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The Learning App

**IAS**

AUGUST - 2018

# Kerala Floods

Nature's fury – Fisher Men and Army double up as Saviours



**Rupee  
Depreciation**

Internal Turbulence  
or Global Impact?

**E-cigarettes**

The END of  
new-age smoking

**Article 35A**

People's will vs Politics vs  
Constitutional Mandate

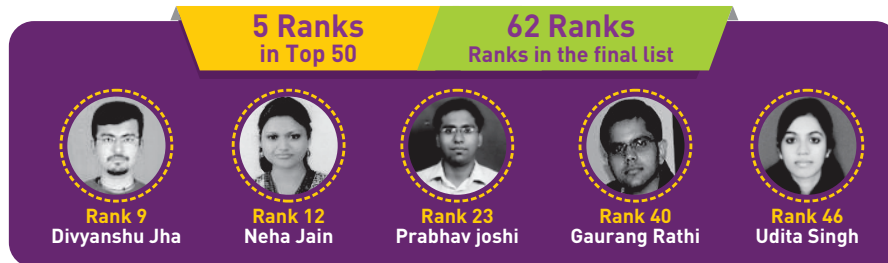
**Gaganyaan**

India's human space  
flight Programme

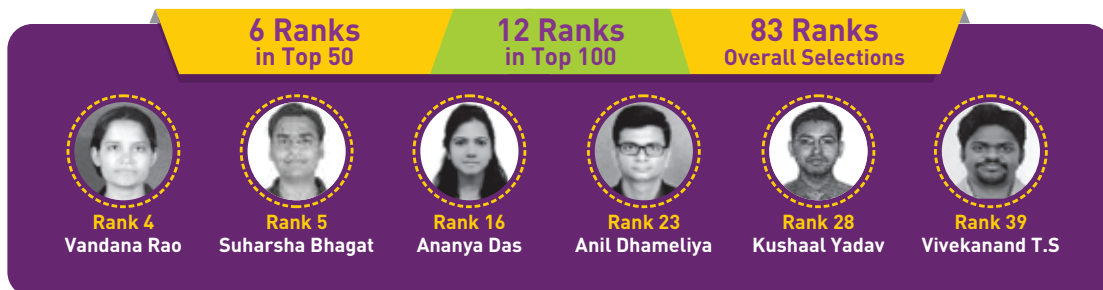
UPSC MONTHLY MAGAZINE

# RESULTS

## Incredible results in IAS 2013



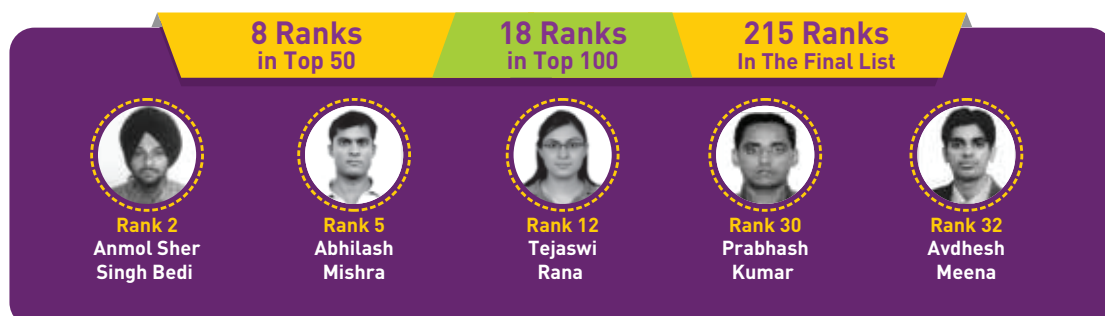
## We broke our past record in IAS 2014



## We did it again in IAS 2015



## And we've done it yet again in IAS 2016





# And we've done it yet again in IAS 2017

**5 Ranks  
in Top 10**

**34 Ranks  
in Top 100**

**236 Ranks  
In The Final List**



**Rank 3**  
Sachin  
Gupta



**Rank 6**  
Koya sree  
Harsha



**Rank 8**  
Anubhav  
Singh



**Rank 9**  
Saumya  
Sharma



**Rank 10**  
Abhishek  
Surana



Ashima  
Mittal  
Rank-12



Abhijeet  
Sinha  
Rank-19



Varjeet  
Walia  
Rank-21



Keerthi  
Vasan V  
Rank-29



Utsav  
Gautam  
Rank-33



Gaurav  
Kumar  
Rank-34



Abhilash  
Baranwal  
Rank-44



Vikramaditya  
Singh Malik  
Rank-48



Vishal  
Mishra  
Rank-49



Sambit  
Mishra  
Rank-51



Bodke  
Digvijay Govind  
Rank-54



Akshat  
Kaushal  
Rank-55



Jagdish  
Chelani  
Rank-57



Hirani  
Adityavikram  
Rank-60



Swapneel  
Paul  
Rank-64



Jyoti  
Sharma  
Rank-75



Pushp  
Lata  
Rank-80



Amol  
Srivastava  
Rank-83



Prateek  
Jain  
Rank-86



Amilineni  
Bhargav Teja  
Rank-88



Sangh  
Priy  
Rank-92



Rahul  
Shinde  
Rank-95



Kathawate  
Mayur Ashok  
Rank-96



Vaibhava  
Srivastava  
Rank-98



Videh  
Khare  
Rank-99



Plash  
Bansal  
Rank-112



Shilpa  
Singh  
Rank-116



Deepanshu  
Khurana  
Rank-120



Saurabh  
Sabhlok  
Rank-124



Abhimanyu  
Manglik  
Rank-128



Akash  
Bansal  
Rank-130



Abinash  
Kumar  
Rank-139



Sameer  
Saurabh  
Rank-142



Jyeshtha  
Maitrei  
Rank-156



Aaditya  
Mishra  
Rank-158



Ram  
Prakash  
Rank-162



Mainak  
Ghosh  
Rank-183



Archi Virendra  
Chandak  
Rank-184



Ankit  
Yadav  
Rank-191



Saurabh  
Gupta  
Rank-192



Kritika  
Jain  
Rank-197



Nahar Pranay  
Prakash  
Rank-199



Siddhant  
Jain  
Rank-201



Shubham  
Agarwal  
Rank-202



Nikita  
Khattar  
Rank-208



Kruti M  
Patel  
Rank-218



Smit  
Lodha  
Rank-219



Deepesh  
Kedia  
Rank-221



Ankit  
Jain  
Rank-222



Saurabh  
Baranwal  
Rank-235



Rajat R  
Chaturvedi  
Rank-237



Harsh  
Singh  
Rank-244



Ghuge Rohan  
Bapurao  
Rank-249



Bharat  
Mittal  
Rank-256



Dinesh Kumar  
Yadav  
Rank-257



Govind  
Mohan  
Rank-260



Shanu  
Dimri  
Rank-270



Shiv Narayan  
Sharma  
Rank-278



Sanjay  
Kumar  
Rank-279



Nikhil  
Singh  
Rank-280



Tuhin  
Sinha  
Rank-281



Vijaypal  
Bishnoi  
Rank-290



Shubhank  
Mishra  
Rank-291



Shakti Mohan  
Avasthy  
Rank-296



Lavanya  
Gupta  
Rank-298



Jagtap Gagdish  
Shankar  
Rank-304



Chetan  
Sharma  
Rank-305



Amandeep  
Dhanoa  
Rank-311



Budumajji Satya  
Prasad  
Rank-313



Aman  
Bishla  
Rank-314



Mohd Nooh  
Siddiqui  
Rank-326



Apurv  
Chauhan  
Rank-328

# CONTENT

CHAPTER	PAGE
<b>1. POLITY</b>	<b>07</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Article 35A</li> <li>Bar Council Of India (BCI)</li> <li>Bombay Prevention Of Begging Act</li> <li>Council Conundrum</li> <li>Law Commission Calls For Re-Think On Sedition Clause</li> <li>'NOTA' Scrapped By SC</li> <li>Personal Data Protection Bill 2018- Draft</li> <li>Poll Panel To Brainstorm On Key Issues               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Campaign silence during the last 48 hours before the elections</li> <li>Umesh Sinha Committee</li> <li>Ceiling on party election expenditure</li> <li>Enhanced representation of women within the organization structure of the political party</li> <li>Alternative modes of voting for domestic migrants and absentee voters</li> </ul> </li> <li>West Bengal To Be Called Bangla</li> <li>Pan-India Reservation Rule Applies To Delhi: Supreme Court</li> <li>Retirement Age Of Judges Should Be Increased?</li> <li>Uniform Civil Code Neither Necessary Nor Desirable At This Stage, Says Law Commission</li> <li>How CJs have involved senior colleagues in major cases?</li> <li>India's Criminal Justice System is in ICU: Tulsi</li> <li>Layers Of Protection: On Changes In Anti-Corruption Law</li> <li>'No Creamy Layer Norm For SC/ST'</li> </ul>	
<b>2. ECONOMY</b>	<b>27</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL)</li> <li>Bhoomi Rashi</li> <li>Bidder Information Management System (BIMS)</li> <li>BIS to set standards for the services sector too</li> <li>Boka Saul/Mud Rice</li> <li>Catastrophe Bonds</li> <li>Committee on Fair Market Conduct</li> <li>Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts (Amendment) Bill</li> <li>Concessional Financing Scheme (CFS)</li> <li>Demonetized Notes 99% of it were returned: RBI</li> <li>DigiYatra</li> <li>E-commerce policy Draft</li> <li>EPFO data not the right gauge of employment level</li> <li>Fall Armyworm Pest</li> <li>'FDI: India remains top destination'</li> <li>G20 Digital Economy Ministerial meeting</li> <li>GDP back series</li> <li>Global Index</li> <li>Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information</li> <li>International Conference on Recent Advances in Food Processing Technology (ICRAFPT)</li> <li>ICRISAT to study Mission Kakatiya</li> <li>International Economic Association</li> </ul>	



- ILO report on wages in India
- NABARD All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey 2016-17
- National Logistics Portal
- National Statistical Commission (NSC)
- Pink bollworm attacks cotton crop
- Pitch to MOVE
- Purchasing Managers Index (PMI)
- RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil)
- Shale included in the definition of petroleum
- State Energy Efficiency Preparedness Index (SEEPI)
- Turkey Economic Crisis
  - Falling rupee and its impact on economy
- UPI 2.0
- World Bank launches world-first block chain bond
- Spice Jet flies India's first biofuel flight, from Dehradun to Delhi
- Multilateral trading system across the world
- Rajasthan first State to implement biofuel policy

### 3. INTERNATIONAL RELATION

52

- '2+2' Ministerial Dialogue
- 8888 Uprising /8-8-88 Uprisings/ People Power Uprising
- Asia-Pacific Institute of Broadcasting Development (AIBD)
- Bhutan India Relations: Sovereignty and sensitivity
  - Project Dantak
  - Hydropower issue
  - The China question
- BIMSTEC-Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multispectral Technical and Economic Cooperation
  - Kathmandu Declaration- BIMSTEC
- Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act (CLOUD Act)
- Durga Puja diplomacy
- Fateh Mobin missile
- Indian Council of World Affairs
- Invest India and Business France Sign MoU to Promote Investment
- Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR)
- Johannesburg Declaration of BRICS
- Kartarpur Corridor
- Operation Storm
- Pakistan Elections
- Pakal Dul Dam and Hydro Project
- Panini Language Laboratory
- Peace Mission 2018
- Postal Highway
- Quad countries discuss ocean security
  - US 'Space Force'
- U.S. cuts military training with Pak
- Venezuela's economy is in freefall
- Venezuela's crude shipments to India
- Vostok -2018 exercises
- India and Pakistan should encourage bilateral trade
- Ten years since U.S. nuclear restrictions were lifted on India
- Saudi-Canada spat
- Easing Tensions
- Stay with RCEP

#### 4. SOCIAL ISSUES

75

- Census 2021 to collect OBC data
- Child Abuse
- Cholanaikkan Tribe
- Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill 2018
- Dhangars
- Ease of Living index
- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill of 2018
- 'Missing' Children
- Punjab's proposed law on sacrilege
- Rajiv Gauba headed Panel on Lynching
- Sabarimala Issue: Ways to read the Constitution
  - Two approaches of Constitution reading
  - 'Living Tree' Doctrine
- Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act
- Slum Policies
- Superstitions in India
- Tani People
- Centre wants Supreme Court to get tough with FB, YouTube on sexual violence
- Meghalaya Govt says marriage certificate must for official work
- Building traceability would undermine end-to-end encryption: WhatsApp
- The crackdown on civil society

#### 5. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

90

- Aeolus Spacecraft
- Evolutionary Biology lacks research
- Gaganyaan
- Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT)
- Gravitational Waves Observatory
- Helium turns 150
  - Helium-3
- India Science Technology and Innovation portal
- Move Hack
- RISECREEK and Project Shakti
- Selfies app and Exoplanet Excursions virtual reality app

#### 6. SECURITY AND DEFENSE

96

- Anti-Tank Guided Missile 'HELINA'
- Defence India Start-up Challenge
- DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018
  - Issues
  - Reforms
- Drug Addiction among children- Control Mechanism
- Exercise Maitree 2018
- Exercise Pitch Black
- ISRO telemedicine nodes for soldiers in high-altitude areas
- Kowsar
- Maoist Structure
- 'Made in India' tank engines
- Military Reform
- MoMo Challenge
- National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System (NASAMS)
- Rotary Wing Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (RUAV)



- Restricted Areas Permit/ Protected Area Permit (PAP)
- Strategic Partner Model
- Type 002 aircraft carrier
- Xingkong-2 or Starry Sky-2

## 7. ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

107

- Aerodrome in Chilika Lake
- Aliens or Exotic Plants
- Arsenic contamination
- Bengal Florican/ Bengal Bustard
- Bhitarkanika National Park
- C40
- Cheetah Reintroduction Project
- Commute-related pollution: Kolkata shines among megacities
- E-bird project
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process
- Erosion: West Bengal loss of land
- Ganga stretches in Bengal unfit for bathing
- Greater Adjutant
- Idukki Dam
- Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve enters UNESCO list
- Kolleru Bird Sanctuary
- LaCONES or Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species
- Mullaperiyar Dam or Mullaiperiyar Dam
- Neonicotinoids
- Nilgiri Tahr
- PARIVESH
- Portuguese man-of-war
- Sangai/Antlered Deer
- Sanjay Dubri National Park
- Tiger Conservation
- World Elephant Day
- Elephant Corridors: Clearing the path
- Water Scarcity
- 'Indians will live longer if pollution is under check'
- Trouble in the hills

## 8. HEALTH ISSUES

128

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Breastfeeding Report
- E-cigarettes
  - The END of new-age smoking?
- HIV hotspots emerges in three north-eastern States
- Ischemic stroke
- Johnson and Johnson faulty hip implants
- National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme
- Oxytocin manufacture restriction
- Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018
- Scrub typhus
- Silicosis
- 'State can stop voluntary retirement of doctors' says SC

## **9. EDUCATION**

**139**

- All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report 2017-18
- Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARRIA)
- Dropout rate soaring after school mergers in tribal belts
- Innovate India Platform
- No Detention Policy: States given power to detain Students
- Turnitin Software
- In search of greatness

## **10. ART AND CULTURE**

**145**

- Aranmula Boat Race
- Bagwal Festival
- Bonalu
- Currency Building and Metcalfe Hall
- e-Aksharayan
- Gol Gumbaz
- International Buddhist Conclave 2018
- Kailasa temple
- Kutiyattam/ Koodiyattam
- Lohagarh Fort
- Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman Award
- Maluti Project
- Paithani saris
- Qawwali
- Rudrasagar Lake Annual boat racing festival
- Tendong Lho Rumfaat (Prayer of the Tendong Mountain)
- Theyyam

## **11. DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

**150**

- Flash Flood Warning to be given by India to Asian nations
- Kerala Floods
- India May Reject UAE's Rs 700 Cr Assistance For #KeralaFloodRelief
- Accepting Help
- How dams can control floods?
- National Disaster
- Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)

## **12. GEOGRAPHY**

**159**

- Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)
- Doyang River
- O-SMART (Ocean Services, Technology, Observations, Resources Modelling and Science)
- Terraforming
- Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands development Story: Good or bad?
- Railways' focus misplaced: CAG



<b>13. GOVERNANCE</b>	<b>163</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Banka Unnayan</li> <li>• Digitization of courts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ e-Filing application</li> <li>○ ePay</li> <li>○ NSTEP - National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• E-Government Development Index (EGDI)</li> <li>• E-Participation Index (EPI)</li> <li>• FASTag</li> <li>• Lateral Entry</li> <li>• ODF+ (Open Defecation Free Plus)</li> <li>• Sangham Radio</li> <li>• SC junks 'one State one vote' proposal of Lodha panel</li> </ul>	
<b>14. HISTORY</b>	<b>171</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Montagu-Chelmsford Report</li> <li>• Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is it right to turn NMML into a museum for PMs?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teen Murti Bhawan</li> </ul>	
<b>15. MISCELLANEOUS</b>	<b>174</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fields medal</li> <li>• National Skill Training Institute (NSTI) for Women in Mohali</li> <li>• Ramon Magsaysay Award</li> <li>• 2018 Awards</li> <li>• HRD Ministry approves norms against plagiarism</li> <li>• TRAI calls for zero telecom equipment imports by 2022</li> <li>• UAE top source of inward remittances in 2016-17: RBI</li> <li>• Satya Pal Malik to be Jammu and Kashmir governor</li> </ul>	
<b>16. PRACTICE QUESTIONS</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>17. ANSWER KEY</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>18. MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS</b>	<b>198</b>

# POLITY

## Article 35A

- Article 35A of the Indian Constitution is an article that empowers the Jammu and Kashmir state's legislature to define "permanent residents"
- The provision mandates that no act of the State legislature coming under the ambit of Article 35A can be challenged for violating the Indian Constitution or any other law of the land.

## Who Are Permanent Residents?

- The rights are given in the state Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir.
  - as a person who was a state subject on May 14, 1954
  - who had been a resident of the state for 10 years
  - Has lawfully acquired immovable property in the state
- The state legislature can alter the definition of a permanent resident by passing a law with a two-third majority.
- Permanent residents are given a Permanent Resident Certificate which forms the basis of their rights in the state.
- It also has a provision to recognize as permanent residents, people who had migrated to Pakistan and returned, though subject to certain conditions.

## Rights and Privileges

- Special Rights and privileges are given in the following four categories:
  - Employment under the state government/ State public sector jobs
  - Acquisition of immovable property in the state
  - Settlement in the state
  - Right to scholarships and such other forms of aid as the state government may provide

## Delhi Agreement

After the instrument of Accession in line with its principles the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly took several important decisions this required the concurrence of the Government of India. Accordingly, representatives of both sides met and arrived at an agreement later known as the 'Delhi Agreement, 1952'. Some of the important features includes:

- Sovereignty in all matters other than those specified in the Instrument of Accession would reside with the state.
- The Union government agreed that the state would have its own flag.
- The state legislature was empowered to make laws conferring special rights and privileges on state subjects in view of the state subject notification of 1927 and 1932; the legislature was also empowered to make laws for state subjects who had gone to Pakistan on account of the communal disturbances of 1947, in the event of their return to Kashmir.
- In view of the peculiar position in which the state was placed, the chapter relating to 'fundamental rights' in the Indian Constitution could not be made applicable to the state.

The result was the 1952 Delhi Agreement which, contrary to popular belief, still fell short of the 1954 Presidential Order. For instance, the 1952 agreement did not finalize financial integration and required the fundamental rights and citizenship to be granted to the State's residents via the State Legislature.



**Before the Delhi Agreement could be implemented, the situation was altered because of three factors.**

- First, any plans for immediate Plebiscite in J&K were abandoned in 1954, which strengthened New Delhi's hand.
- Second, in 1953, Nehru faced a nationwide campaign from certain sections demanding greater integration of Kashmir.
- And finally in August 1953, Abdullah was arrested and replaced by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, who was far more amenable to integration with India.

**How Article 35A took birth?**

- In January 1954, New Delhi negotiated a new agreement with Bakshi, which was passed by the Kashmir Constituent Assembly and eventually introduced through Presidential Order.
- However, it still left the State with enormous autonomy. Foremost, all "residuary powers" rested with the State legislature.
- The State government could detain people who did not enjoy the right to appeal to the Supreme Court.
- It also retained its controversial land reforms measures and the final authority over any alteration of the State's boundaries.
- Among its lesser known provisions at the time was Article 35A

**How was it then added to the constitution?**

- Article 35A was incorporated by an order of President Rajendra Prasad in 1954 on the advice of the Nehru Cabinet.
- The Presidential Order was issued under Article 370 (1) (d) of the Constitution. This provision allows the President to make certain "exceptions and modifications" to the Constitution for the benefit of 'State subjects' of Jammu and Kashmir.
  - The Parliament was not consulted when the President incorporated Article 35A into the Constitution through a Presidential Order issued under Article 370.
  - Article 368 (i) of the Constitution mandates that only the Parliament can amend the Constitution.

**Article 35A opens up New Delhi's role in Jammu and Kashmir**

- The Article was introduced in May 1954 as part of a larger Presidential Order package, which made several additions to the Constitution (not just Article 35A).
- The overall gist of this Order was to give the Government of India enormously more powers over the State than it had enjoyed before.
- For the first time, India's fundamental rights and directive principles were applicable to Jammu and Kashmir and the State's finances were integrated with India.
- Importantly, the Order also extended the Indian Supreme Court's jurisdiction over certain aspects of Jammu and Kashmir.

**Background**

- NGO We the Citizens challenges the validity of both Article 35A and Article 370

**Question before SC**

- The question before the Supreme Court is whether the President acted outside his jurisdiction or powers?
- Is Article 35A constitutionally invalid because the Nehru government did not place it before the Parliament for discussion?

### **Puranlal Lakhanpal vs. the President of India**

- A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in its March 1961 judgement discusses the President's powers under Article 370 to 'modify' the Constitution.
- Though the court concludes that the President has the power to modify the Constitution under Article 370
  - The judgement is silent as to whether the President is empowered to bring about a radical change in the Constitution by introducing a new Article.

### **Arguments for removal of Article 370 and Article 35A**

- Article 370 was only a 'temporary provision' to help bring normality to J&K and strengthen democracy in that State.
  - The Constitution makers did not intend Article 370 to be a tool to bring permanent amendments, like Article 35A, in the Constitution.
- The petition said Article 35 A was against the "very spirit of oneness of India" as it created a "class within a class of Indian citizens."
- Restricting citizens from other States from getting employment or buying property within Jammu and Kashmir was a violation of fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution.
- Only permanent residents of Jammu and Kashmir are allowed to vote in the state Assembly election or contest elections to the state Assembly. This violates Constitutional Principles of right to vote.
- It facilitates the violation of the right of women to 'marry a man of their choice' by not giving the heirs any right to property, if the woman marries a man not holding PRC.
  - Therefore, her children are not given Permanent Resident Certificate and thereby considering them unfit for inheritance – not given any right to such a woman's property even if she is a permanent resident.
- It gives a free hand to the state government and politicians to discriminate between citizens of India, on an unfair basis and give preferential treatment to some by trampling over others, since the non-residents of the state are debarred from buying properties, getting a government job or voting in the local elections.

### **Article 35A should be retained**

- Repeal of this article will lead to the economic deprivation and erosion of cultural identity
- the provisions in this article are not ultra vires because there are similar special rights to other Indian states like Nagaland (Article 371A) and Mizoram (Article 371G), in varying degrees based on historical reasons, and remarks that no objections were raised on them.
- Maharaja Hari Singh sanctioned laws to safeguard the interests of his subjects, especially the Dogras of Jammu, and to shield them from domination by elite and affluent non-state subjects, mostly from neighboring Punjab.
  - It will destroy the Dogra ethos and pride but also subjugating Dogras to outside economic dominance.
- It is also factually incorrect that industrialists from across the country cannot set up businesses in J&K; they can lease land (for 99 years) in the state. So scrapping of 35A, therefore, be wrongly linked to the lack of industrial growth in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Removing Article 35A could lead to a squeeze in opportunities for the Dogra youth.
  - They will have to compete with youth from other states for jobs. Professional academic courses will become more competitive and difficult.
  - The local youth will be deprived of the concessions in recruitment in the security forces and denied scholarships and other financial assistance.

## Conclusion

- Nation building and federal cooperation is a constant endeavor and this requires constant negotiation between components of the state.
- Therefore removal or continuation of this article should be viewed from the lens of historic values and should be an expression of will of people of Jammu and Kashmir.

## Bar Council of India (BCI)

- It is a statutory body established under the section 4 of Advocates Act 1961 that regulates the legal practice and legal education in India.
- Its members are elected from amongst the lawyers in India and as such represents the Indian bar.

## Functions

- It prescribes standards of professional conduct, etiquettes and exercises disciplinary jurisdiction over the bar.
- It also sets standards for legal education and grants recognition to Universities whose degree in law will serve as a qualification for students to enroll themselves as advocates upon graduation.
- To safeguard the rights, privileges and interests of advocates.
- To promote and support law reform
- To organize legal aid to the poor.
- To manage and invest the funds of the Bar Council.

## Composition

- As per the Advocates Act, the Bar Council of India consists of members elected from each state bar council, and the Attorney General of India and the Solicitor General of India who are ex officio members.
- The members from the state bar councils are elected for a period of five years.
- The council elects its own Chairman and Vice-Chairman for a period of two years from amongst its members. Assisted by the various committees of the Council, the chairman acts as the chief executive and director of the Council.

## Bombay Prevention of Begging Act

### Context

- The Delhi High Court struck it down as inconsistent with the Constitution.

### Background

- The Act was formulated with the objective of keeping the streets of then Bombay clear of the destitute, leprosy patients or the mentally ill so they could be sent into institutions.
- Section 10 (struck down) gives a chief commissioner powers to order the immediate, indefinite detention of any person detained in a certified institution who is considered "blind, a cripple or otherwise incurably helpless".

### Definition of begging

The Act defines it to include "soliciting or receiving alms, in a public place whether or not under any pretence such as singing, dancing, fortune telling, performing or offering any article for sale" and "having no visible means of subsistence and wandering about or remaining in any public place in such condition or manner, as makes it likely that the person doing so exist soliciting or receiving alms."

### What does the Begging Act do?

- It gives the police the power to arrest individuals without a warrant.
- It gives magistrates the power to commit them to a “certified institution” (read: a detention centre) for up to three years on the commission of the first “offence”, and up to 10 years upon the second “offence”.
  - Certified institutions have absolute power over detainees, including the power of punishment, and the power to exact “manual work”.
  - Disobeying the rules of the institution can land an individual in jail.
- Before that, it strips them of their privacy and dignity by compelling them to allow themselves to be fingerprinted.
- The Act also authorizes the detention of people “dependant” upon the “beggar” (read: family), and the separation of children over the age of five.

### Begging Act reflects a vicious logic

- Neither the Indian Penal Code nor the Act explain what is meant by “soliciting alms” or what constitutes a “public place” – leading to ambiguity, inconsistency and abuse in the practical implementation of the law
- Failure to differentiate between forceful and non-forceful forms of begging, coupled with the definitional problems in relation to core concepts, make it difficult to construe the purpose of the law and what it seeks to achieve.
- The Act not only criminalize the act of begging but also targets groups and communities whose itinerant patterns of life do not fit within mainstream stereotypes of the sedentary, law-abiding citizen with a settled job.
- And the reference to “no visible means of subsistence and wandering about” punishes people for the crime of looking poor — but it also reflects the lawmakers’ desire to erase from public spaces people who look or act differently, and whose presence is perceived to be a bother and a nuisance.

For these people, the constitutional guarantees of pluralism and inclusiveness do not exist.

### Changing Judicial Attitudes

Indian constitutional courts have seldom approached beggary laws from the prism of fundamental rights; on the contrary, courts have, for long, castigated beggars for totally unscrupulous reasons.

- courts have called pavement dwellers a “source of public nuisance” (Olga Tellis vs Bombay Municipal Corporation);
- branded ‘jhuggi’ dwellers as “trespassers on public land” (Lawyers’ Cooperative Group Housing Society vs Union of India);
- Courts compared homeless people with “pickpockets” (Almitra Patel vs Union of India)
- Anarchists (Hem Raj vs Commissioner of Police).

### Harsh Mander v. Union of India and Karnika Sawhney v. Union of India

- The Delhi High Court presided over by the Chief Justice held that the Begging Act violated Article 14 (equality before law) and Article 21 (right to life and personal liberty) of the Constitution.
- The government conceded that it did not intend to criminalize “involuntary” begging.
- The High Court noted, however, that the definition of begging under the Act made no such distinction, and was therefore entirely arbitrary.
- More importantly, it also held that under Article 21 of the Constitution, it was the state’s responsibility to provide the basic necessities for survival — food, clothing, shelter — to all its citizens.
- According to the court, “people beg on the streets not because they wish to, but because they need to. Begging is their last resort to subsistence; they have no other means to survive.



- Poverty was the result of the state's inability — or unwillingness — to discharge these obligations. Therefore, the state could not turn around and criminalize the most visible and public manifestation of its own failures — and indeed, penalizes people who were doing nothing more than communicating the reality of their situation to the public.
- If we want to eradicate begging, artificial means to make beggars invisible will not suffice. A move to criminalize them will make them invisible without addressing the root causes of the problem. The root cause is poverty, which has many structural reasons: no access to education, social protection, discrimination based on caste and ethnicity, landlessness, physical and mental challenges, and isolation.

### Significance

- Delhi High Court's judgment marks a crucial step forward in dismantling one of the most vicious and enduring legacies of colonialism.
- It seeks to undo legacies of injustice and lift up all individuals and communities to the plane of equal citizenship.

### Portugal example

- Portugal decriminalized drug use and possession in 2001,
- Since then it has achieved the lowest rate of drug-related social costs, like death and crime, in the European Union.
- But part of its solution was to redeploy budgets spent on enforcement to the support of addicts.

A similar step with regard to beggars — spending aggressively on rehabilitation — would yield similar outcomes, and turn what was regarded as a social problem into a dividend.

### Way forward

- The Delhi High Court has done its job in striking down a vicious law that criminalized poverty.
- Now it is the task of the Legislative Assembly and the government to replace the punitive structure of the (now defunct) Begging Act with a new set of measures that genuinely focusses on the rehabilitation and integration of the most vulnerable and marginalized members of our society.

## Council Conundrum

### Context:

Odisha is all set to get a Legislative Council like several other States in the country. Odisha's plan calls for a national policy on the utility of a second chamber (the Legislative Council) in the States. Odisha wants to join the group of States that have an Upper House. The State Cabinet has approved a 49-member Legislative Council, accepting the report of a committee set up in 2015 to study the functioning of the second chamber in other States and make recommendations.

### Legislative Councils:

- The legislative council is permanent body but 1/3rd of its member retire every 2 years. The members of the council elect a chairman which is called "presiding officer". The council also elects the Deputy Chairman.
- Total Number of the Legislative Council should not exceed the 1/3rd of the total number of members of the Legislative assembly, but it should not be less than 40 (Article 171).
- Jammu & Kashmir is an exception to this where the upper house has strength of 36 only. This is because; J & K assembly is created as per the J & K constitution and Part VI is not applicable to Jammu & Kashmir.

### Details:

- There are only seven such Councils across the country in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh.
- Section 168 of the Indian constitution speaks about the Constitution of Legislatures in States and Article 169 speaks about "Abolition or creation of Legislative Councils in states".

- Indian Constitution does not adhere to the principle of bicameralism in case of every legislature. Whether there should be a legislative council in the state or not, is decided by legislative assembly of the state itself.
- But it does not mean that legislative assembly can itself create a legislative council. The constitution of India has full provisions about the creation of legislative council and its abolishment.
- The power of abolition and creation of the State legislative council is vested in Parliament of India as per article 169. But, to create or to abolish a state legislative council, the state legislative assembly must pass a resolution, which must be supported by majority of the strength of the house and 2/3<sup>rd</sup> majority of the present and voting (Absolute + Special Majority).
- The resolution to create and abolish a state legislative council is to be assented by the President also.
- Though when a legislative council is created or abolished, the Constitution of India is also changed, it is not considered as a Constitution Amendment Bill.

### **Is there a need for Legislative Council in all the States?**

The framers of the constitution as well as members of the Constituent assembly had in mind that it may not be possible for all the states to support two houses, financially as well as for other reasons. For instance, some of the members of the Constituent assembly criticized the idea of bicameral legislature in the states as a superfluous idea and a body which is unrepresentative of the population, a burden on the state budget and causing delays in passing legislation. That is why, it was left for the legislatures of the state assembly to decide whether or not there should be a legislative council in the state.

### **Arguments in favour of Legislative Councils in every state:**

- An Upper House provides a forum for academicians and intellectuals, who are arguably not suited for the rough and tumble of electoral politics.
- It provides a mechanism for a more sober and considered appraisal of legislation that a State may pass.
- Legislative Councils make the governments more accountable.
- The members of Legislative Council through their experience can act as the friend, philosopher and guide of the Legislative Assembly.

### **Arguments against Legislative Councils in every state:**

- The absence of Legislative council in every state itself suggests the lack of any real advantage, apart from the absence of a broad political consensus on the issue.
- The process of creating an Upper House is lengthy. Two Bills introduced in the Rajya Sabha in 2013 for establishing Legislative Councils in Assam and Rajasthan are still pending, indicating the lack of support for such a move.
- Rather than fulfilling the lofty objective of getting intellectuals into the legislature, the forum is likely to be used to accommodate party functionaries who fail to get elected.
- It is also an unnecessary drain on the exchequer.
- Another issue is that graduates are no longer a rare breed; also, with dipping educational standards, a graduate degree is no guarantee of any real intellectual heft.

### **Way Forward:**

- There has to be a national policy on having an Upper House in State legislatures to be framed by the Union government, so that a subsequent government doesn't abolish it. There has to be a uniformity and strong policy for its creation, revival and abolishment.
- The provision in the law for Councils to have seats for graduates and teachers needs to be reviewed.
- A national consensus must be evolved on the establishment of Legislative Councils.

## **Law Commission Calls for Re-Think on Sedition Clause**

### **Context**

- The Law Commission, which is the Centre's topmost advisory body on laws, headed by former Supreme Court judge, Justice B.S. Chauhan, published a consultation paper recommending that it is time to re-think or even repeal the provision of sedition (Section 124A) from the Indian Penal Code

### Law Commission Comments

- Dissent and criticism of the government are essential ingredients of a robust public debate in a vibrant democracy
  - Expression of frustration over the state of affairs cannot be treated as sedition
- Why India should retain sedition when the British, who introduced sedition to oppress Indians, have themselves abolished the law in their country
- If the country is not open to positive criticism, there lies little difference between the pre- and post-Independence eras. Right to criticize one's own history and the right to offend are rights protected under free speech. While it is essential to protect national integrity, it should not be misused as a tool to curb free speech
  - People should be at liberty to show their affection towards their country in their own way
- The Commission asks whether it would be "worthwhile" to rename Section 124A and find a "suitable substitute" for the term 'sedition'.

### Supreme Court

- Dissent is the safety valve of democracy

### Penalty

- Sedition attracts imprisonment from three years to life.

### 'NOTA' Scrapped By SC

#### Context

- The Supreme Court scrapped the use of NOTA (none of the above) option for Rajya Sabha polls, saying it would usher back the "Satan of defections."

#### Background

- The Election Commission had issued a circular in January 2014 that the provisions of NOTA be included in the Rajya Sabha elections too, after it was included as one of the options in the Electronic Voting Machines in 2013.

#### How does the NOTA work in RS elections?

- In Rajya Sabha polls, the MLAs have to show their ballot paper to an authorized party agent before putting it in ballot box.
- If a voter (MLA) defies the party directive and votes for someone else or uses NOTA option, he cannot be disqualified as a legislator. If an MLA chooses NOTA, the vote is rendered ineffective.
- EC says MPs and MLAs have the freedom not to exercise their franchise
  - The voting at election to the Office of President of India or in Rajyasabha is not compulsory, like the voting at elections to the House of the People and State Legislatures where also there is no compulsion to vote.
  - The 'electoral right' of a voter is defined in section 171A (b) of the Indian Penal code to 'mean the right of a person to stand, or not to stand as, or to withdraw from being, a candidate or to vote or refrain from voting at election'.
- Supreme Court in *Kuldip Nayar v Union of India* 2006 said an elector would not attract the penal provisions of the Tenth Schedule for having so voted at the Rajya Sabha election in defiance the party's directions
- But the party is free to take disciplinary action including expulsion. The defiant voter can continue to be an MLA and his vote can also not be invalidated for defying party directions, the EC rules say.

#### Issue Area

- The SC judgement in 2013 was ambiguous about usage of NOTA

- There was selective usage of NOTA in few state elections
- If it has to be used why not use universally for all elections including that of President.
- Electors in Rajya Sabha have the option of abstaining from an election to make a political statement why have NOTA

#### **NOTA should not be there**

- NOTA in indirect elections, such as in the Rajya Sabha, would lead to horse-trading, corruption and using of extra constitutional methods to defeat a party candidate.
- The system of NOTA makes the system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote futile and serving no practical purpose or result.
- The idea behind having an open ballot voting system in polls for the Rajya Sabha and the Legislative Councils was to restrain cross-voting due to corrupt practices

#### **NOTA should be there**

- The presence of the NOTA option for the legislator allows the possibility of a protest vote against the party high command for choosing candidates who are not agreeable to her, without having to choose candidates from opposing parties.

#### **EC's view**

- A person, along with a right to vote, also has the right not to vote.

#### **Comments by SC**

- A three-judge Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, held that the NOTA option is meant only for universal adult suffrage and direct elections and not elections held by the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote as done in the Rajya Sabha.
- The option of NOTA may serve as solution in direct elections but in the election to the Council of States, it would not only undermine the purity of democracy but also serve the Satan of defection and corruption
- The court pointed out that in the voting in Rajya Sabha elections, there is a whip and the elector is bound to obey the command of the party.

The party discipline...in this kind of election is of extreme significance, for that is the fulcrum of the existence of parties. It is essential in a parliamentary democracy. The thought of cross-voting and corruption is obnoxious

### **Personal Data Protection Bill 2018- Draft**

#### **Context**

- The Personal Data Protection Bill 2018 has been submitted by the Justice BN Srikrishna committee on Data protection to Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY)

#### **Definitions**

- Personal Data Breach:
  - Any unauthorized or accidental disclosure, acquisition, sharing, use, alteration, destruction, loss of access to, of personal data that compromises the confidentiality, integrity or availability of personal data to a 'data principals' (Indian citizens)
- Sensitive Personal Data:
  - Personal data revealing or related to passwords, financial data, health data, official identifier, sex life, sexual orientation, biometric data, genetic data, transgender status, intersex status, caste or tribe, religious or political belief or affiliation or any other category of data specified by the Data protection Authority
- Processing of Personal Data:



- An operation or set of operations performed on personal data, including collection, recording, organization, structuring, storage, adaptation, alteration, retrieval, use, alignment or combination, indexing, disclosure by transmission, dissemination or otherwise making available, restriction, erasure or destruction
- Profiling:
  - Any form of processing of personal data that analyses or predicts aspects concerning the behavior, attributes or interest of a data

#### **Details**

- Justice B.N. Srikrishna-headed expert panel appointed to look into laws of data protection has proposed that critical personal data of Indian citizens be processed in centers located within the country.
- The draft left it to the Central government to notify categories of personal data that will be considered as critical.
- Other personal data may be transferred outside the territory of India with some exceptions
  - However, at least one copy of the data will need to be stored in India.

#### **Personal Data**

- The processing of sensitive personal data should be on the basis of “explicit consent.” This consent should be at the time of commencement of processing and this should not have retrospective application.
- The implementation should be in a structured and phased manner.

#### **Protecting the data of children**

- It has recommended that companies be barred from certain types of data processing such as behavioral monitoring, tracking, targeted advertising and any other type of processing which is not in the best interest of the child.
- So, processing of personal data of children ought to be subject to greater protection than regular processing of data because children are unable to fully understand the consequences of their actions and this is exacerbated in the digital world where data collection and processing is largely opaque and mired in complex consent forms
- The committee noted that, at present, there were two types of entities processing the personal data of children.
  - The first type were services offered primarily to children, such as YouTube Kids, Hot Wheels and Walt Disney
  - The second were social media services such as Facebook and Instagram.
- Parental consent
  - A dominant criticism against parental consent is that it is prone to escape, as it risks encouraging children to lie about their age, without achieving the intended purpose of protection
- Certain types of data processing have been objectively found to be harmful for children
  - Harm may be tangible [in terms of physical or reputational harm]
  - Intangible [in terms of loss of autonomy]. These include: behavioral monitoring, tracking, targeted advertising and any other type of processing which is not in the best interest of the child.

#### **Penalties**

- The draft provides for penalties for data processor as well as compensation to data principal to be imposed for violations of the data protection law by ‘data fiduciaries’ (public and private sector entities that collect process and store data).

- If a data fiduciary doesn't follow through on compliance requirements, it can be fined up to Rs 5 crore or 2% of its worldwide turnover, whichever is higher.
- If it doesn't comply with the standards for processing personal or personal sensitive data it can be fined up to Rs 15 crore or 5% of its total worldwide turnover, whichever is higher
- Other penalties for more minor violations such as refusing to comply with an individual's request (Rs 5 lakh maximum).

### **Exemption**

- The processing of data for certain interests such as security of the State, legal proceedings, research and journalistic purpose may be exempt from certain obligations of the proposed data protection law.
- This processing of personal data in the interests of the security of the State shall not be permitted unless it is authorized pursuant to a law, and is in accordance with the procedure established by such law, made by Parliament

### **Data Protection Authority (DPA)**

- The DPA, a sector agnostic body, will ensure that every entity that handles data is conscious of its obligations and that it will be held to account in case of failure to comply
- The DPA will be stating codes of practice, conducting inquiries, and issuing warnings and injunctions.
- The authority will be governed by a board consisting of six whole-time members and a chairperson appointed by the Union government on the recommendation of a selection committee.
- The selection committee shall consist of the
  - Chief Justice of India or her nominee (who is a judge of the Supreme Court of India),
  - the Cabinet Secretary, Government of India,
  - one expert of repute who has special knowledge of, and professional experience in, areas related to data protection, information technology, data management, data science, cyber and Internet laws and related subjects.
- The members of the DPA are to be "individuals of integrity and ability" with special knowledge of, and professional experience of not less than 10 years in, areas related to data protection, information technology, data management, data science, cyber and internet laws and related subjects.
- The DPA members will have a five-year term, subject to a suitable retirement age and their salaries will be prescribed by the Central government.
- Broadly, the DPA will have four departments and related functions:
  - monitoring and enforcement;
  - legal affairs, policy and standard setting;
  - research and awareness; and inquiries,
  - Grievance handling and adjudication.
- So, it will have the power to issue directions, call for information, launch inquiries, levy penalties and in extreme cases even "temporarily suspend" or discontinue the business activity of a data fiduciary or data processor.

