence and they do not live, feed or travel through plantations.
- Threat: Habitat fragmentation due to spread of agriculture and tea, coffee, teak and cinchona, construction of water reservoirs and human settlements to support such activities.

3. Bengal florican

- Scientific Name: Houbaropsis bengalensis
- **Habitation:** The Bengal florican, also called Bengal bustard, is a bustard species native to the Indian subcontinent, Cambodia and Vietnam.
- IUCN Classification: Critically Endangered.

4. Pink-headed duck

- Scientific Name: Rhodonessa caryophyllacea
- **Habitation:** Gangetic plains of India, Bangladesh and in the riverine swamps of Myanmar.
- IUCN Classification: Critically Endangered.

5. Asiatic cheetah

- Scientific Name: Acinonyx jubatus venaticus
- · Habitation:
- · Only in Iran now
- It once occurred from the Arabian Peninsula and the Near East to the Kyzylkum Desert, Caspian region, Pakistan and India, but has been extirpated there during the 20th century.
- IUCN Classification: Critically Endangered.
- Threats: Reduced gazelle numbers, persecution, landuse change, habitat degradation and fragmentation, and desertification contributed to the decline of the cheetah population Asiatic cheetah



- Scientific Name: Acinonyx jubatus venaticus
- · IUCN classification: Critically Endangered
- Threats: Reduced gazelle numbers, persecution, landuse change, habitat degradation and fragmentation, and desertification contributed to the decline of the cheetah population

6. Gharial

- · Scientific name: Gavialis gangeticus.
- Habitat: native to the northern part of the Indian Subcontinent.
- The gharial once thrived in all the major river systems of the Indian Subcontinent, spanning the rivers of its northern part from the Indus River in Pakistan across the Gangetic floodplain to the Irrawaddy River in Myanmar. Today, it is extinct in the Indus River, in the Brahmaputra of Bhutan and Bangladesh, and in the Irrawaddy River. Its distribution is now limited to only 2% of its former range.
- IUCN Classification: critically endangered.
- Threats: loss of riverine habitat, depletion of fish resources, and entanglement in fishing nets.
- Fact: Gharials are bred in captivity in the National Chambal Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh, and in the Gharial Breeding Centre in Nepal's Chitwan National Park.

7. Indian wild dog (Cuon alpinus)

- Distribution: They occur in most of India south of the Ganges, particularly in the Central Indian Highlands and the Western and Eastern Ghats of the southern states.
- In north-east India, they inhabit Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, and West Bengal.
- Threats: Habitat loss, depletion of its prey base, competition from other predators, persecution and possibly diseases from domestic and feral dogs.

8. Peacock tarantula

- · Scientific name: Poecilotheria metallica
- IUCN Classification: critically endangered species
- Distribution: This is an Old World species of tarantula.
 The species natural habitat is deciduous forest in Andhra Pradesh, in central southern India.

9. White-bellied heron

- Scientific name: Ardea insignis
- Habitat: The white-bellied heron, also known as the imperial heron or great white-bellied heron, is a species of large heron found in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas in India, northeastern Bangladesh, Burma and Bhutan.
- IUCN classification: Critically Endangered
- Threats: species is threatened by disturbance and habitat degradation.

10. Great Indian bustard

- · Scientific name: Ardeotis nigriceps.
- Habitat: India and the adjoining regions of Pakistan
- IUCN Classification: critically endangered.
- Threats: hunting and loss of its habitat



MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Paper-1

Topic: Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

- 1. Critically analyze "The impact of caste on economic mobility in India".
- 2. Was it right on the part of Supreme Court to ban Triple talaq, Critically analyze the issue?

Topic: Role of women and women's organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

- 3. 'Minor' sexual offences are a threat to women empowerment. Discuss it in the backdrop of increasing violence against women in India.
- 4. "Smart, Safe, Efficient" public transport system is at the core of Smart City concept. Discuss.
- 5. Section 375 is an hindrance to women empowerment. Discuss
- 6. "Advancing rights of women farmers can revolutionise the rural ecosystem." Discuss the relevance of this statement in the current Indian context.

Topic: Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc., geographical features and their location - changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora

7. Discuss the phenomena of tropical cyclones in the Indian Ocean by drawing a comparison between the frequency of cyclones in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal.

Paper-2

Topic: Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

- 1. Discuss each adjective attached to the word 'Republic' in the preamble. Are they defendable in the present circumstances stances?
- 2. Did the Government of India Act, 1935 lay down a federal constitution? Discuss
- The Indian party system is passing through a phase of transition which looks to be full of contradictions and paradoxes."
- 4. A democracy is likely to degenerate into a tyranny if it does not allow opposition groups to criticize fairly, freely and frankly" Comment.
- 5. Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a uniform civil code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy
- 6. "The freedom of the belief or faith in any religion is a matter of conscience falling within the zone of purely private thought process and is an aspect of liberty," Discuss?
- 7. "An enabling atmosphere for citizens to dissent and scrutinise government measures add to the vibrancy of democracy" Evaluate?
- 8. Examine the need for the review of Indian Constitution?
- 9. Should the court give relief in writ jurisdiction only when one's right to life or personal liberty under Article 21 is violated?



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

- 10. To what extent is Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, bearing marginal note "Temporary provision with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir", temporary? Discuss the future prospects of this provision in the context of Indian polity.
- 11. Discuss the essentials of the 69th Constitutional Amendment Act and anomalies, if any, that have led to recent reported conflicts between the elected representatives and the institution of the Lieutenant Governor in the administration of Delhi. Do you think that this will give rise to a new trend in the functioning of the Indian federal politics?
- 12. According to recent report regional inequalities is on the rise in India. Rich states are becoming richer and poor getting poorer. Analyze various geographical factors responsible for rising regional inequalities
- 13. What are the essentials of a true federalism? Analyze the nature of the Indian federation?

Topic: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

- 14. "The job of chairperson of Rajya Sabha is very challenging and thankless" Examine.
- 15. Social evils were cast out by way of legislation and not by judicial orders, Justify?

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

16. "The power to frame rules under the Representation of People Act, 1951 has not been given to the EC by successive governments." Examine Critically.

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

17. Critically analyze various issues involved in the recently proposed Central selection mechanism for appointing judicial officers in State subordinate judicial services?

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

- 18. "We need an external, independent body to determine parliamentary salaries" Examine?
- 19. What is a quasi-judicial body? Explain with the help of concrete examples.
- 20. "The regulator and the government would be two distinct agencies. The government shall not be the regulator and the regulator shall not be the government," Evaluate?

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

- 21. "While the rash of false allegations under Section 498A demands a course correction, interventions could be as problematic." Discuss.
- 22. "Proposed amendments to the Whistle Blowers Act defeat the very purpose of the legislation". Discuss?
- 23. Explain the need for Anti-lynching law in India, what are the challenges involved
- 24. "Demographic Dividend in India will remain only theoretical unless our manpower becomes more educated, aware, skilled and creative." What measures have been taken by the government to enhance the capacity of our population to be more productive and employable?
- 25. Right to privacy which is the core intrinsic human value that can be a potential tool to address the issues ranging from Aadhar to sexual identity. Explain



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

- 26. To what extent Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana was able to address the farmers grievances? What are the challenges and issues involved in the implementation?
- 27. Direct cash transfers have the potential to improve the economic lives of the poor by transferring benefits to households quickly and directly. Achieving these benefits requires thoughtful design of schemes, and careful, rigorous analysis of ongoing programmes is an important input to the design process. Discuss
- 28. "Less than 10 per cent of the schools in the country are fully compliant with the RTE's requirements on infrastructure and teacher availability." Comment.

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

29. "Children are most affected by air pollution and will be the primary beneficiaries of policies to reduce fossil fuel emissions" Evaluate?

Topic: Role of civil services in a democracy.

30. "Traditional bureaucratic structure and culture have hampered the process of socio-economic development in India."