### **Appellate Tribunal**

The bill calls for a separate appellate tribunal to be set up that will hear appeals made against DPA orders.

## Poll Panel to Brainstorm on Key Issues

### Context

- The Election Commission will be debating on campaigning and seven other issues, including limiting of expenditure and increasing participation of women, at a multi-party meeting. All seven registered national political parties and 51 State political parties have been invited.

## Campaign silence during the last 48 hours before the elections

- Section 126 of the Representation of the People, 1951, prohibits displaying any election matter by means, inter alia, of television or similar apparatus, during the period of 48 hours before the hour fixed for conclusion of poll in a constituency.
  - The law prohibits canvassing during the last 48 hours before the elections.
- This is meant to create an environment of neutrality and “silence” for the voter to exercise his franchise through reasoned reflection rather than be swayed by last-minute appeals by parties and candidates.
- The question before EC right now is how to “address the issue of online canvassing to promote or prejudice the electoral prospects of a party/candidate on social media during the last 48 hours.”

### What is EC suggestion?

- The Commission has asked the parties if the print media should also be brought within the ambit of Section 126(1) (b) (which lists mediums in which display of election matter is prohibited and includes television, cinematograph or similar apparatus) of the Representation of the People Act.

## Umesh Sinha Committee

- The Election Commission (EC) has set up a 14-member committee to suggest changes to Section 126 of the Representation of the People (RP) Act, which prohibits poll campaign in the last 48 hours leading to voting, in the wake of media expansion.
  - It will also study the impact of new media and social media during the “silence period” and its implication in view of Section 126
  - It has been tasked to examine the difficulties faced in regulating media platforms during the prohibitory 48 hours in a multi-phase election.
  - Finally, suggest changes to the elections laws and model code of conduct (MCC) accordingly.

## Ceiling on party election expenditure

- The Commission has asked political parties on whether there should be a ceiling on party election expenditure
  - The present election laws only provide a limit on a candidate’s expenditure.
- The Commission wants to know the views of political parties on bringing a ceiling for expenditure in the Legislative Council elections. In these elections, huge amounts of unaccounted-for money is often spent by the candidates

## Enhanced representation of women within the organization structure of the political party

- There are only 11.4% women in the 16th Lok Sabha, substantially lower than the global average of 22.9%
- It has said that at least seven countries have laws reserving seats for women in legislature, including Nepal.

## Growing in strength

Women's representation increased from 4.4% in the first Lok Sabha elected in 1952 to 11.9% in the 16th Lok Sabha that came into being in 2014

- The global average as per the Inter-Parliamentary Union data of 2014 is 22.9%

- There were only 668 women out of 8,251 candidates in 2014. Only 29% of the women candidates were from national or State parties

- Number of women voters has increased from 55.82% in 2009 to 65.54% in 2014

- Sweden, Argentina, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Rwanda and Bolivia have

laws reserving seats for women in the legislature

- Argentina, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Mexico, France and Spain have laws providing for quotas for women in candidate lists of political parties



## Alternative modes of voting for domestic migrants and absentee voters

- Developing portability of voting rights by linking voter ID and Aadhaar.
- A one-time voluntary registration system for domestic migrants, electoral support services to be provided to migrants at the source and destination areas, raising awareness of voters' rights and a helpline for domestic migrants are the other measures suggested by the Commission

## West Bengal to Be Called Bangla

### Context

- The West Bengal Assembly passed a resolution to change the name of the State as 'Bangla' in three languages — Bengali, English and Hindi.

### Details

- The Assembly passed a resolution to change the name to 'Bengal' in English, 'Bangla' in Bengali and 'Bangal' in Hindi.

### How does it work?

- When the fresh proposal comes to the Home Ministry, it will prepare a note for the Union Cabinet for an amendment to the Schedule 1 of the Constitution

A Constitution Amendment Bill will be introduced in Parliament, which has to approve it with a simple majority, before the President gives his assent to it

## Pan-India Reservation Rule Applies To Delhi: Supreme Court

### Context

- Observing that anyone who lives inside India can never be considered an outsider in Delhi, the Supreme Court held that people belonging to Scheduled Casts (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and migrated to the capital from other states cannot be denied benefit of the reservation in government jobs.

### Background

- The Constitution Bench was answering a reference made to it in *Bir Singh versus Delhi Jal Board*, a 2013 case; on the legal question whether a Scheduled Caste person from a State would be accorded the same concessions in employment in another State.

### Details

- A five-judge Constitution Bench led by Justice Ranjan Gogoi unanimously held that "a person belonging to a Scheduled Caste in one State cannot be deemed to be a Scheduled Caste person in relation to any other State to which he migrates for the purpose of employment or education."

- The benefits of reservation provided for by the Constitution would stand confined to the geographical territories of a State/Union Territory in respect of which the lists of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes have been notified by the Presidential Orders issued from time to time.
- Although a five judge constitution bench held that a person notified as SC/ST in one state cannot claim same status in another state, it, however, ruled by majority of 4:1 that pan India reservation rule to be implemented in Delhi
- Writing the majority verdict, Justice Gogoi said that subordinate services in the National Capital Territory of Delhi are part of Central Civil Services and the reservation benefits must be extended to all and should not be restricted to SCs/STs specified in the Presidential Order of Delhi.
  - He, however, did not examine the issue regarding to other Union Territories and left it for appropriate bench to adjudicate.
- Justifying its decision for pan India rule for reservation in Delhi, the bench quoted a previous verdict of the apex court and said,
  - The capital city is not just a part of India. It is miniaturized India
  - It is megapolitan and people from all parts flock to this outsized city and this should be accommodative of people from all parts of India

### **Dissenting Voice**

- However, Justice Banumathi agreed that reservation should be State-specific.

But, she said that there could not be any distinction between the states and UTS on this issue. "Even though UTS are centrally administered, though the administrator/Lieutenant Governor so far as the administrative aspects of the UTs, each UT has its own identity. Each of the UTS would be bound by their respective Presidential Order of SCs/STs for giving benefit of reservation in employment."

## **Retirement Age of Judges Should Be Increased?**

### **Background**

- Venkatachaliah Report (Report of the National Commission to review the working of the Constitution) as early as 2002 had recommended increasing the age of retirement for judges

### **Attempts in the past**

- There was a Constitution (114th Amendment) Bill to raise the retirement age of High Court judges to 65 from 62 years. But the amendment never came through.

### **Issue Area**

- Judge-population ratio in India is among the lowest in the world at 19.66 judges per million (10 lakh)
  - In 2016, the U.K. had 51 judges per million people, the U.S. had 107, Australia had 41, and Canada had 75.
- According to National Judicial Data Grid data, more than 2.84 crore cases are pending in the subordinate courts, 43 lakh cases are pending before the High Courts, and 57,987 cases are pending before the Supreme Court.
  - Pendency does not only debilitate the justice redress system; it also makes the rule of law a distant dream.
  - So, it is necessary to increase the number of judges in the pool to enable the judiciary to deal with the enormous pendency of cases.
- The fact that judges in India are retiring at 62 and 65 years is not helping alleviate this problem either. We are losing judges who are trained by time and experience well before their prime.
- If legislations provide for retired High Court and Supreme Court judges to man tribunals till the age of 70, there is no reason why these judges should be retired so early.



### **How to address pending- CJI Misra?**

- Shortage of Judges is no doubt a factor responsible for pendency but at the same time, it is found that some courts have been functioning and performing better in the same conditions. Adopt such courts as models. This underscores the need to understand that existing capacity has to be better and fully utilized rather than solely concentrating on developing additional capacity.
- Modernization, computerization, and technology – court automation systems, e-courts, digitization of court records, access to information about cases, if possible, could be made available to litigants in a simpler mode instead of going through multiple web pages
- Strive for more alternative methods of dispute resolution in various forms like arbitration, mediation, pre-litigation mediation, negotiation, Lok Adalats, well-structured and channelized plea bargaining, etc.
- Consider and explore options for setting up fast-track courts and fixing time limits or deadlines for certain categories of cases especially in subordinate courts.

### **Examples from other countries**

- In the Supreme Court of the United States, and in constitutional courts in Austria and Greece, judges are appointed for life.
- In Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and Australia, the retirement age for judges is 70 years.
- Judges in Canada and Germany retire at 75 and 68, respectively.

### **Merits**

- One, it will ensure the continued presence of a strong talent pool of experienced judges.
- Two, new judges can be appointed without displacing existing judges.
- Three, it will address the problem of mounting arrears.
- Four, it will be a buffer against impending litigation explosion.
- Five, it will render post-retirement assignments unattractive and, as a consequence, strengthen the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, both of which are crucial to sustain democracy.

### **Conclusion**

- The issue of increasing the retirement age of judges thus requires serious and immediate consideration and must necessarily move beyond partisan politics.

### **Uniform Civil Code neither Necessary Nor Desirable at this Stage, Says Law Commission**

#### **Context**

- The law commission led by former Supreme Court judge Justice B.S. Chauhan in its 'Consultation Paper on Family Law Reforms' said a uniform civil code "is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage" in the country

#### **On uniformity**

- Cultural diversity cannot be compromised to the extent that our urge for uniformity itself becomes a reason for threat to the territorial integrity of the nation
- A unified nation did not necessarily need to have "uniformity". 'Efforts have to be made to reconcile our diversity with universal and indisputable arguments on human rights
- Difference did not always imply discrimination in a robust democracy

#### **On Secularism**

- The Commission said secularism cannot contradict the plurality prevalent in the country.
- In fact, term "secularism" has meaning only if it assured the expression of any form of difference.

- This diversity, both religious and regional, should not get subsumed under the louder voice of the majority
- At the same time, the Commission said, discriminatory practices within a religion should not hide behind the cloak of that faith to gain legitimacy.
  - Citing sati, devadasi, triple talaq and child marriage as examples of 'social evils' under the garb of religious customs, the Commission has observed that these "practices do not conform with basic tenets of human rights and nor are they essential to religion".

### **On Personal Laws**

- It said the way forward may not be a uniform civil code, but the codification of all personal laws so that prejudices and stereotypes in every one of them would come to light and could be tested on the anvil of fundamental rights of the Constitution.
- By codification of different personal laws, one can arrive at certain universal principles that priorities equity rather than imposition of a uniform code, which would discourage many from using the law altogether, given that matters of marriage and divorce can also be settled extra-judicially

### **On Marriage**

- The Commission suggested certain measures in marriage and divorce that should be uniformly accepted in the personal laws of all religions.
- These amendments in personal laws include fixing the marriageable age for boys and girls at 18 years so that they marry as equals
  - it 'simply contributes to the stereotype that wives must be younger than their husbands'
  - If law grants all citizens the right to choose their governments, surely, they must then be also considered capable of choosing their spouses. For equality in the true sense, the insistence on recognizing different ages of marriage between consenting adults should be abolished
- Making adultery a ground for divorce for men and women and to simplify divorce procedure.
- The Commission said the filing of Section 498A IPC (dowry harassment) cases was actually done by women wanting a quick exit from a difficult marriage.
- It recommends amendments to exclude from grounds for divorce forms of illnesses that can be cured or controlled with adequate medical treatment or counselling

### **Issues with laws in various Religions**

- Christian
  - It suggests that the two year separation period for confirmation of a decree of divorce needs to be brought in line with the Special Marriage Act
- Hindu
  - One of the most significant recommendation with regards to the Hindu personal law is the abolition of the Hindu Undivided Family which, the paper notes, has been used only for tax evasion
- Muslim
  - Nikahnama (Islamic Marriage Contract)
  - The Commission suggested that nikahnamas should make it clear that polygamy is a criminal offence and this should apply to "all communities"
  - "This is not recommended owing to merely a moral position on bigamy, or to glorify monogamy, but emanates from the fact that only a man is permitted multiple wives, which is unfair,"

## How CJIs have involved senior colleagues in major cases?

### Background

- Chief Justice Dipak Misra's role as Master of the Roster was called into question by the other four judges in the Supreme Court collegium. While their complaint was about cases being "assigned selectively" to benches of "preference"
- The four collegium judges who complained about case allocation had felt that cases were allocated to junior hand-picked judges against the conventions of the court.

### What is the study about?

- The study helps us understand, how have members of the collegium been represented in major cases (those with bench sizes of three or more)?
  - Judges, whose rank was 2 to 5, were considered Collegium judges (Rank 1 was the CJI).
- This study looks at the numbers since January 1999, when the collegium was expanded to five judges

### Results

- It shows that the representation of collegium members other than the CJI — that is, those ranked two to five — is among the lowest during Chief Justice Misra's term.
  - Until January 12, when Justices J. Chelameswar, Ranjan Gogoi, Madan B. Lokur and Kurian Joseph held their unprecedented press conference, collegium members (two to five) were involved only in 29.3% of the judgments delivered.
  - In Justice Misra's case, the involvement of other collegium judges increased after the January 12 press conference; overall, as of July 31, it went up to 33.9%.
  - In nearly two-thirds of the cases referred to various benches (of three judges and above), Chief Justice Misra did not appoint a single Collegium judge other than himself.
- Of the 17 CJIs since January 1999, it was only during Justice G.B Pattanaik's term as CJI that the representation of the four collegium members was less. At 29.2%, it was less only by the smallest of fractions.
  - Also, Justice Pattanaik was CJI only for just a little over a month, during which 24 judgments with benches of three or more judges were delivered.
- At the other end of the spectrum, former CJIs H.L. Dattu (68%), R.M. Lodha (67.5%), K.G. Balakrishnan (55.1%) and A.S. Anand (63.5%) used other collegium members most in cases involving three judges or more, going by the judgment percentages.

### Overall Judgements from 1999

- There were over 2,400 such judgments between January 1999 and July 2018, of which 224 were delivered by Constitution Benches — those with five judges or more.
- The average representation for collegium judges (barring the CJI) in major cases was 52.1% for this period.

## ROLL CALL

Collegium members ranked 2 to 5 delivered 33.9% of the judgments in major cases (benches of 3 or more) during CJI Dipak Misra's current term. This figure is even lower at 29.3% — the second lowest among all 17 CJIs since January 1999 — between the period he took charge and January 12, 2018, the day other collegium members complained about the manner in which important cases were allocated

Chief Justice	No. of judgments	With a collegium member	CJI and no collegium member
<b>LOWEST FIVE</b>			
G.B.Pattanaik (8/11/2002-18/12/2002)	24	7 (29.2%)	11 (45.8%)
<b>Dipak Misra (Upto 12/1/2018)</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>17 (29.3%)</b>	<b>38 (65.5%)</b>
T.S. Thakur (3/12/2015-3/1/2017)	119	35 (29.4%)	72 (60.5%)
P. Sathasivam (19/7/2013-26/4/2014)	99	31 (31.3%)	65 (65.7%)
<b>Dipak Misra (28/8/2017-31/7/2018)</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>61 (33.9%)</b>	<b>111 (61.7%)</b>
S.H. Kapadia (12/5/2010-28/9/2012)	148	53 (35.8%)	52 (35.1%)
<b>HIGHEST FIVE</b>			
S.Rajendra Babu (2/5/2004-31/5/2004)	5	3 (60.0%)	2 (40.0%)
A.S.Anand (10/10/1998-31/10/2001)	405	257 (63.5%)	61 (15.1%)
K.G. Balakrishnan (14/1/2007-12/5/2010)	490	319 (65.1%)	143 (29.2%)
R.M. Lodha (27/4/2014-27/9/2014)	40	27 (67.5%)	12 (30.0%)
H.L. Dattu (28/9/2014-2/12/2015)	97	66 (68.0%)	21 (21.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,433</b>	<b>1,268 (52.1%)</b>	<b>868 (35.7%)</b>

## India's Criminal Justice System is in ICU: Tulsi

### Context

- India's criminal justice system is in ICU and unless drastic measures are taken to revive it, the adage "justice delayed is justice denied" would become true, Rajya Sabha MP and eminent jurist K T S Tulsi warned
- This was the view expressed by Rajya Sabha MP and senior Supreme Court Advocate KTS Tulsi at a seminar on the Criminal Justice System in India organised by the Ludhiana Management Association

### Concerns

- The existence of a plethora of laws entailing repeated amendments
- The justice delivery system was pathetic, resulting in low conviction rates and failing to serve as a deterrent for those committing crimes."
- Tulsi compared India's meagre conviction rate of 21.2 per cent for cognizable offences with those of the USA and Japan, which have a conviction rate of over 98 per cent.
- The country's criminal justice mechanism suffers from lack of judiciary's accountability and cooperation between its investigation and prosecution wings, allowing criminals go scot free.
- The eminent jurist cautioned that if this state of affairs in the criminal justice system remains unchecked, it would lead to "vigilante justice" and high levels of insecurity amongst the citizens.

## Layers of Protection: On Changes in Anti-Corruption Law

### Focus of the article

- Protecting honest public servants is important; so are anti-corruption efforts

### Context

- The amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, adopted recently by both Houses of Parliament

### **Background of the topic**

- Moves to make changes in this law, aimed at combating corruption in government, were initiated during the UPA's second term in office and largely centered on the misuse of one provision — Section 13 (1) d.
- Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had criticized this section, under which public servants are culpable for securing a pecuniary advantage for another "without any public interest", for ignoring a foundational principle of criminal law: men's rea (the intention or knowledge of wrongdoing that constitutes part of a crime, as opposed to the action or conduct of the accused).
- This resulted in many honest officials being prosecuted even when they gained nothing and merely exercised their power or discretion in favour of someone.

### **Highlights of the Bill**

- The Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013 amends the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.
- The Act covers the offence of giving a bribe to a public servant under abetment. The Bill makes specific provisions related to giving a bribe to a public servant, and giving a bribe by a commercial organization.
- The Bill redefines criminal misconduct to only cover misappropriation of property and possession of disproportionate assets.
- The Bill modifies the definitions and penalties for offences related to taking a bribe, being a habitual offender and abetting an offence.
- Powers and procedures for the attachment and forfeiture of property of public servants accused of corruption have been introduced in the Bill.
- The Act requires prior sanction to prosecute serving public officials. The Bill extends this protection to former officials.

### **Impact of the amendment**

- Insofar as it had a chilling effect on governance and deterred bold decision-making, the amended form may have a liberating effect on honest officials.
- It is more concise and restricts criminal misconduct to two offences: misappropriating or converting to one's own use property entrusted to a public servant or is in his control, and amassing unexplained wealth.
- There was concern initially with the wording, "intentionally enriches himself illicitly during the period of his office", as it raised a doubt whether the 'intention' to amass wealth would also have to be proved. Now an explanation has been added that a person "shall be presumed to have intentionally enriched himself" if he cannot account for his assets through known sources of income.
- By making citizens liable for offering a bribe to a public servant, the anti-corruption law has been brought in line with the UN Convention against Corruption.

### **Criticism**

- The penal provision can empower people by allowing them to cite it to refuse to pay a bribe. At the same time, what happens when the police or any other agency refuses to register a complaint? People may be left in the lurch with no redress. Further, it may render them vulnerable to threats



from unscrupulous public servants who collect money to speed up public services but do not deliver.

- The most unacceptable change is the introduction of a prior approval norm to start an investigation. When a prior sanction requirement exists in law for prosecution, it is incomprehensible that the legislature should create another layer of protection in the initial stage of a probe.

### Way Forward

Public servants need to be protected against unfair prosecution, but a genuine drive against corruption needs a package of legislative measures. These should contain penal provisions, create an ombudsman in the form of a Lokpal or Lokayukta, as well as assure citizens of time-bound services and whistle-blower protection. Laws to fulfill these objectives are either not operational or are yet to materialize. Protecting honest public servants is important; so are anti-corruption efforts

### 'No Creamy Layer Norm for SC/ST'

#### Context

- The government told the Supreme Court that the "creamy layer" concept cannot be applied to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe communities, who have suffered for centuries.

#### Necessity of creamy layer

- Reservation benefits were inequitably distributed among SCs/STs in the last 64 years and only a small group had benefited from the policy.
- Lokur Committee report contended that socially and economically advanced SCs and STs be kept out of the policy
- According to PRICE all-India income and expenditure survey
  - around 6% of SC households (that's 4 million households) earn between Rs 5-10 lakh a year
  - 7% (5 million) earn over Rs 10 lakh.
  - In the case of ST households, 11% (3 million) earn between Rs 5-10 lakh and 5% (1 million) earn over Rs 10 lakh
- According to the latest definition put out by the central government, OBCs who earn more than Rs 8 lakh are considered to be 'creamy layer' and, therefore, ineligible for reservation benefits.
  - Based on the PRICE survey, if 22 million OBC households are 'creamy layer', 13 million SC/ST households are also "creamy layer", using the income definition.
  - If a rich OBC is seen as someone who should no longer be eligible for the same reservations available to a poor OBC, surely the same logic should apply to SC/ST as well

#### Creamy layer should not be adapted for SC

- The team of researchers, led by Prof S K Thorat, chairman of the Indian Council of Social Science Research said that caste stereotypism is not just limited to economic status.
  - Example: People in Delhi were asked about caste when house was to be given for rent
  - They feel socially isolated and finding houses becomes difficult
- Reservations are an anti-discrimination program - it is not a poverty alleviation program.
- People feel connected that there is someone from the community whom they can rely upon at the time of adversities in the caste laden society.

#### Conclusion

- There are some sub castes who are well off and command social respect such sub caste should be taken off the bracket
- Religious gurus and leaders should be propagators of peace and establish bonhomie with community

# ECONOMY

## Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL)

- It is a statutory body constituted for the purpose of hearing cases against the orders of the Regulatory Commissions and the Adjudicating officer.
- By virtue of Section 110 of The Electricity Act, 2003 an Appellate Tribunal for Electricity having jurisdiction throughout India has been set up to hear appeals or original petitions against the orders of the Adjudicating officer
- The Tribunal is conferred with original jurisdiction to hear petitions under Section 121 of the Act and issue directions to all Commissions for the performance of its statutory functions.
- This Tribunal has been established by the Ministry of Power
- The Appellate Tribunal shall consist of a Chairperson and three other Members. Every Bench constituted by the Chairperson shall consist of at least one Judicial Member and one Technical Member

## The Electricity Act of 2003

- It seeks to consolidate the laws relating to generation, transmission, distribution, trading and use of electricity and generally for taking measures conducive to development of electricity industry, promoting competition therein, protecting interest of consumers and supply of electricity to all areas, rationalization of electricity tariff ensuring transparent policies regarding subsidies, promotion of efficient and environmentally benign policies, constitution of Central Electricity Authority, Regulatory Commissions and establishment of Appellate Tribunal and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- The act applies throughout Union Territories of India except Jammu & Kashmir.

## Context

- Smt. Justice Manjula Chellur took Oath as Chairperson, Appellate Tribunal for Electricity, Ministry of Power

## Bhoomi Rashi

- It is the portal developed by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and NIC, comprises the entire revenue data of the country, right down to 6.4 lakh villages.
- Bhoomi Rashi portal has been instrumental in reducing the time taken for approval and publication of notifications pertaining to land acquisition

## Bidder Information Management System (BIMS)

- It is an initiative of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways
- It will help to streamline the process of pre-qualification of bidders for EPC Mode of contracts for all National Highway works with enhanced transparency and objectivity.
- BIMS would work as a data base comprising bidder wise information covering basic details, civil works experience, cash accruals and network, annual turnover etc. so that bidders' pre-qualification is assessed based on evaluation parameters like threshold capacity and bid capacity from already stored data and technical evaluation can be carried out in a faster manner using this information.
- BIMS would be used by all the project implementation agencies of the Ministry, for maintenance of technical information of civil works of contractors/ concessionaires, and for online technical evaluation of civil works bids.

- The bidders would be responsible for ensuring that their latest details are available on the BIMS portal.

### **BIS to set standards for the services sector too**

#### **Context**

- Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is in talks with industries and all major stakeholders to set new standards to measure quality of services offered to consumers across different sectors, including telecom, aviation, e-commerce and healthcare.

#### **Current Status**

- BIS sets the quality regulations for various products from gold to bottled water

#### **Details**

- BIS standards are set to formulate a framework for quality services that should be provided to consumers and also talk about the benchmarks to deal with consumer complaints or after sales service in an effort to ensure quality in the services sector.
- So it has pointed out that the initial focus will be on 12 champion services sectors identified by the government. These include IT, tourism and hospitality, transport and logistics, accounting and finance services, legal services, communication services and construction.
- It has also been decided that the BIS will set up a separate 'divisional council' for services in a month's time.
  - Under this, different technical committees will be set up — one for each service.
    - The committees will have various stakeholders such as government officials, experts and industry representatives.

#### **What was the need?**

- The process was initiated after concerns over lack of standardization, particularly with regards to after-sales service, in their feedback to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs.
- In a poll, online community network Local Circles found that in the absence of defined customer service standards in the country, a majority of consumers were not happy with after-sales services.
- As per the poll, 43% feel that mobile handset and computer manufacturers are the worst in after-sales services,
  - Followed by white goods firms (38%) and automobile companies (11%).
  - About 93% of respondents said brands should at least acknowledge complaints from users within 72 hours.
- Many consumers complained that customer service numbers of many companies do not work

#### **Bureau of Indian standards (BIS)**

- BIS is the National Standard Body of India established under the BIS Act 1986 for the harmonious development of the **activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods and for matters connected therewith.**
- BIS has been providing traceability and tangibility benefits to the national economy in a number of ways - providing safe reliable quality goods; minimizing health hazards to consumers; promoting exports and imports substitute; control over proliferation of varieties etc. through standardization, certification and testing.
- BIS has its Headquarters at New Delhi

## **Boka Saul/Mud Rice**

### **Context**

- It has got the geographical indication (GI) tag, bestowed upon it by the Government of India

### **Details**

- It is a paddy variety grown in parts of lower Assam — Nalbari, Barpeta, Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Dhubri, Chirang, Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Baksa etc.
- Boka saul requires zero fuel. The rice does not need to be cooked
- soaking the rice in (cold) water for one hour or in hot water for around half an hour, it swells up
- Boka saul now joins Muga Silk, Joha Rice, Tezpur Litchi — the three other products to have earned the GI-tag status

## **Catastrophe Bonds**

- A catastrophe bond (CAT) is a high-yield debt instrument that is usually insurance-linked and meant to raise money in case of a catastrophe such as a hurricane or earthquake.
- It has a special condition that states if the issuer, such as the insurance or reinsurance company, suffers a loss from a particular predefined catastrophe, then its obligation to pay interest and/or repay the principal is either deferred or completely forgiven.
- They were created and first used in the mid-1990s in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew and the Northridge earthquake.

### **Some facts**

- The market for catastrophe bonds was initially pegged in the range of \$1-2 billion dollars in the initial years of 1998-2001. Today, the total size of the catastrophe bond market is more than \$30 billion
- The outstanding bonds in the first quarter of 2018 amounted to \$35 billion.
- Catastrophe bonds are issued by insurance companies which have exposure to property and calamity insurance.

### **Advantages of a Catastrophe Bond**

- These are generally not closely linked with the stock market or economic conditions.
- The bonds also typically offer a competitive yield compared to their risk, including relative to alternative investments.
- The low correlation with equities and corporate bonds with insurance risk securitization means the bonds provide diversification benefits.

### **Conclusion**

- Since investors will always have an eagle eye on the preparedness of dealing with catastrophes, it cuts the slack and bolsters more investments into technology and into people keeping an eye out for such events.
- It is high time that such instruments are introduced in India so that relief and reconstruction work in areas affected by natural disasters goes on unimpeded and are not stalled for only want of capital.

## **Committee on Fair Market Conduct**

### **Context**

- The committee under the chairmanship of former law secretary T.K. Viswanathan, with over 20 members was represented by industrialists, lawyers, consultants, stock exchanges, mutual funds and investment bankers.
- The panel has suggested Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), should seek powers to tap telephones and other electronic communication devices to check insider trading and other frauds.

### Recommendation with respect to phone tapping

- Currently, SEBI has the power to only ask for call records, which includes numbers called and the duration of calls made
- The committee has recommended that SEBI may seek direct power to intercept calls to aid in investigation, akin to the power granted to the Central Board of Direct Taxes
- SEBI be given powers to tap phone calls.

### Other recommendations

- The panel is in favour of including a new sub-section within the SEBI Act to prohibit schemes or tricks to manipulate the books of accounts and financial statements or to hide diversion, misutilisation or siphoning of public issue proceeds.
- The panel has proposed broadening the ambit of manipulative and unfair trade practices, stating that listed firms should have policies to deal with leaks of unpublished price sensitive information.
- A key recommendation is that the stock market watchdog be granted the power to act directly against “perpetrators of financial statements fraud”. In essence, this means SEBI can act not only against listed entities under its extant powers but also against those who aid or abet financial fraud — including accountants and auditors.
- The panel has suggested that SEBI, rather than the Central government, be given the power to grant immunity to whistle-blowers who help uncover illegal activities
- Greater executive powers can help the regulator take swifter action against offenders instead of relying on government bodies such as the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
- this could also free SEBI from various manifestations of political influence
- SEBI is better placed to understand the complex nuances that financial market fraud entails, compared to other investigative agencies or even those in charge of implementing the Companies Act, it may also be better placed to enforce the law.

### Concerns

- It can act as deterrent to truants in the market, but banking on fear too much could also scare away genuine investors.
- Its order to impose restrictions on the trading of shares of 331 companies suspected of laundering money was seen as a hasty move taken under pressure from the government without a formal investigation
- Given that SEBI is now considering a cap on trading by retail investors based on their assessed ‘net worth’, the committee’s suggestion that it may consider any trading by players beyond their known ‘financial resources’ as fraud could lead to undue harassment of investors.

### Conclusion

- Granting more teeth to enable the market regulator to fulfil its primary role of protecting investors is fine. But it is equally critical to empower it with the right tools so that it does not dominate or curtail the freedom of investors.
- **Proper checks and balances must be ensured** for use of the power

### Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts (Amendment) Bill

- The law defines “commercial disputes” to include regular commercial and business contracts, construction contracts, shareholder agreements, licensing agreements, etc.
- The Bill intends to jump-start India as a sought-out business destination in the world. Its objective is to set India at the top of the ‘Ease of Doing Business’ index of the World Bank. It aims to create a conducive regulatory environment for investors to set up and operate businesses.



### Details

- It seeks to bring down the specified value of commercial disputes from the existing Rs 1 crore each to Rs 3 lakh and for their speedy disposal.
  - The Commercial Courts Act, 2015, provides for commercial courts and commercial divisions of high courts to settle commercial disputes with a value of at least Rs 1 crore.
- The bill provides for establishment of commercial courts at the district judge level for the territories over which respective high courts have ordinary original civil jurisdiction.
- The law will be given prospective effect so that the authority of the judicial forum at present adjudicating the commercial disputes is not affected.
- Pre-Institution Mediation (PIM) process is introduced in cases where no urgent or interim relief is contemplated would provide an opportunity to the parties to resolve commercial disputes outside the ambit of the courts through the authorities constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
  - The Bill proposes a new Section, 21A, which enables the Centre to make rules and procedures for PIM.

### Why is this done?

- With rapid economic development, there has been a considerable increase in commercial activities and a consequent steep rise in the number of commercial disputes at the domestic and international levels.
- Growing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and overseas commercial transactions have contributed to a significant increase in commercial disputes.

### Significance

- Bringing down the specified value of commercial disputes would reduce the time taken for resolution of such disputes and improve India's ranking in the ease of doing business.
- The introduction of the pre-institution mediation process in cases where no urgent interim relief is contemplated will provide an opportunity to the parties to resolve the commercial disputes outside the ambit of courts through authorities constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act
  - However, in all other cases, the mediation is mandatory and will be conducted within a period of three months (extendable by another two months with the consent of the parties).
  - Any settlement arrived at through mediation will have the status of an arbitral award on agreed terms and be enforceable like a decree of court.

## Concessional Financing Scheme (CFS)

### Context

- Cabinet approves Extension of Concessional Financing Scheme (CFS) to support Indian Entities bidding for strategically important infrastructure projects abroad

### Details

- Under the Scheme, MEA selects the specific projects keeping in view strategic interest of India and sends the same to Department of Economic Affairs (DEA).
- The strategic importance of a project to deserve financing under this Scheme, is decided, on a case to case basis, by a Committee chaired by Secretary, DEA and with members from Department of Expenditure, Ministry of External Affairs, Department of Industrial Promotion and Policy (DIPP), Department of Commerce, Department of Financial Services and Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The Scheme is presently being operated through the Export-Import Bank of India, which raises resources from the market to provide concessional finance. Government of India (GoI) provides counter guarantee and interest equalization support of 2% to the EXIM Bank.

**Background:**

- Prior to the introduction of CFS, Indian entities were not able to bid for large projects abroad since the cost of financing was very high for them and bidders from other countries such as China, Japan, Europe and US were able to provide credit at superior terms, i.e., lower interest rate and longer tenures which works to the advantage of bidders from those countries.

**Advantages**

- Also, by having projects of strategic interest to India executed by Indian entities, the CFS enables India to generate substantial backward linkage induced jobs, demand for material and machinery in India and also a lot of goodwill for India.

**Demonetized Notes 99% of it were returned: RBI****Context**

- The Reserve Bank of India's annual report for 2017-18 said more than 99% of the Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 notes withdrawn from circulation on November 8 2016 had been returned to the central bank.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that notes of 500 and 1000 will no more be used as legal tender.

**Objective**

- A radical governance-cum-social engineering measure, radical and unprecedented step with short term costs and long term benefits where the aim of the action was:
  - to curb corruption,
  - counterfeiting,
  - the use of high denomination notes for terrorist activities,
  - The accumulation of "black money", generated by income that has not been declared to the tax authorities.

**Details**

- According to the report, after verification and reconciliation, the total value of the Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 notes as on November 8, 2016, the day before the note ban came into effect, was Rs. 15.41 lakh crore.
- The total value of such notes returned from circulation is Rs. 15.31 lakh crore.
- Just Rs 10,720 crore of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes failed to come back to the RBI, as against expectations that over Rs 3 lakh crore of black money would not return to the banking system.

**Concerns**

- liquidity shortage, with long queues outside banks and people undergoing immense hardship across the country
- It had also roiled the economy, with demand falling, businesses facing a crisis, and GDP growth declining close to 1.5 per cent
- Many small units were hit hard, with many reporting huge losses

**DigiYatra**

- It is an initiative of Ministry of Civil Aviation
- The 'DigiYatra' is an industry-led initiative coordinated by the Ministry in line with the Prime Minister Modi's Digital India's vision to transform the nation into a digitally empowered society.
- It aims to bring together entire industry to develop a digital ecosystem that will deliver Indian customers a seamless, consistent and paperless service experience at every touch point of their journey.

- The basic objective is to reduce queues at airports and bring efficiency to the boarding process
- All aviation stakeholders – airlines, airport operators, security and immigration agencies, cab operators, retail establishment and others are working to devise digital standards which can enable seamless exchange of data and information.

#### **Four Key Pillars**

- Connected Passengers, Connected Airports, Connected Flying and Connected Systems

#### **Features**

- Submit grievances, share experiences and provide feedback
- Get a prompt when their luggage reaches the baggage claim belt
- Receive relevant information pertaining to various facilities, protocols, airline timings, queue lengths at airports etc
- Walk-through security scanners swiftly owing to advanced biometric security solutions
- Plan their trips efficiently by identifying price trends and estimate future airfares at the time of ticket booking

#### **Implementation**

- The facility will use digital technology to enhance air passenger experience all the way from ticket booking to airport entry check, security check and aircraft boarding.
- For this a passenger needs to enrol in to DigiYatra program through AirSewa app and a DigiYatra verified passenger will get hassle free entry at airport through E-Gates.
- The ID verification will be done by the BCAS-approved Government ID. At the entry gate a single token for the passenger will be created.

#### **Privacy concern addressed**

- This facility is in conformity with privacy guidelines of the Supreme Court
- When an individual enters the airport, their images will be captured and then they will be able to go through the full lifecycle of travel in a seamless manner
- Once an individual establishes identity they will be able to pass through the entire lifecycle of the travel and this facility is optional.
- If somebody does not want to disclose identity, there will be separate provision for them.

### **E-commerce Policy Draft**

#### **Context**

- A task force of the Union Commerce Ministry has submitted the draft National Policy on Electronic Commerce

#### **Stats**

- According to an estimate by the finance ministry, the size of the digital economy in India will be \$1 trillion by 2022 and it will account for close to 50% of the entire economy by 2030.
- India's e-tail business, estimated to be worth around \$25 billion
- Over the coming decade, the e-commerce is expected to swell to \$200 billion

#### **Features**

- The draft policy proposes the creation of a single national regulator to oversee the entire industry, although operationalizing its different features would require action from multiple Ministries and regulators.
- The draft e-commerce policy proposes that all discounts offered by large e-commerce firms be phased out within two years to ensure fair competition with brick-and-mortar stores.

- It mandates e-commerce firms to store consumer data in India. The firms will be given two years to comply.
  - The draft India e-commerce policy proposes tax sops to encourage data localization and grant infra status to data centres.
- The Competition Commission of India may be asked to amend the current thresholds and examine potentially competition-distorting M&As.
- The government does not currently allow foreign direct investment (FDI) in e-commerce companies that hold their own inventories. Online retailers with foreign investments can only operate as marketplaces — letting sellers list their products on the platform.
  - The policy proposes 49% FDI under the inventory model for firms to sell locally-produced goods on their online platforms. The control of such firms will remain with Indians.
  - This will allow e-commerce firms to offer their own brands — as long as they are made in India.
  - An independent regulator will address compliance with FDI caps in e-commerce.
- To provide a forum for consumers, the task force has suggested the setting up of a Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), which, besides helping consumers, will also act as the nodal agency for intra-government coordination, and provide a platform for e-commerce operators regarding complaints of fraudulent activities.

#### **Concerns expressed by retailers**

- Traditional retailers have voiced concerns about large e-tail players with deep pockets pricing them out of the market, and have been seeking a level playing field.

#### **How will consumers be affected?**

- With online discounts gone, they will lose out. Having a regulator, e-consumer courts may better address complaints about online financial frauds

#### **Issue Area**

- To give the government a say on who can offer how much discount and for how long, instead of letting consumers exercise informed choices, would be a regressive step for the economy.
- Foreign direct investment restrictions on players who can hold their own inventory are sought to be lifted, but there must be a majority Indian partner and all products have to be made in India.
- The proposed e-commerce policy could drive away those planning online retail forays — and the opportunity to create jobs and benefit consumers would be lost.

### **EPFO data not the right gauge of employment level**

#### **Context**

- The recent downward revision in the Employees' Provident Fund Organization data for September-June does not imply a decrease in formal sector employment, according to labour economists

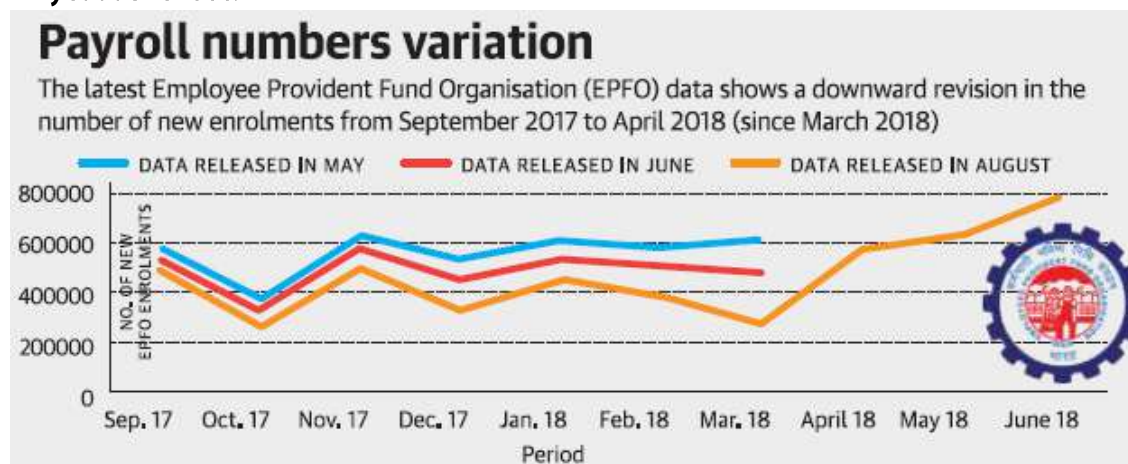
#### **Concerns**

There are several problems with the EPFO data and economists have cautioned against its use as a gauge of formal sector employment in the country.

- It is not clear what happens when a person changes jobs
- People at the bottom of the pyramid get low wages, so they are not enthusiastic about their salaries getting cut for the Provident Fund (PF). Neither are their employers eager to pay PF. Accordingly, they have been outside the EPFO net
- Enterprises may not have registered at all, or may not have admitted that they employ enough people to meet the EPFO threshold.

- a company employing 19 people may not be in EPFO, but as soon as it adds one more employee, all 20 are added to EPFO

### Why sudden shoot?



- The new Goods and Services Tax regime created a certain incentive for many small enterprises to register themselves on the GST network, and so they may have registered under EPFO as well.
- Thus, these are not new jobs being created; it is simply that they are newly registered under EPFO.

### Fall Armyworm Pest

#### Context

- Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) has sounded the alarm after the invasive agricultural pest Fall Armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) was discovered in Karnataka
- It is a major maize pest in North America, Which arrived in Africa in 2016 and has threatened the continent's maize crop, a staple which feeds 300 million people.

#### Concerns

- Africa's experience shows how quickly the pest can colonise a new continent.
  - it has spread to 44 African countries today and has proved hard to control
- Its discovery in Karnataka means its spread to the rest of the country, as well as neighboring countries
  - In India, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are at immediate risk.
- The discovery is worrisome because the pest feeds on around 100 different crops, such as vegetables, rice, and sugarcane.

#### Measures to control Growth

- The first line of defence against the Fall Armyworm will be insecticides like lambda-cyhalothrin
- Natural predators such as coccinellid beetles can aid biological control
  - But these natural enemies may not be as effective as insecticides

### 'FDI: India remains top destination'

#### Context

- RBI Annual Report said India remains a preferred destination for foreign direct investment (FDI) as domestic consumption remains strong,

#### Stats

- India received \$37.3 billion capital inflow in 2017-18 as compared with \$36.3 billion in the previous fiscal.
- During the 2015-16, the country received \$36.06 billion.