Comment

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

- 31. Evaluate the economic and strategic dimensions of India's Look East Policy in the context of the post-Cold War international scenario.(Mains -2016)
- 32. Critically analyze the prospects to India from the recently unveiled "New South Asian Policy of President Donald Trump?
- 33. Is Doklam solution a burden on Indo-Bhutan relations? Critically analyze
- 34. Can technological prowess be a weapon for India to attain global supremacy and hegemony? Discuss

Paper-3

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

- 1. Examine the arguments in favour and against introduction of universal basic income.
- 2. Discuss in detail the impact of GST on Logistic sector?
- 3. Recently, the Niti Aayog released the draft National Energy Policy. Discuss its provisions related to health and pollution
- 4. Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) is necessary for bringing unbanked to the institutional finance fold. Do you agree with this for financial inclusion of the poorer section of the Indian society? Give arguments to justify your opinion.
- 5. "GST is a weapon to curb state's financial autonomy." Evaluate?
- 6. Normally countries shift from agriculture to industry and then later to services, but India shifted directly from agriculture to services. What are the reasons for the huge growth of services vis-a-vis industry in the country? Can India become a developed country without a strong industrial base?
- 7. GST will free the common man from tax terrorism and inspector raj. Critically comment.

Topic: Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

8. Comment on the challenges for inclusive growth which include careless and useless manpower in the Indian context. Suggest measures to be taken for facing these challenges.



Topic: Government Budgeting.

9. "Multiple indicators suggest that executive-led budgetary governance has not been successful in India." Critically examine.

Topic: Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers.

- 10. What is allelopathy? Discuss its role in major cropping systems of irrigated agriculture
- 11. "Policy should focus not just on higher production but also on helping farmers manage risks" Discuss. How price deficiency payments can address price risk?
- 12. How can the 'Digital India' programme help farmers to improve farm productivity and income? What steps has the Government taken in this regards?
- 13. In what way could replacement of price subsidy with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) change the scenario of subsidies in India? Discuss.
- 14. If futures market is one way to ensure farmers security. Examine reasons for India's poor performance in Agri-futures trading and give suggestions?
- 15. Indian agriculture is plagued by subsistence practice of farming with poor inputs and lack of institutional support from the government, banks and insurance companies in providing a safety net for crop failures. Critically Evaluate.
- 16. Given the vulnerability of Indian agriculture to vagaries of nature, discuss the need for crop insurance and bring out the salient features of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY).

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

- 17. In what way could replacement of price subsidy with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) change the scenario of subsidies in India? Discuss.
- 18. What are the impediments in marketing and supply chain management in industry in India? Can e-commerce help in overcoming these bottlenecks?

Topic: Food processing and related industries in India- scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management.

19. Discuss the challenges and prospectus for Agro based industries in India?

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

20. How globalization has led to the reduction of employment in the formal sector of the Indian economy? Is increased informalization detrimental to the development of the country?

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

- 21. Explain CRISPR Gene editing technology its applications and concerns raised against this technology?
- 22. "Artificial Intelligence is not going to go 'rogue' and turn on humans, at least in the near future, but there are other very real issues raised by AI." Critically examine.
- 23. "An incremental, technology-neutral approach to the adoption of electric vehicles is the way forward for Automobile Sector in India" Comment.
- 24. What do you know by Internet -of -things? Discuss its various applications in everyday life?
- 25. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a next boon to mankind. Critically examine.



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

26. In a globalised world, intellectual property rights assume significance and are a source of litigation. Broadly distinguish between the terms – copyrights, patents and trade secrets.

Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

27. Solid waste management has emerged as a major challenge in urban governance in India. But if implemented well, it can bring in not just environmental benefits but also financial benefits. Discuss

Topic: Disaster and disaster management.

28. "Protocols followed by State governments to deal with floods need an urgent review." Comment.

Topic: Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.

- 29. "State is obliged to put a robust personal data protection mechanism in place in this digital age" Evaluate?
- 30. Discuss the advantage and security implications of cloud hosting of servers vis-a-vis in-house machine-based hosting for government businesses.
- 31. The frequency of earthquakes appears to have increased in the Indian subcontinent. However, India's preparedness for mitigating their impact has significant gaps. Discuss various aspects.
- 32. Considering the threats cyberspace poses for the country, India needs a "Digital Armed Force" to prevent crimes. Critically evaluate the National Cyber Security Policy, 2013 outlining the challenges perceived in its effective implementation.

Paper-4

Part-A: Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude.

- 1. All human beings aspire for happiness. Do you agree? What does happiness mean to you? Explain with examples.
- 2. What is meant by 'environmental ethics'? Why is it important to study? Discuss any one environmental issue from the viewpoint of environmental ethics.
- 3. Some people feel that values keep changing with time and situation, while others strongly believe that there are certain universal and eternal human values. Give your perception in this regard with due justification.
- 4. What is meant by 'environmental ethics'? Why is it important to study? Discuss any one environmental issue from the viewpoint of environmental ethics.
- 5. What is 'emotional intelligence' and how can it be developed in people? How does it help an individual in taking ethical decisions?
- 6. Human beings should always be treated as 'ends' in themselves and never as merely `means'. Explain the meaning and significance of this statement, giving its implications in the modern techno-economic society.
- 7. What do you understand by 'values' and 'ethics'? In what way is it important to be ethical along with being professionally competent?

Part-B: Case Studies on above issues.

- 1. Rameshwar successfully cleared the prestigious civil services examination and was excited about the opportunity that he would get through the civil services to serve the country. However, soon after joining the services, he realized that things are not as rosy as he had imagined.
- 2. He found a number of malpractices prevailing in the department assigned to him. For example, funds under various schemes and grants were being misappropriated. The official facilities were frequently being used for personal needs by the officers and staff. After some time, he noticed that the process of recruiting the staff was also not up to the mark. Prospective candidates were required to write an examination in which a lot of cheating was going on. Some candidates were provided external help in the examination. Rameshwar brought these incidents to the notice of his



seniors. However, he was advised to keep his eyes, ears and mouth shut and ignore all these things which were taking place with the connivance of the higher-ups. Rameshwar felt highly disillusioned and uncomfortable. He comes to you seeking your advice.

- 3. Indicate various options that you think are available in this situation. How would you help him to evaluate these options and choose the most appropriate path to be adopted? 250 words.
- 4. You are recently posted as district development officer of a district. Shortly thereafter you found that there is considerable tension in the rural areas of your district on the issue of sending girls to schools.
- 5. The elders of the village feel that many problems have come up because girls are being educated and they are stepping out of the safe environment of the household. They are of the view that the girls should be quickly married off with minimum education. The girls are also competing for jobs after education, which have traditionally remained in boys' exclusive domain, adding to unemployment amongst male population.
- 6. The younger generation feels that in the present era, girls should have equal opportunities for education and employment, and other means of livelihood. The entire locality is divided between the elders and the younger lot and further sub-divided between sexes in both generations. You come to know that in Panchayat or in other local bodies or even in busy crossroads, the issue is being acrimoniously debated.
- 7. One day you are informed that an unpleasant incident has taken place. Some girls were molested, when they were en route to schools. The incident led to clashes between several groups and a law and order problem has arisen. The elders after heated discussion have taken a joint decision not to allow girls to go to school and to socially boycott all such families, which do not follow their dictate.
 - a. What steps would you take to ensure girls' safety without disrupting their education?
 - b. How would you manage and mould matriarchic attitude of the village elders to ensure harmony in the intergenerational relations? (250 words) (25 Marks)
- 8. One of the scientists working in the R & D laboratory of a major pharmaceutical company discovers that one of the company's bestselling veterinary drugs, B has the potential to cure a currently incurable liver disease that is prevalent in tribal areas. However, developing a variant of the drug suitable for human beings entailed a lot of research and development having a huge expenditure to the extent of 50 crores rupees. It was unlikely that the company would recover the costs as the disease was rampant only in poverty-stricken area having very little market otherwise.
- 9. If you were the CEO, then—
 - (a) Identify the various actions that you could take;
 - (b) Evaluate the pros and cons of each of your actions.
- 10. You are recently posted as district development officer of a district. Shortly thereafter you found that there is considerable tension in the rural areas of your district on the issue of sending girls to schools.
- 11. The elders of the village feel that many problems have come up because girls are being educated and they are stepping out of the safe environment of the household. They are of the view that the girls should be quickly married off with minimum education. The girls are also competing for jobs after education, which have traditionally remained in boys' exclusive domain, adding to unemployment amongst male population.
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- 13. One day you are informed that an unpleasant incident has taken place. Some girls were molested, when they were en route to schools. The incident led to clashes between several groups and a law and order problem has arisen. The elders after heated discussion have taken a joint decision not to allow girls to go to school and to socially boycott all such families, which do not follow their dictate.