### Details

- With manufacturing sector gathering momentum, helped by both services and agriculture sectors, consumption demand remains robust in the country making it an attractive investment destination.
- A normal monsoon for the third consecutive year should lift Agricultural Output
- Manufacturing activity is gathering momentum on the back of new business, both domestic and export orders
- In the services sector, the impulses of growth are broadening and there is expansion in employment conditions
- The increase in foreign capital flow was mainly due to higher flows into the communication services, retail and wholesale trade, financial services and computer services.
- With the ongoing policy reforms in sectors ranging from single brand retail trading, civil aviation, real estate broking service and simplification of legal and regulatory system
- India moved into the top 100 countries in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business global rankings

### Global Investment Trends Monitor

- It is published by UNCTAD
  - It provides the international community with up-to-date data and analysis on trends and emerging issues relating to FDI and the activities of multinational enterprises.
  - It is released every quarter of the year.
- India was the 10th largest recipient of global FDI in 2017 and remained the topmost destination for Greenfield capital investment — even ahead of China and the US, if reckoned on an approval basis (FDI market intelligence 2017).

## G20 Digital Economy Ministerial meeting

### Context

- The meeting was held in Salta, in the north-west of Argentina.

### Details

- Argentina has selected the theme, 'Building consensus for fair and sustainable development,' for the 2018 G20 Leaders' Summit, and has identified three key issues for the agenda: the future of work, infrastructure for development, and a sustainable food future.
- Participants will discuss digital government, digital inclusion, measuring the digital economy and technological infrastructure development.
- They will also look into the digitalization of SMEs and entrepreneurship, consumer protection in digital environments and the adoption of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and the Internet of things in sectors like manufacturing and agriculture.

### Digital Economy Task Force (DETF)

Digital Economy refers to a broad range of activities which include: the use of knowledge and information as factors in production, information networks as a platform for action, and how the information and communication technology (ICT) sector spurs economic growth.

- DETF was established under the 2017 German presidency, based on the decision adopted in Hangzhou in 2016 under the Chinese Presidency.
- In Antalya, under the Turkish presidency in 2015, G20 leaders recognized the modern period as a critical era of digital transformation, influenced by the advent of new technologies as key elements for economic development.

## GDP back series

### Background

- In January 2015, the government moved to a new base year of 2011-12 from the earlier base year of 2004-05 for national accounts. The base year of national accounts had been revised earlier in January 2010.
- In the **new series**, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) did away with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at factor cost, and adopted the international practice of valuing industry-wise estimates as gross value added (GVA) at basic prices.
- With the move to the new base year, the growth rate of the economy for 2013-14 was estimated at 6.9%; it was 4.7% on the 2004-05 base. Similarly, the growth rate for 2012-13 was revised upwards to 5.1% from 4.5%.

#### **How was the measurement calculated?**

- Apart from using establishment-based datasets of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and Annual Survey of Industries (ASI), the CSO started to use the enterprise-level corporate database of MCA-21 — an e-governance initiative of the Ministry of Company Affairs that was launched in 2006 to allow firms to electronically file their financial results — and advance filing of corporate accounts, to calculate national accounts.

#### **Problem Area**

- For years preceding 2011-12, however, the CSO faced issues for evaluating GDP with the new base year — due to the lack of availability of the MCA-21 database.
- In 2017, then Chief Statistician of India T C A Anant said that the back series was proving to be a “major statistical challenge” in the absence of data for earlier years, and declared “it’s not going to happen that quickly”.

#### **Committee on Real Sector Statistics**

- The National Statistical Commission (NSC) constituted a Committee on Real Sector Statistics under the Chairmanship of Dr. Sudipto Mundle
- It is for improvement and modernizations of real sector database
- It discusses alternative approaches for converting the old GDP series to the new base year 2011-12.

#### **Methods of estimation**

Back series can be generated in three ways, the Committee on Real Sector Statistics said

- one, based on the new GDP methodology by using the base data wherever available;
- two, based on a production shift approach;
- three, by projecting the old series using the base year 2004-05 forward, and then adjusting it to the 2011-12 base by comparing with the new series. The third approach is yet to be tried, the Committee said.

#### **What else did it say?**

- The report states that the economy grew at a faster pace under the UPA government from 2004-05 to 2013-14, compared with the average growth during the first four years of the current government.

#### **Global Findex**

- The Global Findex database is the world’s most comprehensive data set on how adults save, borrow, make payments, and manage risk.
- It is published by World Bank.
- Launched with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the database has been published every three years since 2011.

## India

- The report says India has made rapid strides in improving access to formal financial services.
- The World Bank report cited the success of the Jan Dhan Yojana the government's initiative aimed at bringing masses within the formal banking system.
- The percentage of adult bank account holders in India increased to 80% in 2017 as compared to 53% in 2014 and 35% in 2011

## Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information

- It is a multilateral framework which works in the area of transparency and exchange of information for tax purposes
- The Global Forum was originally established in 2001 by OECD member countries along with a number of participating partners.
- In September 2009, in response to the G20 Leaders' call for jurisdictions (means countries) to adopt high standards of transparency and information exchange in tax matters, the Global Forum was restructured as a consensus-based organization where all members will get an equal role.
- The aim of the Global Forum was to ensure that all countries fully implement the international standards on tax transparency and Exchange Of Information (EOI).
- These standards require that tax information should be exchanged by a requested country on requisition from a requesting country where it is relevant to the enforcement of the domestic laws of the requesting country. Every country is peer reviewed on these standards. After review, a rating is awarded which may be 'Compliant', 'Largely Compliant', 'Partly Compliant' or 'Non-Compliant'.

## Merits

- Global Forum has assigned ratings to 116 countries. The whole process has been very efficacious. There were many countries (including tax havens) that were initially rated non-compliant. These countries were persuaded to amend their legal and practical systems.
- The adverse rating also has a reputational effect. International organizations such as World Bank and IMF do not grant assistance to a country if the rating is adverse. Such countries have quickly made the recommended changes in their system and upgraded their ratings.
- As per the Tax Transparency Report, due to work of the Global Forum, 32 countries (for which data is available) could recover taxes of €520 million in 2012, €745 million in 2013 and €667 million in 2014.

## Challenges

- It does not have the power to take direct action against any country, which is not following the tax transparency standard. It can only award an adverse rating.
- Tax evaders are inventing new techniques of evasion. This can only be addressed by adopting transparency standards on a real time basis which, due to its multilateral nature, is difficult for the Global Forum to target
- Global Forum operates on the principle of "consensus" implying that all countries should agree, which sometimes leads to less than optimal decision-making while deciding complex tax issues
- There are still countries which are outside the purview of Global Forum and are being used by tax evaders
- There has been tremendous increase in work which has put stress on the limited resources of Global Forum.

## Conclusion

- It is essential that countries like India, which are plagued by black money concerns, actively support the work of Global Forum in order to check cross-border tax evasion.

## **International Conference on Recent Advances in Food Processing Technology (ICRAFPT)**

### **Context**

- It got underway at Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology, Thanjavur in Tamilnadu.
- 2018 theme: Doubling farmers' income through food processing.

### **Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology (IIFPT)**

- It is a premier national Institute working under the administrative control of Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI)
- It is involved in delivering research and education in food processing
- The institute has also been incubating farmers, entrepreneurs and aspiring youth for prospective food business ventures.

## **ICRISAT to study Mission Kakatiya**

### **Context:**

The Telangana State government has decided to ask International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics ICRISAT to conduct an in-depth study to assess the impact of de-siltation of tanks taken up under the prestigious Mission Kakatiya project.

- The study to be conducted over two years would cover aspects like impact of de-siltation on water availability for irrigation, changes in cropping pattern and recharge of groundwater.
- It would incorporate economic valuation in terms of nutrients applied, among others.

### **Mission Kakatiya:**

- It is a program for restoring all the minor irrigation tanks and lakes in Telangana State.
- The geotagging and geospatial database is maintained for 45,800 tanks, for analysis and monitoring. Every tank is assigned a unique GEOID, based on its latitude and longitude.
- The project has resulted in return of many migratory birds because of water levels and fishes in the tanks.
- There has also been a significant increase in ground water table, reduction of fertilizer usage, reduced power utilization and increase in crop yield.

### **ICRISAT:**

- The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) is an International organization which conducts agricultural research for rural development, headquartered in Telangana in India with several regional centers in Mali, Kenya.
- The research stations are located in Mali, Nairobi, Kenya, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe.
- It was founded in 1972 by a consortium of organizations convened by the Ford and the Rockefeller foundations. Its charter was signed by the FAO and the UNDP.
- Since its inception, the host country India, has granted a special status to ICRISAT as a UN Organization operating in the Indian Territory making it eligible for special immunities and tax privileges.

## **International Economic Association**

- It is a Non-Governmental Organization that was founded in 1950
- Its aim from the beginning has been to promote personal contacts and mutual understanding among economists in different parts of the world through the organization of scientific meetings, through common research programs and by means of publications of an international character on problems of current importance

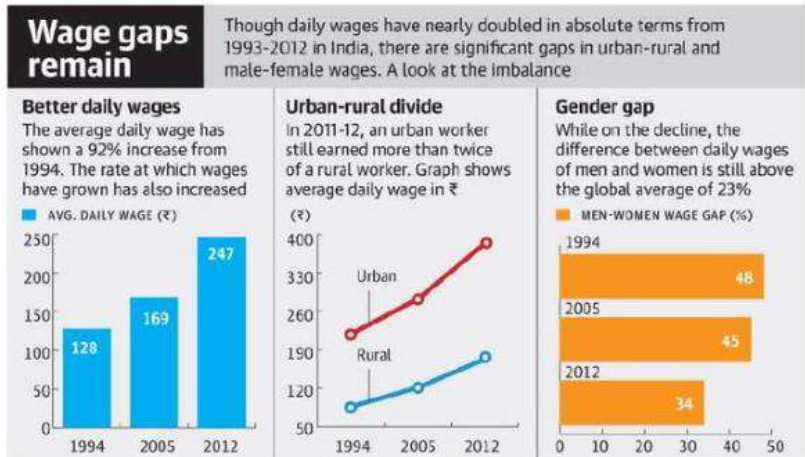
## **ILO report on wages in India**

### **Context**

- International Labour Organization published a Wage Report which said real average daily wages in India almost doubled in the first two decades after economic reforms, but low pay and wage inequality remains a serious challenge to inclusive growth

### Details

- Regional disparities in average wages have actually increased over time, with wages rising more rapidly in high-wage States than in low-wage ones.



### Suggestions

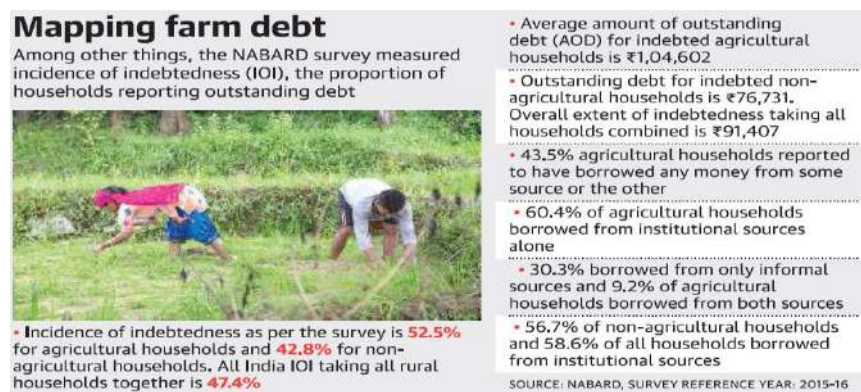
- It has recommended for stronger implementation of minimum wage laws and strengthening of the frameworks for collective bargaining by workers.
- It is essential to combat persistent low pay in some sectors and to bridge the wage gaps between rural and urban, male and female, and regular and casual workers.
- It has urged collaborative work between government agencies, academic institutions and expert organisations.

## NABARD All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey 2016-17

### Context

- More than half the agricultural households in the country have outstanding debt, and their average outstanding debt is almost as high as the average annual income of all agricultural households, according to a recent survey by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

### Details





### State figures

- The southern States of Telangana (79%), Andhra Pradesh (77%), and Karnataka (74%) showed the highest levels of indebtedness among agricultural households, followed by Arunachal Pradesh (69%), Manipur (61%), Tamil Nadu (60%), Kerala (56%), and Odisha (54%).

### Source of Loans

- Only 46% of the loans were taken from commercial banks. Farm households took less than half their loans from commercial banks
- 40% were taken from non-institutional sources such as relatives, friends, moneylenders and landlords.
  - Loans from relatives and friends may be free of interest and reflective of social integration in communities
  - A sizeable 11.5% households exhibited dependence on local moneylenders and landlords, which exposes them to exploitation by having to pay exorbitant interest. The persons resorting to local moneylenders often include, either the illiterate or extremely poor ones which are not eligible for loans from formal institutions, or the households that do not have social networks that can help them in times of need.
- 10% from self-help groups

### Where was loan amount spent?

The biggest reason for taking loans among agricultural households was capital expenditure for agricultural purposes, with a quarter of all loans taken for this purpose.

- 19% of loans were taken for meeting running expenses for agricultural purposes,
- 19% were taken for sundry domestic needs.
- Loans for housing and medical expenses stood at 11% and 12%, respectively.

### Classes of Debt

- The highest incidence of indebtedness came from those owning more than two hectares of land. In that category, 60% of households are in debt.
- Among small and marginal farmers owning less than 0.4 hectares, slightly less than 50% of the households were in debt.
- Those with more land were more likely to have multiple loans.
  - This may be attributed to the fact that these economically better-off households are more eligible for taking loans as they have enough assets to serve as security against the loans taken

### National Logistics Portal

- It is a digital platform to bring all stakeholders in the logistics sector on board to cut down transaction cost and time for businesses
- It is an initiative of Department of Commerce
- It will create opportunities and bring together various ministries, departments and the private sector.
- Stakeholders like traders, manufacturers, logistics service providers, infrastructure providers, financial services, government departments and groups and associations will all be on one platform, once the portal is created.

### Objective

- India's logistics sector is highly defragmented and the aim is to reduce the logistics cost from the present 14 per cent of GDP to less than 10 per cent by 2022

#### Four main components

- It includes a logistics e-market place, a logistics certification platform, an integrated regulatory platform and a banking and financial services platform.

#### Logistics e-market place

- It will allow a trader or exporter to plan end to end shipment route, check availability, enquire the rates make bookings for a wide range of services such as freight forward, ocean freight, truck, warehouse, air freight, ICD services and packaging services, exchange e-contract, generate invoice, pay electronically, and monitor physical flow of goods.

#### Facts

- According to the Economic Survey 2017-18, the logistics sector provides livelihood to more than 22 million people and improving the sector will facilitate 10 per cent decrease in indirect logistics cost leading to the growth of 5-8 per cent in exports.
- The survey estimates that the worth of Indian logistics market would be around \$215 billion in the next two years compared to about \$160 billion now.

#### National Statistical Commission (NSC)

- It is an autonomous body formed in 2005.
- It was established on the recommendations of the Rangarajan Commission
- The objective of its constitution is to reduce the problems faced by statistical agencies in the country in relation to collection of data.
- It would lay special emphasis on ensuring collection of unbiased data so as to restore public trust in the figures released by the Government.
  - Statistical agencies like the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) face numerous problems in collecting data from State and Central government departments, but an autonomous body like the NSC is thought to be more able to coordinate things as a statutory status would lend it teeth.
- The NSC has four Members besides a Chairperson, each having specialization and experience in specified statistical fields.

#### Pink bollworm attacks cotton crop

##### Context

- The pink bollworm has again attacked cotton plants in Maharashtra, causing concern among farmers and the State government.

##### Details

- Pink bollworm is an insect which chews through the cotton lint (Cotton fibre after separated from the seed is called lint) to feed on the seeds.
- It occurs throughout the world, though it is more serious in Asia and Africa than in America.
- Infestation occurs when the crop is in the mid stage and continues till end.

#### Open pollinated and Hybrid

- Open pollinated (OP) seeds are seeds that are produced from natural, random, open pollination by wind, birds or insects, resulting in plants that are naturally varied.
  - This means that the seed will result in a plant very similar to the parent.
- Hybrid refers to a plant variety developed through a specific, controlled cross of two parent plants.

#### Causes

- A major cause of bollworm attacks is the absence of crop rotation.

- Continuous planting of cotton year after year encourages breeding of the pest.
- The pink bollworm grew resistant because India restricted itself to cultivating long-duration hybrids since the introduction of Bt cotton in 2002.
  - The output is low densities per hectare so, Indian farmers grow them longer so that they produce enough cotton.
  - All other Bt cotton-growing countries mainly grow open-pollinated cotton varieties rather than hybrids.

#### **Problems faced**

- Reduction of lint development, destruction of seed and weakened lint. It affects the lint quality.
- Infested bolls open prematurely exposing the saprophytic fungi to grow on them.
- There is loss in weight of seed cotton.
  - The pest can cause about 20 to 30 per cent crop loss
- The oil content is also affected.

#### **Measures to be taken**

- One way to reduce pest susceptibility is to plant non-Bt cotton as “refugia” in the vicinity of the main Bt crop.
- It needs concerted efforts at crop management by farmers, government agencies and seed companies to undertake a coordinated campaign, involving continuous field monitoring as well as pre-cultivation and post-harvest stage measures.
- Field monitoring should involve installation of pheromone traps.
- No growth-promoting chemicals or even urea should be applied during the crop’s grand growth phase to prevent greenness and tenderness of foliage that attracts the pest.

Any technology, though, gets obsolete with time and requiring replacement, including with upgraded versions. So there needs to be continuous focus on research and long-term policies supportive of new technologies with science-based evaluation

### **Pitch to MOVE**

#### **Context**

- NITI Aayog has launched “Pitch to MOVE” - a mobility pitch competition that aims to provide budding entrepreneurs of India a unique opportunity to pitch their business ideas to a distinguished jury

#### **Details**

- “Pitch to MOVE aims to identify and incentivize the startups, which will help the Government realize its vision of Shared, Connected, Intermodal and Environment Friendly Mobility for India.
- The objective is to harness the latest disruption for generating employment and growth in our country.
- Startups working in the various fields of mobility can pitch their ideas to industry leaders and Venture Capitalists for raising investments.
- “Pitch to MOVE” is organized by NITI Aayog in collaboration with Invest India and Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM)

#### **Mobility Pitch Competition**

- The Mobility Pitch Competition is open to primarily startups from various parts of India who are interested in showcasing their business ideas to jury members.
- The competition aims to identify and reward the start-ups offering innovative solutions for shared, connected, and environment friendly mobility. The Startups can be from the domain of Public

Mobility, Electric Vehicles, Shared Transport, Last Mile Connectivity, Passenger Transportation, Battery Technology, Automotive IoT, Freight & Logistics, Powertrain/Drivetrain, Experiential, Travel, Mobility Infrastructure and Automotive Electronics etc.

### Significance

- Potential driver of innovation, job creation, economic growth and social change

## Purchasing Managers Index (PMI)

### Context

- The Nikkei India Services Business Activity Index rises to 54.2 in July 2018 from 52.6 in June, as new businesses increase at the fastest rise since June 2017

### Purchasing Managers Index (PMI)

- It is an indicator of business activity -- both in the manufacturing and services sectors.
- It is a survey-based measure that asks the respondents about changes in their perception of some key business variables from the month before.

### Details

- It is a weighted average of the Manufacturing Output Index and the Services Business Activity Index and tracks business trends across private sector activity, based on data collected from a representative panel of around 800 companies.
- The index tracks variables such as sales, new orders, employment, inventories and prices.
- A reading above 50 indicates expansion in business activity and below 50 indicates that it is generally declining.
  - The rate of expansion can also be judged by comparing the PMI with that of the previous month data.
  - If the figure is higher than the previous month's then the economy is expanding at a faster rate. If it is lower than the previous month then it is growing at a lower rate.
- It is calculated separately for the manufacturing and services sectors and then a composite index is constructed.

### What are its implications for the economy?

- The PMI is usually released at the start of the month, much before most of the official data on industrial output, manufacturing and GDP growth becomes available.
- It is considered a good leading indicator of economic activity.
- manufacturing growth measured by the PMI as a good indicator of industrial output
- Central banks of many countries also use the index to help make decisions on interest rates.
- The PMI also gives an indication of corporate earnings and is closely watched by investors as well as the bond markets. A good reading enhances the attractiveness of an economy vis-a-vis another competing economy.

## RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil)

### Context

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) launched RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil), an initiative that will enable collection and conversion of used cooking oil to bio-diesel.

### Details

- Under this initiative, 64 companies at 101 locations have been identified to enable collection of used cooking oil.

- FSSAI is also working in partnership with Biodiesel Association of India and the food industry to ensure effective compliance of used cooking oil regulations
- FSSAI has additionally launched a micro-site to monitor the progress of the collection and conversion of used cooking oil into biodiesel,
- The regulator believes India has the potential to recover 220 crore litres of used cooking oil for the production of biodiesel by 2022 through a coordinated action.

#### **Example**

- McDonald's has started converting used cooking oil to biodiesel from 100 outlets in Mumbai and Pune.

### **Shale included in the definition of Petroleum**

#### **Context**

- The government has amended the Petroleum and Natural Gas Rules 1959 to include shale in the definition of petroleum, a change that would allow private companies to explore and produce the resource in the blocks they already operate.
- Prior to this, the definition excluded shale and therefore barred companies from exploiting it from fields that are producing conventional oil and gas or coal-bed methane.

#### **Petroleum Definition**

- Petroleum means naturally occurring hydrocarbons, whether in the form of natural gas or in a liquid, viscous or solid form, or a mixture thereof, but does not include coal, lignite, and helium occurring in association with petroleum or coal or shale.

#### **Significance**

- It would help in enhancing domestic exploration and production of hydrocarbons and increasing India's energy security and reducing dependency on imports

### **State Energy Efficiency Preparedness Index (SEEPI)**

- It assesses state policies and programmes aimed at improving energy efficiency across various sectors
- It is a joint effort of the NITI Aayog and Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)

#### **Details**

- The SEEPI has put states into four categories — front runner, achiever, contender and aspirant — based upon their efforts and achievements towards energy efficiency implementation.
- The composition of the index has been developed considering each state's energy consumption, its energy saving potential and its influence in implementing energy efficiency in buildings, industry, municipalities, transport, agriculture and distribution companies.
- The required data was collected from the concerned state departments such as DISCOMs, Urban Development Departments, etc., with the help of State Designated Agencies (SDAs) nominated by the BEE.

#### **Ranking**

- 'Front runner' states: Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab and Rajasthan.'
- 'Achiever' states: Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Haryana
- While most states have implemented national programmes designed by BEE and EESL, the 'Front Runner' and 'Achiever' states have several individual initiatives as well.



## Turkey Economic Crisis

### Context

- The Turkish lira weakened over 8%, following concern over its President Tayyip Erdogan's increasing control over the economy and worsening diplomatic relationship with the United States.
- The value of the Turkish lira collapsed sending shock waves across the financial markets.

### Major causes for turmoil in Turkey due to internal factors

- Turkey is under the control of authoritarian president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. He has been seizing greater control over the country's economic policy.
  - He appointed his son-in-law as finance minister.
  - He has made a series of pronouncements that undercut the independence of the country's central bank, railing against the prospect of high interest rates.
- Lower interest rates tend to stoke growth — as well as inflation. And Turkey is already dealing with inflation running near an annual rate of 16 percent.
- Foreign investors are scared. They have been pulling money out of the country. In practice, that means that they sell lira and buy dollars or other currencies. The result is that the value of the lira has plunged. And that has the potential to upend the Turkish economy and financial system.
- Turkey's debt scenario is in bad shape. The current account deficit (CAD) of the country has now reached 5 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP). A greater CAD-to-GDP ratio is thus a burden on the economy.

### Turkey's economy and its link to USA- External factors.

- In recent years, investors in wealthier parts of the world, like the United States, Europe and Japan, have lent many billions of dollars to governments and companies in developing economies like Turkey
  - That has been an attractive proposition because interest rates in the United States and other developed markets have been incredibly low, as central banks tried to nurse their economies back to health after the last recession. The higher rates on offer in countries like Turkey have acted as magnets for foreign capital.
  - Now, with the economy of the United States strong again, the Federal Reserve has been raising interest rates. As a result, keeping money invested in American markets looks like a better deal, and the dollar has strengthened.
- The country's finances received a body blow after US President Donald Trump announced he was doubling US import tariffs on Turkish steel and aluminium.
- Turkey detained American pastor named Andrew Brunson.
  - To Turkey, Brunson is a spy who attempted to overthrow the government during a 2016 coup attempt. But to US officials, Brunson is an innocent Christian family man who is being wrongfully detained.
  - White House has repeatedly pushed for Brunson's release in conversations with Turkish officials. That push has since escalated to threats of economic sanctions.

### Its effects on other countries

- The crisis has brought considerable risks of financial contagion
- The slump in lira sparked fresh concerns in the global markets which has already been jittery with rising noise around a trade war.
- Indian investors have reasons to worry as emerging economies seem most vulnerable in face of the lira erosion.
  - The Indian economy is far stronger, our current account deficit is much lower and our foreign exchange reserves much higher, our external debt is low.
- Much like the rupee, India's BRICS counterparts felt the heat.

- The Russian ruble, already under pressure after the US hit Moscow with sanctions, lost two per cent,
- Brazilian real lost 4%.
- South African rand was battered seven per cent.
- China's yuan was somewhat immune, even though it fell by almost half a per cent.
- Foreign banks lent money to companies, investors and governments in the crisis-stricken countries.
  - As borrowers defaulted, those loans led to deep losses that threatened to undermine the health of financial systems thousands of miles away.
  - There are echoes of that situation in today's Turkey crisis. A number of large European banks — including Italy's UniCredit, Spain's BBVA and France's BNP Paribas — own stakes in Turkish lenders. Other western banks are exposed to Turkey via loans to Turkish companies.

### Falling rupee and its impact on economy

- The depreciation is largely owing to the dollar strengthening rather than any inherent weakness in the domestic unit
- The rupee compares well against currencies of other emerging markets such as Russia, Brazil, Argentina and Turkey.

#### Impact

- **Exports** may receive a boost while imports could flag
  - It takes more rupees to pay for the same quantum of imports and fewer dollars for a buyer to pay for the same quantity of exports.
  - A strong US economy and a US dollar mean good news for Indian exporters. Companies in the software services and pharmaceutical industry have been looking for a revival in demand for their services and products respectively.
- Inflation
  - More expensive imports are likely to drive inflation upward, especially in India where input products constitute a large part of our imports.
  - In addition, a depreciating rupee also impacts the oil import bill since it costs more rupees per barrel of oil, which plays its own part in pushing inflation up.
- GDP growth
  - On the one hand, costlier inputs and the subsequent increase in the prices of finished goods should have a positive impact on GDP.
  - But the consequent decrease in demand due to higher prices could nullify this.
- Impact on individuals
  - A depreciating rupee means higher prices of goods and services, costlier petrol and trips abroad turning more expensive.
  - On the flip side, the domestic tourism could grow as more tourists visit India since their currency now buys more here.
  - In the medium term, export-oriented industries may also create more jobs.

#### What has Govt said?

- Rupee is depreciating due to external factors, nothing at this stage to worry
- The Indian currency is still better as compared to certain other currencies.

### UPI 2.0

#### Context

- An upgraded version of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), UPI 2.0, was launched

### What is UPI?

- Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is an instant real-time payment system developed by National Payments Corporation of India facilitating inter-bank transactions.
- The interface is regulated by the Reserve Bank of India and works by instantly transferring funds between two bank accounts on a mobile platform
- UPI 2.0 member banks as on date are: State Bank of India, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, IDBI Bank, RBL Bank, YES Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, IndusInd Bank, Federal Bank and HSBC.

### Features

- Linking of overdraft account: In addition to current and savings accounts, customers can link their overdraft account to UPI.
  - UPI 1.0 allowed users to link only saving accounts.
  - Customers will be able to transact instantly and all benefits associated with overdraft account shall be made available to the users. UPI 2.0 will serve as an additional digital channel to access the overdraft account.
  - It will enable to continue withdrawing money even if the account doesn't have sufficient funds. This will allow merchants to take credit through these OD accounts.
- One-time mandate: UPI 2.0 mandates are created with one-time block functionality for transactions.
  - Through this feature, a customer can schedule payments. It can be used in cases where the money is to be transferred later while commitment has been made now.
  - This feature allows pre-authorization of a transaction, in which amount will be deducted on the date for which it has been scheduled.
- Invoice in the inbox: According to NPCI, this feature is designed for customers to check the invoice sent by merchant prior to making payment.
  - It will help customers to view and verify the credentials and check whether it has come from the right merchant or not.
  - Customers can pay after verifying the amount and other important details mentioned in the invoice.
- Signed intent and QR: This feature is designed for customers to check the authenticity of merchants while scanning QR or quick response code.
  - It notifies the user with information to ascertain whether the merchant is a verified UPI merchant or not. This provides an additional security.
  - Customers will be informed in case the receiver is not secured by way of notifications, said NPCI.

### Significance

- Transactions are processed faster
- It negates the chances of QR tampering. Customers will be informed in case the receiver is not secured by way of notifications

### World Bank launches world-first block chain bond

#### Context

- World Bank has priced the world's first public bond created and managed using only block chain in a \$100 million (\$73.16 million) deal
- It is designed to test how the technology might improve decades-old bond sales practices.

#### Bond-i (Blockchain Offered New Debt Instrument)

- It is a bond created, allocated, transferred and managed through its life cycle using distributed ledger, on behalf of its client the World Bank.

- Bond-i is issued and managed on a private Ethereum block chain operated by the World Bank in Washington and the CommBank in Sydney.
- The bond-i blockchain platform was built and developed by the CommBank Block chain Centre of Excellence, housed in the Sydney Innovation Lab
- The bond-i bond forms part of a broader strategic focus of the World Bank to harness the potential of disruptive technologies for development.

#### **Why is Australia preferred?**

- Australia is a popular test site for market developments because of its well-established financial infrastructure and the familiarity of international investors with the Australian dollar, which is one of the most-traded currencies in the world.

#### **Significance**

- It is a step in moving bond sales away from manual processes towards faster and cheaper automation.
- The World Bank bond will be the first time that capital is raised from public investors through a legally valid bond issuance that uses block chain from start to finish.

### **Spice Jet flies India's first biofuel flight, from Dehradun to Delhi**

#### **Context**

- India's first biofuel-powered flight was successfully tested. It was a 75-seater Spice Jet Bombardier Q400 aircraft that took off from Dehradun's Jolly Grant airport and successfully landed in Delhi.

#### **Details**

- The Fuel developed by Indian Institute of Petroleum(IIP)
- The 450 liters of bio jet fuel that was used was developed by using oil extracted from the seeds of the Jatropha plant which was supplied to IIP by the Chhattisgarh Biofuel Development Authority (CBDA).
- With the success, India has joined an elite club of nations including USA and Australia who use biofuel for commercial flights.

#### **Advantages with Jatropha**

They are fruit pods that are native to Central America and well-adapted to the tropics and subtropics. Inside those pods are several black seeds, each one about twice the size of a coffee bean. Crush the seeds will help in generation of oil. The oil is good for making soap, burning in lamps — or converting into diesel fuel.

- Jatropha addresses the food vs. fuel issue – jatropha isn't edible since it's poisonous, and it can survive with little rain and poor soil conditions allowing it to grow on land that doesn't compete with land for food.
- It'll help farmers and tribal earn from supplying the feed.
- running on a blend of 25 per cent bio jet fuel and 75 per cent ATF helped reduce carbon emissions by 15 per cent
- The production of biofuel will also reduce the dependency on crude oil, most of which currently is imported.

#### **Challenges**

- It's true that the tree can survive droughts, and poor soil. But under those conditions, it won't produce many seeds. If one wants a good harvest of oil, the plant needs nutrients and water, just like any other crop
- Procuring feed for biofuel is a challenge

## Multilateral trading system across the world

### Context

- Bilateral trade deals cannot create an environment conducive to trade expansion in a world where much of trade consists of global value chains that stretch across several countries.
- Trade restrictions will only lower incomes and demands elsewhere in the world, which, in turn, will lower the demand for high-tech exports from the US, and, to that extent, reduce some of the new employment being created in the US economy

### Background:

- Trump is not the first US president to doubt the effectiveness of the WTO in protecting US interests.
- The US and other industrialized countries have long felt that with the changing contours of global trade and economic integration, the only way trade can be seen as fair is if it comes with deeper integration on issues such as consumer safety standards, labour standards, intellectual property standards. Developing countries have strongly opposed these “behind the borders” measures.

### Highlights of the issues

- If the US politics pushes the administration to act against the country’s own long-term interest, there is not much that the world can do.
- US President Donald Trump has imposed unilateral tariff increases on some of the US’s major trading partners and there are threats of more increases to come.
- Retaliatory tariffs have also been announced.
- The US effectively used its leadership capacity to mobilize a group of “likeminded countries”, covering 60% or so of world trade, to subscribe to higher standards, presenting larger developing economies. They could apply to join the new grouping with the new rules, or stay outside with correspondingly less market access.

### World Trade Organization (WTO) views:

- “Whether or not you call it a trade war, certainly the first shots have been fired.” WTO said that this is the time for any one concerned about the world trading system to speak up.
- Since the consensus rule on which the WTO works made it impossible for the industrialized countries to make progress in this area within the WTO, they turned to plurilateral arrangements, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) with East Asia and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with Europe.
- Multilateralism was replaced by plurilateralism, but with the WTO dispute settlement mechanism still available to settle disputes within the new arrangements.

### Can bilateralism succeed?

- The problem is that bilateral trade deals cannot create an environment conducive to trade expansion in a world where much of trade consists of global value chains that stretch across several countries.
- Each export or import includes many components imported from elsewhere. For trade based on global value chains to flourish, what is needed is a common set of rules for all countries participating in the value chain.
- This is best achieved by a multilateral agreement or, as a second best, a plurilateral agreement that is sufficiently inclusive.

### Misconceptions among the industrialized countries

The protectionist sentiment in industrialized countries is driven by mistaken notions.

1. That trade imbalances reflect unfair trade policies followed by others.
  - They are the consequence of excess aggregate demand, which spills over into the balance of payments, and the solution lies in macroeconomic policy, not trade policy.
  - There are unfair trade policies which need to be curbed, but mere existence of a trade deficit does not prove unfair trade policies.
2. That unemployment in some sectors justifies protectionist actions.
  - In fact, much of the unemployment in individual sectors in the US is the result of structural and technological changes which have altered competitiveness, generating more employment in sectors where the US is highly competitive (e.g. the high-tech sectors) while reducing it in others where it is no longer competitive.
  - The loss of employment in individual sectors is a genuine problem, but the solution lies in migration, reskilling and regional restructuring, not restricting trade.
  - There is also a more general apprehension that new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, will lead to the elimination of a large percentage of jobs that currently exist.



3. The US has often complained of exchange rate manipulation as a form of unfair trade. Exchange rate manipulation is recognized as a problem in the articles of both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WTO.
- The IMF is specifically mandated to identify cases of currency manipulation. There is obviously room here for clarifying procedures and streamlining them to facilitate “legitimate multilaterally sanctioned action” against unfair trade.
- The WTO can legitimize trade retaliation against a country that is found to be engaging in currency manipulation.

#### The way forward

- We should use the G20 Summit, to be held in Argentina in November, to have a full discussion on the multilateral trading system at the Summit level.
- The G20 at the summit level was extremely effective after the financial crisis in 2008 when it delivered results which were not forthcoming from the G20 finance ministers meet. If the world is indeed on the brink of trade wars, it is time for the G20 Summit to get into action again.
- Reaching an agreement on trade will be more difficult than in the IMF and the World Bank. These institutions require only a decision of the boards, based on weighted voting. The US vote share allows it to veto anything it doesn't want, but once the US is on board, anything the G20 collectively agrees on will sail through. This is not true of the WTO, where decisions are by consensus.
- However, a consensus among the G20, which account for 80% of world trade, would create a strong basis for action.
- This is also the right time to reconsider the consensus rule and let decisions in the WTO be taken on the basis of a weighted majority vote, with the weights being the share of trade in goods and services.

#### Concluding remarks

- In a world where dark clouds are gathering over multilateral trade, India would do well to accelerate its integration into regional groups such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement which we have been negotiating for far too long.

### **Rajasthan first State to implement biofuel policy**

#### **Context**

- Rajasthan has become the first State in the country to implement the national policy on biofuels to lay emphasis on increasing production of oilseeds

#### **Details**

- In line with the policy it is establishing a Centre for Excellence in Udaipur to promote research in the fields of alternative fuels and energy resources.
- It seeks to help farmers dispose of their surplus stock in an economic manner and reduce the country's oil import dependence.
- It has expanded the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing use of sugarcane juice, sugar containing materials, starch containing materials and damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice and rotten potatoes for ethanol production.

# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## **'2+2' Ministerial Dialogue**

- It is a dialogue between the defence and external affairs ministers of India and US
- This 2+2 replaces the strategic and commercial 2+2 that India and the US had been holding for a few years earlier, involving the defence and commerce ministries in discussions focused on expanding defence and bilateral trade ties.

### **Purpose**

- India-U.S. ties are increasingly strategic, and in recent years, there have been concerns that while military ties and exercises have increased rapidly, diplomatic convergences aren't keeping pace.
- Conversely, despite close diplomatic exchanges, key defence agreements have not yet been completed.
- The talks will also review the U.S.'s South Asia policy on Afghanistan and its Indo-Pacific strategy to enhance peace and stability in the region.

## **8888 Uprising /8-8-88 Uprisings/ People Power Uprising**

### **Context**

- August 8 2018 marks the 30th anniversary of the people's uprising in Myanmar.
- The '8888' uprising (or the eighth day of August 1988) is one of Myanmar's most important historic days in the context of the pro-democracy movement

### **What is it?**

- '8888' was a people's movement that challenged the then ruling Burma Socialist Programme Party's grip on political, economic and social affairs which led the country into extreme poverty.
- The protests and the bloody crackdown gave rise to the National League for Democracy (NLD), a political party which paved the way for the current Myanmar State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi's entry into politics and for the pro-democracy movement to continue.
- The objective of '8888' was two-fold: to push for the transfer of power from the military to a civilian leadership and a change in the political system from an authoritarian regime to a multi-party democracy.

### **Power Transition**

The past 30 years have seen a change in leadership —

- From military dictatorship to a military-backed semi-democracy and
- Then to a negotiated hybrid regime with power being shared between unelected military personnel and an elected civilian leadership.

### **Its relevance for today**

- it keeps alive the spirit of democracy;
- underscores the need for equality and federalism;
- Builds an awareness campaign on the role of military.

### **Ethnic minorities face issues**

- The country's ethnic minorities still have their share of struggle and political demands that date back to before Myanmar's independence in 1948 continue.

- The non-Burman ethnic armed groups have fought for a federal democracy that guarantees autonomy or self-determination in their respective areas and the right for control over their people and resources.
- The kind of federalism the ethnic minorities want is based on equality of rights to all citizens which has been denied by the military leadership and the government.

#### **Addressing the issue**

- The '8888' anniversary organizing committee, which is predominantly from the Burman-majority, understands this need and has laid emphasis on the importance of equality and federalism.
- Peace talks are initiated between the civilian government, the military and the ethnic armed groups.

#### **Conclusion**

- For democracy to strike deep roots in Myanmar, the role of the '8888' leaders remains important.
- The military must note that the people of Myanmar as well as members of the international community want a democracy that respects the rights of all its people, including the minorities.
- The military may hesitate to roll back its dominant role in Myanmar's politics but it should note that no democracy can succeed when the military holds the reins and is unaccountable to an elected civilian leadership.

#### **Asia-Pacific Institute of Broadcasting Development (AIBD)**

- It was established in 1977 under the auspices of UNESCO, AIBD is a unique regional inter-governmental organization servicing countries of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) in the field of electronic media development.
- It is hosted by the Government of Malaysia and the secretariat is located in Kuala Lumpur.
- The AIBD is mandated to achieve a vibrant and cohesive electronic media environment in the Asia-Pacific region through policy and resource development.
- The Institute seeks to fulfill this mandate by mobilizing the intellectual and technological resources available within the national broadcasting organizations of its member countries as well as regional and international bodies through a well-established infrastructure and networking mechanism which includes government agencies, non-governmental organizations, institutions of higher learning, private sector and individual professionals.

#### **Context**

- India has been elected as the President of the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) for a period of two years.

#### **Bhutan India Relations: Sovereignty and Sensitivity**

##### **Context**

- Bhutan is in the election season. October 2018 marks ten years of democracy in Bhutan.

##### **Bhutan Elections**

- There are five registered political parties- Bhutan Kuen-Nyam Party (BKP), Druk Chirwang Tshogpa (DCT), Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa (DNT), Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) and People's Democratic Party (PDP).
- The People's Democratic Party is led by incumbent Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay

##### **Election Canvassing by Tshering Tobgay**

- It won 32 of the 47 seats in 2013
- He is banking on growth in Construction and tourist boom in Bhutan

- He is Credited for stabilizing the rupee-ngultrum crisis that he had inherited, as well as for economic reforms including lifting the import ban on cars.
- Unable to curb the national debt, owed mostly to India for hydropower loans

### **Opposition Stance**

- Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) party said that “sovereignty, security and self-sufficiency” were the DPT’s top priorities.
- The opposition said that Mr. Tobgay is “pro-India”. so they are working out strategy to capitalize on the backdrop of doklam crisis
- It advocates a Bhutanese foreign policy that is less dependent on India.

### **Project Dantak**

- Project DANTAK of the Border Roads Organization was raised in May, 1961.
- It is headquartered at Simtokha, near Thimphu under a Chief Engineer.
- Project DANTAK has constructed, under GOI funding, over 1500 km of roads through very difficult mountainous terrain in Bhutan.
- Likewise, under GOI funding, Project Dantak has built all the major highways such as the East- West highway (548 km) and Thimphu-Phuentsholing highway (181 km), airfields at Paro and Yangphula and airport terminal at Paro, a number of helipads, the Indo- Bhutan microwave link, Bhutan Broadcasting Station, India House Complex, Chhukha Hydroelectric Housing Complex, Power sub-stations, river training works, and several important buildings (including SAARC Convention Centre).
- Project DANTAK is also constructing infrastructure works for the Tala Hydro-electric project, besides maintaining some important highways such as Eastern and Western ways and other roads.