- a. What steps would you take to ensure girls' safety without disrupting their education?
- b. How would you manage and mould matriarchic attitude of the village elders to ensure harmony in the intergenerational relations? (250 words)
- 14. You are working as an Executive Engineer in the construction cell of a Municipal Corporation and are presently incharge of the construction of a flyover. There are two Junior Engineers under you who have the responsibility of day-to-day inspection of the site and are reporting to you, while you are finally reporting to the Chief Engineer who heads the cell. While the construction is heading towards completion, the Junior Engineers have been regularly reporting that all construction is taking place as per design specifications. However, in one of your surprise inspections, you have noticed some serious deviations and lacunae which, in your opinion, are likely to affect the safety of the flyover. Rectification of these lacunae at this stage would require a substantial amount of demolition and rework which will cause a tangible loss to the contractor and will also delay completion. There is a lot of public pressure on the Corporation to get this construction completed because of heavy traffic congestion in the area. When you brought this matter to the notice of the Chief Engineer, he advised you that in his opinion it is not a very serious lapse and may be ignored. He advised for further expediting the project for completion in time. However, you are convinced that this was a serious matter which might affect public safety and should not be left unaddressed.
- 15. What will you do in such a situation? Some of the options are given below. Evaluate the merits and demerits of each of these options and finally suggest what course of action you would like to take, giving reasons. (20 marks | 250 words)
 - a. Follow the advice of the Chief Engineer and go ahead.
 - b. bMake an exhaustive report of the situation bringing out all facts and analysis along with your own viewpoints stated clearly and seeks for written orders from the chief Engineer.
 - c. cCall for explanation from the Junior Engineers and issue orders to the contractor for necessary correction within targeted time.
 - d. Highlight the issue so that it reaches superiors above the Chief Engineer.
 - e. Considering the rigid attitude of the Chief Engineer, seek transfer from the project or report sick.
- 16. You are heading a leading technical institute of the country. The institute is planning to convene an interview panel shortly under your chairmanship for selection of the post of professors. A few days before the interview, you get a call from the Personal Secretary (PS) of a senior government functionary seeking your intervention in favour of the selection of a close relative of the functionary for this post. The PS also informs you that he is aware of the long pending and urgent proposals of your institute for grant of funds for modernization, which are awaiting the functionary's approval. He assures you that he would get these proposals cleared. (20 marks | 250 words)
 - a. What are the options available to you?
 - b. Evaluate each of these options and choose the option which you would adopt, giving reasons.
- 17. There is a disaster-prone State having frequent landslides, forest fires, cloudbursts, flash floods and earthquakes, etc. Some of these are seasonal and often unpredictable. The magnitude of the disaster is always unanticipated. During one of the seasons, a cloudburst caused devastating floods and landslides leading to high casualties. There was major damage to infrastructure like roads, bridges and power generating units. This led to more than 100000 pilgrims, tourists and other locals trapped across different routes and locations. The people trapped in your area of responsibility included senior citizens, patients in hospitals, women and children, hikers, tourists, ruling party's regional president along with his family, additional jail. As secretary State and prisoners in jail.
- 18. As a civil services officer of the State, what would be the order in which you would rescue these people and why? Give justifications.
- 19. You are a young, aspiring and sincere employee in a Government office working as an assistant, to the director of your deportment. Since you've joined recently, you need to learn and progress. Luckily your superior is very kind and ready to train you for your job. He is a very intelligent and well-informed person having knowledge of various departments. In short, you respect your book and are looking forward to learn a lot from him.



20. Since you've good tuning with the boss, he started depending on you. One day due to ill health he invited you at his place for finishing some urgent work. You reached his house and you heard shouting noises before you could ring the bell. You waited for a while. After entering, boss greeted you and explained the work. But you were constantly disturbed by the crying of a woman. At last, you inquired with the boss but his answer did not satisfy you. Next day, you were compelled to inquire further in the office and found out that his behavior is very had at home with his wife. He also heath up his wife.

- 21. His wife is not well educated and is a simple woman in comparison to her husband. You see that though your boss is a nice person in the office, he is engaged in domestic violence at home. In such a situation, you are left with the following options. Analyse each option with its consequences.
 - a. Just ignore thinking about it because it is their personal matter.
 - b. Report the case to the appropriate authority.
 - c. Your own innovative approach towards the situation. (250 words)
- 22. Suppose one of your close friends, who is also aspiring for civil services, comes to you for discussing some of the issues related to ethical conduct in public service. He raises the following points:
- 23. In the present times, when unethical environment is quite prevalent, individual attempts to stick to ethical principles may cause a lot of problems in one's career. It may also cause hardship to the family members as well as risk to one's life. Why should we not be pragmatic and follow the path of least resistance, and be happy with doing whatever good we can?
- 24. When so many people are adopting wrong means and are grossly harming the system, what difference would it make if only a small minority tries to be ethical? They are going to be rather ineffective and are bound to get frustrated.
- 25. If we become fussy about ethical considerations, will it not hamper the economic progress of our country? After all, in the present age of high competition, we cannot afford to be left behind in the race of development.
- 26. It is understandable that we should not get involved in grossly unethical practices, but giving and accepting small gratifications and doing small favours increases everybody's motivation. It also makes the system more efficient. What is wrong in adopting such practices?
 - a.Critically analyze the above viewpoints. On the basis of this analysis, what will be your advice to your friend? 250 words.
- 27. Question: You are running a Non Governmental Organization to educate orphans, beggars and other single/lonely child. Appreciating the work, Government of India sanctions a grant of Rs. 2 lakhs/year lapsable fund. But due to your commitment towards Civil service examination, you could only spend Rs. 50,000/- this year. A friend advises you not to return the remaining amount as it would result in labeling the NGO as inefficient and reduce the grant for next year. S/ he also suggests you to manipulate the accounts and use the remaining Rs.1, 50,000/- along with the next year's grant without misusing the purpose of the grant. So what is your stand?
- 28. Akash is running an NGO to help street children. He receives government grant of Rs.2 lakh rupees for a project to teach the "out of school" children, who work at tea-stalls, do boot-polishing etc. A year passes, but Akash managed to utilize only 50,000 rupees from the grant. Despite his best efforts, he couldn't convince many poor children or their families to join his NGO's program.
- 29. As per the grant rules, Akash has to return all the unspent money back to government by the end of March 31st. But his colleague Ravi suggests following:
 - a. If we honestly return Rs.1.5 lakh back, then government officials will think we are amateur, ineffective NGOs and they'll substantially reduce our grant for next year or even worse-they'll not give us any project next time!
 - b. We should take help of CA Kevin to manipulate our account books and show majority of the grant was utilized for education.
 - c. Many other NGOs do the same thing- there is no problem nobody will raise any objection, as long as we give 20% of the grant to SDM in charge of this project.



d. Although it sounds unethical but we won't use this money for personal needs, we'll use it on street children only. Hence our act is fully ethical and moral.