### **Bhutan’s sensitivity unaddressed**

- Roads built under Project Dantak had road signs and markers with Indian Tricolors. This had raised red flags on social media where few citizens felt India was imposing its flag on their countries road signs.
- Department of Roads had to remove a board which read “Dantak welcomes you to Bhutan” at the Paro international airport
- On the Thimphu-Phuentsholing arterial highway, another board credited the “Government of India” for infrastructural development, this was ultimately painted over by local administration.
- In number of cases Bhutanese Minister for Public Works stepped in and change few markers into their national colors
- The Manmohan Singh-led United Progressive Alliance government’s decision to cut cooking gas subsidy just before the 2013 elections in Bhutan has often been shown as proof of Indian interference, especially by the DPT party that lost that election.
- The Narendra Modi government’s actions, indicating a preference for one party (for example, Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League in Bangladesh) or antipathy for another (such as for Mahinda Rajapaksa’s Sri Lanka Freedom Party), have been noted closely in Bhutan.

### **Hydropower issue**

- Hydropower projects are critical for the Bhutanese economy, and are at the core of Bhutan’s plans for self-reliance ever since the first five-year plans in 1961
- Hydropower is the largest source of domestic revenue for Bhutan and is its largest export to India.
- It is also the only viable medium term option to balance the huge trade deficit with Bhutan's largest trading partner, India, which in 2012 led to a major economic crisis in Bhutan.

### **Projects undertaken**

- India imports power from the 336 MW Chukha project (commissioned in 1986) and the 1020 MW Tala project (commissioned in 2006), both built with 60 percent grant from India and 40 percent loan.
- the Mangdechhu project, unlike Chukha and Tala, is built on only 30 percent grant and 70 percent loan making the cost of financing much higher and hence, pushing up tariff rates.
- While the cost of the 720 MW Mangdechhu project has nearly doubled in the past two years of construction, both Punatsangchhu 1 and 2, each of 1200 MW have trebled in cost and been delayed more than five years over the original completion schedule.

### **Debt Burden**

- As of July 2017, Bhutan's debt to India for the three major ongoing projects: Mangdechhu, Punatsangchhu 1 and 2 is approximately ₹12,300 crores which accounts for 77% of the country's total debt, and is 87% of its GDP.

### **What should India do?**

India should revise India's Bhutan policy and address several issues that have come up in the past few years

- The hydropower projects where delays in constructing and commissioning in Bhutan by Indian companies have led to the country's burgeoning national debt.
- India's power-surplus status and the advent of other renewable energies like wind and solar power will make it more difficult for Bhutan to ensure that its hydropower sector becomes profitable.
  - India should find ways to help, it will be accused of the same sort of "debt-trapping" that China is accused of today.
- The implementation of promised hydro projects and payment of fair tariff rates gives an important opportunity to India to play an important role in making Bhutan economically self-sufficient, and in the process winning the trust and goodwill of a new generation.
- India also needs to focus on policing cross-border trade better. The goods and services tax still hurts Bhutanese exporters, and demonetisation has left lasting scars on the banking system.
- India should also look into environmental issues, illegal wildlife trade and cross-border drug smuggling and other areas of concern.

### **The China question**

The biggest issue between India and Bhutan will remain how to deal with China.

- Bhutan-China border dispute, could become a point of India-China conflagration, with Bhutan becoming a hapless spectator in the middle
- China's actions to build a permanent military presence above the stand-off point mean that Bhutan has a much reduced advantage in any forthcoming negotiations on the issue.
- After Mr. Modi's Wuhan outreach and several meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Bhutan too has decided that there is little point in avoiding engagement with China.
- So it is important to clarify here that the popular narrative of India coming to the rescue of tiny Bhutan is not accurate. In the Doklam stand-off, it was India's security that was at stake, its "chicken neck" on the line.
- New Delhi must appreciate the kinds of pressures that Thimphu must have come under from Beijing for taking such a stand.

### **Conclusion**

- Bhutan will steer its external relations with China by giving neither provocation nor the impression of getting into a bear hug of dependence with India. Both could jeopardise its autonomy.
- At the same time India should reach out more to the people of Bhutan to address issues concerned.

## **BIMSTEC-Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multispectral Technical and Economic Cooperation**

### **Background**

- India had a diplomatic win in 2016 when it hosted BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit, which acted as a key vehicle to take forward India's regional, strategic and economic interests.

### **India's inclination towards BIMSTEC**

- A key reason for India to reach out to its BIMSTEC neighbors has been the stagnation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). This limited both the scope of India's growing economic aspirations as well as the role it could play in improving regional governance.
  - Steps taken to revitalize relationship
    - ✓ 18th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu, in 2014, India proposed the SAARC Motor Vehicles Agreement
    - ✓ Pakistan also opted out of the ambitious SAARC Satellite project proposed by India, leading to a change in its name to the South Asia Satellite.
  - There is a tendency in some quarters to see India's interests in BIMSTEC as part of its strategy to isolate Pakistan and position BIMSTEC as an alternative to SAARC.
- The main motivation for India to push BIMSTEC is thus not Pakistan; rather, it is in the country's interest to ensure that the region does not lag behind and that an unstable neighborhood does not drag its growth.
  - India's desire to link South Asia to the economically dynamic Southeast Asia is also part of this strategy.
  - The rationale behind making the BIMSTEC mechanism work is to reassure South Asia that the region can work together to achieve common goals with India playing its due role.

### **Challenges**

- India is currently the largest contributor to the BIMSTEC secretariat's budget.
  - India's annual contribution was Rs. 2 crore (or 32% of the total secretariat budget) for 2017-18.
  - With the secretariat planning to strengthen its capacity by increasing human resources and the number of officials representing each member state, India may need to consider allocating more resources.
  - India's generosity would be a key test of its commitment to the sub regional grouping.
- Another issue would be for India to counter the impression that BIMSTEC is an India-dominated bloc, a problem that it faced for a long time in SAARC. The same issue may re-emerge and pose hurdles in the progress of BIMSTEC.
  - To moderate such suspicions, India will need to show sensitivity to the concerns of smaller neighbors.
  - Today, most of the smaller neighbors are more willing to engage so as to benefit from India's economic rise. So India should be inclusive and use tenets of Gujral Doctrine of peaceful development of neighbors
- Another strategic challenge for India is that China has long desired to be part of the SAARC grouping.
  - Some SAARC members also have their own interests in bringing China into the equation: they want it to balance India's dominance. China has observer status in SAARC.
  - When this was given, it only increased the demand to make China a full member of SAARC.
  - India will have to carefully navigate the emerging regional geopolitics, as many of the elements that made SAARC hostage to political rivalry and turned it into a defunct mechanism can re-emerge in BIMSTEC



## **Kathmandu Declaration- BIMSTEC**

### **Context**

- The fourth BIMSTEC Summit concluded in Kathmandu with the member states inking a deal for cross-country energy grid interconnection and reaffirming strong commitment to working out a comprehensive approach to combat terrorism.

### **Terrorism is biggest threat**

- Terrorism and transnational organized crimes continue to pose a great threat to international peace and security including in the BIMSTEC countries
- Fight against terrorism should target not only terrorists, terror organisations and networks but also identify and hold accountable states and non-state entities that encourage, support or finance terrorism, provide sanctuaries to terrorists and terror groups and falsely extol their virtues

### **On economic Front**

- The declaration underlined the importance of multidimensional connectivity, which promotes synergy among connectivity frameworks in the region, as a key enabler to economic integration for shared prosperity.
- The MoU provides for optimization of using energy resources in the region & promotion of efficient & secure operation of power system
- The declaration also included cooperation in areas such as agricultural technology exchange, gradual reduction of climate change impact, boosting trade and investment, blue economy, mountain economy, tourism, cultural cooperation and people-to-people contact.

## **Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act (CLOUD Act)**

- This act will enable the U.S. government to enter into agreements with like-minded states for cross-border data sharing.
- The law allows tech companies to share data directly with certain foreign governments. This, however, requires an executive agreement between the U.S. and the foreign country certifying that the state has robust privacy protections, and respect for due process and the rule of law.

### **Problems faced by investigating agencies in India**

- Eight of the top 10 most accessed websites in India are owned by U.S. entities.
- India in the first half of 2017 requested data from Facebook 9,853 times, of which only 54.3% were met.
  - Companies like Facebook, however, can directly respond only to requests for “basic subscriber information” — that is, data that a user provides at the time of signing up for a service (name, email address, etc.).
- Indian law enforcement officials often point out that the police need access to more information on the user, such as the content of an online conversation, to further their investigations.
  - This has hindered Indian law enforcement agencies when investigating routine crimes or crimes with a cyber element.
- Police officials are forced to rely on a long and arduous bilateral process with the U.S. government to obtain electronic evidence from U.S. communication providers.

### **Current Procedure for accessing information**

- Currently, an officer in India would have to make a request for electronic data under the India-U.S. Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty to access content data held by a U.S. company.
  - The current U.S. law prohibits service providers from disclosing user data to foreign law enforcement agencies.

- Technology companies are allowed to share data such as content of an email or message only upon receiving a federal warrant from U.S. authorities
- This process has often been criticized by the Indian police for being time consuming, sometimes even taking as long as three years, as well as being cumbersome and outdated.

### **Issues with data localization**

- The Srikrishna Committee calls for a copy of user data to be mandatorily localized in India
- Reserve Bank of India also amplified call for data localization
- The draft bill mandates local storage of data relating to Indian citizens only.
  - Localization can provide data only for crimes that have been committed in India, where both the perpetrator and victim are situated in India.
- Prevalent concerns around transnational terrorism, cybercrimes and money laundering that the committee rightly highlights will often involve individuals and accounts that are not Indian, and therefore will not be stored in India.
- For investigations into such crimes, Indian law enforcement will have to continue relying on cooperative models like the MLAT process.

### **Advantage of CLOUD act**

- With the enactment of the CLOUD Act, an Indian officer for the purposes of an investigation will no longer have to make a request to the U.S. government but can approach the company directly.
- This will allow law enforcement agencies from states to directly obtain electronic data, held by communication service providers headquartered in the U.S., to combat crime.
- The CLOUD Act creates a potential mechanism through which countries such as India can request data not just for crimes committed within their borders but also for transnational crimes involving their state interests.

## **Durga Puja diplomacy**

### **Context**

- Chinese consulate will fly in martial artists who will perform in Kolkata during Durga Puja

### **Details**

- Durga Puja diplomacy' has been gaining importance in Kolkata, with countries that have consulates here making it a point to participate in the celebrations.
- Chinese Consulate will be collaborating in constructing the canopy where the idol of the goddess will be housed; it will also be flying in over two dozen Chinese artists to put up cultural performances.
  - They will perform on Chinese songs, lion dance, acrobatics and martial arts at the pandal
- It had also taken Puja organizers and pandal designers to China's Yunnan province to familiarize them with local artistic traditions.

### **Hulusi**

- The pandal will house a 35-foot high and 20-foot wide replica of a Chinese bottle gourd, a plant whose fruit is used to make a Chinese musical instrument called Hulusi.
- In Chinese, the gourd is called 'Hulu,' which signifies happiness and prosperity and is very popular in China, especially in the Yunnan province.

### **Significance**

- It is significant because it will draw the attention of the Chinese people and promote cultural ties between eastern India and China
- It will improve people to people contact and help in cultural tourism

- It will encourage people to read and involve in educating about each other.

### **Fateh Mobin missile**

- It is a next generation short-range ballistic missile developed by Iran
- It is 100-percent domestically made agile, stealth, tactical (and) precision-guided'.
- The new missile's range was not given, but previous versions had a range of around 200 to 300 kilometres, according to the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

### **Indian Council of World Affairs**

- It is a New Delhi based Indian think-tank established in 1943.
- It was registered as a non-official, non-political and non-profit organization under the Registration of Societies Act 1860.
- It is devoted exclusively for the study of international relations and foreign affairs.
- It has been declared an institution of national importance in 2001 by an act of parliament
- The Vice President of India is the ex-officio President of ICWA, while the Minister of External Affairs is its Vice-President
- It has conducted international conferences like 'Asian Relations Conference' in 1947 under the leadership of freedom fighter Sarojini Naidu and 'United Nations and the New World Order' in 1994

### **Invest India and Business France Sign MoU to Promote Investment**

#### **Context**

- Invest India and Business France have signed a MoU to promote investment facilitation and cooperation between startups of India and France.

#### **Details**

- The goal will be to facilitate direct foreign investment by providing practical investment information to enterprises and support the companies pursuing those opportunities which contribute positively to economic growth of the two countries.
- Invest India and Business France will collaborate to promote business and startup ecosystem cooperation through joint activities and exchange experiences to strengthen institutional knowledge and identify opportunities between businesses in the French and Indian private sector, creating a dedicated support structure to facilitate inbound companies and startups.

#### **Invest India**

- 'Invest India' is India's official agency dedicated to investment promotion and facilitation.
- It is a not-for-profit, single window facilitator, set up in 2010.
- Invest India is set up as a joint venture company between the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry (35% equity), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) (51% equity), and State Governments of India (0.5% each).
- It provides sector-specific and state-specific information to a foreign investor, assists in expediting regulatory approvals, and offers hand-holding services. Its mandate also includes assisting Indian investors to make informed choices about investment opportunities overseas.

#### **Business France**

- Business France is an executive agency of the French government under the supervision of the Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development.
- It promotes International Business Development for French companies and professionals through a worldwide network

### **Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR)**

- The IACHR is an independent, multinational court that handles the human rights cases of people affected by the laws of countries that are members of the Organization of American States (OAS).

### **Organization of American States**

- It is continental organization for the purposes of regional solidarity and cooperation among its member states.
- It was formed to promote economic, military, and cultural cooperation among its members.
- The OAS's main goals are to prevent any outside state's intervention in the Western Hemisphere and to maintain peace between the various states within the hemisphere.
- The OAS's members are the 35 independent states of the Americas.
- Headquartered in the United States capital Washington, D.C.

### **Johannesburg Declaration of BRICS**

#### **Context**

- The Heads of State and Government of five BRICS nations comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa came together in 2018 BRICS Summit to address important issues of common concern and adopted Johannesburg Declaration to give thrust to development, inclusivity and mutual prosperity in the context of technology driven industrialization and growth.

#### **Theme**

- It was held under the theme "BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution".
- The theme is reflective of the core priorities of each one of the BRICS members, notably to strive towards the creation of an inclusive society and global partnerships that will bring prosperity to all humankind.

#### **The new areas of BRICS cooperation**

- Establishment of a Working Group on Peacekeeping;
- Establishment of a Vaccine Research Centre for Collaboration with BRICS vaccine innovation and development partners – this is intended to be a physical research centre focused on research and development and vaccine innovation;
- Establishment of a BRICS Gender and Women's Forum – intended as a dedicated track for gender and women's issues, given the economic benefit to be derived from the socio-economic empowerment of women, particularly in developing countries;
- Establishment of a BRICS Tourism Track of Cooperation.
  - There would be steady progress in interactions through sports, films, education, culture and tourism has been commendable. So, the leaders renewed their commitment to an inclusive and "people-centered approach" on development.
- They espoused the centrality of the rules-based, transparent, non-discriminatory, open and inclusive multilateral trading based on the norms of World Trade Organization.
  - This stems from their broader commitment to cooperate for strengthening multilateralism, the rule of law and an equitable international order.
- Leveraging the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership towards the pursuit of Inclusive Growth and Advancing the 4th Industrial Revolution
  - this is intended to foster discussions to addresses opportunities provided by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as a means of leapfrogging development stages and bridging the digital divide;

### **BRICS Plus**

- BRICS Plus represents emerging economies
- It is an opportunity to build an open, inclusive, cooperative and win-win partnership and create a platform for deepening South-South cooperation
- According to the BRICS tradition, the presiding and host countries, as observers, are encouraged to invite their regional neighbors.
  - South Africa, for example, invited countries such as Argentina, Jamaica, Turkey, Indonesia and Egypt
- An immediate benefits of BRICS plus is the immense opportunities it provides for networking among leaders.

### **Merits**

- It has expanded the arc of its interests and established new institutions and partnerships
- The members are now habit of working together

### **Demerits**

- BRICS is still far from achieving its initial goals:
  - reform of global financial governance,
  - democratization of the United Nations,
  - expansion of the Security Council
- Partially because two of its members (China and Russia) do not want the other three members (India, South Africa and Brazil) to obtain parity in the global pecking order.
- China does not follow in word and spirit the high-sounding prescription of rules-based order
- BRICS should engage with the private sector and young innovators working at the cutting edge of technology rather than focusing only on few ministries.
- China's dominance is a reality even as the grouping asserts the sovereign equality of all members.

### **Conclusion**

- The critical question is whether BRICS's exertions will have appreciable impact on G-7 , only time shall be the answer for some questions.

## **Kartarpur Corridor**

### **Context**

- Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has sought the personal intervention of External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in seeking access from the Pakistan government to enable devotees to visit the gurdwara in Kartarpur on the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev.
  - It is being observed in November 2019.
  - Guru Nanak was born in the year 1469

### **Location**

- It is located in tehsil Shakargarh, Narowal District, Punjab, Pakistan
- Kartarpur is located across the river Ravi at a distance of around 4 km from the International Border near Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district.

### **Significance**

- Kartarpur was established by Guru Nanak Dev in 1522 and is the location of Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib, the first Gurdwara ever built, where Guru Nanak is said to have died.
- Guru Nanak Dev spent 18 years of his life.

### **What is the plan?**

- If a corridor is constructed, it will take 20 minutes to reach the gurdwara from Dera Baba Nanak. At present, pilgrims have to go via Lahore, which takes nearly 4 hours.
- The talks would also involve in ensuring development and infrastructural work for the celebrations at Sultanpur Lodhi, Dera Baba Nanak and Batala — holy places visited by Guru Nanak.
- The state government has decided to convert all places visited by Guru Nanak Dev into a religious-tourism circuit and link it with an extensive network of roads before his 550th birth anniversary celebrations

### **Operation Storm**

- It was the last major battle of the Croatian War of Independence
- It was a war against the serbs
- During this military offensive, Croatia recaptured a Serb-inhabited region of its territory known as Krajina. In the process, about 200,000 Serbs were driven from their homes.

### **Pakistan Elections**

#### **Context**

- Pakistani politics has finally moved beyond the axis of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) with Imran Khan set to become the "captain" of the Pakistan government

#### **Stats**

- The National Assembly has 272 seats in total and the halfway mark is 137 for a simple majority.
- Imran has won 117 seats, PML-N won 64 seats, Bilawal Bhutto won 43 seats.

### **What worked for Imran Khan?**

- Imran's biggest advantage has been that he is actually a philanthropist
- He still carries with him the flavour of being "Kaptaan" who led Pakistan to victory in the World Cup.
- Imran Khan's incorruptibility and the positive record of his party in governing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province
- Imran Khan's respect for the military. Khan has undoubtedly been a votary of keeping defence expenditure high even when it was amply clear that the country could not afford it.

### **Controversy**

- He had lambasted feminism as "a Western concept", saying degraded the role of mother
  - Has supported the justice dispensed against women by 'jirgas' - or councils of elders
  - These councils have banned women from voting, given children to old men to marry, and ordered a woman to be stripped naked and paraded for a crime committed by a male relative
- Khan was accused of mainstreaming extremism by launching a full-throated defence of Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws, which carry a maximum penalty of death.
  - The laws, which carry an automatic death sentence, sometimes have incited mobs against entire neighborhoods at the merest suggestion that blasphemy has been committed
- "No Muslim can call himself a Muslim unless he believes that the Prophet Mohammed is the last prophet," he said a statement that raised alarm among the Ahmadi sect, who are persecuted for their belief in a prophet after Mohammed.
- The ex-cricketer has earned the mark as "Taliban Khan" for repeatedly arguing for peace talks with militants and for his party's alliance with Sami ul Haq, the so-called Father of the Taliban whose madrassas once educated Taliban stalwarts Mullah Omar and Jalaluddin Haqqani. In 2013 Khan even suggested that the Pakistani Taliban should be allowed to open an office in the country.



### **European Union on Pakistan Elections**

- It was eclipsed by "restrictions" on freedom of expression and an "unequal" opportunity for candidates to campaign.
- EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) said the media outlets and journalists suffered from restrictions which resulted in self-censorship.
- The EU EOM said that, although there were several legal provisions aimed at ensuring a level playing field, there was a lack of equality of opportunity.

Control of foreign, defence, and internal security policy is now more firmly in military hands than ever before. So, only time will be the best judge to see if India Pakistan relation will improve.

### **Pakal Dul Dam and Hydro Project**

- It is a Project on the Marusadar River, a tributary of the Chenab River, in Kishtwar district of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- It is being constructed by the Chenab Valley Power Projects (CVPP), which will be the first-ever power project of the state with a storage capacity in 0.5 million acres of area
- A total of 1,000 MW will be generated by the Pakal Dul project, 624 MW by Kiru hydroelectric project while 540 MW by Kwar hydroelectric project

### **Concerns from Pakistan**

- As per the Indus Water treaty, the 'eastern rivers' of Sutlej, Ravi and Beas are under India's control, while Pakistan controls the 'western rivers' of, Chenab, Jhelum and Indus.
- The treaty gives each country the right to use only 20% of the water from the rivers under the two countries' respective control.
- Pakistan has asked India to share details of the designs of the two dams -- the Pakal Dul dam on the Marusadar river in Kishtwar; and the Lower Kalnai dam on another tributary of the river in Doda -- to verify that the 1960 water treaty was not being violated.
- The issue was raised in the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) meeting
- The treaty mandates the PIC to meet at least once a year alternately in India and Pakistan.

### **Context**

- India and Pakistan concluded the 115th meeting of the India-Pakistan Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) in Lahore
- India has invited Pakistan to visit sites of the Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai hydro-electric projects on the Chenab.

### **Panini Language Laboratory**

#### **Context**

- External Affairs Minister (EAM) Sushma Swaraj inaugurated 'Panini Language Laboratory' at Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) in Mauritius.

#### **Details**

- The lab, gifted by the Indian government, will help MGI in teaching Indian languages in Mauritius.
- Swaraj said that similar laboratories equipped with all modern technologies and similar facilities need to be build up in India also to promote Hindi and regional languages.

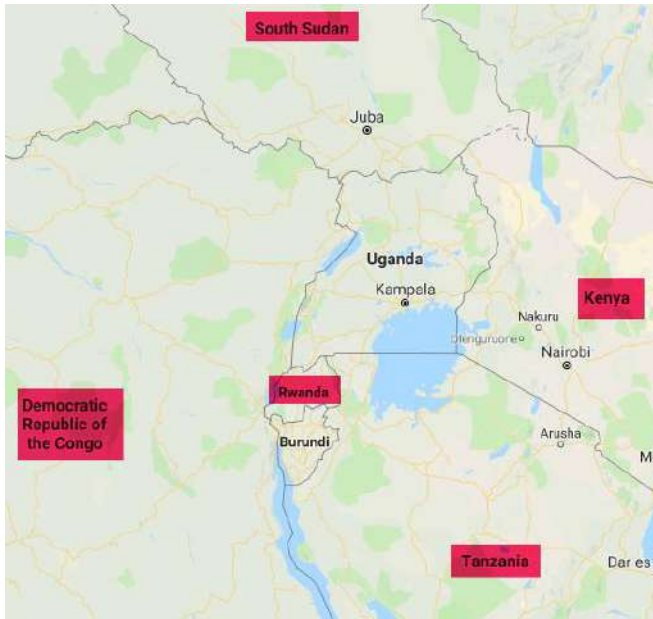
### **Peace Mission 2018**

- It is the joint military exercise of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) held at Chebarkul, Russia
- The exercise provided an opportunity to armies of all nations for greater cultural understanding, sharing experiences and strengthening mutual trust and cooperation

- The exercise will provide an opportunity to the armed forces of SCO nations to train in counter terrorism operations in urban scenario in a multinational and joint environment.
- The scope of the exercise includes professional interaction, mutual understanding of drills & procedures, establishment of joint command and control structures and elimination of terrorist threat in urban counter terrorist scenario.
- This is the first time India and Pakistan participated in the exercise
  - The exercise provided an opportunity for the armies of India and Pakistan to operate together outside the United Nations umbrella, under which they had operated in the past.

### **Pearl of Africa**

- Uganda is called as the Pearl of Africa



### **India's Commitment to Uganda**

- Prime Minister Modi addressed the Ugandan Parliament, the first ever by an Indian Prime Minister since 1997.
- India would continue to support Uganda in the fields of agriculture and healthcare, education and training, infrastructure and energy, capacity building in government and training in defence.
- Mr.Modi outlined 10 guiding principles for deepening India's engagement with Africa to help in its economic growth and tackle challenges such as terrorism and climate change.

### **Ten guiding principles**

- First, the PM promised to keep Africa as a top Indian priority.
- Two, India-Africa development partnership will be guided by Africa's priorities.
- Three, India will keep the markets open and make it easier and more attractive to trade with. Indian industries would be encouraged to invest in Africa.
- Four, India's experience with digital revolution will be harnessed to support Africa's development, improve delivery of public services, extend education and health, spread digital literacy, expand financial inclusion and mainstream the Marginalized
- Five, Africa has 60% of the world's arable land, but produces just 10% of the global output. India will work with Africa to improve its agriculture.
- Six, our partnership will address the challenges of climate change

- Seven, cooperation and mutual capabilities in combating terrorism and extremism will be strengthened, keeping the cyberspace safe and secure and supporting the UN in advancing and keeping peace
- Eight, India will work with African nations to keep the oceans open and free for the benefit of all nations. The world needs cooperation and not competition in the eastern shores of Africa and the eastern Indian Ocean
- Nine, as global engagement in Africa increases. India and Africa must work together to ensure that Africa does not once again turn into a theatre of rival ambitions but becomes a nursery for the aspirations of Africa's youth.
- Ten, just as India and Africa fought colonialism together, we will work together for a just, representative and democratic global order that has a voice and a role for one-third of humanity that lives in Africa and India

## **Postal Highway**

### **Context**

- The Indian Government released additional NPR 470 million for the Postal Highway being constructed in Southern Plains of Nepal.
- Since 1950, the Government of India has been supporting infrastructure development of Nepal and has provided financial assistance for construction of various highways, roads, bridges, airports, etc as part of its multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional India-Nepal Economic Cooperation Programme.

### **Details**

- Postal Highway also called Hulaki Rajmarg runs across the Terai region of Nepal, from Bhadrapur in the east to Dodhara in the west, cutting across the entire width of the country.
- It is the Oldest highway in Nepal to aid transportation and facilitate postal services throughout the nation

## **Quad countries discuss ocean security**

- It includes India, Australia, Japan and the US

### **Quadripartite Commission on Indian Ocean Regional Security**

- The think Tanks include Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), Australia National University, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Japan and Sasakawa Peace Foundation, USA
  - They put out 20 policy recommendations for stability in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- Australia, Japan, India and the US should work with countries in the IOR to help maintain independent security and economic policies by supporting high-quality alternatives to unilateral Chinese investments and political alignment with Chinese regional objectives
- The four countries should work to oppose "the establishment of permanent Chinese military bases" in the IOR.
  - This should include demonstrating to China that its security needs can be met "through cooperation and consultation with other nations" and without the recourse to a "disruptive unilateral military presence."
- It stresses that naval fleets would evolve increasingly long range operations.
- The report calls for maintaining the momentum of high-level consultations among the Quad countries with the aim of "free and open Indo-Pacific region" and progressively move it to a political level.

## **US 'Space Force'**

### **Context**

- President Donald Trump ordered the Pentagon to create a new US “Space Force,” which would become the sixth branch of the American military but this requires Congressional approval to take effect.
- The Trump administration is planning to create a Space Force, a new branch of the US military, by 2020
- The concept of a Space Force was first proposed in 2000

#### **What is a Space Force?**

- The Space Force will be a new department of the US military which Trump has described as “separate but equal”.
- According to the plan, the Space Force will comprise three units.
  - The Space Command will be led by a four-star general to oversee warfighting operations.
  - The Space Development Agency will identify and develop new technologies.
  - The third unit is the Space Operations Force, made up of leaders and fighters for their expertise

#### **Current Status**

- This will be the sixth service after the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Air Force.
- At present, the US Air Force Space Command looks after space power and air force cyberwarfare. It has 38,000 personnel and operates 185 military satellite systems. This division will come under the ambit of the Space Force.

#### **Procedure to establish new armed force**

- According to the Constitution, it is Congress’ responsibility to “raise and support armies”.
- The Army and the Navy, the first two branches of the US military, are enshrined in the Constitution.
- The Air Force was created, was established after World War II in 1947 when Congress passed the National Security Act to reorganize the country’s military divisions to include air operations as a separate division.

#### **How will it help?**

- Using satellites, the Space Force will aid other arms of the military by strengthening communications, navigation and providing intelligence to counter adversaries which could use missiles or cyber warfare to target its satellites.

### **U.S. cuts military training with Pak**

#### **Context**

- President Donald Trump’s administration has started cutting scores of Pakistani officers from coveted training and educational programmes that have been a hallmark of bilateral military relations for more than a decade
- It is one of the first known impacts from Mr. Trump’s decision to suspend U.S. security assistance to Pakistan to compel it to crack down on Islamic militants.

#### **International Military Education and Training programme (IMET)**

- IMET provides students from allied and friendly nations valuable training and education on U.S. military practices and standards, including exposure to democratic values and respect for internationally recognized standards of human rights.
- IMET serves as an effective means to strengthen military alliances and international coalitions critical to U.S. national security goals.
- It is U.S. security assistance, promoting regional stability and defense capabilities through professional military training and education.

- The program facilitates the development of important professional and personal relationships with the defense leaders
- It also helps develop a common understanding of shared international challenges, and fosters the relationships necessary to counter those challenges collaboratively.

#### **Action initiated**

- Pakistan has been removed from programmes at the U.S. Naval War College, Naval Staff College and courses including cyber security studies.
- Ex: The War College, the U.S. Army's premier school for foreign officers, says it has hosted 37 participants from Pakistan over the past several decades. It will have no Pakistani students in the upcoming academic year

#### **Criticism**

- Officials from both countries privately criticized the move.
- the decision could undermine a key trust-building measure
- The move is very short-sighted and myopic. This will have lasting negative impacts limiting the bilateral relationship
- Pakistani officials warned it could push their military to further look to China or Russia for leadership training.

### **Venezuela's economy is in freefall**

#### **Context**

- Hyperinflation, power cuts, and food and medicine shortages are driving millions of Venezuelans out of the country. The country is facing the worst inflations.

#### **Concerns**

- The biggest problem facing Venezuelans in their day-to-day lives is hyperinflation.
- \$1 US = 248,000 Venezuelan Bolivars, at the official exchange rate
- Prices have been doubling every 26 days on average. This has resulted in many Venezuelans struggling to afford basic items such as food and toiletries.
- With small items like a cup of coffee costing a whopping 2.5m bolivars

#### **Major Cause**

- Venezuela is rich in oil, and has the largest proven reserves in the world. But it's this exact wealth that underpins many of its economic problems.
- Its oil revenues account for about 95% of its export earnings.
  - Venezuela's economy depends mostly on oil. That was great when a barrel of Now oil prices have fallen to as low as \$28.36 -- the lowest point in 12 years. As long as oil prices stay historically low, Venezuela will struggle to grow.
- Because it has so much oil, Venezuela has never bothered to produce much else. It sells oil to other countries, and with the dollars it earns, imports the goods Venezuelans want and need from abroad.
  - But when the oil price plummeted in 2014, Venezuela was faced with a shortfall of foreign currency.
  - This in turn made it difficult to import goods at the same level as before, and imported items became scarcer.
- The result: businesses increased prices and inflation rose.

#### **Other Causes for Inflation**

- According to Transparency International, Venezuela is the ninth most corrupt country in the world.

- Members of Maduro's family and immediate support have been implicated in drug smuggling and hundreds of billions of dollars are believed to have been syphoned out of the economy.
- It is the government's willingness to print extra money and regularly hike the minimum wage in an effort to regain popularity with Venezuela's poor,
- Years of excessive government spending on welfare programs, poorly managed facilities and dilapidated farms set the stage for the crisis.
- The government is also increasingly struggling to get credit after it defaulted on some of its government bonds.
- With creditors less likely to take the risk of investing in Venezuela, the government has again taken to printing more money, further undermining its value and stoking inflation.

### **Venezuela's crude shipments to India**

#### **Context**

- India is the third largest export market after the U.S. and China from Venezuela but exports have fallen by 21% recently because of U.S. sanctions.

#### **Why USA has sanctions on Venezuela?**

- President Trump signed economic sanctions against Venezuela after the country's socialist president, Nicolás Maduro, won elections that have been widely condemned as fraudulent.
- Maduro, replaced long-time socialist ruler Hugo Chavez, who died of cancer in 2013.
- He led country to deep recession and hyperinflation that have caused food shortages in Venezuela and sent an exodus of migrants into neighboring countries.

#### **Crypto Currency Petro**

- To counter economic crisis and hyperinflation, Venezuela has adopted new cryptocurrency, Petro, which will start circulating from August 20.
- Petro is pegged to the international price of oil.

#### **India's backing**

- Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj said that India would not back unilateral sanctions as these sanctions were imposed by the U.S., not by the UN.

### **Vostok -2018 Exercises**

- The five day Vostok -2018 exercise 11 will be bigger than Zapad- 81

#### **Zapad- 81**

- It was the largest military exercise ever to be carried out by the Soviet Union
- It was a show of force to the NATO countries, the exercise was a large-scale demonstration of military capability

#### **Details**

- Mongolia will be third country participating in this mega-exercise.
- The Vostok-2018 will involve a jaw dropping 300,000 troops. They will engage in tri-service mock-operations involving 1000 military aircraft, two of Russia's naval fleets and all its airborne units
- Nearly 36,000 military vehicles will participate in the drills that will take place at Russia's Tsugol training range in the trans-Baikal region
- China will dispatch about 3,200 troops, along with more than 900 pieces of weaponry, as well as 30 fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, to take part in live-fire strikes and counter-attack training



## **India and Pakistan should encourage bilateral trade**

### **Context**

- There is rising concern about declining trade between India and Pakistan due to escalation in tensions along the borders. So there is need for concerted efforts on both sides to ease tensions through people-centric measures.

### **Stats**

- Over the last five years, the bilateral trade trajectory has been volatile.
- From a high of \$2.70 billion in 2013-14, it fell to \$2.40 billion in 2017-18. During this time, while Pakistan's exports to India were (and have been) fairly consistent, India's exports decreased.
- Overall, India still manages to have a significant trade surplus with Pakistan (about \$1.4 billion in 2017-18).

### **Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) Study on informal trade**

- Informal trade between India and Pakistan is almost twice the value of formal trade between the two countries.
- Informal trade is broadly defined as all trade between two countries that should be included in the national income statistics, according to conventional national income accounting, but is **not**.

### **What drives informal trade?**

- Factors such as high tariffs, political tension, infrastructure impediments, and ease of trading goods via third countries have generated a thriving industry for informal trade between the two South Asian giants.
- Pakistan's negative list of 1,209 items as the most important factor pushing informal exports from India.
  - Items on the negative list are those that are not allowed to be imported from India.
  - More than one in every two items exported informally to Pakistan were on Pakistan's negative list.

### **Which commodities are traded?**

- Real jewellery, including gold, diamond and precious stones, accounted for the largest share of 23% of informal exports from India to Pakistan. It also included chemicals, tyres, alcohol and tobacco products, among several others.
- While India's imports from Pakistan included items such as dry fruits and spices,
- Informal exports from India to Pakistan in 2012-13 stood at \$3.9 billion, much higher than the just over \$2 billion worth of formal exports.
- Informal imports, on the other hand, from Pakistan valued \$0.7 billion, slightly more than formal imports of \$0.5 billion.

### **How does informal trade take place?**

- Most of informal trade between the two countries was also found to be via a third country, in particular Dubai. About 68% of India's informal export to Pakistan was found to be routed via Dubai.

### **Land or water route?**

- The efficiency of transport of goods via two routes
  - the Delhi-Lahore route
  - the Delhi-Mumbai-Dubai-Karachi-Lahore route
- Found that the latter route was 2.75 times more efficient in terms of transport per transaction cost incurred per container-kilometre.

- Higher transaction cost per-tonne-per-kilometre on the direct route is because of factors such as limited number of items that can be exported via road route, cumbersome customs checks at Attari/Wagah customs station, transaction costs in the form of bribes incurred in getting customs clearances, physical examination of goods and poor infrastructure, among others.
- While the total cost of shipping would still be lower in the formal channel, given the fact that the distance is one-tenth of the route via Dubai, predictability and comfort encourages traders to incur these high costs.

#### **Area of cooperation**

- In textiles, while there is an existing bilateral engagement, there is potential for raw materials (raw cotton, fabric dye), grey fabric (polyester, chiffon, nylon), blended fabric (cotton-polyester-viscose blend for denim) and stitched clothes (track suits and sportswear) from Indian hubs such as Surat (Gujarat) and Tiruppur (Tamil Nadu) to Pakistan's major production centre at Faisalabad and its Lahore and Karachi markets.
- Similarly, from Pakistan, there is a huge demand for salwar-kameez-dupatta made of lawn fabric and wedding attire (shararas).
  - Given Pakistan's expertise here, the demand in India for Pakistani fabric and designs as well as the cost benefits attached with trading between India and Pakistan, there is significant scope for collaboration.
- Pakistan's sports goods manufacturing sector is emerging as an original equipment manufacturer for major global brands. Sialkot is a global manufacturing hub for professional-level goods such as footballs, hockey sticks, quality leather goods, and weightlifting and cycling gloves, some of which is imported by India. Also, footballs manufactured here were used in the FIFA World Cup.
  - However, manufacturers in Sialkot require quality raw materials or semi-finished products to produce these goods.
  - India can play a key role here in exporting raw material and semi-finished goods such as latex, rubber, and football bladders, which would work out to be more economical for Sialkot than sourcing them from other countries such as Thailand.
  - In terms of finished goods, sportswear made of lycra is in demand in Pakistan.
- Pakistan's surgical instruments manufacturing industry, again based in Sialkot, is noted for its expertise. Pakistan is a major supplier of these instruments to the U.S., Germany, France and Belgium.
  - India, on the other hand, is a large medical market which imports these instruments from these developed countries at high rates. Direct imports from Pakistan to India in this area would ensure considerable cost benefits in terms of economics and logistics.
  - To strengthen value chain linkages, India can potentially increase the supply of stainless steel to Pakistan, a major raw material used in instrument manufacturing, or even import semi-finished products.

#### **How to improve relationship?**

- First, it is important to alleviate fears, misconceptions and the trust deficit in the trading community.
- Second, business-to-business linkages need to be formed and strengthened between actual traders.
- Third, SAARC business traveller visas must be implemented in practice.
- There also needs to be focus on other issues such as key items in the textiles and clothing sector, border infrastructure and security, improved connectivity by sea and air
- Sporting events could play a pivotal role in boosting people-to-people relations on both sides of the Punjab border
- More people-level contacts and educational exchanges between the two nations could help pave the way for long-term peace and stability in the region.

## **Conclusion**

- Tariff and non-tariff barriers should be addressed and steps should be taken towards increasing awareness and building confidence among the trading communities.
- So, if appropriate measures are taken, a significant share of informal trade can be diverted to formal channels. The benefits of direct trade is much more than informal.

## **Ten years since U.S. nuclear restrictions were lifted on India**

### **Background**

- The Nuclear Suppliers group made 1967 the cut-off date for declaring nuclear powers, which India missed as it conducted its first nuclear test in 1974
  - It resulted in sanctions and cutting off of international assistance from western countries.
  - In 1998, after the Pokhran tests, India faced further sanctions, which led to many hardships
- India and the U.S. signed a breakthrough defence framework agreement that changed the course of the relationships.

### **India's decision to go ahead with the civilian nuclear deal in 2008 was an effort to reverse "three strategic errors,"**

- Partition
  - There was the error of partition, where India lost the territory
- Socialist economic policy
  - The error of economics where many of the reforms of the 90s should have come earlier
- Delay in conducting nuclear tests.
  - India should have pushed its nuclear programme as consistently as China did in the 1950s, so that we could have made the Non Proliferation Treaty deadline

### **The biggest advantages for India since the U.S. Congress passed the deal in September 2008.**

- Permanent access to nuclear fuel
  - Long term agreements for fuel with at least a dozen countries.
- A change in international perception
  - No one now objects when India conducts a missile test
  - The nuclear deal also differentiated India from Pakistan in the eyes of the world. It branded the two countries very differently, and helped to change our relationships in the world
- With Indo-U.S. nuclear deal, India gained in technological and space collaborations from the U.S., and this deepened Indo-U.S. cooperation in the subcontinent.

## **Saudi-Canada spat**

### **Context**

- Saudi Arabia has arrested several female human rights activists.
- Canada's foreign ministry issued a tweet calling on Saudi Arabia to "immediately release" Samar Badawi as well as "all other peaceful #humanrights activists."
- Saudi's foreign ministry slammed Canada's statement as "an overt and blatant interference in the internal affairs of the Kingdom of #SaudiArabia."

### **Issue in Picture**

- Ms. Badawi has long campaigned against Saudi Arabia's guardianship laws that require all Saudi women to have a male guardian.
- Her brother, who ran a website critical of the Saudi religious establishment, was sentenced to 10 years in jail and 1,000 lashes in 2014.

### **Progress made by Saudi Arabia**

- Saudi Arabia has allowed women to drive,
- It has cracked down on hardliners among the clergy and projected itself as a moderate Islamic country that respects people's rights

### **Immediate Reaction by Saudi**

Saudi Arabia has:

- Has asked Canadian ambassador to leave the country
- Recalled its ambassador from Canada
- Canceled direct flights to Toronto by Saudi's state airline
- Announced a plan to relocate Saudi scholarship students in Canada to other countries
- Begun to transfer all Saudi patients out of Canadian hospitals

### **Economic Impact**

- Saudi Arabia is Canada's second largest export destination in West Asia.
- The two countries have signed a \$12 billion arms deal, which is still in the works.
- Started selling off its Canadian assets
- Suspended new trade and investment with Canada

## **Easing Tensions**

### **Context:**

US and Mexico have reached a trade deal, paving the way to replace NAFTA. The bilateral deal between the U.S. and Mexico offers hope of winding down global trade wars.

### **Background:**

The North American Free Trade Agreement, known usually as NAFTA, is a free trade agreement among Canada, the United States, and Mexico. NAFTA went into effect on January 1, 1994. NAFTA is also used to refer to the tripartite trading bloc of North American countries.

### **Details:**

- The US and Mexico reached a breakthrough bilateral trade agreement NAFTA after Mexico agreed to the concessions demanded by the Donald Trump administration.
- The deal comes in the aftermath of President Trump's statement in June that he might enter into separate trade agreements with Canada and Mexico, thus effectively junking the tripartite NAFTA deal.
- It has also invited Canada to join talks for a renegotiation of trade terms in favour of U.S. interests.
- **According to the new agreement,**
- 75% of all automobile content must be made regionally, which is higher than the current level of 62.5%.
- 40-45% of such content must be manufactured using labour that costs at least \$16 an hour. The U.S. hopes that this will discourage manufacturers from moving their facilities to Mexico, where labour is available at rates lower than in the U.S.

### **Lesson to other countries:**

Mexico's decision could set an example for other countries which have resorted to retaliatory tariffs to deal with Mr. Trump's aggressive trade war against them.

- The favorable market reaction post the deal was a sign of relief, riding on hopes that tit-for-tat tariff wars between the U.S. and its trade allies could draw to a close.
- It is worth noting that Mexico had earlier joined hands with other economies such as Canada, China and the European Union to impose retaliatory tariffs against the U.S.
- China has been at the forefront of the tit-for-tat approach, slapping tariffs on several U.S. goods, together worth billions of dollars.
- There is no doubt that Mr. Trump's protectionist trade policy, including the current deal which increases restrictions on cross-border trade in order to protect U.S. jobs, is bad for the global economy.

- Nevertheless, the best way to win the trade war against the U.S. may simply be to accept “defeat” by refusing to double down on retaliatory tariffs.
- Retaliatory tariffs can only cause further harm to the world economy by increasing the burden of taxes on the private sector, which is crucial to spur growth and create jobs.
- Further, there is no reason for America’s trading partners to deprive the domestic consumers of access to useful foreign goods in a mechanism to protect themselves from US Tariffs.

The right response to Mr. Trump’s trade war will be to abstain from any mutually destructive tit-for-tat tariff regimes while simultaneously pushing for peace talks.

## **Stay with RCEP**

### **Context:**

Negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), among 16 Asian and Pacific Ocean countries, have entered a decisive phase.

### **Details:**

- Most potential member-countries of the grouping, that comprises the 10 ASEAN members and their Free Trade Agreement partners, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and Republic of Korea, would like to see a “substantive agreement” on the trade deal by the end of this year.
- At a meeting in Singapore, which is driving the effort as the current ASEAN chair, countries which still have issues with the outline of the agreements reached so far may be told politely to step aside and allow a smaller group to go ahead with finalising the RCEP, with the option to join it at a later date.

### **India’s take on RCEP:**

India is among the countries that will have to take a call at this point.

The government has decided to set up a group of four ministers to advise the Prime Minister on the path ahead. This indicates the seriousness of the situation.

### **India’s Concerns:**

- India’s concerns with RCEP negotiations thus far are manifold, but some have been addressed.
1. The first is the greater access Chinese goods will have to the Indian market, a problem given India’s massive trade deficit. To circumvent this, given that India is the one country that doesn’t have an FTA with China, the government has proposed a “differential market access” strategy for China, which others are inclined to accept. After the Wuhan summit, India and China have made progress on addressing the trade deficit, with China increasing access for Indian goods such as pharma and agricultural products.
  2. The second concern is about demands by other RCEP countries for lower customs duties on a number of products and greater access to the market than India has been willing to provide. On the other hand, the more developed RCEP countries such as Australia and Singapore have been unwilling to accommodate India’s demands to liberalize their services regime and allow freer mobility of Indian workers.
- None of this is made easier by the fact that some of the RCEP countries, including India, are headed for elections next year, a point where governments traditionally turn protectionist.
  - Trying to drive home the point that FTAs in general have not paid off, is a product of both domestic and global circumstances.

### **Way forward:**

- Despite these concerns, the Indian government must take into account the deeper strategic pitfalls of either slowing down India’s RCEP engagement or walking out of the talks at this stage.
- India must not take the easiest way out on the trade deal and walk out of talks. Walking out would cut India out of the rules-making process for the RCEP and give China further space in the regional trade and security architecture.
- At a time when the U.S. has broken from the global concord on multilateral trade agreements, an Indian walkout would endanger the united message that RCEP countries, which represent 40% of the global GDP, would wish to send out.

- The push for trade blocs has acquired a new urgency, with the Trump administration unleashing a trade war of sorts against China and even the EU.
- It would also be a sharp departure from India's "Act East" slogan and its extended outreach to ASEAN.
- If the RCEP countries are keen on a slice of India's market, they must sweeten the deal.

**Conclusion:**

India should carefully weigh the pros and cons of exiting the trade bloc. It should seriously consider the impact of any exit from RCEP on its links to global supply chains. The East Asian Tigers were, like India, remarkably protectionist economies, but they opened up at the right time, and at the right pace. India could still learn a few lessons, given its botched experience in industrial development. Multilateralism, fairness and WTO principles must be believed in but these must not hit the Indian Industries.



## SOCIAL ISSUES

### Census 2021 to collect OBC data

#### Context

- In a notification released by Center about Census 2021 it said data on Other Backward Classes (OBC) would be collected for the first time.

#### Why is it being done?

- The decision to count the OBCs in the next Census was to get a correct perspective on the social status in the country.
- It will help the govt know if the community has progressed or not. Through this corrective measures can be adopted.
- It is likely to put an end to the longstanding demand from political parties to update the previous caste-based census conducted 87 years ago, in 1931, by the British.

#### Technological upgrade

- It was emphasized that improvements in design and technological interventions be made so as to ensure that the Census data is finalized within three years after conducting of Census.
- At present it takes seven or eight years to release the complete data

#### Other areas of focus

- The Home Minister also emphasized the need for improvement in the Civil Registration System, especially on registration of birth and death in remote areas, and strengthening sample registration system for estimating the data namely, infant mortality rate, maternal mortality ratio and fertility rates

#### Background

- It has been conducted every 10 years,
- A systematic and modern population census, in its present form was conducted non-synchronously between 1865 and 1872 in different parts of the country. This effort culminating in 1872 has been popularly labeled as the first population census of India
- However, the first synchronous census in India was held in 1881. Since then, censuses have been undertaken uninterruptedly once every ten year.
- The responsibility of conducting the decennial Census rests with the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India under Ministry of Home Affairs
- The Census Act was enacted in 1948 to provide for the scheme of conducting population census with duties and responsibilities of census officers.

### Child Abuse

According to WHO: "Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power."

### **Stats**

- According to Study on Child Abuse: India 2007, brought out by the Union Ministry for Women and Child Development, two of every three children suffer physical abuse and more than 80% face abuse by their parents.
- The study found that 69% of children reported to have been physically abused. Out of these 54.68% were boys
- 53% of children surveyed said they had been subjected to some form of sexual abuse.
- Children between the ages of 5-12 are at the highest risk for abuse and exploitation.

### **Issue Area**

- Focus with regards to abuse has generally been in the more public domain such as child labour, prostitution, marriage, etc.
- Intra-family abuse or abuse that takes place in institutions such as schools or government homes has received minimal attention. Many of the crimes go unnoticed

### **Measures**

- The system needs to be more sensitive in dealing with sexual abuse of the child. Talking to her, listening to her, is a first step.
- Legal procedure is long-drawn, giving ample time to both parties for “negotiations”. So there needs to be fast tracking of cases
- Most of the complainants were from the economically weaker strata of the society. So they need to be provided legal assistance.
- Talking to children about body parts and inappropriate touching is an important first step that needs to be refreshed

### **Context**

- There is large scale underreporting of child abuse as many parents are working professionals and children are under custody of caregivers.

### **Cholanaikkan Tribe**

- They are an ethnic group in the state of Kerala specially Silent Valley National Park
- They speak the Cholanaikkan language, which belongs to the Dravidian family.
  - Around half of them also have a basic knowledge of Malayalam.
- The Cholanaikkan call themselves as ‘Malanaikan’ or ‘Sholanaikan’. They are called Cholanaikan because they inhabit the interior forests. ‘Chola’ or ‘shoals’ means deep ever green forest, and ‘naikan’ means King

### **Way of life**

- They have traditionally collected minor forest produce, such as honey, which they brought into town to sell. In turn, they bought essentials and returned, happy in their green abode.

### **Context**

- Kerala’s reclusive Chola Naikar tribe is leaving the forests for the plains after the devastating floods of Kerala

### **Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill 2018**

#### **Context**

- The Lok Sabha has passed the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill 2018 that proposes to enhance punishment for rape of a child.

#### **Bill Details**

- Under new law, if the victim is under 12 years of age, the culprit faces minimum sentence of 20 years, up from 10 years previously.
  - The maximum punishment is death penalty
  - In the cases of gangrape of child under 12, the minimum punishment is life sentence (earlier 20 years) while the maximum is death penalty.
- In cases of child aged between 12 and 16, the offence of rape is punishable with the minimum sentence of 20 years, up from 10 years.
  - Maximum punishment in such cases is life imprisonment.
  - If a girl aged between 12 and 16 is gang raped, the convict faces minimum punishment of life sentence.
- If the victim is aged between 16 and 18, the offence of rape is punishable with minimum punishment of 10-year jail term and maximum is life imprisonment.
- Repeat offenders will be punished with life imprisonment or death.
- The Bill provides for time-bound investigation in cases of rape of girl children. The investigation into rape of a child must be completed within two months.
- The case is to be tried in a fast track court. The Bill states that any appeal against a sentence by the trial court must be disposed of within six months.
- Accused is not entitled to anticipatory bail, under new law, in offences of rape of child less than 16 years of age.

#### **Dhangars**

##### **Context**

Dhangar Welfare Association had convened a meeting to discuss about the issues faced by the community.

##### **Details**

- The Dhangars are a shepherd community who live mostly in Western Maharashtra and Marathwada, and make up about a crore of Maharashtra's roughly 11.25 crore population (9%).

##### **Their demand**

- Dhangars are currently on the list of Vimukta Jati and Nomadic Tribes (VJNT) in Maharashtra.
- However, they have been demanding Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for the past several decades.
- Leaders of the community claim Dhangars in Maharashtra are the same as those who are called "Dhangad" elsewhere in the country, and are listed as a Scheduled Tribe.

#### **Ease of Living index**

##### **Context**

- Pune has ranked first while two more Maharashtra cities — Navi Mumbai and Greater Mumbai — figure in the second and third spots in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs' Ease of Living Index

##### **Details**

- The index captures the quality of life based on the data collected from the urban local bodies on four parameters, which were further broken down into 15 categories.

- The four parameters include institutional (governance), social (identity, education, health, security), economic (economy, employment) and physical factors (waste water and solid waste management, pollution, housing/ inclusiveness, mixed land use, power and water supply, transport, public open spaces).
  - Institutional and social parameters carry 25 points each,
  - economic factors five points
  - physical factors have a weightage of 45 points
- Cities which were unable or unwilling to provide data received low scores.
- Future editions of the Index may also incorporate citizen and stakeholder feedback rather than relying on government data alone.

### **Ranking**

- The other cities in the top ten include Tirupati, Chandigarh, Thane, Raipur, Indore, Vijayawada and Bhopal.
- Among other major cities, Chennai holds 14th rank, Ahmedabad 23rd, Hyderabad 27th, and Bengaluru 58th.
- The three cities at the bottom of the rankings are Rampur, Kohima and Patna.

### **Challenges**

- It was a challenge to collect some of this information from data-starved urban local bodies.
- Particular complications were seen in indicators such as health —where local governments did not have access to data from private hospitals.

### **Significance**

- The ranking marks a shift to a data-driven approach to urban planning and management.
- Ministry officials said that the index has been developed to allow city managers to get a grip on the city's baseline and compare its performance across key indicators.

### **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill of 2018**

- According to section 2(aa) of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2006, "adoption means the process through which the adopted child is permanently separated from his biological parent and becomes the legitimate child of his adoptive parents with all right, privileges and responsibility that are attached to the relationship".

### **Procedure**

- The party willing for adoption can make application to Child Welfare Agency.
- Registration can be done either at Adoption Coordinating Agency (ACA) found in each state's capital city, or an agency certified by the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) in New Delhi.
- After this, the agency conducts a preliminary interview with the adopting couple in order to understand their intention and motivation behind adoption.
- Once the party decides which child they are going to adopt they file the petition at the court of apt jurisdiction, where court hearing takes place regarding adoption

### **Juvenile Justice Act of 2015**

Chapter 8 of this Act deals with adoption.

- Subsection (1) of Section 56 of the Act says “adoption shall be resorted to for ensuring right to family for the orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children.”
- Subsection (2) of Section 61 of the Act provides that “the adoption proceedings shall be held in camera and the case shall be disposed of by the court within a period of two months from the date of filing the adoption.”
- Section 63 of the Act states that the adoption is final on the issuance of the adoption order by the court concerned.

### **Concerns**

- An affidavit filed by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights shows that of 203 special adoption agencies audited, merely eight deserved positive reviews.
- It has been observed that there is an inordinate delay in issuing adoption orders by the courts due to the heavy workload.
  - Due to delay in the issuing of adoption orders by the courts, children continue to stay in childcare institutions, even after getting a family.

### **Govt addresses the key issue in the new bill**

- In the best interest of the child, it proposes to amend the Juvenile Justice Act to empower the District Magistrate, instead of the court, to issue adoption orders.
- This would ensure timely processing of adoption cases and provide orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children with familial care and protection.

### **'Missing' Children**

#### **Context**

- The Supreme Court expressed shock at the discrepancy in two surveys reflecting a difference of around two lakh children staying in child care institutions and said it was “very, very disturbing” that such children were being “treated” as mere numbers.
- A 2016-17 survey, commissioned by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, shows that 4.73 lakh children reside in care homes nationwide. However, the number of children in care homes came down to 2.61 lakh in the data submitted by the Centre before the Supreme Court in March 2018. The data were gathered by the Centre from the States.

#### **Facts**

- Statistics show that over 60,000 children go missing every year in the country.
- The data, available with the Ministry of Home Affairs, shows that the number of untraced children in the country has increased by 84% between 2013 and 2015. The total number of untraced children in 2015 was 62,988 as against 34,244 in the year 2013.
- According to CRY, Maharashtra and Delhi have the maximum number of untraced children. According to a recent RTI reply from the Delhi Police, 22 children go missing in Delhi every day.
- There are 9,589 childcare institutions across the country, 1,596 were overcrowded and 97 districts were without childcare homes.

### **Reasons for Missing Children**

- Between 2013 and 2014, at least 67,000 children in India went missing; 45 per cent were minors who were victims of trafficking for prostitution.

- Primary causes are forced marriage, child labour, procurement of minors as domestic help and sexual exploitation.
- Children are subjected to corporal punishment and other abuses in these homes.
- The main reasons for children running away were academic pressure, elopement, job opportunities, or because they were scolded by parents.

### **What has Govt done?**

- Ministry of Women and Child Development also set up a website, [trackthemissingchild.gov.in](http://trackthemissingchild.gov.in). This interactive website has information relating to missing children
- Another portal which was set up in June 2015 is <http://khoyapaya.gov.in> where information relating to missing children can be submitted.
- The police through its various programmes like 'Operation Smile', 'Operation Milap', and 'Operation Muskaan' aimed at reuniting missing children with their families.
- Supreme Court on the issue of missing children ordered State and Central governments to periodically submit compliance reports in the court relating to the status of missing children in their respective States.

### **ReUnite**

- The app, christened as 'ReUnite', is a collaboration between Bachpan Bachao Andolan led by Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi and IT major Capgemini
- The app will use Amazon Web Services based on face recognition technology to match the photographs of missing children with a database to give result after face matching.
  - The app will be connected with missing children's database of Delhi Police.
- It's a multi-user platform which can be used to upload photos of missing children.

### **Way forward**

- Images of missing children should be shared on social media in an attempt at increasing outreach and tracing them.
- To begin with, the reasons behind children going missing need to be identified through specialised studies, unique to different States. This is because the reasons differ across the country.
  - For example, in Madhya Pradesh, a key cause behind children being kidnapped is because they are used as domestic labour, which is not so in many other States.
- Strong, well-coordinated platforms are needed to deal with the problem of missing children. Sound rehabilitation measures need to be in place as well for the well-being and protection of rescued children who have been victims of violence.
- Community-based child protection systems have to be in place to ensure prevention of such crimes. Village Protection committees and panchayats can keep a track of all children that leave villages for better prospects.
- Greater awareness and specialized manpower is a must.

### **Punjab's proposed law on sacrilege**

#### **Context**

- The Punjab Cabinet has taken a decision to amend the law to make acts of sacrilege against the holy books of major religions punishable with life imprisonment



## **Background**

- Two earlier bills had amended the CrPC and IPC, in 2016 during the previous SAD-BJP regime had mandated life imprisonment for any sacrilege of the holy Guru Granth Sahib.
  - The bills were introduced after several incidents related to the desecration of the holy book in various parts of the state were reported in 2015.
- The earlier bill passed by the state Assembly in March 2016 had been objected to by the Centre on the grounds that it should include punishment for sacrilege against all religions and not exclusively for the Sikh religion.
  - Protecting the holy book of only one religion would make it discriminatory and anti-secular.

## **Changes made from earlier act**

- The proposal now cleared by the Cabinet aims to also cover the Bible, the Koran and the Bhagvad Gita.
- The law will introduce a new section (Section 295-AA) in the Indian Penal Code after India's own 'blasphemy law', Section 295-A, which criminalizes "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings".

## **Concerns**

- The IPC, which contains an entire chapter on "Offences Related to Religion", which includes 295A, does not define the terms "religion" or "religious".
- This section 295AA is unwanted as Section 295-A already protected religious books from damage, insult and sacrilege
  - It is aimed at preserving public order; and miscreants can fan disorder and tension by malicious acts such as damaging or desecrating a holy text.
  - They shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.
  - The Supreme Court in 1957 upholding its constitutional validity clarified that the section "punishes the aggravated form of insult to religion when it is perpetrated with the deliberate and malicious intention of outraging religious feelings".
- Providing for a life term for the same offence in relation to religious texts would be grossly disproportionate.
- 'Sacrilege' itself is a vague term, and would render the section too broad.
  - There is a history of misuse of laws aimed to protect religious sentiments, and those that seek to punish persons who promote enmity between different groups.
- They have a chilling effect on free speech, and give a handle to anyone claiming to be outraged to pursue vexatious prosecutions.
  - Ex: Kiku Sharda was arrested for mimicking Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh
- It is retrograde and fraught with undesirable consequences. They are a dangerous tool that is almost always used against the marginalized and defenseless.
- It may also set off a needless flurry of legislation in the rest of India to pander to different groups.

## **Conclusion:**

- As prior permission of the Central or State government is needed to prosecute someone under such sections, a consequential amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure will be required.
- There is a case to read down Section 295-A and Section 153-A of the IPC that give scope to prosecute people in the name of protecting the feelings of a section of society. There is no case whatsoever to enhance jail terms.

## **Rajiv Gauba headed Panel on Lynching**

### **Context**

- A panel headed by Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba, which deliberated on measures to check incidents of lynching, submitted its report to a Group of Ministers headed by Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

### **Recommendations**

- Social media platforms also needed to act in a “time bound” manner.
  - Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter — would be made accountable for not blocking such malicious posts/videos when brought to their notice
  - FIR could be lodged against their country heads for non-compliance of government orders and they could be prosecuted under law.

## **Sabarimala Issue: Ways to read the Constitution**

### **Background**

- The arguments before the Supreme Court around the entry of women of a certain age to the Sabarimala temple in Kerala raise issues about religious freedom, gender equality and the right of women to worship.
- The petitioners have argued that discrimination based on biological reasons is not permissible going by the constitutional scheme.
- They maintain that due to the current exclusion, the right of women to worship the deity, Ayyappa, is violated.

## **Two approaches of Constitution reading**

### **‘Original intent’ approach**

- It is based on the intent of the framers of the Constitution when they drafted the text. For example, an originalist will adopt a certain understanding of a constitutional right — say, the right to same-sex relationships under the right to liberty promised under Article 21 only if she is convinced that the drafters intended that.
- She may argue that the framers never thought of such a situation and, therefore, a same-sex couple cannot have a constitutional right under Article 21.
- In fact, a similar argument has been made in the debates in India on homosexuality.
  - Article 15 enjoins the state from discriminating on grounds such as religion, caste and sex. By relying on the originalist approach, it was asserted that the makers of the Constitution meant the word ‘sex’ under Article 15 only in the binary sense of ‘male and female’.

### **Concerns**

- Over time, originalism as a method of constitutional interpretation has been subject to serious criticism for being too rigid and inflexible.

In *B.C Motor Vehicle Reference* (1985), the Canadian Supreme Court, while rejecting originalism, said that such a method would mean that “...the rights, freedoms and values embodied in the Charter in effect become frozen in time to the moment of adoption with little or no possibility of growth, development and adjustment to changing societal needs.

## **‘Living Tree’ Doctrine**

- It involves understanding the Constitution to be an evolving and organic instrument.
- For the living tree theorists, it matters little what the intentions were at the time of Constitution making.

- What matters the most is how the Constitution can be interpreted to contain rights in their broadest realm.
- The moral reading of the Constitution, propounded by Ronald Dworkin, also complements the living tree approach.
  - Dworkin says in Freedom's Law that "according to the moral reading, these clauses must be understood in the way their language most naturally suggests: they refer to abstract moral principles and incorporate these by reference, as limits on government's power."

### **Untouchability Case**

- In spite of the specific equality and anti-discrimination guarantees in the Constitution, Article 17 is inserted to specifically acknowledge and remove the social stigma associated with certain castes. It was enacted in an attempt to eradicate historical inequality.
- The 'living tree' approach — being an alternative and a finer reading of the Constitution — supports a broader interpretation of Article 17.
  - Now, even if the framers of the Constitution intended this provision to address a specific category of discrimination, what prevents the constitutional court from adopting an interpretation to include women under Article 17?
  - Women have been kept out of Sabarimala because of menstruation. As a distinct class, they are being discriminated against.
  - If certain castes are considered 'impure' because of their social status, menstruating women are considered to be so because of their gender.
- In Living Originalism in India: Our Law and Comparative Constitutional Law (2013), Sujit Choudhry argues that untouchability and the exclusion of the homosexuals are comparable.
  - He says that "the treatment which homosexuals experience today is similar in kind to that which 'untouchables' experienced and which prompted the adoption of Article 17, in that the treatment of homosexuals likewise flows from their social status."
  - This is a case where discrimination is based solely on sexual orientation.

### **Conclusion**

- Therefore, in essence, the Sabarimala case is a test case not only for freedom of religion and women's rights but also for constitutional interpretation. It presents to the court an exemplary opportunity for an alternative reading of the Constitution.
- If the court indeed reads Article 17 to have a wider meaning, it will signal a new era of transformative constitutionalism in Indian jurisprudence.

## **Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act**

### **Context**

- In order to ensure better implementation of the law against sexual harassment at workplace, the Centre has made it mandatory for companies to disclose whether they have constituted an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) to probe such allegations.

### **Background**

Sexual harassment includes physical contact and advances, demand or request for sexual favors, sexually colored remarks, showing any pornography and any other unwelcome physical, verbal, non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

- Under the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, it is mandatory for any organization with 10 or more employees to constitute an ICC. An employer who doesn't do so could face a fine of up to Rs. 50,000.
- An ICC should consist of a presiding officer, who is a woman employee at a senior level in the same organization, at least two employees "preferably committed to the cause of women", and a member from an NGO or a person "familiar with issues relating to sexual harassment."
- The committee would have powers similar to those of a civil court and would have to complete its inquiry within 90 days.

### **Details**

- The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has amended the Companies (Accounts) Rules, 2014, to make it part of the mandatory non-financial disclosures in annual reports of private companies under Section 134 of the legislation wherein non-disclosure attracts penal provisions
- Section 134 lists the disclosure framework that directors of companies have to comply with in the annual reports.

### **Significance**

- This is a major step towards making the workplace safe for the women in the private sector

## **Slum Policies**

### **Context**

- India's rapid urbanization has been proceeding apace for decades and there is growth of Slums in the urban areas and for thousands who come to the cities every day, cheap housing in slums is often the springboard to better lives.

### **How should India address this issue?**

- First, India must get its numbers right as there are no concrete figures on these temporary and semi-permanent settlements.
  - Slums have a fluid definition and legal pedanticism leads to exclusion of people.
  - The 2011 Census estimated 65 million people in slums, a marked shortfall from the UN-HABITAT's 2014 estimation of 104 million.
- Current slum policies primarily focus on housing, relocation or in-situ development of multi-storey complexes, which free up swathes of prime real estate. But in doing so we miss out on the brewing socio-economic distress in slums.
  - Over 70% of families in slums live in debt.
  - The difference between their monthly earnings and expenses is less than ₹1,000 leaving them vulnerable in case of educational, vocational, social or health emergencies.
  - Moreover, with no access to formal financial systems, any borrowing comes from private money lenders at high interest rates.
  - For many, even water and electricity are disproportionately more expensive as they are forced to rely on the grey market rather than on formal, subsidized channels.

### **What could this lead to?**

- The cumulative effect is that residents end up staying in the same slums for an average of 21 years
  - When families did move out of their slums, it was towards "cheaper," worse-off slums.

- This is perhaps due to the rapidly changing profile of entry level jobs. Undergraduate or technical certificates can only provide low-paying jobs. Much like their parents, the youth earn less than their more-educated peers who don't live in slums.

### **Way forward**

- A nuanced slum policy, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach is the need.
- In many established slums, political patronage has produced concrete houses, title deeds, piped water and regularized electricity. Here, economic opportunities and employment are key.
- On the other end, slums resembling tented refugee camps need housing and basic amenities.
- Until these nuances are considered, ambitious but slow-to-implement housing schemes will do little for the welfare of slum dwellers.

### **Superstitions in India**

- An idea or thought where one practices actions without any rational or logical base. It is deprived with any scientific backing.

### **Examples**

- If a black cat crosses your path, it's a bad omen
- Breaking mirror brings bad luck
- Branding children with heated objects
- Madee-snana, a ritual where devotees from across castes roll over the leftover food of Brahmins in certain temples to cure themselves of skin diseases.

### **Causes**

- Lack of education
- Exploiting the innocence of some communities
- Lacking access to proper health care, it is the poor, who fall victim to such methods.
- Linking every superstition to religion and word of God.

### **Consequences**

- Mental alienation and ill treatment.
- It has become a money making racket by exploiting the gullible
- Superstitions aim at fragmenting the human family and sowing seeds of hate and cruelty.
- It violates women's rights
- Life guaranteed under article 21 is violated
- Wastage of money, time and resources
- Every superstition is a blatant contradiction of truth and the light of spirituality. Superstitions thwart our ethical development.

### **Laws**

- The Article 51 A (h) of the Constitution lists "to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform" as a fundamental duty for every Indian citizen
- Maharashtra has implemented the Maharashtra Prevention and Eradication of Human Sacrifice and Other Inhuman, Evil and Aghori Practices and Black Magic Act, 2013.
- Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Inhuman Evil Practices and Black Magic Bill

### **Issues in implementation**

- Example: Throwing children on thorns; parading women naked
  - For instance, throwing a child on thorns is an offence under Sections 307 and 323 of the IPC.
  - Similarly, parading a woman naked can also be addressed specifically by Section 354B of the IPC.
- Certain changes in the law pertaining to the procedural rules and the law of evidence may be necessary to establish the commission of such crimes.
  - These can be addressed by amendments in the Criminal Procedure Code and Indian Evidence Act.
  - If the executive is serious about curbing such practices, active implementation and enforcement of existing laws need to be made more effective.
  - So with bad implementation what we have is known as 'over-criminalization' — more laws but less 'rule of law'.
- Therefore, the enforcement machinery needs a major overhaul to make criminal justice more accessible.

### **How to overcome this issue?**

- Events such as street-plays, film screenings and discussions should be held to raise awareness
- The government must take measures to ensure that those living in the remote areas were provided with basic amenities of living and that education was the top priority

### **Conclusion**

- Every superstition cannot be removed by the force of law. For that, a mental change is necessary. However, superstitious practices that are utterly dehumanizing, brutal and exploitative need to be dealt with by a law that specifically addresses them.
- The fundamental tenets of a liberal democracy give us the freedoms of conscience and to believe in things even when science and rationality don't support them.

### **Tani people**

- The group comprises Nyishi, Adi, Apatani, Galo and Tagin
- Tani are a group of tribes from the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam and Tibet Autonomous Region of China which share common Tani languages and certain common beliefs, primarily in Abutani/Abotani as their primeval ancestor

### **Centre wants Supreme Court to get tough with FB, YouTube on sexual violence**

#### **Context**

- The Government is to seek "stricter directions" to service providers, such as Facebook and YouTube, from the Supreme Court to curb sexual violence against women and children
- This was on the backdrop of inadequate steps taken by service providers and social media platforms like Facebook and Youtube

#### **Issue Area**

- The compliance by the service providers was mediocre.
- The issue of tracing the origin of "unlawful" content
  - The government is keen on intermediaries sharing certain data with law enforcement agencies to identify the origin of such content.



- The Govt wants Intermediaries to keep a complete trail of forwarding of unlawful content
- Currently, on the issue of assistance to law enforcement agencies on identification of offender, the response is often delayed
  - So, the Govt wants 100% compliance as far as requests from law enforcement agencies are concerned

### **What is the request?**

- The directions sought will include considerably reducing the time taken by the intermediary to comply with content removal requests under certain Sections of the IT Act to less than 10 hours from about 36 hours at present
- The government also wants that the service providers be asked to employ agencies for identification and removal of sexually violent content, particularly videos relating to child pornography and rape, besides deploying “proactive monitoring tools.”

### **Background**

- Supreme Court in the past gave several directions for removal of sexually violent content from the Internet
- Ministry of Home Affairs was tasked with monitoring compliance on some agreed action points by both the government and the service providers.
- Government has compiled a keyword repository of over 500 English and Hindi words.
  - These have been shared with the intermediaries so that they can issue warning message for searching about child pornography or rape and gang rape videos. Govt has seen only partial compliance by the internet giants.

## **Meghalaya Govt says marriage certificate must for official work**

### **Context**

- The State government in Matrilineal Meghalaya has made it mandatory for married people to produce marriage certificates for all official purposes.

### **Matrilineal law of inheritance**

- KHASI TRIBE:
  - The youngest daughter of the house will stay with the parents and inherit the house that is named after her mother.
  - The husband is expected to leave his house and live with his wife in his mother-in-law's house.
- GARO TRIBE:
  - This tribe has a similar social formation and also follows the matrilineal methodology to trace property.
  - A Garo family is headed by the mother of the house but the father is responsible for providing sustenance.
  - The daughter of the family carries the clan name throughout her life, whereas the son takes up his wife's clan name after marriage

### **Details**

- The government has also decided to deny government jobs and benefits to men who have abandoned their families and are not providing for maintenance of their children.
  - Some of these men live with other women.

- This step has been taken in view of increasing cases of broken marriages and women being forced to fend for themselves and their children.

### **Significance**

- The government's order cannot stop divorce, but marriage certificates will help abandoned women fight for the maintenance of their children after their husbands abandon them

## **Building traceability would undermine end-to-end encryption: WhatsApp**

### **Context**

- WhatsApp has rejected India's demand for a solution to track the origin of messages on its platform, saying building traceability would undermine end-to-end encryption and affect privacy protection for users.

### **Details**

- It emphasizes that people use its platform for all kinds of "sensitive conversations" including with their doctors, banks and families
- WhatsApp will not weaken the privacy protections
  - They would rather work on educating people about misinformation.
- the government has asked WhatsApp to set up a local corporate entity and find a technology solution to trace the origin of fake messages circulated through its platform as well as appoint a grievance officer.'

## **The crackdown on civil society**

### **Context:**

- On the 28<sup>th</sup> of August, lawyers, poets, academics and activists known for their defence of the deprived were targeted by the Maharashtra police.
- The houses of Sudha Bharadwaj, Varavara Rao, Vernon Gonsalves, Arun Ferreira, Gautam Navlakha, Anand Teltumbde and Stan Swamy were raided, and some of them imprisoned.
- The reason for their arrest was that their speeches at the Elgar Parishad meeting in Pune in December 2017 incited the violence unleashed on a Dalit gathering at Bhima-Koregaon on January 1, 2018.

### **What is civil Society?**

- The society considered as a community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity is a civil society.
- It is the "aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens.
- It is referred to as the third sector of the society distinct from government and business.

### **What is the need for civil society?**

- The modern democratic state with the technologies of surveillance and control possesses such power that has never been seen in the history. Yet, there are citizens that are vulnerable and helpless despite the rights they possess, if the democratic state decides to terrorize, kill and drill fear in them.
- The market in present times lacks moral sense. It is supremely indifferent to human suffering. It has neither sympathy nor room for citizens exploited by the state, and by its own need for resources, labour, and profit.
- Such a scenario calls for the intervention of civil society to protect the interest of the citizens. As it is the only sphere that stands between the individual and the state.
- Their role is crucial for democracy because today we are ruled by a government that openly defies ethics and morality, that casts itself in the mould of realism, and that is supremely indifferent to the plight of millions of its citizens.

- We are ruled by leaders who dismiss the need for civil society because the cadres and the front organizations of its ideological backbone seek to dominate the space between the individual, the market and the state
- Associations have the capacity to challenge the violent power of the state through petitions, protests, dharnas and ultimately judicial activism.
- When the political parties are unresponsive, citizens can access centres of power and privilege only through a vibrant civil society.

### **Background:**

- Every political revolution in the world has begun with the rights to life and liberty, be it the French Revolution or the Glorious Revolution, among the others. These two rights lie at the core of other rights that have been developed and codified as critical for human beings.
- The two rights stretch from the right not to be tortured or killed, to the right not to be arrested and imprisoned by the lackeys of the state without due cause.
- The right to life is a basic right, but our lives do not mean anything if we are imprisoned for no reason.
- The civil liberties movement made an appearance on to the scene of Indian politics at the aftermath of Emergency (1975-77) as some Indian citizens were randomly and arbitrarily imprisoned and the fundamental rights of others were curtailed.
- The movement took a significant task of protecting the fundamental right to life and liberty granted by the Indian Constitution.

### **What has been the role of Civil Society in India?**

- The human rights groups have become the custodian of the Fundamental Rights chapter of the Indian Constitution.
- They have investigated cases of arbitrary imprisonment, custodial deaths, deadly encounters and coercion of any citizen who dares to speak up against the state or dominant groups.
- These organisations have carefully documented the causes and the triggers of communal and caste violence, and established an excellent archive on the abuse of power by governments.
- They have protected the rights of vulnerable sections of our own people, the Adivasis, the Dalits and Muslims. They have shouldered the fight for the rights of the oppressed.

### **Criticisms:**

- Not all civil society groups are involved in protecting the moral conscience of our society. Some are in the sole business of getting funds from the state or others.
- Some sections of media are often cowered down by their corporate bosses, and the temptation of fame.
- Few sections are involved in excessive protests, eventually hampering national interests.
- Too often, even progressive global civil society organizations do not meet the standards of accountability and transparency that they demand of others.
- Unhappily, the majority of Indians keep quiet when their own fellow citizens are tortured by the police, stripped of access to resources and livelihoods, lynched, exploited by corporate India, and neglected by the mainstream media.

### **Conclusion:**

Some parts of global civil society have played a significant role in mobilising public opinion and in spurring global action in the direction of fairness and justice. Each democratic association is important, but we cannot deny that civil liberty and human rights groups are an essential precondition for human well-being. But too often an unbalanced picture is painted of this highly complex phenomenon. Alongside its evident benefits and opportunities, some of its limitations and downsides should be recognised. A more rounded understanding of and intelligent engagement with the civil society will help to bridge the gap between its image and its performance, and produce better public poli

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### **Aeolus spacecraft**

- Aeolus is part of the Copernicus project, a joint initiative of the European Union and the European Space Agency (ESA). The satellite is being controlled from ESA's European Space Operations Centre in Germany.
- The satellite is equipped with a single instrument: a Doppler wind lidar — an advanced laser system designed. Aeolus will fire an ultraviolet laser through the atmosphere and measure the return signal using a large telescope
- It is named after the guardian of wind in Greek mythology

### **Why does this space mission matter?**

- Currently, there are multiple ways to measure the wind, from whirling anemometers and weather balloons to the satellites that infer wind behavior by tracking clouds in the sky.
  - But these are all limited indications that tell us what is happening in particular places or at particular heights.
- Aeolus on the other hand will gather wind data across the entire Earth, from the ground to the stratosphere (30km).

### **Significance**

- It will help in measuring global wind patterns from space and improve weather forecasts.
- Aeolus will give scientists the information they need to understand how wind, pressure, temperature and humidity are interlinked.
- Its data will be used in air-quality models to improve forecasts of dust and other airborne particles that affect public health.
- It will track environmental damage and aid disaster relief operations.
- This new mission will provide insight into how the wind influences the exchange of heat and moisture between Earth's surface and the atmosphere — important aspects for understanding climate change.

### **Evolutionary Biology lacks research**

#### **Context**

- The marginalization of research and education in evolutionary biology in India has justifiably been a matter of concern.

#### **What is it?**

- Evolutionary biology is a sub discipline of the biological sciences concerned with the origin of life and the diversification and adaptation of life forms over time.
- It studies the evolutionary processes that produced the diversity of life on Earth, starting from a single common ancestor. These processes include natural selection, common descent, and speciation.

#### **Its importance**

- Evolutionary biology is important in understanding multi-drug resistance in microbes.

- The Nipah virus outbreak, which was traced to the habitat destruction of fruit bats, is also a study in ecology and evolutionary biology.
- DNA fingerprinting is a technology that has now caught the popular imagination.
  - Using DNA fingerprinting and DNA statistics for forensics requires a nontrivial understanding of molecular population genetics.
  - But we do not have sufficient number of researchers working on these areas

### **Issue Area**

- Unlike in other countries, Darwinian medicine is poorly researched in India
- In education, too, evolutionary biology is at a disadvantage. For one, there are no postgraduate departments of evolutionary biology in any university.

### **Measures taken**

- A group of evolutionary biologists have recently established the Indian Society of Evolutionary Biologists (ISEB). This is a significant development.
- The ISEB hopes bring together practitioners and senior researchers from the field
- It also aims to reach members of the public and get them to engage with the mission of the Society.
- Talks and activities for students have been planned.

### **Conclusion**

- The Society has a small membership, mainly active researchers in the field of evolutionary biology. For it to be embraced by the public, membership drives will be crucial.

### **Gaganyaan**

- It is the human space flight Programme green-flagged and set for 2022 marking India's 75th Independence Day by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- When it achieves the mission, India would be the fourth nation to circle Earth after the Soviets, the Americans and the Chinese. In 1984, India's first astronaut Wing Commander (retd.) Rakesh Sharma orbited Earth as part of a Soviet mission.

## 2022: India's space odyssey

### What is the Human Space Flight Project all about?

- In 2022, 3 Indian astronauts, mostly flight test pilots from the IAF, will circle earth for seven days from a distance of 300-400 km
- They will travel in a 7,000-kg crew capsule. A GSLV-MkIII launch vehicle will lift them to their orbit
- The flight will take off from a refurbished launchpad at Sriharikota
- The entire project could cost roughly between ₹7,000 to 9,000 crore



### ALSO PROPOSED

- Food, suits and other life systems for crew
- Astronaut selection & training
- Two unmanned trials, the first in two years
- A new command & tracking centre at ISTRAC, Bengaluru
- Improved launchpad at SDSC, Sriharikota

### **Chronology**

- August 2004: ISRO Policy Planning Committee recommends manned space mission
- November 2006: National committee comprising 80 scientists and technocrats endorses proposal



- September 2007: First public announcement of the human space programme
- February-March 2009: Another committee, comprising Montek Singh Ahluwalia, R Chidambaram, Roddam Narasimha, M G K Menon, Yash Pal, M S Swaminathan and K Radhakrishnan, discusses the desirability and feasibility of the programme and expresses support
- April 2010: Failure of GSLV-D3
- December 2010: Failure of GSLV-F06
- December 18, 2014: Successful testing of experimental flight of GSLV Mk-III; this also successfully tests an experimental crew module, demonstrating reentry capability
- June 2017: First 'developmental' flight of GSLV Mk-III
- July 2018: First successful flight of the crew escape system
- August 15, 2018: Prime Minister announces manned mission to take place before 2022

### **Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT)**

- It is an array of thirty fully steerable parabolic radio telescopes of 45-metre diameter.
- It is operated by the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics.
- GMRT is a versatile instrument for investigating variety of radio astrophysical problems ranging from nearby solar system to edge of observable universe

#### **Context**

- Astronomers have used an Indian telescope to discover the most distant radio galaxy ever known, located at a distance of 12 billion light-years.

#### **Details**

- The radio galaxy belongs to a time when the universe was only seven per cent of its current age.
- Radio galaxies are very rare objects in the universe. They are colossal galaxies with a supermassive black hole in their centre that actively accretes gas and dust from its surroundings.
- This activity initiates the launch of high-energy jet streams, which are capable of accelerating charged particles around the supermassive black hole to almost the speed of light.
- These jet streams are very clearly observed at radio wavelengths. The fact that such galaxies exist in the distant universe has surprised astronomers.

#### **Significance**

- The unraveling of such radio galaxies at large distances is important for our understanding of the formation and evolution of galaxies
- The researchers are of the view that analyzing and studying these galaxies at length also reveals the formation of primordial black holes.

### **Gravitational Waves Observatory**

#### **Context**

- The Government of India has given 'In-Principle' approval for Construction and Operation of Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Laboratory – India (LIGO) in India in collaboration with LIGO Laboratory, United States of America.
- Hingoli District of Maharashtra has been selected as the primary site and the process of acquiring land for the project is in advanced stage.

#### **Details**

- The project involves constructing a network of L-shaped arms, each four kilometers long, which can detect even the faintest ripples from cosmic explosions millions of light years away.
- The construction of such a large, sensitive device — there are only three of its kind in the world — requires an extremely flat surface.



- The LIGO project operates three gravitational-wave (GW) detectors.
  - Two are at Hanford in the State of Washington, north-western USA, and one is at Livingston in Louisiana, south-eastern USA.
  - Currently these observatories are being upgraded to their advanced configurations.
  - The proposed LIGO-India project aims to move one Advanced LIGO detector from Hanford to India.

### **Implementation**

- The LIGO-India project is an international collaboration between the LIGO Laboratory and three lead institutions in the LIGO-India consortium: Institute of Plasma Research, Gandhinagar; IUCAA, Pune; and Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology, Indore.
- The LIGO lab would provide the complete design and all the key detector components.
- Indian scientists would provide the infrastructure to install the detector and it would be operated jointly by LIGO-India and the LIGO-Lab.
- The project, piloted by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Department of Science and Technology (DST), reportedly costs ₹1,200 crore and is expected to be ready by 2025.

## **Helium turns 150**

### **Background**

- On August 18, in 1868, helium was discovered by astronomers studying the sun during a total solar eclipse. It is the only element to have been seen in the sun before it was known to exist on earth.