- 30. What should Akash do with the money?
- 31. Country B is called for resolving both border issue and invest in infrastructural development.
- 32. But a day before meeting Country B attacks A at border and kills 20 soldiers. What is the dilemma in this situation? What is your future course of action?
- 33. You are stranded in traffic in your car. You are driving the car. A poor girl lookingvery frail approaches you and start begging for money. Looking at her frail appearance, out of compassion, you take out your wallet to search for a ten Rupees note. The girl who is standing very near to you snatches the wallet and starts running. A man on a motorbike who see this act, catches the girl and starts beating her in full view of public. Now the traffic is moving and your car is in the middle of the road. What will you do in such a situation? Explain the course of action and reason?
- 34. Recently a peon was appointed in your office (DM office). He is illiterate and mentally not sound. Ever since his appointment he has been more of a 'burden' than any help in the office. He doesn't know any work. Staff in your office feel that their work is disturbed by his behaviour. The peon is always found to be talking either alone or with anyone he encounters. He is not obeying your staff's orders in the office.
- 35. He was appointed on sympathy grounds after his father's untimely death. His mother is ill and always bedridden. His income is the only source for his family now. He got the job after lobbying by a group representing his caste. He was appointed by your predecessor after he was pressurized by local MP. Some moves to remove him by your predecessor were met with public protests by a group representing his caste.
- 36. You are very strict and disciplined in your office. You are being respected in your district for your integrity and honesty. You come to know about the peon few days after you assume power. You have observed his behavior and found him to be unfit to continue in his job. The peon has no other relatives except his mother.
- 37. Identify your moral and professional responsibilities in this case study and explain how will you deal with the peon.
- 38. You are a district development officer, Panchayat has appointed part time teachers who are not of better quality and are accompanied on not working according to working hours. What steps would you take to resolve the issue?



PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Consider the following statements

- 1. The eight core industries comprise 60% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP)
- 2. The current base year of IIP is 2011-2012

Choose the correct statements from the option given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

2. Consider the following statements

- ELEVATE 100, is an initiative of the Department of Information Technology and Biotechnology, Government of Kerala.
- 2. Elevate 100 aims to provide a comprehensive entrepreneurship platform for startups.
- 3. The top 100 technology based startups chosen through a rigorous hunt across State will tap into a whopping sum of Rs.400 Cr of Government funds.

Choose the correct statements from the option given below

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 2 and 3
- C. 1 and 3
- D. All are correct

3. Consider the following statements

- 1. NHB Residex is a set of benchmarks that aims to track housing price indicators across Indian cities.
- NHB Residex is designed by a technical advisory committee comprising Government representatives, lenders and property market player.

Choose the correct statements from the option given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

- 4. Rajgir Mahotsav is celebrated in __:
 - A. Rajasthan
 - B. Bihar
 - C. Uttar Pradesh
 - D. Madhya Pradesh
- 5. Sangai Festival is celebrated in which among the following states of India?
 - A. Assam.
 - B. Manipur.
 - C. Bihar.
 - D. Karnataka.
- 6. Dasht-e Margo, also known as "Desert of Death", is located in which country?
 - A. Kazakhstan
 - B. Saudi Arabia
 - C. Afghanistan
 - D. China
- 7. India's first bullet train project "MAHSR" will be built with the help of which country?
 - A. China
 - B. Japan
 - C. Germany
 - D. France
- 8. Which Article of Indian Constitution incorporates the Common law doctrine of pleasure?
 - A. Article 123
 - B. Article 213
 - C. Article 310
 - D. Article 368
- 9. Which state government has launched its flagship health scheme "Care Companion Programme (CCP)"?
 - A. Punjab
 - B. Uttar Pradesh
 - C. Kerala
 - D. Manipur



- 10. The Emergency Provisions of Indian Constitution have been borrowed from:
 - A. Germany.
 - B. Japan.
 - C. USSR.
 - D. U.S.A.
- 11. Which state government has launched "Apni Gaddi Apna Rojgar" scheme for jobless youth?
 - A. Maharashtra
 - B. Punjab
 - C. Assam
 - D. Haryana
- 12. The Gangotri National Park (GNP) is located in which state?
 - A. Chhattisgarh
 - B. Bihar
 - C. Uttrakhand
 - D. West Bengal
- 13. Where is the headquarters of Dredging Corporation of India Limited??
 - A. Pune
 - B. New Delhi
 - C. Chennai
 - D. Visakhapatnam
- 14. Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution Mission (MAVEN) is a space probe developed to study the atmosphere of Mars. It has been developed by _?
 - A. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)
 - B. China National Space Administration (CNSA)
 - C. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
 - D. Russian Federal Space Agency (RFSA)
- 15. Jorwe culture, a Chalcolithic culture, was first discovered in which of the following states of India?
 - A. Maharashtra
 - B. Rajasthan
 - C. Gujarat
 - D. Jammu & Kashmir
- 16. Silver Tanka" and "Copper Jital" coins were introduced by:
 - A. Iltutmish
 - B. Abu Bakr Shah
 - C. Firuz Shah Tughlaq

- D. Sikander Lodi
- 17. NAVIC is an autonomous regional satellite navigation system that provides accurate
 - A. Real-time positioning
 - B. Timing services.
 - C. Both A and B
 - D. Neither A nor B
- 18. Shaphee Lanphee, a traditional textile fabric, is a GI product from which of the following states?
 - A. Assam
 - B. Manipur
 - C. Jammu & Kashmir
 - D. Andhra Pradesh
- 19. Raut Nacha is folk dance performed mainly by the tribal communities of which state?
 - A. Rajasthan.
 - B. Jammu & Kashmir.
 - C. Assam.
 - D. Chhattisgarh.
- 20. Which of the following protects the body against infectious disease and foreign invaders?
 - A. Leukocytes.
 - B. Red blood cells.
 - C. Endoplasmic reticulum (ER).
 - D. Golgi apparatus.
- 21. 'Project Dantak' refers to
 - A. The construction of road and telecommunications network by India's Border Roads Organisation, in Bhutan.
 - B. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's programme to set up dental clinics through PPP mode in every district.
 - C. The Income Tax Department's initiative to e-verify large cash deposits made during the window provided for depositing high-denomination currency notes with banks.
 - D. An India Post virtual museum showcasing all philatelic items associated with India's Men in Uniform.



- 22. The first Indian satellite built in our country, was named after a 5th Century A.D. astronomer. Which of the following is/are texts authored by this astronomer?
 - 1. Aryabhatibhashya
 - 2. Brihatsamhita
 - 3. Aryasiddhanta

Select the correct answer using the code given below

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 3 only

23. Consider the following statement with reference to Dhara Mustard Hybrid (DMH -11)

- 1. Transgenic mustard crop
- 2. Cross-pollinating plant.

Identify the correct statement

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

24. The base year for the new series of IIP, WPI data is

- A. 2004-04
- B. 2010-11
- C. 2011-12
- D. 2012-13

25. India's first bio refinery plant has set up in which of the following state?

- A. Andhra Pradesh
- B. Assam
- C. Tamil Nadu
- D. Maharashtra

26. Zonal council is

- A. A Constitutional Body
- B. A Statutory body
- C. Constituted by an executive order.
- D. None of the above

27. Interstate council is

- A. A Constitutional Body.
- B. A Statutory body.
- C. Constituted by an executive order.
- D. None of the above.

28. Consider the following statements

- 1. The Union Home Minister is the Chairman of each of Zonal Councils.
- 2. The Chief Ministers of the States included in each zone act as Vice-Chairman of the Zonal Council for that zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of two year at a time.

Identify the correct statement

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

29. Which Ministry releases WPI?

- A. Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- B. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
- C. Ministry of Finance.
- D. None of the above

30. Which ministry is responsible for implementation of Foreign Contribution of Regulation Act

- A. Ministry of Finance
- B. Ministry of Home affairs
- C. Ministry of Corporate affairs
- D. None of the above.