### **Significance**

- It helps in determining the chemical compositions of stars and gas far far away, and even calculate their temperature and density,
- Helium is also used to detect leaks, such as in car air-conditioning systems
- Because it is very unreactive, helium is used to provide an inert protective atmosphere for making fibre optics and semiconductors, and for arc welding.

## **Helium-3**

### **Context**

- Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) said that the country's second moon mission 'Chandrayaan-2' — is designed to hunt for deposits of Helium-3 — a waste-free nuclear energy that could answer many of Earth's energy problems.
- Helium-3 is available on Earth too, it is in limited supply. On the other hand, the moon theoretically could have enough of the isotope to meet global energy needs for 250 years if harnessed

### **Details**

- The isotope of Helium is abundant on the moon, could theoretically meet global energy demands for three to five centuries
- There are approximately 1 million metric tons of Helium-3 embedded in the moon

### **Concerns**

- Even if we are successful in bringing back huge deposits of Helium-3 from the moon, we are far away from having the technology to harness it.
- The space agency will have to figure out how it will mine and bring back the isotope to Earth.
- Building fusion power plants to convert this resource into energy is another issue
- Additionally, there is no international treaty on commercial entities allowed to keep what they have mined from space
- Only the US and Luxembourg have passed legislations to this effect.

## India Science Technology and Innovation Portal

### Context

- The Union science ministry's communication wing, Vigyan Prasar, has launched the India Science Technology and Innovation portal that can help individuals in areas of career prospects in mathematics and to know about other domains of research

### Details

- Currently the portal can be queried for information about the organizations carrying out research, those funding them, international collaborations, the scientists involved in the research, the states in which they are being carried out, their achievements and impact.
- There's also a compilation of technologies developed in India, the organizations that have developed these technologies, those that have funded them and the status of the technologies.
- A major thrust of the portal is to reach out to students, researchers, scholars, scientists both from India and abroad, so that they can choose from the mine of fellowships, scholarships and funding and startup opportunities that India affords.

### India Science Channel

- It is an Internet-based science channel, to showcase the developments in science and technology in India.

Both the portal and the channel are part of a push by the Science Ministry to improve its public outreach

## Move Hack

### Context

- NITI Aayog has launched Move Hack, a global mobility hackathon to crowdsource solutions aimed at the future of mobility in India.

### Details

- MoveHack aims to bring about innovative, dynamic and scalable solutions to problems pertaining to mobility.
- The hackathon has two-pronged campaign approach:
  - "Just Code It": aimed at solutions through innovations in technology / product / software and data analysis, and
  - "Just Solve It": innovative business ideas or sustainable solutions to transform mobility infrastructure through technology.
- Move Hack is open to individuals from all nationalities, making it a truly global hackathon.
- The hackathon is organized in partnership with Government of Singapore and is powered by Hacker Earth. PwC is the Knowledge Partner and NASSCOM is the Strategic Partner.
- Move Hack is expected to unravel pioneering and ingenious solutions to pertinent mobility-related challenges and pave the way for developing integrated, interconnected and inventive global community.
- Move Hack is the first platform in the world which has enmeshed public transport, private transport, road safety, multimodal connectivity, and new age transport technologies such as zero emission vehicles and intra city aerial transport in a hackathon platform spearheaded by a Government.

## RISECREEK and Project Shakti

### Context

- Computer scientists and a student team from the IIT- Madras have developed the first of a family of six industry-standard microprocessors.

### **Details**

- The initial batch of 300 chips, named RISECREEK and produced under Project Shakti, have been fabricated free at Intel's facility at Oregon, U.S., to run the Linux operating system.
- Since the design is open source its microprocessors can be adapted by others
- The Shakti plan started in 2014 as an IIT-M initiative. Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology funded a part of the project
- The Shakti project is not aimed at only building processors. It also aims to build high speed interconnects for servers and supercomputers

### **Significance**

- They optimise power use and compete with international units such as the Cortex A5 from Advanced RISC Machines (ARM).
- At a frequency of 350 MHz, RISECREEK can meet the demands of defence and strategic equipment such as NAVIC (Indian Regional Navigation Satellite) and Internet of Things (IoT) electronics

## **Selfies app and Exoplanet Excursions virtual reality app**

### **Context**

- NASA has created two virtual reality apps that allow users to take selfies in front of gorgeous cosmic locations, and explore TRAPPIST-1 planetary system, the only known exoplanet system to host seven roughly Earth-size planets.

### **Details**

- It was released to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the launch of NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope.
- Spitzer's incredible discoveries and amazing images are at the center of these new products

### **Selfies app**

- It lets individuals to generate snapshots of self in a virtual spacesuit, posing in front of gorgeous cosmic locations, like the Orion Nebula or the centre of the Milky Way galaxy.
- The app also provides information about the science behind these stunning images.

### **Exoplanet Excursions**

- In the Exoplanet Excursions virtual reality app, VR users are taken on a guided tour of the TRAPPIST-1 planetary system.
- Spitzer played a major role in detecting these planets and providing information that has helped scientists learn about the planets' likely compositions.

## SECURITY AND DEFENSE

### Anti-Tank Guided Missile 'HELINA'

#### Context

- Indigenously developed Helicopter launched Anti-Tank Guided Missile 'HELINA' has been successfully flight tested

#### Details

- The HELINA weapon system released smoothly from the launch platform, tracked the target all through its course, and struck it with high precision.
- The Missile is guided by an Infrared Imaging Seeker (IIR) operating in the Lock on Before Launch mode
- It is the helicopter-launched version of NAG and has a hit range of 7-8 km.

### Defence India Startup Challenge

#### Context

- Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled the Defence India Startup Challenge

#### Details

- It is an initiative to tap startups for finding safe and futuristic Indian solutions to critical needs of the three Armed Forces.
- A list of 11 technologies that the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force need was released
- They included remote air vehicles, laser weapons, secure and safe communication systems and bandwidth, precision targeting systems, sensors, and protected and informed movement of soldiers in battle tanks.
- The schemes are part of Innovations for Defence Excellence initiative launched at the DefExpo

### Support for Prototype & Research Kickstart in Defence (SPARK)

- Those that come up with prototypes of usable products would be supported with ₹1.5 crore each and friendly procurement procedures from the Ministry under SPARK

### DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018

#### Context

- It has been introduced in India's Parliament, with a view to creating a national DNA database for use by the police in solving crimes and identifying missing persons.

#### Key Features

The Bill allows two categories of persons to have their DNA collected without consent and their DNA profiles added to the database.

- persons suspected of any offence, where an order is made by a magistrate, and
- Persons suspected of more serious offences, where an order from a magistrate is not required.

## Issues

**Forensic Genetics Policy Initiative published its report, "Establishing Best Practice for Forensic DNA Databases". It reveals a number of important issues:**

- First, using DNA effectively during criminal investigations requires proper crime scene examination, trained and reliable policing, a trusted chain of custody of samples, reliable analysis, and proper use of expert evidence in court.
  - Without these prerequisites, a DNA database will exacerbate rather than solve problems in the criminal justice system

## Concern

- DNA can be an important tool here, in solving crimes, it is important that there are safeguards to protect human rights and prevent miscarriages of justice.
- The Home Ministry circulated a set of guidelines to States on how to search crime scenes and collect, store and transport DNA samples in criminal cases. However, it is not yet clear whether these guidelines will be effective.
- There would be many errors which may occur before samples get to the laboratory, so there should be a requirement for laboratory accreditation in the Bill and it must include quality assurance for crime scene examination.
- Consideration should be given to an independent forensic science regulator to ensure oversight of both laboratory quality assurance and crime scene examination.
- There is also a need for elimination databases for police, crime scene examiners and laboratory workers, whose DNA may contaminate the evidence they touch.

## Financial Expenditure

- The financial memorandum to the Bill estimates that there will be a one-off cost of ₹20 crore to set up the database, with annual costs of ₹5 crore to maintain it. This is completely unrealistic:
- For Example, the U.K. National DNA database cost £3.7 million to run in 2015-16.
- International evidence shows that the success of a DNA database is driven primarily by the number of crime scene DNA profiles loaded on to it, not by the number of DNA profiles from individuals, so proper crime scene analysis should be the top priority.

## Reforms

**DNA Regulatory Board rules should be amended**

- This board is too powerful and insufficiently transparent or accountable.
- The Board's need to review the ethics of its own behavior may conflict with its other roles: an independent ethics board should be set up to advise it, and the ethics board's opinions should be published.
- Provisions which give the government or the board the power to amend aspects of the safeguards in the Bill, and to avoid accountability in court, should be deleted.
- The Board's responsibilities for privacy protections need an independent regulator: the easiest way to achieve this would be prior adoption of a privacy or data protection bill
- The Bill includes provisions for the destruction of DNA samples and removal of innocent people's DNA profiles from the database. However, these provisions are currently inadequate because it is unclear how they will operate in practice: currently, the removal of innocent people's records is not automatic, and some samples will be retained by the police. Any international sharing of DNA profiles should also be covered by a privacy or data protection law, and meet international human rights standards.

### **Database separation**

- Further, it is a best practice to separate the databases for missing persons and for criminals set up by the Bill, so that people who volunteer their DNA to help find their missing relatives are not treated as suspects for criminal offences.
- Provisions allowing the use of these databases for civil cases, for example to test paternity, should be deleted from the Bill.
- To maintain trust in the system, people should not be concerned that non-paternity might be revealed if they offer to assist a criminal investigation, or are accused (perhaps falsely) of a crime.

### **Way forward**

- Important safeguards and a cost-benefit analysis are still lacking for this Bill. The Bill needs further improvement, and full parliamentary scrutiny should be utilized to achieve that end.

## **Drug Addiction among children- Control Mechanism**

### **Context**

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has issued an advisory to all States and Union Territories for taking coordinated action to address the problem of drug abuse

### **Measures to be taken**

- Conducting Sensitization and Preventive education programmes in schools and colleges throughout the year
  - National Institute of Social Defence (NISD), an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment conducts sensitization and preventive education programmes in schools and colleges on regular basis.
  - This Institute is currently focusing on human resource development in the areas of drug abuse prevention, welfare of senior citizens, beggary prevention, transgender and other social defense issues.
- Establishing separate and specialized de-addiction treatment centers/facilities for drug dependent children, especially in Government Hospitals/Medical colleges.
- Providing treatment facilities for those in the Juvenile Justice Systems including Juvenile Homes and Children Homes
- Providing appropriate facilities for children including street children
- Creating awareness generation through Youth organizations like Nehru Yuva Kendra, NSS and through print, electronic and social media

## **Exercise Maitree 2018**

- It is joint military exercise between Indian Army and Royal Thai Army
- Exercise Maitree is an annual event designed to strengthen the partnership between Royal Thai Army and Indian Army

### **Details**

- It involved familiarization training between two armies to evolve drills and procedures involved in counter insurgency & counter terrorist operations in urban, rural and jungle terrain under UN mandate
- The second phase included practicing of various drills & tactical scenarios in counter insurgency environment, execution of tactical operations like search and destroy operation, house intervention and survival techniques



### **Significance**

- Both the armies immensely benefitted from each other's expertise and experience in conduct of tactical level counter terrorist operations.
- The exercise helped in enhancing the cooperation between two armies & bonhomie between troops.

### **Exercise Pitch Black**

- Ex Pitch Black a biennial multi-national large force employment warfare exercise was hosted by Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)
- It is for the first time that IAF participated with air assets in the Exercise Pitch Black (PB-18).

### **Objective**

- The objectives for the exercise were to foster closer relationship between the participating friendly forces and to promote interoperability through exchange of knowledge and experience.
- The aim for participating crew and specialist observers was to expose them to op environment in international scenarios.

### **Significance**

- The exercise provided a unique opportunity for exchange of knowledge and experience with the participating nations in a dynamic warfare environment.
- The IAF contingent interacted with various countries, gained first-hand experience of training patterns, employment and operating philosophies of their combat assets.
- The Operational lessons learnt by IAF during the exercise will assist IAF in adding more teeth to its overall war waging capabilities and assist us in better joint man ship with the friendly Nations

### **ISRO telemedicine nodes for soldiers in high-altitude areas**

#### **Context**

- In a major effort to improve emergency medical support to soldiers posted in high-altitude areas, especially Siachen, the Integrated Defence Staff of the Defence Ministry and the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) signed a memorandum of understanding to set up telemedicine nodes in critical places across the country.

#### **Details**

- ISRO telemedicine programme started in 2001 has been connecting remote medical college hospitals and mobile units through the Indian satellites to major specialty hospitals in cities.
- ISRO will establish 53 more nodes in the first phase over and above the existing 20, in various establishments of the Army, Navy and Air Force across the country

#### **What was the need?**

- During winter months, many of the remote posts are cut off for several months because of adverse terrain and extreme weather, making emergency evacuation near impossible.
- Communication through satellite-enabled telemedicine nodes will be a paradigm shift in the delivery of lifesaving health care till the weather clears up and movement is possible.

### **Kowsar**

- Kowsar (or Kosar) is a medium-range, land-based anti-ship missile made by Iran
- The new "Kowsar" plane is a fourth-generation fighter with "advanced avionics" and multi-purpose radar.

- The fighter plane has been indigenously developed and is part of Iran's efforts to upgrade its missile defences.

## **Maoist Structure**

### **Background**

- Naxalite movement was started by Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santhal in West Bengal in 1967 under the banner of Communist Party of India (Marxist)

### **Current Status**

- The movement has changed many banners over the past four decades and is now called the CPI (Maoist), which is a banned organization in the country.
- The CPI (Maoist) was formed in 2004 with the merger of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War, commonly known as the People's War Group, and the Maoist Communist Centre of India.

## **Cadre and hierarchy**

Each unit within the Maoist structure has a clear role and area of operation — for instance, the central military commission's role is to design operational plans that include attacks

### **How Maoists operate**



A scene of a Maoist attack in Andhra Pradesh. ■ FILE PHOTO

### **Organizational structure**

They follow the 'need to know' principle for the flow of information. Each unit within the structure has its role and area of operation cut out.

- The core body is the Central Committee (CC)
- The CC is supported by the Polit Bureau (PB) and the Central Military Commission (CMC).
- The Polit Bureau is the think tank of the organization
  - The PB's role is basically to keep in touch with the over-ground frontal organizations, operators and sympathizers and formulate long-term policy and strategy.
  - The PB keeps in touch with like-minded political parties and sympathizers and plays a major role in developing logistical support, which includes getting legal help for cadres, funding, spreading the ideology and finding safe houses for cadres.

- The Central Military Commission's role is to design operational plans that include attacks on security forces, recruiting cadres and funding through extortion.

#### **The CC is supported by the four regional bureaux — central, east, north and south.**

- The central bureau spans the Dandkaranya zone, the Andhra-Odisha border special zone and the state committees of Telangana, Odisha, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.
- The eastern bureau consists of the zonal committees of Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Assam and Uttar Pradesh.
- The northern bureau comprises Punjab and Uttarakhand
- The southern bureau controls the whole of the Western Ghats region.

#### **Local Division**

Each of the bureaux and the zonal committees is headed by a CC member.

- Under the zonal committees, there are regional committees.
- The regional committees are further divided into divisional committees, area committees and finally the local area committees, which focus on one or two tribal villages each.

#### **Strategy meetings**

- Every year the CC and the PB members try to meet at least on two occasions: the Martyrs' Week, which begins on July 28, and the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) week, usually the first week of December.
  - The PLGA week is being observed since 2000 from the first anniversary of killing of three members of its Central committee members in Koyyuru forest area in Karimnagar district on December 2, 1999.
  - Party's concentration during the week is generally on recruitment to swell its cadres
- It is during these two meetings that the year-long policy is drafted.

#### **'Made in India' tank engines**

##### **Context**

- Defence Minister handed over two fully indigenous battle tank engines, V-46-6 and V92S2 that power the T-72 Ajeya tank and the T-90 Bhishma tank, produced by the Engine Factory Avadi (EFA), a unit of Ordnance Factory Board, to the Vice Chief of Army Staff.



##### **Significance**

- It has resulted in savings for the exchequer to the tune of ₹33 lakh for the T-90 engine and ₹9.75 lakh for the T-72 engine.

#### **Military Reform**

##### **Background**

- The Group of Ministers' report, the Kargil Review Committee report, and the Naresh Chandra Committee report all focused on a restructuring of higher defence organization as the first step.'
- This was intended to improve synergy among different tools of statecraft (bureaucracy, military, research and development, intelligence, internal security mechanisms, and more).

### **Concerns**

- There was little action as the words were not converted into structural changes within the Ministry of Defence, and sharing of expertise. So, the debate shifted to the second tier of reform in the operational realm.
- This has unfortunately pitted the three services against one another in a series of turf wars that have ranged from control over space to control over cyber and Special Forces.
- Without sorting the issues addressed above the Integrated Defence Staff and the Andaman and Nicobar Command was established as stepping stone to integration which is a standalone integrated theatre commands.
- Without considering any restructuring of higher defence organization, creation of Chief of the Defence Staff, or debating whether these theatre commands would be accompanied by a dilution in the operational control of the respective service chiefs
- Now the Indian Air Force (IAF) in a subtle manner is seen as the 'spoiler' in what is otherwise a largely consensual approach to integration.

### **IAF importance to armed forces**

- In terms of participation in statecraft or military operations in tandem with other tools, particularly as first responders, it is the IAF
- There has never been any recorded criticism or shortfalls in the contribution of the IAF reported by the Indian Army or Navy to the political executive at apex forums like the Combined Commanders' Conference.
- The IAF is aware of its pivotal role in determining the trajectory of any limited high-intensity conflict in any kind of terrain.
- Air power offers a viable alternative by shaping 'battle spaces' adequately before the other services enter combat in limited but high-tempo operations.

With such a deep understanding of joint operations, it is impossible to imagine that the reservations expressed by the IAF leadership in supporting the creation of integrated theatre commands in isolation is tantamount to stonewalling.

### **Apprehensions over reserves**

- The main apprehensions of the IAF leadership not only revolve around how best to exploit its dwindling offensive resources if they are hived off to multiple theatre commands, but also how the limited availability of enabling equipment and platforms (AWACS, refuelers, electronic warfare platforms and more) could seriously jeopardise operations even in a single-adversary limited conflict
- To explain the resource crunch, the U.S.'s Pacific Command (PACOM) and Central Command (CENTCOM) have their own air assets that are first supplemented by reserve units from the U.S. in emergency situations; they are not pooled in from other theatre commands.
  - But for IAF the mantra is 'to do more with less'
- The air force is organised and trained to plan operations centrally to exercise the best possible choice and the execution is delegated.
  - IAF assets, including special weapons, are limited in number and are distributed across the country, which require base-installation support. It is not possible to triplicate or quadruplicate them to every Theatre Command.
- IAF has a serious shortfall in strength of combat squadrons.

### **Disadvantages**

- The proposed new integrated commands are less about jointers and more about perpetuating army centrism, giving the army more control and in fact dangerously eroding the air-force.
- Our focus is on defending our territory and we need to structure our forces and strategy accordingly. Interestingly, the current responsibilities of the 19 commands towards administering, training, equipping and supporting the forces under their charge would in no way diminish if such Theatre Commands are formed. The creation of few more general rank posts would be sought.
- Dividing the country into military theatres sounds jingoist.
  - India cannot hold onto long term wars. So, it may be compelled to enter short and swift ones.
- forming Theatre Commands would demand large increase in expenditure with doubtful returns
- International press and our adversaries, would have a field day with the news that could be interpreted in many ways — to exercise tighter political control

### **Advantages**

- Better coordination among the three services.
- A potential conflict with a major military power like China will, in all likelihood, extend well beyond the typical theatres into the domains of cyber, space, nuclear and covert capabilities. A more integrated response will be needed from the Indian armed forces.
- Presiding over the Combined Commanders Conference in 2015, Modi said
  - We have been slow to reform the structures of our armed forces... We should promote jointness across every level of our armed forces. We wear different colours, but we serve the same cause and bear the same flag. Jointness at the top is a need that is long overdue.

### **Conclusion**

- National security reforms and restructuring are bound to have far-reaching consequences and call for political sagacity, wisdom and vision.

### **MoMo Challenge**

- It is said that the challenge first started on Facebook where people were asked to communicate with an unknown person via an unknown number.
- Reportedly, the link of this game is being circulated through Whatsapp.
- The first Momo challenge death took place in Argentina in early August where a 12-year-old girl filmed her tasks on her phone before committing suicide.

#### **Momo challenge - Why the name?**

- According to a popular news portal, Momo is a popular social media account on WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube, which uses the image of a doll with scary features and large protruding eyes, and a wide mouth to induce curiosity among children

#### **Momo challenge - What are the tasks?**

- Once the contact with the victim is established, the 'Momo' account shares a series of challenges (read activities) that need to be completed to finally meet the 'Momo'.
- Most of these tasks, according to reports, involve violent acts that end with suicide. If someone refuses to follow the instructions, the Momo intimidate them with dire consequences.



### **About the Momo image**

- The challenge uses an image of a grotesque woman with big bulging eyes. The Japanese artist who created the image, Midori Hayashi, says she is not associated to the game in any way. The image is called 'Mother bird by Link Factory'.

### **How do they choose their target?**

- The perpetrators of this horrific crime monitor the status of people on social networking websites to find out people with suicidal tendency.

## **National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System (NASAMS)**

### **Context**

- India is in talks with the U.S. to procure an advanced air defence system to defend the National Capital Region (NCR) from aerial attacks.

### **Details**

- The NASAMS was developed by Raytheon in partnership with KONGSBERG Defence and Aerospace of Norway.
- The system can be deployed to identify, engage and destroy aircraft, helicopters, cruise missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), as well as protect high-value assets and mass population centres against air-to-surface threats.
- NASAMS-II is an upgraded version of the NASAMS and features new 3D mobile surveillance radars and 12 missile launchers for quicker reaction.
- Owned by seven countries, it has been integrated into the US National Capital Region's air defense system since 2005. Apart from the US, it is also in service in Norway, Finland, Spain and the Netherlands.

## **Rotary Wing Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (RUAV)**

### **Context**

- Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) and IIT-Kanpur co-developed a 10 kg rotary drone and it was flown for the first time in Bengaluru

### **Details**

- The RUAV can carry a 2.5-kg payload or instrument including a live-streaming video camera.
- It can operate for an hour and travel 8-10 km.
- It was powered by a 2-stroke petrol engine.
- The RUAV is the first outcome of HAL's R&D tie-ups with academic institutions such as IITs of Madras, Roorkee, Kharagpur, Bombay, Kanpur and the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru.
- Apart from military and civil helicopters, the center is designing and developing rotary UAVs for defence, paramilitary forces and homeland security.

## **Restricted Areas Permit/ Protected Area Permit (PAP)**

### **Context**

- Foreigners no longer need a Restricted Areas Permit to visit 29 inhabited islands in the Andaman and Nicobar chain.
- The Union Home Ministry decided to lift restrictions as the government intends to boost tourism.

### **What is it?**

- The Foreigner (Protected Areas) Act requires foreigners to obtain a Protected Area Permit (PAP) to visit certain areas in India. This requirement is in addition to getting an Indian visa.
- Such restriction is in place due to security reasons.



- Even Indian citizens who are not residents of those areas require an Inner Line Permit (ILP) to enter these places. The Inner line Permit is significantly easier to get. However, NRIs (Indians who are staying abroad for more than 6 months), PIO Card holders, and OCI holders are not eligible for Inner Line Permit. They will have to apply for a regular Protected/Restricted Area Permit.

#### **Protected Areas are located in the following States:-**

- Whole of Arunachal Pradesh
- Parts of Himachal Pradesh
- Parts of Jammu & Kashmir
- Whole of Manipur
- Whole of Mizoram
- Whole of Nagaland
- Parts of Rajasthan
- Whole of Sikkim (partly in Protected Area and partly in Restricted Area)
- Parts of Uttarakhand

#### **Details**

- The 29 inhabited islands have been excluded from the Restricted Area Permit (RAP) notified under the Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963, till December 31, 2022, subject to certain conditions
- Citizens of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan and foreign nationals having their origin in these countries would continue to require RAP to visit the Union Territory
- For visiting Mayabunder and Diglipur, citizens of Myanmar will continue to require RAP, which shall be issued only with the prior approval of the ministry.
- Separate approvals of the competent authority would be required for visiting reserved forests, wildlife sanctuaries and tribal reserves

#### **Following instructions must be strictly adhered to:**

- Tourists are permitted to visit ONLY the designated places and for the period for which they are authorized.
- The permit will be valid for the specific tourist circuit/route and specific entry / exit points. No area other than the ones indicated in the permit should be visited.

#### **Strategic Partner Model**

- SP model aims to revitalise defence industrial ecosystem and progressively build indigenous capabilities in the private sector to design, develop and manufacture complex weapon system for future needs of armed forces.
- The proposed strategic partner model is intended to enhance competition, increase efficiencies, facilitate faster and more significant absorption of technology, create a tiered industrial ecosystem, ensure development of a wider skill base, trigger innovation and enable participation in global value chains as well as promote exports.
- Under the model, the government intends to boost private sector participation and create domestic expertise in four key areas, namely
  - Fighter Aircraft,
  - Helicopters,
  - submarines, and armored vehicles
  - Main Battle Tanks.
- One company would be selected for each area based on its competence, which would then tie up with the foreign Original Equipment Manufacturer selected through the procurement process, to build the platform in India with significant technology transfer.

**Concerns expressed by armed forces:**

- The Armed Forces are apprehensive over the overall model as they feel the SP model will block new technology and new players coming to the defense sector.
- On the other hand, existing defense players argue for committed orders for the next 30 years to give them the economies of scale as defense involves large investments.

**Context**

- Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approved the implementation of Strategic Partnership guidelines

**Type 002 aircraft carrier**

- It is a second generation Chinese aircraft carrier design
- The Type 002 will be the first Chinese carrier that features an integrated electric propulsion system.
- This will allow the operation of electromagnetic launch catapults similar to the Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) used by the United States Navy.
- The Type 002, however, compares poorly with much larger U.S. aircraft carriers, which usually have a more than 85,000 tonne displacement

**Context**

- China's 'Type 002' begins sea trials

**Xingkong-2 or Starry Sky-2****Context**

- China has successfully tested its first waverider hypersonic aircraft which could carry nuclear warheads and break through any current generation anti-missile defence system due to its high speed and "unpredictable trajectory".

**Details**

- Wave rider is a flight vehicle that flies in the atmosphere and uses shock-waves generated by its own hypersonic flight with the air to glide at high speed
- Trajectory of a wave rider is relatively unpredictable in the glide and it flies so fast that it poses an extreme challenge to current anti-missile defence systems
- The hypersonic aircraft was designed by the CAAA in collaboration with China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation

## ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

### **Aerodrome in Chilika Lake**

#### **Context**

- The Airports Authority of India has proposed to set up a water aerodrome in Chilika Lake for starting amphibious aircraft operations in Odisha.

#### **Details**

- It has an aim to promote tourism transforming Chilika into a commercial hub
- It is the responsibility of the state government and the Centre to create employment opportunity for the unemployed youth. The tourism sector of the state would flourish with the development of infrastructure.

#### **The project has environmental issues**

- Chilika turns into a temporary habitat for lakhs of migratory and residential birds.
  - If an aircraft flies at low height, there is every chance of the birds getting hit. So, the bird population will be in danger
  - safety of passengers of amphibious aircraft will also be jeopardized
- Noise pollution generated by close to 10,000 boats has already taken a toll on the endangered Irrawaddy dolphins in the lake. The amphibious aircraft operation would add to the woes.
  - As many as 155 endangered Irrawaddy dolphins were spotted in Chilika, which is the single largest habitat of this species in the world. After clearing the lake of illegal man-made enclosures, dolphins have now started moving freely in all sectors.
- Chilika is known for its unique biodiversity. The lake has 375 species of marine fish, 230 species of birds and other exotic marine species. Setting up of a water aerodrome in the lake will have a serious repercussion on its ecosystem as the vibrations of the seaplane during take-off and landing will disturb the birds and marine species.
- The highly productive lake eco-system with its rich fishery resources sustains the livelihood of more than 200,000 fisher-folk who live in and around the lake.
- Green Nobel prize winner environmental activist Prafulla Samantara said his organization Lok Shakti Abhiya will oppose the proposed water aerodrome project in Chilika lake at national and international forums.
- It is a designated Ramsar site – wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
- There is no scientific study that has been conducted to assess the possible impact of the project on the lake's ecology.

### **Aliens or Exotic Plants**

#### **Context**

- Around 471 plant species that are not part of India's natural or endemic plants are thriving in India's forest. These alien or exotic plants not native to India are 'naturalized,' have formed stable populations says study published in Biological Invasions, an international journal dedicated to the patterns and processes by which organisms invade ecosystems they are not usually found in.

#### **Alteration of Ecosystem**

- These naturalized species disturb the existing pattern by colonizing the area they grow in and alter the growth of other plants.

- Lantana, for instance, replaces undergrowth and prevents native undershrub's and plants from surviving.

### **Stats with respect to states**

- At 332, Tamil Nadu has the highest number of naturalized exotics, followed by Kerala (290), while Lakshadweep has the least (17).

## **Arsenic Contamination**

### **Context**

- A study titled 'Arsenic accumulation in paddy plants at different phases of pre-monsoon cultivation' was published

### **Details**

- There is continuous rise in arsenic contamination of paddy plants from ground water in West Bengal and the concentration of 'arsenic accumulation' depends on the variety of paddy and its stage in the crop cycle.
- Arsenic uptake in the paddy plant reduces from root to grain, and that its concentration is related to the variety of the rice cultivated.
- The study was conducted on Minikit and Jaya varieties — and Jaya was found to be more resistant to arsenic
- The highest concentration was observed in the initial or vegetative state in the first 28 days. It reduced during the reproductive stage (29-56 days) and again increased in the ripening stage
- uptake of arsenic is faster in young roots in a vegetative state than in older tissues with a higher concentration of iron in root soil in the reproductive phase

### **Issue Area**

- Concerns are raised over the disposal of the contaminated rice straw which is used as animal fodder or burnt or sometimes left in the field itself to serve as fertilizer.

## **Bengal Florican/ Bengal Bustard**

- IUCN: Critically Endangered
- It is a bustard species native to the Indian subcontinent, Cambodia and Vietnam.
- It inhabits lowland dry, or seasonally inundated, natural and semi-natural grasslands, often interspersed with scattered scrub or patchy open forest.
- The key threats are the extensive loss and modification of grasslands through drainage, conversion to agriculture and plantations, overgrazing, inappropriate cutting, burning and ploughing regimes, heavy flooding, invasion of alien species, scrub expansion, dam construction and inappropriate and illegal development
  - The shift from traditional crops like lentils and legumes to cash crops like soya and cotton led to intensive use of pesticides, killing off insects that dominate the bird's diet.
  - Changing crop patterns and agricultural practices affected the bird too

### **Saving strategies**

- Measures to save the bird have to be flexible, multi-layered and site specific.
- A sensitive and inclusive approach that takes into account the difficulties that local communities face is important.
- Core breeding areas must be inviolate, and protected from over-grazing and other anthropogenic pressure.
- Other potential breeding sites need to be protected and restored.
- Florican habitats must be declared Eco-Sensitive Zones to regulate land use and development.

### **Bhitarkanika National Park**

- It is a national park located in Kendrapara district of Odisha
- The national park is surrounded by the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary. Gahirmatha Beach and Marine Sanctuary lies to the east, and separates swamp region cover with canopy of mangroves from the Bay of Bengal. Thus it become a vicinity of rich biodiversity
- The park is home to Saltwater Crocodile, White Crocodile, Indian python, King Cobra, black ibis, darters and many other species of flora and fauna.
- The national park and wildlife sanctuary is inundated by the rivers Brahmani, Baitarani, Dhamra, Pathsala.
- Kalibhanjdia Island spread over 8.5 square km, a place in Bhitarkanika, has attracted the attention of foreign scientists as it possesses 70% of the total mangrove species of the world.

### **C40**

- It is a network of the world's megacities committed to addressing climate change by assisting with or creating models that other cities and governments can adopt.
- C40 is focused on tackling climate change and driving urban action that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks while increasing the health, well-being and economic opportunities of urban citizens
- It is a platform for big cities to improve, replicate and speed up the process of adopting climate action models and fund equipment backed by an exchange of technical expertise among fellow cities.

### **Context**

- Bengaluru hosts first meeting of C40 Air Quality Network

### **Cheetah Reintroduction Project**

#### **Context**

- The Madhya Pradesh forest department has written to the National Tiger Conservation Authority to revive the plan to reintroduce cheetahs in the State's Nauradehi sanctuary.

### **Asiatic Cheetah**

- IUCN: Critically Endangered
- The country's last spotted feline died in Chhattisgarh in 1947. Later, the cheetah — which is the fastest land animal — was declared extinct in India in 1952.

### **Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary**

- It is the largest wildlife sanctuary of Madhya Pradesh
- It is a potential site for the Cheetah Reintroduction in India.
  - Reintroduction of the cheetah in India involves the artificial re-establishment of a population of cheetahs into areas where they had previously existed but were hunted into extinction by the British colonial officers and Indian royalty.
  - A part of the reintroduction process is the identification and restoration of their former grassland scrub forest habitats
- Nauradehi was found to be the most suitable area for the cheetahs as its forests are not very dense to restrict the fast movement of the spotted cat
- Besides, the prey base for cheetahs is also in abundance at the sanctuary

### **Finance for introduction**

- M.P. forest department would need finances from the Centre for the project. In the past NTCA, a statutory body under the Union Environment Ministry, had committed ₹50 crore to the State for it in 2011.
- The Wildlife Institute of India at Dehradun had prepared a ₹260-crore cheetah re-introduction project

### **Background**

- According to the earlier action plan, around 20 cheetahs were to be translocated to Nauradehi from Namibia in Africa. The Namibia Cheetah Conservation Fund had then showed its willingness to donate the felines to India

### **Commute-related pollution: Kolkata shines among megacities**

#### **Context**

- The report titled 'The Urban Commute and how it contributes to Pollution and Energy', compiled by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), was released

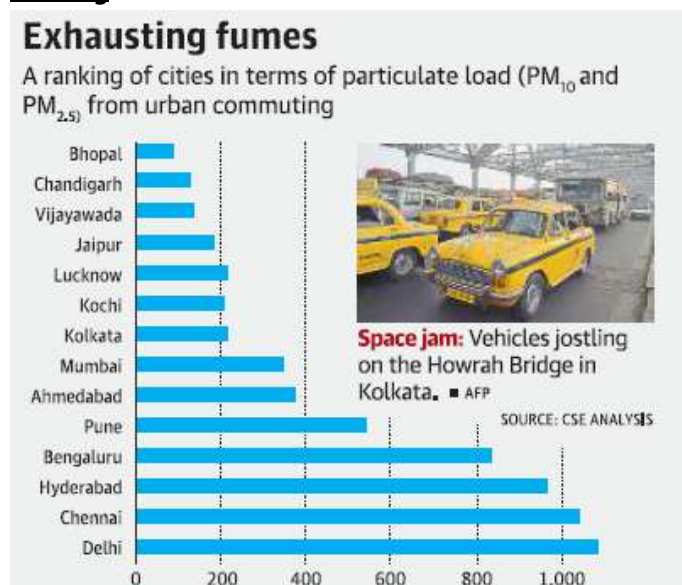
#### **Details**

- An analysis of 14 cities in India, including six mega cities and eight metropolises were conducted
  - Six megacities (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad)
  - Eight metropolitan cities (Bhopal, Lucknow, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, Pune, Kochi and Vijayawada) were evaluated.
- The survey was about how they fare when it comes to pollution and energy consumption from urban commuting

#### **How was the survey conducted?**

- The study took two approaches to rank the cities —
  - One, based on overall emission and energy consumption
  - Two, on per person trip emissions and energy consumption.
- In the study, with an aggregate of toxic emissions from urban commuting practices, such as particulate matter and nitrogen oxides, the cities were ranked based on calculations of heat trapping (CO<sub>2</sub>).

#### **Ranking**





- The report places Kolkata as the top-performing megacity.
- Bhopal leads the list on the lowest overall emissions.
- Delhi and Hyderabad are the two cities that fare at the bottom of the table in terms of pollution and energy use.

### **Significance**

- Kolkata provides a resounding message that despite population growth and rising travel demand, it is possible to contain motorization with a well-established public transport culture, compact city design, high street density and restricted availability of land for roads and parking
- Mumbai, the report stated, had the highest GDP but a lower rate of motorization compared with other megacities, proving that income levels were not the only reason for deciding a population's dependence on automobiles.
- Chennai was the first city to adopt a Non-Motorized Transport (NMT) policy in 2004 that aims to arrest the decline of walking or cycling by creating a network of footpaths, bicycle tracks and greenways
  - NMT includes mainly walking, cycling and cycle rickshaws. All of them are green modes of transport
  - Their carbon footprint is low, energy consumption is minimal and their local emissions are zero.

### **E-bird Project**

- The surveillance programme is called e-bird project.
- A pilot was conducted on International Tiger Day, July 29 2018 where drone cameras were used to monitor rhinos in the rehabilitation area.
- The e-bird project is a joint initiative of the reserve and Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun.
- They will further help in habitat management, countering man-animal conflicts and checking criminal activities.
- The e-bird project will help better monitor the area during the monsoon season, when patrolling is severely restricted.
- The project helps in addressing the major challenge for field staffers over the years. Such as
  - The rough terrain is interspersed by Mohana, Sharda Rivers
  - Numerous small canals and water bodies
  - The presence of carnivorous animals
  - Waterlogged routes
- It is the beginning of significant technological intervention in wildlife conservation.

### **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Process**

#### **Context**

- An approval process for the “World Trade Centre” in Nauroji Nagar in south Delhi has been tweaked and these projects have used the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process to subvert the right of citizens to a better environment.

#### **What is EIA?**

- EIA reports are a critical component of India's environmental decision-making process in that they are supposed to be a detailed study of the potential impacts of proposed projects.
- Based on these reports, the Environment Ministry or other relevant regulatory bodies may or may not grant approval to a project.
- The EIA reports are also important to define measures that the project could take in order to contain or offset project impacts.
- To ensure that they are an accurate account of scientific facts and observations, the law mandates the engagement of an accredited independent EIA consultant to undertake the study.

### **EIA reports lacks research practices and ethics**

- The consultant for the Nauroji Nagar project has used material from copyrighted papers, webpages and other EIA reports
- It even mentions that the water quality study was undertaken in 2015
- Another example is the text under “Hydrogeology of PIA District” of the EIA report. This is a carbon copy of material from a copyrighted book (2015) titled “Management of Water, Energy and Bio-resources in the Era of Climate Change: Emerging Issues and Challenges”.

### **Errors in Project reporting**

- There are many instances of missing or misleading information which understate the potential impact of these projects.
  - The EIA’s ‘Terms of Reference’ (ToR) for Nauroji Nagar, which is essentially a commercial project, fail to mention the word “commercial”. Instead, it states that the project is for the “modernization” of government residential colonies.
- The ToR requires the EIA report to include a detailed traffic impact analysis, but this is missing.
- The report is also oblivious to the many archaeological and cultural heritage sites that will be affected by the construction.
- It does not consider the flora and fauna that are harmed because of this project

### **Institutional Flaws**

- The EIA Notification 2006 says that “deliberate concealment and/or submission of false or misleading information or data...” can lead to a rejection of the application or cancellation of the approval.
  - But it is unlikely that the Ministry will pursue this line against these projects as it would mean stopping the project of the more powerful Ministry of Urban Development.
- Such research practices in EIAs continue unabated because of the Environment Ministry’s failure to come down heavily on this.
  - In the end, it is citizens who have to bear the brunt.
- EIA-based approvals for most projects also involve the process of conducting public hearings in order that the views and opinions of people who are likely to be affected can be taken on board before a decision to approve the project is made.
  - Yet, it is disappointing that the government has generously exempted real estate projects from holding consultations.

### **Conclusion**

- Citizen action and litigation has forced the project proponents and the Ministry of Urban Development to state that they will revise their plans to reduce or prevent tree felling. But this response is neither adequate nor legally acceptable.
- The Delhi High Court that is hearing this matter must ensure that these redevelopment projects reapply for approvals as a single integrated one, and in accordance with the law.

### **Erosion: West Bengal loss of land**

#### **Context**

- A report by the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, released recently said West Bengal recorded the maximum erosion of 63%, followed by Puducherry 57%, Kerala 45%, and Tamil Nadu 41%.

### **Why is the State vulnerable?**

- The coastal stretch of West Bengal, bordering Bangladesh and located on the eastern end of the Indian peninsula, is one of the largest deltaic regions of the world.
- The coastline has numerous rivers and the largest single block of tidal halophytic mangroves
- The 534 sq km coastline of West Bengal, regularly hit by tides, tropical cyclones and storm surges, has suffered 63% erosion.
- Other than the natural process, like storms and sea level rise, anthropogenic issues like aquaculture, port construction and other developmental activities also lead to coastal erosion

### **Facts**

- Between 1990 and 2016, West Bengal lost 99 sq km land due to coastal erosion
- Sagar, the biggest island of the Sunderbans archipelago, which is home to almost 2 lakh people, is facing severe erosion on its western and south eastern parts.
- Islands like Ghoramara and Mousuni are also facing erosion.
- The same trend has been observed at Jambudweep Island and Henry Island in the Sunderbans.

### **What will be the impact?**

West Bengal is a land-starved State with the fourth highest population in the country. It is also the second most densely populated State. According to the 2011 census, 1,029 people live in each square kilometre of West Bengal. The Sunderbans, which comprises most of the coastline in the State, has about 1,000 people living per sq km.

- The loss of more than 80 sq km of coastal land puts further pressure on the population of the island, who are dependent on economic activities centred on the coastline.
- This stress leads to migration from these coastal areas and islands.
- Climate Change Refugees
  - Researchers call the people moving out of the Sunderbans “climate change refugees.”
  - The erosion of coastal areas, coupled with climate change, is a major cause of migration from the Sunderbans, which is one of the most backward regions of the State. Reports say that of the 1,000 inhabitants of the Sunderbans, 190 eat just one meal a day and 510 are malnourished.
  - According to NCCR researchers, the report on the national survey of coastline will provide inputs for framing policies to address the stress of the people residing in coastal areas, especially in the Sunderbans.

### **Is it happening only in Bengal?**

- Coastal erosion has been noticed in nine States and two Union Territories.
- The NCCR report said
  - 34% of India’s coastline underwent varying degrees of erosion
  - 28% of the shoreline showed accretion
  - 38% of the country’s coastline remained stable.
- A State-wise analysis of the coastal erosion suggests that more than 40% erosion was observed in four States and Union Territories.
- The report states that the west coast has relatively been stable with erosion in minor pockets like Kerala. In the west, 48% of the coastline is stable, whereas only 28% of the eastern coast has been deemed stable.
- When it comes to accretion, States such as Odisha (51%) and Andhra Pradesh (42%) recorded the maximum gain owing to coastline changes.
- Goa and Maharashtra have the most stable coastlines in the country.

## **Ganga stretches in Bengal unfit for bathing**

### **Context**

- Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has revealed that water in nearly a dozen major stretches of the Ganga in West Bengal is so polluted that it is even unfit for bathing.
- It has dotted the length of the Ganga with red markers on a map after the National Green Tribunal had asked it to display a prominent map showing where the river water was fit for bathing and drinking.



### **Details**

- The map further reveals that Uttarakhand remains the only exception with 11 stretches of the Ganga being fit for bathing
- The water of the Ganga is also unfit for bathing in States such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar barring one spot at the border of UP and Bihar.

### **Why is there so much pollution in WB?**

- West Bengal is located at the downstream of the Ganga it receives all the pollutants which accumulates in the river from States in the upstream
- The sewage treatment plants in Bengal were not being utilised properly as “no proper mechanism” has been developed to bring sewage to the treatment plants.

### **Sustainability of River Ganga Water**

The CPCB guidelines, upon which the map is based, states that water is fit for bathing when the amount of

- fecal coliform bacteria, found mainly in human faeces, is not more than 2,500 most probable number (MPN) per 100 ml,
  - Coliform levels indicate the presence of dangerous bacteria in the water and if it is below 500 then it could be suitable for drinking by boiling. The coliform level showed in the map is 10 times the permissible limit for drinking
- dissolved oxygen is not more than 5 mg per litre,
- bio chemical oxygen demand is less than 3 mg per litre
- pH level-measurement of how acidic the water is, is between 6.5 to 8.5

### **Greater Adjutant**

- IUCN: Endangered
- It is a member of the stork family

### Habitat

- Once found widely across southern Asia, mainly in India but extending east to Borneo, the greater adjutant is now restricted to a much smaller range with only two breeding populations; one in India, with the largest colony in Assam and the other breeding region in Cambodia.
- Two-thirds of the global population lives in Assam, where they are called hargila — bone swallower.

### Major Threat(s):

- The key threats are direct exploitation, particularly at nesting colonies, habitat destruction, including felling of nest-trees, and drainage, conversion, pollution and over-exploitation of wetlands.
- Additionally, the Indian population is threatened by contaminated open rubbish dumps where pollutants are disposed along with carcasses and foodstuffs and it is also known to accidentally ingest polythene bags if food is wrapped inside

### Idukki Dam



### Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve enters UNESCO list

#### Context

- Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve (KBR) of Sikkim, the highest biosphere reserve in the country includes the third highest mountain peak in the world, Kanchenjunga (8,586 m), has been included in the UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserve (WHBR).

#### World Network of Biosphere Reserve (WHBR)

- It fosters the harmonious integration of people and nature for sustainable development through participatory dialogue; knowledge sharing; poverty reduction and human well-being improvements; respect for cultural values and society's ability to cope with change
- Accordingly, the WNBR is one of the main international tools to develop and implement sustainable development approaches in a wide array of contexts.

#### Geographical Feature

- Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP), comprises the core area of the KBR, was inscribed as India's first "Mixed World Heritage Site" in 2016.
  - It fulfilled the nomination criteria under both natural and cultural heritage.
- Eighty six per cent of the core lies in the Alpine zone and the remaining portions are located in the Himalayan wet temperate and sub-tropical moist deciduous forest.



### **Facts**

- With the inclusion of the KBR, one of the highest ecosystems in the world, reaching elevations of 1,220 m to 8,586 m above sea level, the number of biosphere reserves from the country included in World Network of Biosphere Reserves has increased to 11.
- The previous biosphere reserve to be included was the Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve in Kerala in 2016.
- The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve was the first reserve from the country to be included in the WNBR.
- India has 18 biospheres reserves, of which 11 have been included in the WNBR.

### **Significance**

- It will boost the unique ecosystem of Sikkim on two counts: collaborative research and tourism.
  - It will boost international research collaboration relating to flora, fauna and ecosystem

### **Species Diversity**

- The biosphere reserve has listed 362 species of ferns.
- Blood Pheasants is the State Bird of Sikkim
- Over 118 species of the large number of medicinal plants are found in Dzongu Valley in north Sikkim
- Many species protected under the Wildlife Protection Act have their home in the KBR. This includes the Red Panda, Snow Leopard, Himalayan Black Bear and herbivores species of Musk deer, Great Tibetan Sheep, Blue Sheep, Boral and Barking Deer.

### **Kolleru Bird Sanctuary**

- Kolleru Bird Sanctuary is a sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh, India.
- It covers 673 square kilometers.
- It was established in November 1999, under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.
- The sanctuary protects part of the Kolleru Lake wetland, which gained Ramsar Convention for International importance in 2002.
- The main flora of the sanctuary is Phragmites karka, a weed that grows up to 10 feet in height and that offers shelter for some species of birds.
- The aquatic vegetation includes species such as Nymphaeae nouchali, Nyphoides indicum, Ottelia alismoides, Nechamandra alternifolia, Limnophila indica, Vallisneria spiralis, Blyxa octandra, Ipomaea aquatica, Scirpus articulatus, Paspalidium germinatum, Typha angustata, and Phragmites karka.

### **LaCONES or Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species**

- It is a Council of Scientific and Industrial Research lab located in Hyderabad.
- It has a dedicated facility of CSIR's Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad uses modern biotechnologies for conservation of endangered wildlife.
- Effective conservation measures include both in situ habitat preservation, species protection and ex situ conservation (captive breeding in controlled environment to restock original wild populations).
- It is India's only research facility engaged in conservation and preservation of wildlife and its resources.
- It was established in 1998 with the help of Central Zoo Authority of India, CSIR and the government of Andhra Pradesh.
- It was dedicated to the nation in 2007 by then President of India APJ Abdul Kalam.



### **Significance**

- Despite being one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, nearly 14% of all species in India face serious threat of extinction.
- It is therefore, important to carry out conservation breeding and assisted reproductive strategies for conservation and management of threatened species

### **Mullaperiyar Dam or Mullaiperiyar Dam**



- It is a masonry gravity dam on the Periyar River in Idukki District of Kerala
- The dam situated at the confluence of the Mullayar and Periyar rivers
- The Periyar National Park in Thekkady is located around the dam's reservoir.
- The dam was built in the late 1800s in the princely state of Travancore (present-day Kerala) and given to British-ruled Madras Presidency on a 999-year lease in 1886.
- The dam is located in Kerala on the river Periyar, but is operated and maintained by Tamil Nadu state.
- The agreement was renewed in 1970.
  - Tamil Nadu was given rights to the land and the water from the dam as well as the authority to develop hydro-power projects at the site, and Kerala would receive rent in return.

### **Purpose of the dam**

- The Periyar river which flows westward of Kerala Arabian sea was diverted eastwards to flow towards the Bay of Bengal to provide water to the arid rain shadow region of Madurai in Madras Presidency which was in dire need of a greater supply of water than the small Vaigai River could provide
- For Tamil Nadu, the Mullaperiyar dam and the diverted Periyar waters act as a lifeline for Theni, Madurai, Sivaganga and Ramnad districts, providing water for irrigation and drinking, and also for generation of power in Lower Periyar Power Station.

### **Kerala Government**

- It states that it does not object to giving water to Tamil Nadu, their main cause of objection being the dam's safety as it is more than 100 Years old.
  - Mullaperiyar dam has leaks and cracks in the structure. Increasing the level would add more pressure to be handled by the already leaking dam
- Idukki district, where the dam is located, is earthquake-prone and has experienced multiple low-intensity quakes. So, the dam is situated in a seismically active zone

- A 2009 report by IIT Roorkee stated that the dam "was likely to face damage if an earthquake of the magnitude of 6.5 on the Richter scale struck its vicinity when the water level is at 136 feet"
- It poses danger to life and property to people living downstream
  - Three million people living in the vicinity of the reservoir.

### **Tamilnadu**

- On the orders of the CWC, the Tamil Nadu government lowered the storage level from 152 feet to 142.2 feet then to 136 feet, conducted safety repairs and strengthened the dam
- It becomes difficult to sustain agriculture if water level is not increased
  - One estimate states that "the crop losses to Tamil Nadu, because of the reduction in the height of the dam, between 1980 and 2005 are a whopping ₹ 40,000 crores.
- The dam has been strengthened and there will be no threat to people and the tremors that felt in neighborhood was minor

### **Other Issues between them**

- With Kerala, Tamil Nadu has issues on several river waters, such as Parambikulam-Aliyar, Siruvani of the Bhavani sub-basin, Neyyar, and the proposal for linking the Pamba and Achankovil rivers of Kerala with Vaippar of Tamil Nadu. But, in the case of Karnataka, Cauvery is the only river to be considered.

### **Why controversy?**

- 2006: SC allowed Tamilnadu to raise water height to 142 feet after strengthening the dam. (Total height of the dam is 176 feet) while permissible is 152 feet.
- But Kerala passed a law the Kerala Irrigation and Water Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2006, to prevent the neighboring State (TN) from raising the water level beyond 136 feet.
- Tamilnadu challenged Kerala's dam height law in Supreme Court.

### **May 2014: Supreme Court order**

- Kerala dam Law of 2006 is unconstitutional and void. Because Mullaperiyar is a dispute between two states. In such disputes, one state legislature cannot unilaterally enact law in its own favor.
- Besides, in 2006 SC allowed Tamilnadu to raise water height. By enacting this law, Kerala is interfering with our judicial function.
- Permanent Supervisory Committee
  - The Committee shall inspect the dam periodically, more particularly, immediately before the monsoon and after the monsoon and keep close watch on its safety and recommend measures which are necessary.
  - The Committee shall be free to take appropriate steps and issue necessary directions to the two States Tamil Nadu and Kerala or any of them if so required for the safety of the Mullaperiyar dam in an emergent situation. Such direction shall be obeyed by all concerned.

### **Neonicotinoids**

- Neonicotinoids are a new class of insecticides chemically related to nicotine.
- The name literally means "new nicotine-like insecticides".
- They affect the central nervous system of insects leading to paralysis and death

### **Why are they used?**

- One thing that has made neonicotinoid insecticides popular in pest control is their water solubility, which allows them to be applied to soil and be taken up by plants.

### **Concerns**

- Low level exposures do not normally kill bees directly, they may impact some bees' ability to searching for nectar, learn and remember where flowers are located, and possibly impair their ability to find their way home to the nest or hive.
- It has adverse ecological effects, including honey-bee Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD)
  - CCD disorder affecting honeybee colonies that is characterized by sudden colony death, with a lack of healthy adult bees inside the hive.
  - The disorder appears to affect the adult bees' ability to navigate. They leave the hive to find pollen and never return.
  - In some cases the queen and a small number of survivor bees may remain in the brood nest.
  - Beekeeping is a critical component of modern agriculture. CCD not only threatens the beekeeping operations that provide pollination service and honey production but also has the potential for crippling the production of the many crops that are dependent on honeybees for pollination.
  - Causes can be habitat loss, Malnutrition, Global Warming but one of the major cause is also the insecticide.
- They disrupt the ability of bees to reproduce and lower their resistance to disease.
- It could lead to loss of birds due to a reduction in insect populations

### **Control Measures**

- Certain pesticides are harmful to bees. That's why we require instructions for protecting bees on the labels of pesticides that are known to be particularly harmful to bees. This is one of many reasons why everyone must read and follow pesticide label instructions.

### **Nilgiri Tahr**

- IUCN: Endangered
- The Nilgiri tahr, known locally as the Nilgiri ibex or simply ibex, that is endemic to the Nilgiri Hills and the southern portion of the Western Ghats in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in Southern India.
- It is the state animal of Tamil Nadu and largest of three tahr species
- The Nilgiri tahr is fully protected (Schedule I) by the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972

### **Threats**

- Researchers point to the continuing spread of invasive species of flora, such as wattle and pine, and exotic weeds like scotch broom (*Cystisus scoparius*) and gorse, which end up diminishing grazing land.
- Incidents of forest fire destroying fodder
- Unsustainable non-timber forest produce collection
- Poaching and unabated human intervention in the habitat in the name of pilgrimage to sacred places
- Spread of diseases through unregulated cattle grazing in areas close to the habitat

### **Mukurthi National Park**

- It is protected area located in the western corner of the Nilgiris Plateau west of Ootacamund hill station in the northwest corner of Tamil Nadu
- The park was created to protect its keystone species, the Nilgiri tahr

## **PARIVESH**

- Pro-Active and Responsive facilitation by Interactive, Virtuous and Environmental Single-window Hub
- It is an environmental single window hub for Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ clearances
- It has been developed in pursuance of the spirit of 'Digital India' initiated by the Prime Minister and capturing the essence of Minimum Government and Maximum Governance.
- It has been rolled out for online submission, monitoring and management of proposals submitted by Project Proponents to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC), as well as to the State Level Environmental Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAA), to seek various types of clearances (e.g. Environment, Forest, Wildlife and Coastal Regulation Zone Clearances) from Central, State and district-level authorities.

### **Significance**

- It enhances Ease of Doing Responsible Business
- It offers a framework to generate economic growth and strengthens Sustainable Development through EGovernance
- With automatic highlighting of non-compliance by the system, PARIVESH helps in improving the overall performance and efficiency of the whole appraisal process.
- PARIVESH also helps the processing authorities, as it has a Single Window System for Central, State and District level clearances, auto-generation of agenda (based on first come, first served principle), minutes of the meetings and online generation of approval letters
- PARIVESH enables project proponents, citizens to view, track and interact with scrutiny officers, generates online clearance letters, online mailers and alerts to state functionaries in case of delays beyond stipulated time for processing of applications

## **Portuguese man-of-war**

### **Context**

- Lifeguards have spotted a cluster of Portuguese man-of-war, a jelly-like marine organism in Goa Beaches

### **Details**

- The marine organism is commonly known as 'bluebottle' or 'floating terror'.
- IUCN: Least Concern

### **Issue Area**

- Most jellyfish stings are harmless to humans and cause only a mild irritation, species like the bluebottle are venomous and can cause harm on contact.
- Even a dead bluebottle washed up on shore can deliver a sting

### **First aid**

- First aid that can be delivered includes washing the stung area with hot water, as heat breaks down the toxins.
- Vinegar is also known to diffuse the poison present in the tentacles.
- Ice packs can reduce swelling but a visit to the doctor is recommended

## **Sangai/Antlered Deer**

- IUCN: Endangered
- The sangai is an endemic, rare and endangered subspecies of brow-antlered deer found only in Manipur

- It is also the state animal of Manipur. Its habitat is located in the southern parts of the Loktak Lake, which is the largest freshwater lake in eastern India.
- It is also one of the seven Ramsar sites of international importance.
- The habitat of the sangai is now protected as the Keibul Lamjao (Kei- Tiger, Bul - vast, Lamjao-Land) National Park. Keibul Lamjao is the only floating national park in India.
  - Phumdi is the floating mass of entangled vegetation formed by the accumulation of organic debris and biomass with soil.
- The sangai was believed to be almost extinct by 1951. Habitat destruction and poaching are two major threats to sangai.

### **Why it is called “dancing deer”?**

- While walking on the floating biomass, Sangai often balances itself which looks as if it is dancing on the green grassland and therefore popularly called as “dancing deer” of Manipur.

### **Second home?**

- In a bid to save and help them multiply, there is a demand for a second home for the deer.
- Government plans to keep the deer at the Phumlenpat Lake but there are concerns that are raised.
  - The Phumlenpat in Thoubal district is quite different from the Loktak Lake in Bishnupur district. There is no plant or grass or floating bio mass in the Phumlenpat Lake which means the deer will starve to death.
  - The villagers in Thoubal district have been launching sit-in protests and taking out torch light processions almost every night, saying that they should not be deprived of their livelihood by opening a second home for this deer at Phumlenpat Lake in the district.
    - Women of villages surrounding the Phumlenpat say that for generations they have been depending on fish, other water living beings and edible water plants in this lake.
    - The villagers who will be denied entry in the lake will starve.

### **Sanjay Dubri National Park**

- It is in Madhya Pradesh.
- This is basically a moist deciduous forest consisting mainly of sal (*Shorea robusta*).
- Guru Ghasidas National Park, which falls in Chhattisgarh State area, shares its forest with Sanjay National Park on its northern boundary with Madhya Pradesh. Before the bifurcation of Madhya Pradesh the entire area of Guru Ghasidas National Park were unite with Sanjay National park.

### **Tiger Conservation**

#### **Context**

- Global Tiger Day is celebrated on July 29

#### **Facts**

- IUCN: Endangered
- India is home to 70% of the tiger population
- India Leads the chart followed by Russia and Indonesia
- Karnataka leads the list of states when it comes to highest tiger population in India.
- Indian Tiger is an endangered animal and is listed in the Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

#### **Concerns**

- The Ministry of Environment recently said that 45% of the tiger deaths between 2012 and 2017 could be attributed to unnatural reasons.

- 22% of the deaths were due to poaching,
- 15% due to seizures of body parts
- The remaining could be attributed to road and railway accidents.
- several road, irrigation and railway projects will pass through potential tiger corridors
- 29% frontline staff vacancy against sanctioned posts in the tiger reserves of the country

### **World Elephant Day**

- World Elephant Day is an international annual event on August 12
- The objective behind celebrating the World Elephant Day every year is to focus attention of various stakeholders to support various conservation policies to help elephants, including improving enforcement policies to prevent the illegal poaching and trade of ivory, conserving elephant habitats, providing better treatment for captive elephants and reintroducing some captive elephants into sanctuaries.

### **Facts**

- Current population estimates for Asian elephants in the country, as per 2017 Census, are about 30,000.
- Asian elephants are confined to South Asia and South East Asia and about 60 per cent of global population of Asian elephants is found in India.

### **Project Elephant**

It was started in 1992, with the objectives of

- conservation and protection of viable population of wild elephants in their natural habitats in the country;
- restoration of natural habitats and traditional corridors/migratory routes or movement paths used by the elephants, wherever necessary, through eco-restoration, acquisition etc;
- ensuring safeguards against poaching and other threats;
- mitigation and control of human elephant conflicts;
- welfare and management of captive elephants; and
- Creating a viable mechanism to ensure inter-state and regional and national level coordination in protecting and conserving the elephant and its ranges.

### **Elephant Corridors: Clearing the path**

#### **Context:**

The Supreme Court had ordered to seal and close 27 resorts operating in corridors used by elephants in the Nilgiris.

#### **Details:**

- The Tamil Nadu government was ordered to seal or close down such resorts which were constructed on the elephant corridor in violation of law, within 48 hours.
- The court had stressed on the need to have elephant corridors across the country to reduce animal fatalities due to accidents and other reasons

### **Why should the elephant corridors be protected?**

- It is a necessary step to restore the ecology of these spaces.
- Weak regulation of ecotourism is severely impacting important habitats, and affecting animals that have large home ranges, like elephants.
- Fragmentation of forests makes it all the more important to preserve migratory corridors.
- Forests that have turned into farms and unbridled tourism are blocking their paths, resulting in growing incidents of elephant-human conflict. These encounters claim the lives of about 450 people and lead to the death of nearly 100 elephants in retaliatory actions every year on average.



- A review of elephant corridors published by the Wildlife Trust of India jointly with the Environment Ministry's Project Elephant last year indicates that there are 101 such identified pathways, of which almost 70% are used regularly. Nearly three-quarters of the corridors are evenly divided among southern, central and northeastern forests, while the rest are found in northwest Bengal and the northwestern region. Some of these passages are precariously narrow, at only a hundred metres wide.
- These landscape characteristics, and the evidence that there are an estimated 6,500 elephants in just the Brahmagiri-Nilgiris-Eastern Ghats ranges, call for complete protection of the routes they regularly use.

#### **Importance of Elephant corridors:**

- The movement of elephants is essential to ensure that their populations are genetically viable.
- It helps regenerate forests on which other species, including tigers.
- Ending human interference in the pathways of elephants is conservation imperative, more so because the animals are then not forced to seek alternative routes that bring them into conflict with people.

#### **Way forward:**

- The District Collector's report on 39 resorts in the Nilgiris points to their having come up right under the gaze of the Forest Department, the majority without the requisite permissions. This must be thoroughly investigated to check whether there was any wrongdoing.
- The grey area of mushrooming home- stay structures, which are just hotels on forest fringes, also deserves scrutiny.
- But more importantly, the effort should be to expand elephant corridors, using the successful models within the country, including acquisition of lands using private funds and their transfer to the government. More needs to be done to protect elephant corridors across the country
- Among the major factors affecting conservation, two need quick remedies: about 40% of elephant reserves are vulnerable, as they are not within protected parks and sanctuaries; and the corridors have no specific legal protection. Illegal structures in these pathways should be removed without delay.

### **Water Scarcity**

#### **Context**

- India is in the midst of a suicidal water crisis as urban and rural landscapes go thirsty.
- Forests, rivers, mountains, aquifers and soil are being lost at an alarming rate the natural vegetation is disturbed but we are still involved in thoughtlessly building artificial infrastructure. So the need of the hour is Scaled-up solutions for the future.

#### **Problems**

- First, cities today are vast agglomerations that continue to spread, with bursting populations of tens of millions.
  - High densities of our cities do not allow for water harvesting to fill the gap.
  - Until now, invasive schemes like dams to service these large cities and the huge needs of agriculture have caused extreme ecological devastation.
- Second, in our global market economies, the products and services that are derived from natural infrastructure have often led to the terminal loss of the source itself.
  - These resources (forests, mountains, floodplains and rivers) are often lost to the greed of governments, institutions, corporations and individuals. This is long-term loss for short-term gain.
  - Natural resources are living evolutionary resources that are constantly renewed by natural cycles.
    - They provide us perennial value as long as we use them with natural wisdom and not kill them with exploitation

#### **How to address the issue**

- Floodplains of rivers are exceptional aquifers where any withdrawal is compensated by gravity flow from a large surrounding area and can be used as a source of providing water to cities

- Floodplains are formed over millions of years by the flooding of rivers with deposition of sand on riverbanks.
- Some floodplains, such as those of Himalayan Rivers, contain up to 20 times more water than the virgin flow in rivers in a year.
- Since recharge is by rainfall and during late floods, the water quality is good.
- If we conserve and use the floodplain, it can be a self-sustaining aquifer wherein every year, the river and floodplain are preserved in the same healthy condition as the year before.
- The Delhi Palla floodplain project on the Yamuna is an example of this. By utilising 20 sq.km of the river length and running at half its capacity, it provides water to almost a million people daily.
  - Piezometers and a control system have been installed to monitor water levels and other parameters through the year, to ensure sustainable withdrawal.
  - Besides, it provides huge revenue to the Delhi Jal Board.
- Land on the floodplains can be leased from farmers in return for a fixed income from the water sold to cities.
- The farmers can be encouraged to grow orchards/food forests to secure and restore the ecological balance of the river ecosystem.

### **Natural mineral water**

- Forested hills are a result of evolution over millions of years. They are not polluted and sit on a treasure of underground aquifers that contain natural mineral water comparable to that found in a mountain spring.
- This is because the rain falls on the forest and seeps through the various layers of humus and cracked rock pathways, picking up nutrients and minerals and flows into underground mineral water aquifers.
- So, if a scheme of 'conserve and use' is applied correctly, this water can substantially improve the health of citizens and preserve forests at the same time.
- The marvel is that we can provide quality natural mineral water for all from a local forest tract for 20 times less than the market price and yet reap great economic returns

### **Conclusion**

- Working on bottom-up schemes to revive and rejuvenate lakes, wetlands, streams and other small water bodies.
- Unlike large-scale dams, these projects work with nature rather than against it. They can be used around the globe.

### **'Indians will live longer if pollution is under check'**

#### **Context**

- Researchers from the University of Chicago and Harvard Kennedy School have laid out five key evidence-based policy recommendations in a new report, titled 'A Roadmap towards Cleaning India's Air'.

#### **The group's recommendations include**

- improving emissions monitoring by better aligning incentives of auditors,
- providing regulators with real-time data on polluters' emissions,
- applying monetary charges for excess emissions,
- providing the public with information about polluters,
- Using markets to reduce abatement costs and pollution.

### **What else does the report say?**

- If India were to achieve its own air quality standards, life expectancy would increase by more than one year on an average
- This number would increase to four years if India were to meet the World Health Organization's (WHO) norms.
  - According to WHO, reducing annual average particulate matter (PM10) levels from 70 to 20 micrograms per cubic metre ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) can cut air pollution-related deaths by around 15 per cent.

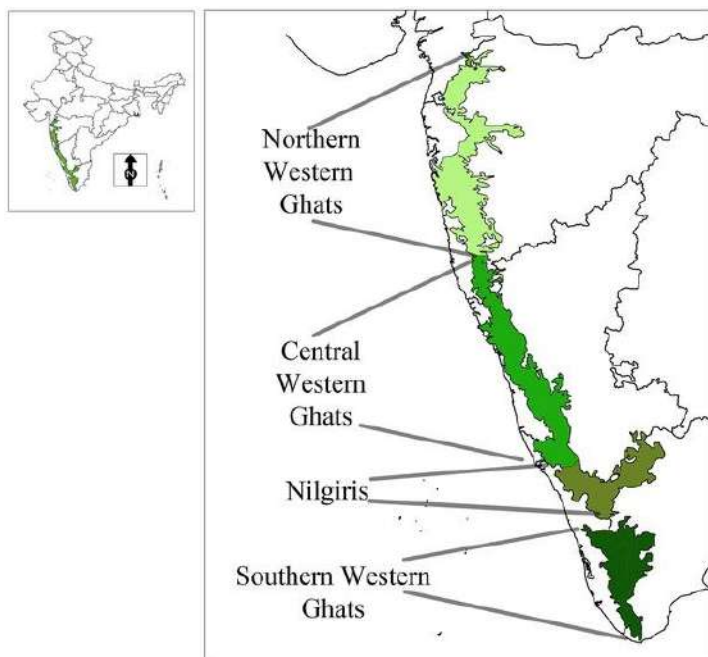
### **Air Quality Life Index (AQLI)**

- It is a tool developed by the Energy Policy Institute at The University of Chicago (EPIC).
- It is a metric that provides a means to predict the overall reduction in life expectancy caused by living in places with high levels of air pollution.
- The AQLI provides county-level (or equivalent) estimates of life years lost per person from ambient PM2.5 concentrations above World Health Organization (WHO) or nationally administered standards. The calculation of life years lost per person in each county is based on an aggregation of grid-level (1km x 1km) estimates of PM2.5

### **Trouble in the hills**

#### **Context:**

The catastrophic monsoon floods in Kerala and parts of Karnataka have revived the debate on whether political profitability outshined science.



- Western Ghats is spread over 6 states (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, and Gujarat) and houses about 139 species of mammal, 508 species of birds and 179 species of amphibians.
- UNESCO has globally acknowledged the Western Ghats as one among the 8 biodiversity hotspots in the World.
- Many Rivers including Godavari, Kaveri and Krishna originate in the Western Ghats.

### **Details:**

- In the year 2010, Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) was constituted by the Central Government, under the chairmanship of Madhav Gadgil.
- WGEEP issued recommendations for the preservation of the fragile western peninsular region.

### **Highlights of Gadgil Report**

- Recommended that the entire stretch of the Western Ghats should be declared as Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA).
- It recommended the division of region into three zones – ESZ1, ESZ2, ESZ3 and gave a broad outline of certain restrictions for each zone.
- The committee recommended the division of region into zones at the block/taluk level.
- It recommended that no new polluting industries (red and orange) were to be permitted in ESZ1 and ESZ2 and gradual phasing out of such existing industries by 2016. Complete ban on mining in ESZ1 and regulation of mining in ESZ-2.
- It was recommended that bottom to top approach be followed for conservation of Western Ghats.
- Western Ghats Ecological Authority was proposed to be set up as a statutory body and given powers under the Environment protection Act 1986.
- There were many criticisms of the Gadgil Committee Report. Some among them were that
  - The report was not prepared keeping in mind the ground realities. If the report is implemented, the development and the energy requirements in the states coming within the boundary of Western Ghats would be adversely affected.
  - There is no need to set up a new body while there are many such bodies for the protection of environment.
- Madhav Gadgil has said the recent havoc in Kerala is a consequence of short-sighted policymaking, and warned that Goa may also be in the line of nature's fury.

Following severe resistance to the implementation of Gadgil Committee report, Kasturirangan Panel was set up in 2012 to advise the government on Gadgil Committee Report.

### **Highlights of Kasturirangan Report:**

- Divide the western Ghats into Natural Landscape and Cultural Landscape
- Of the natural landscape, it picked out 37% as "biologically rich" and with "some measure of contiguity". Any restrictions were placed in this area.
- It proposed the demarcation of ESZ be done at the village level.
- Only red category (heavy polluting) industries were restricted.
- Hydro power project would be given the green signal on a case to case basis, post assessment of its benefits and the possible damage it could cause.

Gadgil report laid too much importance to the environment, Kasturirangan report was biased towards development. Kasturirangan report was criticized by many as that it provided loopholes for mining, which if allowed would turn detrimental to the environment, in long-term will affect development too. Kasturirangan report got the tag as anti-environmental soon after its release. But this report was tagged anti-development too by many who fear that their livelihood and interests will be affected.

### **Way forward:**

- The evergreen topic of debate is between environment and development persists.
- The State governments that is mainly responsible for the Western Ghats must go back to the drawing table with the reports of both the Gadgil Committee and the Kasturirangan Committee.
- The task before them is to initiate correctives to environmental policy decisions.
- Given the need to balance human development pressures with stronger protection of the Western Ghats ecology, this is not going to be easy.
- The issue of allowing extractive industries such as quarrying and mining to operate is arguably the most contentious.
- A way out could be to create the regulatory framework that was proposed by the Gadgil panel, in the form of an apex Western Ghats Ecology Authority and the State-level units, under the Environment

(Protection) Act, and to adopt the zoning system that it proposed. This can keep incompatible activities out of the Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZs).

- Other low-impact forms of green energy led by solar power are available. A moratorium on quarrying and mining in the identified sensitive zones, in Kerala and also other States, is necessary to assess their environmental impact.
- The goal has to be sustainable development for the Ghats as a whole. The role of big hydroelectric dams, built during an era of rising power demand and deficits, must now be considered afresh and proposals for new ones dropped.
- Public consultation on the expert reports that includes people's representatives will find greater resonance now, and help chart a sustainable path ahead

# HEALTH ISSUES

## **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**

### **Context**

- A research published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) revealed frequent digital media use appeared to increase the risk of having symptoms of ADHD by about 10%.

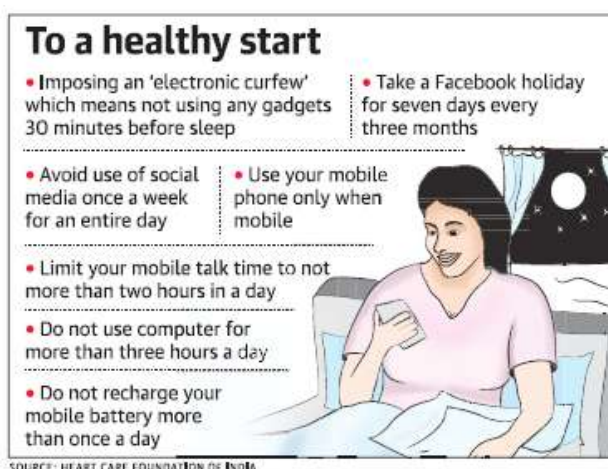
### **Likely Problems**

- ADHD can have many negative effects on teenagers including poor school performance.
- The risk was higher among boys than girls, and among teens suffering from depression or have a previous history of getting into trouble
- It can also increase their likelihood of getting involved in risky activities like substance abuse and legal problems.
- It can cause insomnia, fragmented sleep, etc.
- Smartphone is a cause for parent-child conflict in 30% of the cases.
- It is found to decrease the brain's grey matter density, which is responsible for cognition and emotional control.

### **Common symptoms**

- Blackberry Thumb, cellphone elbow,
- Nomophobia (Nomophobia is the irrational fear of being without your mobile phone or being unable to use your phone for some reason, such as the absence of a signal or running out of minutes or battery power)
- Ringxiety (Phantom vibration syndrome or phantom ringing syndrome is the perception that one's mobile phone is vibrating or ringing when it is not ringing.)
- inattentiveness (being easily distracted, having difficulty getting organised or remembering to do things),
- hyperactivity (having difficulty sitting still),
- Impulsivity (making decisions without thinking through the possible consequences).

### **Control Measures**



### **Conclusion**

- In this digital era, the key to good health should be moderation i.e. moderate use of technology.



- People have become slaves to devices that were really meant to free us and give us more time to experience life and spend time with people.

## Breast Feeding Report

### Context

- A new report was released by UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) during the World Breastfeeding Week (August 1 to 7)

### Details

- World Breastfeeding Week is celebrated every year to encourage breastfeeding and improve the health of babies around the world.
- It commemorates the Innocent Declaration signed in August 1990 by government policymakers, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and other organizations to protect, promote and support breastfeeding.



### Facts

- Breastfeeding for the first two years would save the lives of more than 8, 20,000 children annually.
- It is estimated that only one out three children are breastfed exclusively within six months, which results in a higher risk of death due to various illnesses (diarrhoea and respiratory infection).

### Colostrum

- It is the first form of milk produced immediately following delivery of the newborn, it's low in sugar but high in protein
- Mothers should start breastfeeding in the first hour after birth
- Colostrum is said to be high in antibodies, reduces the risk of death from hypothermia, helps in epithelial recovery and protects children from infectious diseases.
- Early initiation also has numerous immunological and nutritional benefits that have been found to reduce mortality in babies under the age of 1.

### Advantages of breastfeeding

- It can even help reduce the risk of serious jaundice.
- Infants who are breastfed have a reduced risk of diarrhoea, pneumonia and other infectious diseases in comparison to infants who drink breast milk substitutes.
- Human milk is a rich source of immune and non-immune components which resist infection and also accelerate intestinal maturation in a child.

### **Health issues of not breastfeeding**

- The first 24 hours of an infant's life is considered to be a crucial period.
- If the child is not breastfed, it is more likely to suffer from various diseases such as asthma, diabetes, childhood leukaemia, obesity and allergies.

### **Other recommendations by WHO**

- Breastfeeding should be started within one hour after birth until a baby is six months old.
- Nutritious complementary foods should then be added while continuing to breastfeed for up to two years or beyond.

### **Improving India's breastfeeding rates**

- It requires a multi-pronged approach with its focus on educating women and health providers.
- The challenges of limited public knowledge, social norms that trend toward formula feeding, lack of access to lactation services and education have to be addressed through consistent awareness initiatives at every level. Even partial breastfeeding has a modest protective effect when compared to no breastfeeding.
- Every mother-to-be should undergo proper training on breastfeeding.
  - In this, doctors and medical professionals play an important role
  - This which will ensure that new mothers are better prepared and are able to adequately feed their child without any delay.
- Only mothers suffering from severe illnesses or other issues affecting early lactation should go in for bottle feeding or milk substitutes.
- The better the breastfeeding practice, the higher the protection

### **Factors that may delay early breastfeeding**

- Caesarean delivery,
- use of anaesthesia,
- fatigue and the use of pre-lacteal feeding with formula milk

### **Government initiatives**

- The government is making efforts to promote and organize programmes focused on maternal and infant health — especially on the need to encourage early breastfeeding and its various benefits.
- These programmes aim is to educate health-care providers and young parents on the importance of human breast milk for the survival of the child.
- The Health Ministry is also planning to increase the network of human milk banks across the country.

### **Conclusion**

- Since large sections of the society are still lacking in awareness and are unable to access these services it becomes imperative for Govt and civil society to come together to bring about a change in the system.

### **E-cigarettes**

- Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), the most common prototype of which are e-cigarettes

### **Principle**

- Heating of a nicotine-rich liquid to produce vapors, which when inhaled give feeling of smoking an actual cigarette

### **Legal standing**

- E-cigarettes contain nicotine and not tobacco, not covered under Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) 2003, which mandates stringent health warnings on the packaging and advertisements of tobacco products.
- Pictorial health warnings and advertisements were highly effective in increasing awareness of the health risks of tobacco (smoking as well as non-smoking) (Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2009-2010)
- Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka and Punjab have implemented the ban on e-cigarettes

### **Concerns**

- Cases of explosion
- Highly addictive.
- Perpetuate the habit of smoking instead of curbing it.
- Accidental consumption of the liquid can lead to death
- Unregulated e-cigarettes are dangerous as the number of smokers is on the decline in India (WHO Global Report, 2015)
- Lack of a uniform approach in dealing with this public health problem

### **Better than Cigarette**

- The evidence so far indicates that e-cigarettes are safer than combustible cigarettes. Because they heat a liquid to generate a nicotine-containing aerosol, instead of burning tobacco, they do not produce toxic tars.
- At high temperatures, e-cigarettes produce carcinogens such as formaldehyde, although these are fewer in number compared to regular cigarettes.
- They also increase the odds of lung disease and myocardial infarction, but to a lesser extent than normal cigarettes do.
- Given that combustible cigarettes are more noxious than electronic ones, switching from the former to the latter can only help addicts

### **Control Measures**

- Displaying appropriate health warnings,
- regulation of advertisements and marketing strategies,
- legal amendments to bring the products under the purview of the related legislations
- Prevent future abuse and manipulation of the product.
- Commission independent scientific research on the benefits and risks posed by these products in the Indian context.

### **Way forward**

- Completely banning the technology, while selling normal cigarettes, could take away a promising smoking-interruption aid.
- A more pragmatic option would be to regulate e-cigarettes tightly, by creating standards for the aerosols and banning underage and public use. This would leave smokers with a therapeutic alternative, while protecting youngsters from a gateway drug.

### **The END of new-age smoking?**

#### **Context**

- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has issued a directive to stop the manufacture, sale, distribution, import, trade and advertisement of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) such as e-cigarettes, vaping devices, e-sheesha, e-nicotine-flavoured hookah and heat-not-burn devices, citing the risk posed to children, adolescents and women in the reproductive age.

### **Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)**

It is a medically-approved way to take nicotine by means other than tobacco. It is used to help with quitting smoking or stopping chewing tobacco. It increases the chance of quitting smoking by about 50% to 70%. Often it is used along with other behavioral techniques.

- ENDS are often misunderstood as Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) for those who aspire to quit tobacco use
- But Nicotine gums and patches formulated under a valid drug manufacturing licence (with 2 mg and 4 mg of nicotine content) are the only approved forms of NRT currently.

### **A misconception**

- In most ENDS, instead of tobacco, nicotine is used in a chemical form. Thus, users of these devices believe that they are not smoking tobacco, but in reality, they continue to have the addictive chemical.
- People believe that the cancer-causing element is absent in the devices and are simply getting the pleasure of smoking. But several studies have found that use of ENDS leads to initiation of smoking
- The available scientific evidence indicated that ENDS and similar technologies encouraged tobacco use, were hazardous for active as well as passive users, and had an adverse impact on public health.

### **Cost Analysis**

- A cigarette contains four to six milligrams of nicotine whereas most cartridges used in ENDS contain an equivalent of 10 mg of nicotine, but in liquid form.
- While the cost of a cigarette starts from ₹7, a cartridge costs at least ₹200.
- Now as the cost of ENDS is more when it begins to pinch the pocket, most ENDS users go back to cigarettes.

### **Brands Available**

- Most ENDS available in India are of Chinese make and non-branded
- Well-known companies like ITC and Philip Morris International (PMI) have ENDS in the form of an e-cigarette called EON and a heat-not-burn device called IQOS, respectively.
- PMI calls IQOS its breakthrough — it “heats the tobacco just enough to release a flavourful nicotine-containing vapour but without burning the tobacco”

But a launch in India is now unlikely

### **Health Concerns**

- The Health Ministry’s notification highlights that nicotine can have adverse effects on the development of the foetus, may contribute to cardiovascular diseases and could function as a “tumour promoter”.
- Foetal and adolescent nicotine exposure may have long-term consequences for brain development, potentially leading to learning and anxiety disorders

## **HIV hotspots emerges in three northeastern States**

### **Context**

- According to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura have emerged as the new hotspots for HIV.

### **Details**

- The rise in the incidence of HIV is due the high-risk behaviour of Injecting Drug Users (IDUs), and unsafe sexual practices.
- But there has been a steady decline in the number of HIV cases in India.

- The HIV Sentinel Surveillance (HSS), a biennial study conducted by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), is one of the largest regular studies in the world dealing with HIV in high risk groups of the population.

### **Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART)**

- ART leads to effectively suppressing the virus and reducing the transmission of HIV from the infected person
- In terms of Persons Living with HIV (PLHIV) 12.28 lakh people are covered under ART.
- The target is to bring 90% of the 21 lakh people living with the HIV infection in India under ART.
- In terms of PLHIV who are on ART, Maharashtra has the highest number (with 2.03 lakh persons) followed by A.P.(1.78 lakh ) and Karnataka (1.58 lakh persons).

### **Ischemic stroke**

- It is a condition caused by a dysfunction in the supply of blood to the brain due to emboli, thrombus or atherosclerosis occurring in cerebral arteries.

### **Stats**

- According to the American Stroke Association (ASA), brain strokes are the second leading cause of death in the world with a staggering 15 million people effected causing 11 million people either die or become permanently disabled.
- Surprisingly, the prevalence of stroke is much higher in India than the West and about 87% of all strokes are ischemic strokes.

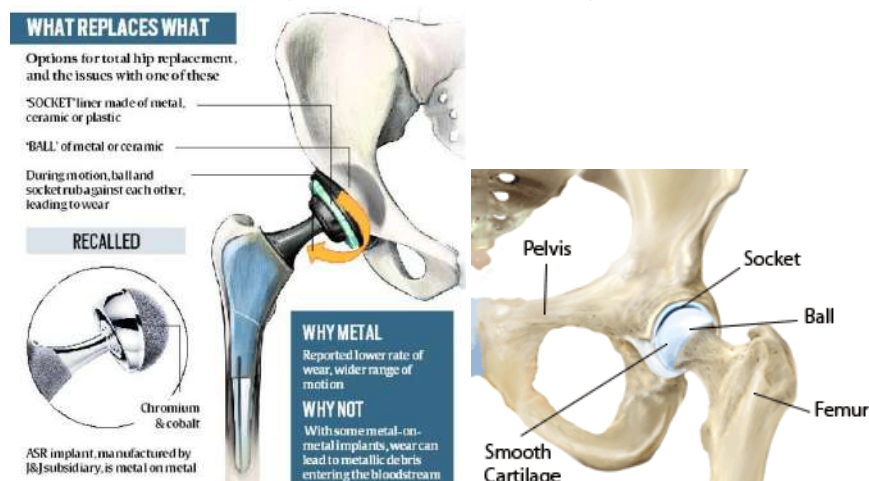
### **Context**

- CSIR's new patented Clot buster PEGylated Streptokinase the novel recombinant protein is set to assist in the treatment of Strokes.