31. Doha Development Round is often in news. It relates to which of the following?

- A. Talks regarding international monetary system
- B. Talks regarding refugee crisis
- C. Talks at WTO regarding world trade
- D. None

32. Consider the following statements

- 1. Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) is a forprofit organisation formed to create a platform for all the concerned parties.
- The portal will be accessible to the central government which will track down every transaction on its end.



Identify the correct statement

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

33. Which among the following are groundwater pollutants

- 1. Fluoride
- 2. Arsenic
- 3. Chromium
- 4. Lead

Choose the correct statements from the option given below

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 1,2 and 4
- C. 1,2 and 3
- D. All of the above

34. Which among the following with reference to XDR-TB

- XDR-TB is resistant to second-line drugs
- Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR TB) is a rare type of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR TB) that is resistant to isoniazid and rifampin.

Choose the correct statements from the option given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2
- 35. Scientists who recently created a virtual black hole in the lab claimed to have observed for the first time a phenomenon predicted by British physicist Stephen Hawking more than thirty years ago according to which
 - A. some particles can escape black holes.
 - B. black holes are spheres (3-D) and not twodimensional as was earlier believed.
 - C. black holes cannot absorb sound waves classified as hyper-frequency waves.
 - D. Black holes can weaken and eventually disappear/collapse.

36. Consider the statements:

- Aadhaar is a 10 digit unique-identity number issued to all Indian residents based on their biometric and demographic data.
- 2. Aadhaar is not a proof of citizenship.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None

37. Consider the statements

- Competition Commission of India is a constitutional body
- 2. It is responsible for enforcing The Competition Act, 2002 throughout India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None

38. Indian manufacturers have supplied EVMs to

- A. Sri Lanka
- B. Myanmar
- C. Bangladesh
- D. Bhutan

39. Electronic Voting Machine is manufactured in India by

- A. BEL only
- B. Electronics Corporation of India only.
- C. Both BEL and Electronic Corporation of India
- D. None of the above

40. Consider the statements

- 1. Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction summit is being held at Mexico.
- 2. Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is global forum for reviewing of progress in the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None



41. The defence acquisition council is headed by

- A. National Security Adviser
- B. Prime Minister
- C. President of India
- D. Defence Minister

42. The Sakewa Festival has recently celebrated in which state?

- A. Jharkhand
- B. Arunachal Pradesh
- C. Sikkim
- D. Manipur

43. The Navegaon National Park is located in which state?

- A. Uttar Pradesh
- B. West Bengal
- C. Gujarat
- D. Maharashtra

44. Which of the following parts of constitution explicitly mentions that India is a secular state?

- A. Preamble
- B. Fundamental Rights
- C. Directive Principles of state policy
- D. The Union

45. With reference to the State Legislative Council in India, which among the following statements is / are correct?

- 1. The Legislative Council is a continuing House & two-third of the members retire in two years.
- 2. Members of local bodies elect one-third of the total number of members of the legislative council
- If a state legislative council is to be created or abolished, a resolution to that effect is to be first passed by the State legislature by a two-third majority.

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- A. Only 1 & 2
- B. Only 2 & 3
- C. Only 1 & 3
- D. 1, 2 & 3

46. Mushroom rocks or Rock pedestals or Zeugen are one of the most striking manifestations of ___?

- A. Water Erosion
- B. Wind Erosion
- C. Gravity Erosion
- D. River Deposition

47. Choose the correct statement with reference to Kani maranjandu which was in news recently.

- A. It is a tree dwelling crab species.
- B. It is a terrestrial crab species.
- C. The species is named after Kani tribe in Kerala.
- D. Both A and C

48. Consider the following statement with reference to Uttarayan Festival which was in news recently.

- A. It is an International Kite festival held at Ahmadabad.
- B. The idea of flying kites to celebrate Uttrayan was introduced by Muslims from Persia.
- C. Both A and B.
- D. Neither A nor B.

49. What do you mean by Masala Bond?.

- A. Masala bonds are bonds issued outside India but denominated in Indian Rupees.
- B. Masala bonds are bonds issued outside India but denominated in US dollars.
- C. Masala bonds are bonds issued outside India but denominated in UK dollars.
- D. None of the above.

50. Consider the statements about Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development(OECD)

- 1. It is UN agency.
- 2. It's head quarter is at New York.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None

51. Sometimes Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) in news. What are they?

- A. Resolving NPA crisis in banking sector
- B. Tax avoidance strategy
- C. Free movement of skilled professional across countries
- D. Free movement of goods across countries



- 52. The famous biennial Thakurani Jatra festival was recently held in
 - A. Odisha
 - B. Telangana
 - C. Assam
 - D. Meghalaya
- 53. Which one of the following industry doesn't fall into the category of core industries identified by IIP?
 - A. Coal
 - B. Cement
 - C. Natural Gas
 - D. Mining
- 54. Consider the following statements
 - IIP data is compiled by National sample survey office
 - 2. 2004-05 is the present base year for compiling IIP data

Choose the correct statements from the option given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2
- 55. Probiotics are
 - A. Bacterial products having healing or curative power
 - B. Fungal products having healing or curative power
 - C. Archaea products having curing or healing power
 - D. None of the above
- 56. India's first micro forest will be built in which state?
 - A. Madhya Pradesh
 - B. West Bengal
 - C. Uttar Pradesh
 - D. Chattisgarh
- 57. Which fish has been officially declared as one of the rarest species of fish in the world by the Marine Living Resources Department of Andhra University?
 - A. Rohu
 - B. Rayichapalu
 - C. Catla
 - D. Tengra

- 58. The "Preservation, protection and improvement of stock and prevention of animal diseases, veterinary training and practice" comes under which list of Constitution of India?
 - A. State list
 - B. Union List
 - C. Concurrent List
 - D. None of the above
- 59. The State shall endeavour to organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle is mentioned in which part of the constitution?
 - A. Fundamental duties
 - B. Union list
 - C. Concurrent list
 - D. Directive Principles of State Policy
- 60. As per NREGA, the minimum number of days within which the workers wages must be paid after due completion of tasks is
 - A. 30 days
 - B. 25 days
 - C. 15 days
 - D. 10days
- 61. What is xenotranplantation?
 - A. The process of grafting or transplanting organs or tissues between members of different species.
 - B. The process of grafting or transplanting organs or tissues between members of same species.
 - C. The process of grafting or transplanting organs or tissues in plants.
 - D. None of the above.
- 62. Which nationwide campaign has been launched by the Union Government to protect elephants?
 - A. Gaj Kesari Yatra
 - B. Gajanan Yatra
 - C. Gajraj Yatra
 - D. Gaj Yatra
- 63. The Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary (GSWS) is located in which state?
 - A. Uttrakhand
 - B. Tamil Nadu
 - C. Gujarat



D. Chhattisgarh

64. Identify the correct statement with reference to Connshing syndrome

- A. Connshing syndrome is related to Hypertension
- B. Connshing syndrome is related to Hypotension.
- C. Connshing syndrome is linked to over production of stress hormone cortisol
- D. Both A and C.

65. Consider the following statements

- 1. Higher aerosol loading results in delayed but more rainfall over Central and Northern India.
- 2. Higher aerosol loading results in earlier but less rainfall over Central and Northern India.
- 3. Aerosol has no effect on the monsoon

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 2 and 3 only

66. In H1N1 virus , what do H and N stands for

- A. Haemagglutinin and Neuraminidase
- B. Haemoglobulin and Neuraminidase
- C. Haemagglutinin and Neuroglutin
- D. None of the above

67. Consider the following statements

- Appointments of persons to be, and the posting and promotion of, district judges in any State shall be made by the Governor of the State in consultation with the Supreme Court.
- A person not already in the service of the Union or of the State shall only be eligible to be appointed a district judge if he has been for not less than seven years an advocate or a pleader and is recommended by the Supreme Court for appointment.

Identify the correct statements from the options given below:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

68. Consider the following statements

- 1. India is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention on Refugees.
- 2. India is a signatory to the 1967 Protocol related to the Convention on Refugees.

Identify the correct statements from the options given below:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

69. Consider the following statements

- The government fixes ceiling prices of all drugs under the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM).
- 2. Price fixation of drugs in NLEM is carried out by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA).

Identify the correct statements from the options given below:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

70. Consider the following statements

- The Government of India has recently announced that only electric vehicles (EVs) will be sold in India from 2020
- 2. 95% of global lithium production comes from Argentina, Australia, Chile and China.

Identify the correct statements from the options given below:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

71. The Mrugavani National Park (MNP) is located in which state?

- A. Chattisgarh
- B. Karnataka
- C. Tamil Nadu
- D. Telangana



72. Consider the following statements

- The objective of the National Food Security Mission is to increase production of rice, wheat and pulses only
- Production of horticulture crops have outpaced the production of food-grains consistently since 2012-13

Identify the correct statements from the options given below:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

73. Consider the statements about Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

- 1. It is an intergovernmental organization based in The Hague, Netherlands.
- 2. The organisation was awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None

74. Consider the following statement with reference to Swadesh Darshan Scheme.

- 1. It is completely funded by Central government
- 2. Ministry of tourism is the implementing agency
- 3. It has two components PRASAD and Swadeshi Darshan under its ambit.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only2
- C. 1 and 3
- D. All are correct

75. Choose the correct circuits that comes under thematic tourism circuit - Swadesh darshan Scheme.

- 1. North-East India Circuit
- 2. Buddhist Circuit
- 3. Himalayan Circuit
- 4. South Indian Circuit

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- A. 1,2 and 4
- B. 1 and 3
- C. 1,2 and 3
- D. All are correct

76. Which of the following currencies is not included in the Special Drawing Rights (SDR) Currency Basket?

- A. Indian Rupee
- B. British Pound
- C. Japanese Yen
- D. Chinese Renminbi

77. Which of the following industries is the not covered in the Index of Eight Core Industries?

- A. Electricity
- B. Crude Oil
- C. Natural Gas
- D. Pharmaceutical

78. Which of the following straits connect Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean?

- A. Strait of Hormuz
- B. Strait of Gibraltar
- C. Bosporus Strait
- D. Dover Strait

79. Which of the following words is not included in the Preamble?

- A. Equality
- B. Liberty
- C. Dignity
- D. Justice

80. Acharanga Sutra is associated with which of the following religions?

- A. Jainism
- B. Buddhism
- C. Sikhism
- D. Ayyavazhi



- 81. Raut Nacha is folk dance performed mainly by the tribal communities of which state?
 - A. Rajasthan
 - B. Jammu & Kashmir
 - C. Assam
 - D. Chhattisgarh
- 82. Ghumura is an ancient folk dance that originated in which of the following states?
 - A. Odisha.
 - B. Madhya Pradesh.
 - C. Rajasthan.
 - D. Karnataka.
- 83. Hemoglobin in humans has the highest affinity for which of the following gases?
 - A. Methane
 - B. Carbon Monoxide
 - C. Nitrous oxide
 - D. Carbon dioxide
- 84. Which of the following countries does not share its border with Black Sea?
 - A. Georgia
 - B. Bulgaria
 - C. Belarus
 - D. Turkey
- 85. The Nitisara of Kamandaka, also known as the Kamandakiya-Nitisara, was composed during the period of:
 - A. Satavahana dynasty
 - B. Gupta dynasty
 - C. Kalachuri dynasty
 - D. Nanda dynasty
- 86. IUCN's RED DATA book classifies Celebes crested macaque as:
 - A. Critically endangered species
 - B. Vulnerable species
 - C. Least concerned species
 - D. None of the above.

- 87. Consider the following statement with reference to Uttarayan Festival which was news recently
 - A. It is an International Kite festival held at Ahmadabad.
 - B. The idea of flying kites to celebrate Uttrayan was introduced by Muslims from Persia.
 - C. Both a and b.
 - D. Neither a nor b.
- 88. Which among the following country has signed but not ratified The World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
 - A. U.S
 - B. U.K
 - C. India
 - D. Pakistan
- 89. Which of the following statements are correct with respect to TAPI pipeline
 - 1. The Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline (TAPI), also known as Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline
 - 2. It is a natural gas pipeline being developed by the Asian Development Bank

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None of the above
- 90. Consider the following statement with reference to Swadesh Darshan Scheme
 - 1. Funding pattern of the program is 75:25 (Center:State)
 - 2. Ministry of tourism is the implementing agency
 - 3. it has two components PRASAD and Swadeshi Darshan under its ambit.

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- A. Only 1
- B. Only2
- C. 2 and 3
- D. All are correct
- 91. Choose the correct statement with reference to Kani maranjandu which was in news recently.
 - A. It is a tree dwelling crab species.
 - B. It is a terrestrial crab species.
 - C. The species is named after Kani tribe in Kerala.
 - D. Both a and c



92. Exercise EKUVERIN is a joint military exercise between

- A. India and Sri Lanka
- B. Sri Lanka and Maldives
- C. India and Seychelles
- D. India and Maldives

93. Bedaquiline is a drug used to treat:

- A. Cancer
- B. Tuberculosis
- C. Japanese Encephalitis
- D. None of the above

94. The 'Zero Effect Zero defect' idea aims to achieve:

- A. Production mechanism where products have no effects
- B. Production process that ensure maximum safety for shop floor workers
- C. Both A and B
- D. None of the above

95. Consider the following statement with reference to Gasification process:

- 1. Gasification is a process that converts organic or fossil fuel based carbonaceous materials into carbon monoxide, hydrogen and carbon dioxide.
- 2. It produces a gas known as Syngas.

Choose the correct statement:

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

96. Consider the following statement with reference to Mission Kakatiya , which was in news recently:

- 1. It is a flagship programme of AndraPradesh State government.
- 2. It is a poverty eradication programme.

Choose the correct statement:

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

97. Consider the following statement with reference to a device Genexpert which was in news recently.

- 1. Genexpert can run molecular test.
- 2. It can diagnose TB and HIV infections.
- 3. The device size is equivalent to that of a microwave oven

Choose the correct statement:

- A. 1 only.
- B. 1 and 2 only.
- C. 1 and 3 only.
- D. All are correct.

98. Consider the following statement with reference to Global Entry Programme which was in news recently

- 1. India recently signed to join this programme.
- 2. This scheme will allow expedited entry into the US to all travellers from India.

Choose the correct statement

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1 and 2 only
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

99. Consider the following statement with reference to CERT-In which was in news recently

- 1. The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) is an office within the Ministry of defense.
- 2. It is the nodal agency to deal with cyber security threats like hacking and phishing.

Choose the correct statement

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1 and 2 only
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

100. Consider the following statement with reference to Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) which was in news recently

- 1. The GES is a personal initiative of US President Barack Obama to bring entrepreneurs from across the globe on one platform.
- 2. The 2017 Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) will be hosted by China.

Choose the correct statement

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1 and 2 only
- D. Neither 1 nor 2



101. Wildlife Crime Control Bureau comes under which ministry?

- A. Ministry of Environment and Forests
- B. Ministry of Home Affairs
- C. Ministry of Defense
- D. None of the Above

102. Consider the following statement with reference to Non-Banking Finance Company

- 1. NBFC cannot accept demand deposits
- NBFCs do not form part of the payment and settlement system
- Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is available to depositors of NBFCs

Choose the correct statements

- A. 1 and 3
- B. 1 and 2
- C. 2 and 3
- D. All are correct

103. Consider the following statement with reference to Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)

- 1. RBI governor is the Chairperson of FSDC
- 2. FSDC is a statutory body

Choose the correct statements

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

104.In which of the following States is lion-tailed macaque found in its natural habitat?

- 1. Tamil Nadu
- 2. Kerala
- 3. Karnataka
- 4. Andhra Pradesh

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1, 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

105. In which of the following States is Nilgiri Langur found in its natural habitat?

- 1. Tamil Nadu
- 2. Kerala
- 3. Karnataka
- 4. Andhra Pradesh

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1, 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

106. Consider the following statement with reference to Nitaqat scheme

- 1. The scheme refers to the replacement of foreign workers with Saudi nationals in the public sector
- 2. It is the official national policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Choose the correct statements.

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

107.The 'Red Data Books' published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) contain lists of

- 1. Endemic plant and animal species present in the biodiversity hotspots.
- 2. Threatened plant and animal species.
- 3. Protected sites for conservation of nature & natural resources in various countries.

Which of the statement given above is/are incorrect?

- A. 1 & 3
- B. 2 only
- C. 2&3
- D. 3 only

108. Which of the following statements with respect to IUCN are correct?

- 1. IUCN is an NGO.
- 2. It publishes Red data book.
- 3. IUCN contains a list of 'Threatened species' (vulnerable, endangered and critically endangered).

Select the correct option

- A. 1 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. All the above

109. Which of the following Indian species under IUCN are critically endangered?

- 1. Himalayan Red/Brown bear
- 2. Elvira rat
- 3. Bornean Orangutan
- 4. Sumatran Rhinos

Select the correct options

- A. 4 only
- B. 1 and 2
- C. 1, 2 and 4
- D. All the above

110. Choose the correct statement with reference to Committee of Privileges

- A. The Lok Sabha committee has 15 members, while Rajya Sabha committee has 10 members.
- B. The Lok Sabha committee has 10 members, while Rajya Sabha committee has 15 members.
- C. The Lok Sabha committee has 25 members, while Rajya Sabha committee has 10 members.
- D. The Lok Sabha committee has 10 members and even Rajya Sabha committee has 10 members.

111. Consider the following statement

- 1. ASEAN is India's fifth largest trading partner.
- India has suffered a trade deficit in respect of few ASEAN members

Identify the Incorrect statement from the options given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

112. Critically endangered Markhor is native to

- A. Hirpora Wildlife Sanctuary
- B. Hemis National Park
- C. Dachigam National Park
- D. None of the above.

113. White-bellied heron is a

- A. Critically Endangered species as per IUCN's Red data book
- B. Endangered species as per IUCN's Red data book
- C. Nearly Threatened species as per IUCN's Red data book
- D. None of the above

114.The Government enacted the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas(PESA) Act in 1996. Which one of the following is not identified as its objective?

- A. To provide self-governance
- B. To recognize traditional rights
- C. To create autonomous regions in tribal areas
- D. To free tribal people from exploitation

115. According to the Constitution of India, which of the following are fundamental for the governance of the country?

- A. Fundamental Rights
- B. Fundamental Duties
- C. Directive Principles of State Policy
- D. Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties.

116.A President's rule can be imposed in a state under the provisions of:

- 1. Article 356
- 2. Article 360
- 3. Article 352
- 4. Article 365

Choose the correct option from the options given below

- A. Only 1
- B. 1 and 3
- C. 1 and 4
- D. 1 and 2



117. Consider the following statements,

- The Gulf Co-operation Council consists of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Iran as its member states.
- 2. The GCC is headquartered in Doha, Qatar.

Which of the above statements is/are true?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

118.Internet of Things, which is frequently in news, refers to?

- A. A UN mission to inter-connect the world and reach out to remote unconnected corners of the world.
- B. It is the inter-networking of physical devices, vehicles, buildings, and other items embedded with electronics, software, sensors, actuators, and network connectivity which enable these objects to collect and exchange data.
- C. A proposal of the United States government to democratise internet governance.
- D. None of the above.

119. Indian agriculture is termed to be an Intensive Subsistence Farming type. What are the characteristics that have made Indian agriculture to be categorized into that type?

- 1. Very high population density.
- 2. Labour intensive farming.
- 3. Lower yield of production in terms of per capita labour force.
- 4. Very small and fragmented land holdings.
- 5. Usage of farm machinery.

Choose the correct code from the following

- A. 1, 2, 3 only
- B. 1, 2, 3, 4 only
- C. 2, 3, 4 only
- D. All the above

120.India has frequently voted against Sri Lanka at which of the following international organisations?

- A. United Nations Human Rights Commission
- B. United Nations Security Council
- C. United Nations High Commission for Refugees
- D. None of the above.

121. Consider the following statements,

- The NITI Aayog has the Prime Minister as its chairperson and four ex-officio members of the Union Council of Ministers.
- The Governing Council is composed of Chief Ministers of all States (and Delhi and Puducherry) and Lieutenant Governors of remaining Union Territories.

Which of the above statements is/are true?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

122. Which of the following satellites is used by ISRO for monitoring crop acreage?

- A. IRNSS
- B. RISAT
- C. Resourcesat-2A
- D. Megha-Tropiques

123.India has imported the Hawk advanced jet trainer from which of the following countries?

- A. France
- B. Britain
- C. USA
- D. Russia

124. Which of the following articles in the Indian Constitution deal specifically with Jammu & Kashmir?

- 1. Article 368
- 2. Article 370
- 3. Article 352
- 4. Article 35A

Choose the correct code from the following

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 4 only
- D. all the above

125. Hurricane Harvey, the most powerful to hit the United States in 13 years, has been classified as:

- A. Category 1 storm
- B. Category 2 storm
- C. Category 3 storm
- D. Category 4 storm



- 126. Which city public transport system has been recognized as the country's first technology-driven public transport system which has become "smart, safe, efficient" and beneficial to lakhs of people across the city according to the recent World Bank report?:
 - A. Bengaluru
 - B. Mumbai
 - C. Hyderabad
 - D. Mysuru
- 127. Which of the following is/are used in cloud seeding:
 - A. silver iodide
 - B. potassium iodide
 - C. dry ice (solid carbon dioxide)
 - D. All of the above
- 128. Natural habitat of the common bonnet monkey is:
 - A. North India
 - B. North east India
 - C. Western India
 - D. South India
- 129.BRT wildlife sanctuary is located in which of the following states?
 - A. Maharashtra
 - B. Karnataka
 - C. Kerala
 - D. Andhra Pradesh
- 130. The Makran Trench is located in
 - A. Arabian Sea
 - B. Bay of Bengal
 - C. Indian Ocean
 - D. Pacific Ocean
- 131. Seniority at the Supreme court court is determined by age
 - A. Age
 - B. The date a judge was appointed to the High Court or any other court.
 - C. The date a judge was appointed to the Supreme Court.
 - D. None of the above

- 132. Minocycline, a drug which was in news recently can be a potential drug to treat:
 - A. Cholera
 - B. Dengue
 - C. H1N1
 - D. Japanese encephalitis
- 133. Once appointed, the Chief Justice remains in office until the age of
 - A. 60 years
 - B. 58years
 - C. 62 years
 - D. 65 years
- 134. Contamination of drinking water with which of the following causes Blackfoot disease (BFD)?
 - A. Nitrates
 - B. Arsenic
 - C. Mercury
 - D. Cadmium
- 135. Which of the following make the components of India's forex reserves?
 - 1. Reverse tranche of World Bank
 - 2. Gold
 - 3. Special drawing Rights
 - 4. Foreign currencies
 - Select the correct options
 - A. 4 only
 - B. 1 and 2
 - C. 1, 2 and 4
 - D. All the above
- 136. Consider the following statements
 - 1. Influenza A (H1N1) virus is the subtype of influenza A virus that was the most common cause of human influenza in 2009.
 - 2. H1N1 flu is also known as swine flu caused by swine influenza virus that is endemic in pigs.
 - Select the correct options
 - A. 4 only
 - B. 1 and 2
 - C. 1, 2 and 4
 - D. All the above.



137. The inter-state council consists of

- 1. Prime Minister
- 2. Chief Ministers of all states
- 3. Chief Ministers of all UT's with legislatures
- 4. Eight union cabinet ministers
- 5. Administrators of UT's

Select the correct options

- A. 1,2,3,4 and 5
- B. 1,2,3 and 4
- C. 1,2 and 3
- D. 1,2,3 and 5

138. Which of the following articles under Part 3 of the constitution safeguard the minority educational institution?

- 1. Article 29
- 2. Article 15
- 3. Article 30
- 4. All the above

Select the correct options

- A. 1 only
- B. 1 and 3
- C. 2 and 3
- D. All the above

139. Consider the following statements

- Monaziteisanimportantoreforthorium,lanthanum, and cerium
- 2. India, Madagascar, and South Africa have large deposits of monazite sands.
- The deposits in India are particularly rich in monazite

Select the correct options

- A. 1 and 3
- B. 1 and 2
- C. 2 and 3
- D. All are correct

140. The word "Budget" is mentioned in which of the following Article of Indian Constitution

- A. Article, 109
- B. Article.112
- C. Article.265
- D. Article.256

141.The ultimate responsibility of taking due action to the comments of the C & AG vests with:

- A. President Of India
- B. Supreme Court
- C. Parliament
- D. National Development Council

142. Sargasso Sea is characterized by

- A. Very cold water
- B. Very warm water
- C. Highly saline water
- D. Typical marine vegetation

143. Which among the following depicts the correct meaning of the term Jins-i-kamil concerning crops in Mughal India?

- A. Paddy Crop
- B. Cash Crop
- C. Coarse Crop
- D. Crop grown in Arid region

144. Arsenic present in groundwater can be partially removed

- A. Along with removal of iron by precipitation/ coagulation method if iron is also present in the water
- B. On boiling even if iron is absent in the water
- C. On UV-treatment
- D. On filtration even if iron is absent in the water

145. Which of the following are not Natural UNESCO World Heritage sites?

- A. Sundarbans National Park
- B. Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks
- C. Group of Monuments at Hampi
- D. Keoladeo National Park

146. Which of the following criteria are to be met to be included in the UNESCO world Heritage sites list?

- A. Should represent a masterpiece of human creative genius
- B. Should contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.
- C. Should contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance
- D. All the above.



147. Consider the following statements

- 1. Gobindobhog is a sweet variety of Bengal.
- 2. Gobindobhog has recently been given the Geographical indicator tag.

Select the correct option

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None of the above

148. Identify the correct statements with respect to the GI Tag

- A. Gl is covered under the Intellectual Property Rights and the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.
- B. A GI tag certifies the origin of a product or produce from a particular region as the quality or other features of the product is attributable only to the place of its origin.
- C. The tag helps farmers or manufacturers, as the case may be, to get a better price in the market.
- D. All the above.

149. Identify the incorrect statements

- 1. Nuakhai is the chief festival of Western Odisha.
- 2. It is the harvest festival of Odisha wherein farmers are in possession of new rice of the season.

Select the correct option

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None of the above

150.Consider the following statements with respect to YUVA initiative

- YUVA is a skill development program and an initiative by Delhi Police under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
- 'YUVA' initiative by Delhi Police aims to connect with youth by upgrading their skill as per their competencies.

Select the correct option

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None of the above

151.Identify the correct statements with respect to Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna' (PMKVY)

- A. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the flagship outcome-based skill training scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- B. Its objective is to enable and mobilize a large number of Indian youth to take up outcome based skill training and become employable and earn their livelihood.
- C. Both are correct
- D. Both are incorrect

152. Identify the correct statements

- Global Retirement Index is created by French asset management company Natixis Global.
- Index ranks countries on the basis of four factors

 the material means to live comfortably in retirement; access to quality financial services to help preserve savings value and maximize income; access to quality health services; and a clean and safe environment.

Select the correct option

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None of the above

153. Consider the following statements

- 1. Article 164, provided for limiting the number of ministers in the state cabinet.
- Article 164 was inserted in the Constitution based on the recommendation of the National Commission for Review of the Working of the Constitution headed by former Chief Justice of India, M.N. Venkatachaliah

Choose the correct statements

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

154. Consider the following statements

- 1. Bromeliads can be found at altitudes from sea level to 4200 meters, from rainforests to deserts.
- 2. Pineapple is a bromeliads

Choose the correct statements

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither



155. Temperate grasslands in Argentina is popularly known as

- A. Pamaps
- B. Prairie
- C. Veld
- D. Steppe

156. The Murlen National Park (MNP) is located in which state?

- A. Odisha
- B. Karnataka
- C. Mizoram
- D. Punjab

157. Consider the following statements

- Thorium is thrice as abundant as Uranium in Earth's crust
- 2. Thorium is difficult to weaponries

Select the correct option

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

158. Which of the following National Parks are located in the state of Jammu and Kashmir?

- 1. Pin valley National Park.
- 2. Salim Ali National park
- 3. Dachingham National Park
- 4. Kishtwar National Park

Select the correct option

- A. 1 only
- B. 1, 2 and 3
- C. 2 and 4
- D. 2, 3 and 4

159. Which of the following statements are incorrect with respect to the UDAN scheme?

- UDAN is an innovative scheme to develop the regional aviation market. It is a market-based mechanism in which airlines bid for seat subsidies.
- Government will provide subsidy to airlines for first five years of operations when they will have exclusive flying rights on the selected routes.

Select the correct option

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2



ANSWER KEYS

Question No	Answer Keys
1.	В
2.	В
3.	С
4.	В
5.	В
6.	С
7.	В
8.	С
9.	A
10.	A
11.	В
12.	С
13.	D
14.	С
15.	A
16.	A
17.	С
18.	В
19.	D
20.	A
21.	A
22.	D
23.	А
24.	С
25.	D

Question No	Answer Keys
26.	В
27.	A
28.	A
29.	A
30.	В
31.	С
32.	В
33.	D
34.	С
35.	A
36.	В
37.	В
38.	D
39.	С
40.	С
41.	D
42.	С
43.	С
44.	A
45.	В
46.	В
47.	D
 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 	С
49.	A
50.	D



Question No	Answer Keys
51.	В
52.	A
53.	D
54.	В
55.	A
56.	D
57.	В
58.	A
59.	D
60.	С
61.	A
62.	D
63.	В
64.	D
65.	A
66.	A
67.	D
68.	A
69.	С
70.	В
71.	D
72.	С
73.	D
74. 75.	D
75.	С

Question No	Answer Keys
76.	А
77.	D
78.	В
79.	С
80.	A
81.	D
82.	A
83.	В
84.	С
85.	В
86.	A
87.	D
88.	A
89.	С
90.	С
91.	D
92.	D
93.	В
94.	А
95.	С
96.	D
97.	D
98.	A
99.	В
100.	A



Question No	Answer Keys
101.	А
102.	В
103.	D
104.	A
105.	A
106.	В
107.	A
108.	D
109.	С
110.	A
111.	A
112.	A
113.	A
114.	С
115.	С
116.	С
117.	D
118.	В
119.	В
120.	A
121.	С
122.	С
123.	В
124.	С
125.	D

Question No	Answer Keys
126.	D
127.	D
128.	D
129.	В
130.	A
131.	С
132.	D
133.	D
134.	В
135.	В
136.	D
137.	С
138.	В
139.	D
140.	В
141.	С
142.	D
143.	В
144.	A
145.	С
146.	D
147.	В
148.	D
149.	D
150.	С



Question No	Answer Keys
151.	С
152.	С
153.	С
154.	С
155.	А
156.	С
157.	С
158.	D
159.	А



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