### **Johnson and Johnson faulty hip implants**

#### **How is hip replacement done?**

- The hip joint consists of a ball and a socket, which are covered with cartilage and surrounded by a lubricating membrane to protect against wear.
- In total hip replacement, all components are replaced with prosthetic components (It is an artificial device that replaces a missing body part.).
- While a metal stem is placed into the hollow centre of the thighbone (femur), the prosthetic ball, socket and cartilage can be made of strong plastic, metal or ceramics. The commonest hip implants are metal on polythene, and ceramic on polythene.



### **What kind are the implants at the center of the current controversy?**

- These are metal on metal, with cobalt, chromium and molybdenum as major constituents.
- Called ASR (Articular Surface Replacement) XL Acetabular System and ASR Hip Resurfacing System, these were being manufactured and sold for several years by Deputy International Limited (DePuy), UK, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson.

### **What problems arose with these?**

- When the prosthetic ball and socket rub against each other, it causes wear.
- If the implant is metal on metal, this can sometimes releases metallic debris into the bloodstream.
- This can lead to complications, sometimes requiring revision surgery.
- Of the 93,000 patients implanted with ASR worldwide, many experienced serious adverse reactions, some requiring revision surgery to replace the ASR implant with another kind. Because of this, the company recalled the product on August 24, 2010.

### **To what extent has it happened in India?**

In India, the company got the licence to import the device in 2006.

- By the time it was recalled worldwide, an estimated 4,700 ASR implants had been done in the country.
- Amid concerns worldwide, the Health Ministry set up an expert committee in 2017 to examine issues arising out of faulty ASR implants in India.
- Headed by Dr Arun Kumar Agarwal, former Dean and Professor of ENT at Maulana Azad Medical College, the committee reviewed action taken by the company to replace faulty ASR implants, and reviewed compensation provided to those who had suffered.

### **What did the committee find?**

- The committee concluded that not only did patients undergo revision after first surgery, but “in some cases, more than one revision surgeries have been performed”.
- Some of the patients had reported that they had to undergo excoriating pain during all these and more particularly after the implant
- Many patients reported general fatigue or local issues such pseudo tumour, pain walking, metalloids (increase in Cobalt and Chromium levels, Asthenozoospermia (reduced sperm motility), cyst in kidney, claudication pain
- Some of them informed that they are still having difficulty in carrying out their routine activities and are confined to bed which has led them to mental turmoil and agony.

### **Concerns Raised**

- Central Drugs Standard Control Organization also failed in its job of protecting Indian patients
  - Though the global recall occurred in 2010, the drug regulator did not issue an alert until 2013.
- The company claims it had trouble tracking patients in India; of 4,700 implants done, only 1,032 recipients had been contacted till March 2017. J&J paid \$2.47 billion in claims to about 8,000 patients in the U.S., but no Indian patient received compensation
- Materiovigilance Programme of India (MvPI)
  - It is an initiative to ensure the safety of medical devices
  - India established it in 2015.
  - Had India had the scheme earlier this trouble could have been avoided.

### **The committee has recommended that:**

- The company should be made liable to pay at least Rs 20 lakh to each patient with such complications, and the reimbursement programme be extended until August 2025.



- A central expert committee and a regional expert committee should be constituted by the Ministry for evaluation of patients' claims in "respect of disability and suffering caused due to use of faulty ASR". The regional committee will determine whether there is permanent disability, and whether such disability has affected or will affect the patient's earning capacity, and then submit its report to the central expert committee.
- According to the committee that examined ASR implants, the base amount should be Rs 20 lakh, and in addition to this, the patient should be given compensation on the basis of suffering on "account of monetary loss due to wages and other loss" and percentage of disability.

#### **How have other countries addressed issues relating to ASR?**

- Australia, which had approved the product in 2004, was the first to take regulatory action against it.
  - In 2009, ASR was removed from the Australian market,
  - By 2016, ASR had the highest revision rate for any hip implant used in Australia.
- In the US, the National Institutes of Health in 2014 found that the ASR Hip Resurfacing System had the highest all-cause revision rate (24.2 % at 7 years) among resurfacing brands.
  - It recommended continued clinical surveillance and laboratory monitoring of patients.

### **National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme**

#### **Context**

- Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare launched the National Viral Hepatitis Control Program to mark the World Hepatitis Day 2018, which is observed on July 28 every year, that aims to raise global awareness of hepatitis — a group of infectious diseases known as Hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E — and encourage prevention, diagnosis and treatment

#### **Details**

- It is an initiative of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- It has the goal of ending viral hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030 in the country
- The aim of the initiative is to reduce morbidity and mortality due to viral hepatitis
- The key strategies include preventive and promotive interventions with focus on awareness generation, safe injection practices and socio-cultural practices, sanitation and hygiene, safe drinking water supply
- infection control and immunization; increasing access to testing and management of viral hepatitis; promoting diagnosis and providing treatment support for patients of hepatitis B & C

#### **Implementation**

- There would be standardized testing and management protocols with focus on treatment of hepatitis B and C;
- co-ordination and collaboration with different Ministries and departments;
- building capacities at national, state, district levels and sub-district level up to Primary Health Centres (PHC)

### **Oxytocin Manufacture Restriction**

#### **Context**

- The decision of the Ministry of Health to restrict, from September 1, the manufacture of oxytocin only to the public sector unit, has sparked fears of shortages and a disruption of supplies of this drug.
- It is considered to be a critical drug in maternal health care and it is made primarily by the private sector

### **What is Oxytocin?**

- Often called the 'love hormone', oxytocin is released naturally in human bonding activities such as sex, childbirth and breastfeeding

### **What was it used for?**

- The drug is used by dairy owners and farmers to boost milk production
- Make vegetables look bigger and fresher.
- It is used to speed up child birth

### **Allegation**

- In mammals, Oxytocin stimulates ejection of milk from the mammary glands. But, its use can cause reproductive damage in animals and even their death.

### **Oxytocin will have no negative impact on animals**

- Experts from the medical and veterinary sciences advised the Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) that oxytocin is required in the treatment of both humans and animals.
  - Further, two studies by the Central government, by the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Dairy Research Institute; conclude that the use of oxytocin does not have an adverse effect on either people or animals.
- With cattle, the danger of misuse is that it may cause addiction, in which case cattle do not react to normal milk ejection stimuli. Both studies have been cited by the Ministers of Health and Agriculture in Parliament while responding to queries about the adverse effects of the drug.

### **Basis of official response**

- There was a judgment by the High Court of Himachal Pradesh in a public interest litigation (PIL) initiated by the court after it came across newspaper reports of oxytocin misuse.
- After hearing the matter for two years, the court passed a judgment in 2016 blaming oxytocin for a number of diseases, including breast and uterine cancers, male impotence, excessive hair growth in women and balding for men.
- However, the court did not cite a single scientific study to support these claims.
- The fact is that the High Court sought a study of the feasibility of restricting manufacture to the public sector; it never ordered the restriction to be imposed.

### **Courts can take a stance different from Govt**

- Courts generally defer to the government when it comes to orders issued under Section 26A of the said Act, they can still set aside such orders if convinced that there is nothing on record to support the final decision.
- This standard of review was reiterated most recently in Union of India v. Pfizer (2017), where the Supreme Court concluded: "If the power under Section 26A is exercised on the basis of irrelevant material or on the basis of no material, the satisfaction itself that is contemplated by Section 26A would not be there and the exercise of the power would be struck down on this ground."

### **Conclusion**

- An order restricting manufacture of a crucial drug such as oxytocin on the grounds of alleged misuse will have to be based on a study of the degree of misuse, the demand for the drug, the manner in which the proposed restriction will affect the supply of the drug, and also its impact on public health.
- The government has not conducted such a study so this resembles a policy quackery.

## **Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018**

### **Background**

- Over 110 Central and State laws discriminate against leprosy patients.
- The biased provisions in these statutes were introduced prior to medical advancements; now, modern medicine (specifically, multi-drug therapy) completely cures the disease.
- These laws stigmatize and isolate leprosy patients and, coupled with age-old beliefs about leprosy, cause the patients untold suffering.

### **Details**

- It attempts to end the discrimination against leprosy persons in various central laws: the Divorce Act, 1869; the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939; the Special Marriage Act, 1954; the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955; and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act of 1956.
- The Bill eliminates leprosy as a ground for dissolution of marriage or divorce. The condition under Section 18 (2) (c) of the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, that a Hindu wife is entitled to live separately from her husband without forfeiting her claim to maintenance if the latter is “suffering from a virulent form of leprosy”, has been omitted.
- It omits the provisions which stigmatize and discriminate against leprosy-affected persons.

### **Supporting Reports**

- India is signatory to UN General Assembly Resolution of 2010 on the ‘Elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members’. So this removal is to give importance to the agreement
- Rajya Sabha Committee on Petitions, in its 131st Report on ‘Petition praying for integration and empowerment of leprosy-affected persons’, had examined various statutes and desired that concerned Ministries and State governments urgently wipe clean the anachronistic and discriminatory provisions in prevalent statutes.
- The Law Commission of India, in its 256th Report, ‘Eliminating discrimination against persons affected by leprosy’, had also recommended removing the discriminatory provisions in various statutes against leprosy patients.

### **Significance**

- Bill is meant to provide for the integration of leprosy patients into the mainstream

## **Scrub typhus**

- Scrub typhus is a mite-borne disease caused by *Orientia tsutsugamushi* (formerly *Rickettsia tsutsugamushi*).
- Symptoms are fever, a primary lesion, a macular rash, and lymphadenopathy.
- Majority of Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) patients have scrub typhus.

## **Silicosis**

- Miner’s phthisis, grinder’s asthma, potter’s rot
- It is a form of occupational lung disease caused by inhalation of crystalline silica dust

### **Causes**

- It comes from chipping, cutting, drilling, or grinding soil, sand, granite, or other minerals.

### **Symptoms**

- It is characterized by shortness of breath, cough, fever, and cyanosis (bluish skin).

### **Context**

- Mine workers in Rajasthan suffering from silicosis as an occupational disease have demanded steps for relief, while pointing out that they were not getting silicosis confirmation certificates from the Pneumoconiosis Board mandatory for getting compensation from the State government.

### **'State can stop voluntary retirement of doctors' says SC**

#### **Context**

- The Supreme Court has ruled that the State can stop government doctors from taking voluntary retirement in public interest

#### **What did the court say?**

- The court said public health was suffering from a scarcity of doctors.
  - Qualified doctors did not join the public service, and even if they did so, they chose voluntary retirement and went into lucrative private practice.
- In view of unfortunate privatization and commercialization of the noble medical profession, for maintaining the efficiency of the State Medical Services, the decision taken by the Government (denying permission to retire) is permissible as per rules and cannot be interfered with.
  - The concept of public interest can be invoked by the government when voluntary retirement sought by an employee will be against public interest.
- The court ruled that in case all doctors were permitted to retire, "there would be a chaos and no doctor would be left in the Government hospitals, which would be against the concept of the welfare state and injurious to public interest."
- The fundamental right to retire is not above the right to save lives in a country where government hospitals cater to the poorest

#### **Constitutional principles**

- The right to practice a profession under Article 19(1)(g) was subject to the interest of the general public
- The State governments had an obligation "to make an endeavor under Article 47 to look after the provisions for health and nutrition."
  - Duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health
- The doctors, as citizens, had certain fundamental duties under Article 51(A) towards their fellow citizens.

#### **Background**

Four doctors employed in various capacities with the Uttar Pradesh medical services department had sought voluntary retirement but the government kept their applications pending.

# EDUCATION

## **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report 2017-18**

### **Context**

- A report published by AISHE says the total number of teachers in higher educational institutions in India has come down by about 2.34-lakh in the last three years.

### **Stats**

- The total number of teachers in higher educational institutions in India — inclusive of all posts from professor to temporary teacher — stood at 12.84 lakh in 2017-18.
  - for 2016-17 it was 13.65 lakh
  - for 2015-16 it was 15.18 lakh
- This signals a fall of about 2.34 lakh within three years. Between 2011-12 and 2015-16, the number had been rising from 12.47 lakh to 15.18 lakh.

### **Possible Reasons**

- professors who are retiring are not being replaced
- Fresh vacancies at all levels are not being filled up.

## **Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARRIA)**

### **Context**

- To promote a culture of innovation and research in higher education, the Union government has introduced Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARRIA).
- It is an initiative of Ministry of Human Resource Development

### **Details**

- ARRIA will rank educational institutions for innovation output based on all major indicators and parameters used globally
- It will work parallel to the overall ranking of institutions captured by the annual National Institutional Ranking Framework.
  - A slight distinction between research – which is crucial in the NIRF framework and innovation: research produces new knowledge while innovation puts that knowledge to use.
- Innovation means original thinking and everyone can contribute their ideas to promote innovation.
  - Innovation must become the part of our culture and it must not be limited only to engineering students, it must be open for other students as well.
- More than quantity, ARRIA will focus on quality of innovations and will try to measure the real impact created by these innovations nationally and internationally

### **Parameters**

Indicators	Weightage
Budget Expenses and Revenue generated through Innovation and entrepreneurship development	20
Facilitating access to advance centres / facilities and entrepreneurial support system	10
Idea to Entrepreneurship	54
Development of Innovation Ecosystems Supported through Teaching & Learning	10
Best innovative solutions Developed In-house for Improving Governance of Your Institution	6
Total	100

#### **Significance**

- It will encourage healthy competitiveness among Higher Educational Institutions
- ARIIA ranking will certainly inspire Indian institutions to reorient their mind-set and build ecosystems to encourage high quality research, innovation and entrepreneurship.

#### **Dropout rate soaring after school mergers in tribal belts**

##### **Context**

- NITI Aayog and the Human Resource Development Ministry's suggestion to close public schools that have low enrolment rate or single teachers in tribal districts is leading to a huge spike in dropout rates.

##### **How does it work?**

- If there are three schools with low enrolment in an area, say, two of them will be closed and their students and teachers transferred to the third --- the biggest or the most centrally located.

##### **Concerns**

Under the Right to Education (RTE) Act, there must be a primary school in the "neighborhood", defined by the ministry as the area within a 1km radius.

- The poorer among them would not be able to bear the cost of commuting and drop out.
- The transport facility supposed to be provided are declined in number of cases
- The most important of all it deprives student to get educated

#### **Innovate India Platform**

##### **Context**

- NITI Aayog and MyGov launched "Innovate India Platform" as part of Atal Innovation Mission

##### **Details**



- The Innovate India portal will serve as the common point for all the innovation happening across the nation.
- Innovate India is an innovations platform for registering both grassroots and deep-tech innovators at a national level.
- The platform is open to all Indian citizens

#### **How does it work?**

- The users can View, comment, share, and rate the innovations crowdsourced on the #Innovate India platform
- View the leaderboard which is calculated based on the votes on each innovation.
- Citizens can share their/organizations/someone else's innovation on the platform by login to the MyGov website
- These innovations can also be shared on various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter

### **No Detention Policy: States given power to detain Students**

#### **Context**

- The Lok Sabha passed an amendment to the Right to Education Act that does away with the no-detention policy mentioned in the law.

#### **Existing Policy**

- It prohibits schools from detaining students till they complete elementary education.
- In India, elementary school runs from Class 1 to Class 8.

#### **What does the amendment say?**

- The amendment says that the states can choose to hold a regular examination either at the end of Classes 5 and 8, or both.
  - It gives States the power to detain students who fail an examination in Class 5 or 8
- Students who fail this test will get additional instruction and the opportunity to appear for a re-examination within two months of the declaration of the result.
- If the students still do not pass the exam, the state government may decide to detain them.
- However, if states choose, they can continue the no-detention policy all the way to Class 8.
- No child can be expelled from school before they complete elementary education

#### **Issue Area**

- Section 30(1) of the RTE Act holds out the assurance that no child shall be required to face any Board examination till completion of elementary education.
- Retaining the student will jeopardize the future of a student. So the aim should be to look at the outcomes based on quality of teachers, processes for continuous assessment and, crucially, active engagement of parents and the community
- NITI Aayog report in 2016 based on a study in Punjab, found that bringing back detention in elementary schooling would increase the dropout rate, impacting the poor and Dalits the most as they depended on government institutions.

#### **What should Govt do?**

- To improve learning outcomes in children, there are other specific provisions in the RTE that need attention. Besides maintaining a good pupil-teacher ratio (PTR), proper infrastructure like all-weather buildings, barrier-free access in schools, separate toilets for boys and girls are pertinent measures to improve qualitative standards enshrined in the RTE.

- Government data show that out of 10, 72,742 government schools at the elementary level, only 7.5 lakh have ramps, 6 lakh have playgrounds, and 9 lakh have libraries.
- Declining funds is another reason why the RTE has not been implemented in letter and spirit.
  - For example, an Accountability Initiative Report shows that allocations for the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the main vehicle to drive RTE implementation, have remained much below the resource estimates made by the MHRD.
  - So govt should increase the funds to the segment
- It would be evident that no-detention can work only if there is improved quality, which the current amendment to RTE does not ensure.

### **Conclusion**

- The move to introduce examinations as filters has not been fully thought through, and may be a hasty response to demands from State governments which want to be seen as acting firmly in favor of quality.
- Tinkering with the RTE Act without sufficient thought will erode a major constitutional achievement.

### **Turnitin Software**

#### **Context**

- Minister of Human Resource Development said that the Turnitin software to detect plagiarism in research, would be provided to all universities free of cost

#### **Details**

- The software checks submitted documents against its database and the content of other websites with the aim of identifying plagiarism.
- It will help students learn to avoid plagiarism and improve their writing

### **In search of greatness**

Scientific achievement will only happen in a culture which celebrates great art, philosophy, sports.

#### **The Fields Medal:**

- The Fields Medal, popularly seen as the equivalent of a Nobel Prize, is awarded once in four years to two-four mathematicians below the age of 40.
- No Indian has yet won it although it was also in 2014 that for the first time an Indian-origin Canadian-American mathematician, Manjul Bhargava, was awarded.
- In the recently announced prize for 2018, an Australian mathematician of Indian origin, Akshay Venkatesh, was awarded.

#### **Unpleasant questions:**

- Though it is a matter of pride that the two winners are of Indian origin, the question it raises is “has the country contributed anything to their growth as mathematicians?” Would Prof. Bhargava and Prof. Venkatesh have produced the work that won these prizes if they had studied and worked in India?
- This problem is not unique to mathematics. It is the same case with respect to the Nobel Prizes in science. Indian-origin scientists have won the Nobel in physics, chemistry and medicine, but post-Independence, work done in India has not led to a science Nobel.

#### **What really is the problem?**

- If Indians studying and working abroad can have a great impact, then obviously the problem has to do with our systems of education and research.

- While it is true that being abroad brings greater visibility to one's work, it is also the case that for a country which claims to have the third largest scientific manpower in the world, our creative contribution to science has been way below par.
- This is a paradox considering the many brilliant scientists who work in Indian institutions, including the universities.

### **The contrast:**

- We can look at other fields in which we have produced world beaters. Chess and badminton are paradigmatic examples of how a whole generation of youngsters not only took to these sports, but under intense, and many times brutal, competition succeeded in coming to the top. These are not isolated cases; there is a systematic creation of groups of individuals who are reaching the pinnacle in these sports.
- Similarly, we have global leaders in music, arts and literature. It is surprising that we have managed to be so original, creative and productive in the global domain in fields which have had very little support either from the government or the corporate sector.
- Having invested all our energy in science education right from early schooling, we have only managed to produce collective mediocrity in these fields year after year.

### **Reasons for mediocrity**

- The revolution in chess and badminton was possible through great personal sacrifices of the players and their families. In many cases, securing even minimal funds from government or the private sector was difficult and the perseverance of parents, as well as the hard work of the children and the coaches, made this revolution possible.
- The training for science begins from a state-sponsored and socially sanctioned education system right from primary school. At every step there are numerous scholarships, cash awards and incentives given to students to excel in these subjects.
- Although achieving greatness in science is not like that in sports or music, it is nevertheless important to understand why our contribution in science does not match this enormous cultural capital in addition to significant funding invested in science.
- There are three reasons that contribute to this culture of mediocrity.
  1. Nature of school education
  2. State of science administration
  3. The cultural response to the idea of excellence

### **What is the problem?**

- While all over the world, children are becoming more independent in terms of their intellectual practices, students in India are becoming more and more like little soldiers marching from one class to tuition.
- Right from their homes to their schools, it is the unending process of teaching a person or group to accept a set of beliefs uncritically.
- Science education is not egalitarian and is designed to keep people out rather than embrace diversity and multiplicity of background, language and talents. This is done in the name of merit, and yet it is precisely this merit that we lack on the global stage.
- Funding agencies like the Department of Science and Technology and a host of others which disburse hundreds of crores of rupees for research in science are not held accountable to the results of that funding.
- Many projects worth crores end up with some minor publications.
- Worse, that personal contacts and networks are still important in securing funds and other incentives in science in India today.
- Great science will only arise in a culture which celebrates great music, art, literature, philosophy, sports and so on. But, countless artists and musicians struggle to survive in spite of creating great work. There is no monthly salary, provident fund and pension for some of the greatest artists, performers, writers and others, yet they continue to produce work of greater quality than the average academic institutions in India.

**Way forward:**

- Great work in any domain is not produced in isolation. Greatness is deeply cultural and arises from a particular attitude and not subject competence alone.
- For great work to be possible in science, the larger society has to produce great work in art, literature, humanities and so on. But we have produced a science ecosystem which does not seem to understand this, nor recognize how this bias has only contributed to mediocre science.
- Our education system must stop reducing the notions of competence and merit only to that of science, thereby denying the greatness inherent in so many other domains.
- The myopic vision of science, the hegemony of science education and the unprofessional cult of Indian science administration must discontinue in order to win Fields medal or Nobel prizes in science for our country

## ART AND CULTURE

### **Aranmula Boat Race**

- It is the oldest river boat fiesta in Kerala
- It is held during Onam
- It takes place at Aranmula, near a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Krishna and Arjuna in Pathanamthitta district in the banks of the river Pampa
- It is held on the day of the Uthrittathi asterism in the Malayalam month of Chingam (corresponding to 15 August and 20 September)
- The snake boats used for this race are called Palliyodams.

### **Bagwal Festival**

- The Bagwal festival, a popular attraction of Raksha Bandhan day in Kumaon, was held in Devidhura village of Champawat district in Uttarakhand.
- The festival is famous for its annual ritual of 'stone pelting.'
- Bagwal is played between four different groups of people. These groups are called Khams. These Khams are - Lamgariya Kham, Valig kham, Chamyal Kham and Garahwal Kham. Only people of these Khams can take part in this Bagwal
- However, after the intervention of the Uttarakhand high court in 2013, stones were replaced with fruits and flowers

### **Bonalu**

- Bonalu is an annual festival of Telangana celebrated in Twin Cities Hyderabad, Secunderabad and other parts of Telangana.
- The word "Bonam" is a contraction of the word "Bhojanam", a Sanskrit loanword which means a meal or a feast in Telugu.
- The week-long celebration, also called Ashadam Jatara, is a thanksgiving to goddess Mahakali for fulfilling prayers.
- "Tottelu" is also a part of the festival bonalu, its one the offerings to the goddess it is artifact of telangana people which is made of the bamboo sticks and colorful transparent papers it looks like a temple doom which is called as Tottelu.

### **Currency Building and Metcalfe Hall**

#### **Context**

- Two of Kolkata's oldest colonial buildings, Currency Building and Metcalfe Hall, both built in the 19th century, will soon become museums and galleries showcasing art and urban history.

#### **Currency Building**

- The three-storied Currency Building in Dalhousie Square was built in 1833.
- Designed in the Italian style with Venetian windows and cast iron gates,
  - The cast iron gates, large brick arches and Venetian windows with intricate designs are the main attractions of the building. The roof is arched with iron joists and the floor is covered with marble and chunar sandstone.
- It was built for housing the Agra Bank and later, the Government of India occupied large parts of the building for housing and issuing paper currency

- Archaeologists say the Currency Building was not a mint but a place where currency was kept.
- Till 1937, the building served as the first office of the Reserve Bank of India
- It was built when the Lord William Bentinck was the Governor General of the British India.
- But now the western wing is all set to become the office of the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA). The Currency Building will now host an exhibition of sketches and sculptures by Ramkinkar Baij, a pioneer of modern Indian sculpture.

### **Metcalfe Hall**

- It is a heritage building situated in Kolkata
- It was built in the years 1840-1844 with 30 Corinthian pillars
- The design was prepared by the city magistrate, C.K. Robinson and named after Sir Charles T. Metcalfe, the Governor-General of India, in honour of his efforts towards a free press.
- The architecture is reflective of the British imperial architecture facing the Hooghly river on the West

### **e-Aksharayan**

- E-Aksharayan is desktop software for converting scanned printed Indian Language documents into a fully editable text format in Unicode encoding.

### **Gol Gumbaz**

- Bijapur, or Vijayapura as it is now known, was the capital of the Adil Shahi dynasty from 1490 to 1686.
- The name finds its roots from the words Gola Gummata meaning circular dome.
- Maintained By : Archeological Survey of India (ASI)
- Architectural Style : Deccan Indo-Islamic
- Built of dark grey basalt and is decorated with plaster

### **Unique Attribute**

- The largest space covered by a single dome in the world, followed by the Pantheon in Rome.
- Its dome is the second largest, after St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

### **International Buddhist Conclave 2018**

#### **Context**

- President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the sixth edition of International Buddhist Conclave 2018

#### **Details**

- The Conclave is being organized by the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the State Governments of Maharashtra, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh
- The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has been organizing the International Buddhist Conclave biennially.
- The earlier International Buddhist Conclaves were organized in New Delhi and Bodhgaya (February 2004), Nalanda and Bodhgaya (February 2010), Varanasi and Bodhgaya (September 2012), Bodhgaya and Varanasi (September 2014) and in Sarnath/Varanasi and Bodhgaya (October 2016).
- The first International Buddhist Conclave took place in 2004 in New Delhi and Bodhgaya.

### **Atthangiko Maggo**

- It is the Eight-fold Path, in Pali language
  - right belief or views (sammā ditthi) right resolve (sahkappo), right speech, right work (kammanto), right livelihood (ājīvo), right exercise or training (vyayama), right mindfulness (sati), right mental concentration (samādhi).



### **Theme 2018: “Buddha Path – The Living Heritage”.**

- ‘Buddha Path’ on one hand refers to the extraordinary Teachings of the Buddha which is also called the Middle Path
  - Which when practiced brings purity of mind and leads to Peace, Happiness and Harmony within and also in the Society as well.
  - The Buddha Path provides quality of life based on Values as moral principles, or other ideas that guide our choices; Right beliefs, connection to nature and place with spirituality; Way of Life, daily practices, good habits and inspiring traditional skills for mental growth, thereby, making it the Living Heritage.
- On the other hand, the ‘Buddha Path’ also refers to the Eight Great Places of Buddhist Heritage, (referred in Pali as Aṭṭhamahāthānāni).
  - These Eight Places are connected with the important events of the life of the Buddha from the time of his Birth, Enlightenment, and Teaching Dhamma to suffering humanity, till he passed away.

### **Kailasa Temple**

- The construction of the temple began during the rule of the Rashtrakuta king, Dantidurga (735-757 AD).
- Major work on the temple was done by King Dantidurga’s successor, Krishna I (757-773 AD), although work continued under many successive kings for more than a century.
- It is located in Ellora, Maharashtra

### **Facts**

- There are 34 caves in Ellora
- Temples 1 to 12 in the Southern side are the 12 Buddhist caves.
- Temples 13 to 29 are the 17 Hindu caves.
- Temples 30 – 34 are the 5 Jain caves.
- The Kailasanatha temple (Cave 16) is one of the 34 cave temples and monasteries known collectively as the Ellora Caves.

### **Features**

- The carving of the temple started from the top of the mountain but a pit was later dug around the temple on the sloping side of the hill
- Apart from the gopura , the main temple has a sabha griha ( hall), vestibules and a Nandi mandap which leads to the garba griha (sanctum) with the Shiv linga, all of which are profusely carved and with Dravidian shikharas (towers). A bridge connects the Nandi mandap to the gopuram .

### **Cultural Link**

- The temple houses several intricately carved panels, depicting scenes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the adventures of Krishna.
- There are five detached shrines in the temple premises; three of these are dedicated to the river goddesses: Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati

### **Kutiyattam/ Koodiyattam**

- Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre, which is practiced in the province of Kerala, is one of India’s oldest living theatrical traditions. Originating more than 2,000 years ago, Kutiyattam represents a synthesis of Sanskrit classicism and reflects the local traditions of Kerala.
- It is a combination of ancient Sanskrit theatre with elements of Koothu, a Tamil performing art which is as old as Sangam era.

- In its stylized and codified theatrical language, neta abhinaya (eye expression) and hasta abhinaya (the language of gestures) are prominent.
- They focus on the thoughts and feelings of the main character. Actors undergo ten to fifteen years of rigorous training to become fully-fledged performers with sophisticated breathing control and subtle muscle shifts of the face and body.
- The actor's art lies in elaborating a situation or episode in all its detail. Therefore, a single act may take days to perform and a complete performance may last up to 40 days.
- Kutiyattam is traditionally performed in theatres called Kuttampalams, which are located in Hindu temples.
- It is officially recognised by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

### **Lohagarh Fort**

- Lohagarh Fort (Iron fort) is situated at Bharatpur in Rajasthan, India.
- It was constructed by Bharatpur Jat rulers.
- Maharaja Suraj Mal used all his power and wealth to a good cause, and built numerous forts and palaces across his kingdom, one of them being the Lohagarh Fort (Iron fort), which was one of the strongest ever built in Indian history.
- The inaccessible Lohagarh fort could withstand repeated attacks of British forces led by Lord Lake in 1805 when they laid siege for over six weeks.
- Of the two gates in the fort, one in the north is known as Ashtdhaatu (eight metalled) gate while the one facing the south is called Chowburja (four-pillared) gate.
- Monuments in the fort include are Kishori Mahal, Mahal Khas and Kothi Khas.
- Moti Mahal and towers like Jawahar Burj and Fateh Burj were erected to commemorate the victory over the Mughals and the British army.
- The Gateway has paintings of huge elephants.

### **Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman Award**

- It is conferred once a year on the Independence Day in recognition of substantial contribution in the field of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Pali, Prakrit, Classical Oriya, Classical Kannada, Classical Telugu and Classical Malayalam.
- The Presidential award carries a certificate of honour, a memento and a one-time cash prize of Rs.1 lakh
- The award introduced in the year 2002, is given to selected young scholars in the age group of 30 to 45 years.

### **Maluti Project**

- It involves conservation of terracotta temples in Maluti, Jharkand
- The project involves conserving 62 temples of the 108 temples which were in a dilapidated condition
- It would enhance tourism in Rural India but also encourage cultural awareness in the Local
- The kings of Baj Basanta dynasty built these temples in Maluti, their capital, inspired by goddess Mowlakshi, their family deity

### **Context**

- The Maluti Project was inaugurated by Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi.

### **Paithani Saris**

- It is a variety of sari, named after the Paithan town in Aurangabad Maharashtra
- They are part of a 200-year-old weaving tradition patronized by the Peshwas.

- It is Integral to the traditional trousseau of a Maharashtrian bride
- Paithani is characterized by borders of an oblique square design, and a pallu with a Peacock design
- The saris are named after the motifs on them: tota-maina (parrot and mynah), asavali (flower and vine) and narli (coconut).
- They have GI tag.

### **Qawwali**

- It is a form of Sufi devotional music
- It is performed at Sufi shrines or dargahs
- Amir Khusro Dehlavi of the Chisti order of Sufis is credited with fusing the Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and Indian musical traditions in the late 13th century in India to create Qawwali
- Qawwāl is someone who often repeats (sings) a Qaul, Qawwālī is what a Qawwāl sings.

### **Context**

- Sufi Qawwali singers, exponents of the ghazal, and Hindustani vocalists were part of a program hosted at traditional Namboothiri mana (house) at Vallikkapatta near Manjeri in Kerala's Malappuram district.

### **Rudrasagar Lake Annual boat racing festival**

- It is held in Tripura's Melaghar
- Local fishermen community participates in the event every year.
- The boat racing festival signifies the excellent team spirit, integration and amity of people.

### **Tendong Lho Rumfaat (Prayer of the Tendong Mountain)**

- It is a festival of the Lepcha people of eastern Nepal and north-east India.
- The festival occurs usually in the month of August.
- As per the Lepcha mythology, it was believed that the entire tribe was saved from 40 days and 40 nights of great deluge caused by continuous rain which drowned the entire Mayel Lyang, the modern day Sikkim.
- During the festivities, people make a model of the Mountain in facade of their homes and worship it. It is exclusively made of nine stones and the people dance and sing wearing mask to get the blessings of the almighty.

### **Theyyam**

- It is a popular ritual form of worship of North Malabar in Kerala also in South Canara and Kodagu of Karnataka
- It encompasses dance, mime and music
- It exalts the beliefs of the ancient tribals who gave a lot of importance to the worship of heroes and the spirits of their ancestors.
- Performers wear heavy make-up and adorn flamboyant costumes

# DISASTER MANAGEMENT

## **Flash Flood Warning to be given by India to Asian nations**

### **Context**

- The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has designated India as a nodal center for preparing flash-flood forecasts to Asian countries

### **What was the need?**

- WMO says flash floods account for 85% of flooding incidents across the world, causing some 5,000 deaths each year.
- Like India, several Southeast Asian countries depend on the monsoon and are prone to its vagaries. To overcome this issue this mechanism has been established.
- Though Pakistan was among the list of countries that would benefit from the forecast, it had refused to participate in the scheme

### **Details**

- India will have to develop a customized model that can issue advance warning of floods in Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand
- So, IMD would be working to customize a weather model, developed by the United States and donated to the WMO, to warn of flash floods at least six hours in advance.

## **Flash Flood Guidance System**

- It aims to provide forecasts six hours in advance while the current flood warning about an hour earlier
- The proposed model would provide forecasts by computing the likelihood of rainfall and the soil moisture levels to warn of possible floods

### **Current Implementation**

- Central Water Commission which monitors India's dams, warns of rising water levels in the reservoirs, which are usually taken to be signs of imminent floods.
- The organization has recently tied up with Google to develop a software application to visualize rising water levels during heavy rains.
- But, India is yet to work out how exactly it would warn countries of potential inundation.

## **Kerala Floods**

### **Facts**

- Initial estimates put the loss at ₹20,000 crore but officials feel the extent of the damage could be more than twice the figure.
- The preliminary estimate of the crop loss is pegged at ₹1,345 crore. More than 3,00,000 farmers suffered damage to various crops spread over 56,439 hectares.
- According to the Kerala government, one-sixth of the total population of Kerala had been directly affected by the floods and related incidents. The last time anything like this has happened was in 1924.

### **Natural causes leading to floods**

- The state has received 37.5% excess rainfall from June
- North Kerala receives heavy rainfall during south west monsoon (Jun to Sep)

- South Kerala gets rainfall during north east monsoon (Oct to Dec). This time most parts Of Kerala has received heavy rainfall
- A total of 37 out of the states 42 dams and reservoirs had been opened to drain out excess water from the catchment areas. Shutters of dams like Cheruthoni, one of the largest arch dams on the continent, were opened for the first time in 26 years, releasing lakhs of litres into the Periyar which continues to remain swollen

#### **Anthropogenic factors leading to floods**

- Experts believe that injudicious use of land is responsible for making some regions of the state more prone to floods and landslides
- A lot of unauthorized encroachments have taken place in our forest area
- Incursions into catchment areas of rivers that have dried up and mountainous areas have rendered settlements in their vicinity vulnerable to the vagaries of nature.
- Kerala is yet to implement recommendations of the Gadgil Committee on conservation of Western Ghats, which was submitted in August 2011. Many political parties had protested against the report on the grounds that it was excessively environment-friendly, and not in tune with ground realities.
- The Institute of Tropical Meteorology analyzed rainfall data dating back to 1900s and held global warming responsible for an increase in the intensity of rainfall during monsoon.
- research indicates that rising temperatures have led to huge fluctuations in the monsoon winds carrying the moisture from the Arabian Sea, resulting in heavy-to-extreme rains over the Western Ghats and central India, lasting for two to three days
- The other factor is deforestation.

#### **People as first responders**

- As the biggest flood in a century marooned over a million people in their homes, it was not the official systems that managed to rescue or arrange relief. People from all walks of life — fishermen to IT professionals, housewives and college students — came together to lend a helping hand.
- Young professionals sitting around the world quickly established a 24x7 help-desk that received the calls, eliminated duplicates, found exact coordinates from Google Earth and relayed precise information to the rescue teams. Relief camps came up all around and there was no shortage of resources.
- Caste, religion, political ideology did not matter in the rescue and relief operations. It was Kerala at its best.

#### **Lessons from the fishermen**

- Devastating deluge in Kerala witnessed the emergence of fishermen as saviors when hundreds decided to brave through flood-waters to venture into areas where even naval commandos could not reach.
- Operating in their mechanized country boats in furious waters they rescued thousands from houses and buildings where helicopters couldn't reach.
- When the single-engine country boats were finding it difficult to cut through the strong current, fishermen decided to deploy double-engine boats to wade through.
- The fishermen also arranged their fuel and food expenses themselves before the state stepped in.
- In spite of the loss of livelihood, their vessels getting damaged the spirit and energy was high to help their fellow citizens at the moment of crisis

#### **International experience**

- In **Japan**, after every tsunami, people place a stone marking the extremities of the tsunami so that later generations can see a mark beyond which they should not build. No such effort was made either by the government or civil society after the 1924 floods.

- A good start for reconstruction by the current generation will be to mark the flood levels, in their homes and in every public place (schools, government offices, temples etc), so that this information is handed down to the next generation.
- The United Nations Environment Programme has been promoting ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. In the context of floods, for example, what needs to be done is to reserve enough land for the river to expand at the time of flooding. That means disallowing the building of houses near rivers and reserving the land for agricultural purposes.
- If there are cities near rivers, they will have to be protected by safety walls. However, the density of population should not be allowed to rise beyond a point, as is followed in Europe now.

### **Measures to be taken**

- All efforts, private and governmental, need to be stepped up to assist flood-affected people
- Disaster management units in other States too should assist those working on the ground to deal with Kerala's catastrophic floods; apart from helping, they will gain valuable experience as well.
- Volunteer efforts can be better targeted if the district authorities in Kerala put out advisories on the nature of relief needed, and the locations and the modalities of transfer.

### **Way forward**

- Going forward, the task of reconstruction will have to be addressed, covering public buildings, residential homes, roads and other infrastructure.
- A subsidized housing programmer may be needed in the worst-hit areas, with tax breaks offered to residents.
- a policy to preserve the remaining hills and wetlands, as they serve as water storing systems is the need of the hour

## **India May Reject UAE's Rs 700 Cr Assistance For #Kerala Flood Relief**

### **Background**

- Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said India was capable of managing the domestic crisis as well as help other tsunami-hit countries. It was also the decision by the Cabinet Committee on Security at that time
- Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Syed Akbaruddin had stated in the backdrop of similar proposals after the Uttarakhand floods that aid from abroad is not in order as India has "adequate ability" to address the necessity in such cases.

### **Why is this followed?**

- The government has since 2004 felt that India has the capacity to handle disasters like these.
- Accepting from any one government opens the floodgates for others as well, and it would be diplomatically difficult to refuse from some while accepting from other
- More than receiver, India believes that as a growing economic power, it has the capability of positioning the country as more of an aid donor
- Even in 2013, when the United States government offered their paltry assistance of \$150,000 (Rs 90 lakh) for the flood victims in Uttarakhand, the then Finance Minister P Chidambaram said it would instead reach out to multilateral aid agencies like the Asian Development Bank and World Bank for relief, instead of individual foreign governments.

### **Exceptions**

- This international disaster relief policy is only limited to foreign governments and not individuals and non-profits dealing in charity.



### **National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP)**

- According to Chapter 9 of NDMP that was published in 2016, if the government of a foreign nation willingly offers help, the Centre “may accept the offer”.
- It states, “As a matter of policy, the Government of India does not issue any appeal for foreign assistance in the wake of a disaster. However, if the national government of another country voluntarily offers assistance as a goodwill gesture in solidarity with the disaster victims, the Central Government may accept the offer.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs, is required to coordinate with the Ministry of External Affairs, which is primarily responsible for reviewing foreign offers of assistance and channelizing the same.
- In consultation with the State Government concerned, the MHA will assess the response requirements that the foreign teams can provide.”

### **Accepting Help** **Background**

- India had felt that this would strengthen its case for seeking to be a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and also hasten the prospect of superpower status by 2020.
- Since permanent membership of the Security Council entails additional financial commitment on its part, India’s low level of mandatory contribution to the UN, calculated based on its capacity to pay, was also a matter of concern at that time. India thought it would be beneficial for it if it were to show that it was spending money abroad over and above the mandatory contribution.

### **Concerns**

- There is mismatch between convention and written document leading to confusion of acceptance and decline

### **What should govt do?**

- Irrespective of what was agreed upon in the past, democracies should be supple enough to respond to emergencies in ways that benefit the greater common good.
- Offers of aid from foreign governments must naturally be scrutinized to see if they compromise national security and other interests.
  - Then there is fear of the foreign hand, the spies who would come with the package, interfere in the country’s internal affairs, and also take away valuable information.
  - The development of technology is such that foreigners do not need to come in hordes to India to know what is happening or to influence decision-making here.
  - Google and Facebook know more about us than we do, and are capable of manipulating our national priorities and plans. India should not be mixing up its 20th century fears with the realities of the 21st century.
- To stand on notions of self-reliance in a multilateral world, to reject a helping hand, is to be beholden to a strange pride.
- There is no shame in taking help, just as there should be no hesitation in offering it. India has a longstanding tradition of rushing help elsewhere.
- Bilateral and multilateral assistance will take a long time for disbursement. So India should use all assistance, Indian and foreign, to rebuild Kerala.

### **Diplomatic issues can rise**

- UAE authorities genuinely felt grieved over the calamity that hit Keralites, who have served their country well over the years. They felt obliged to help Kerala at a time of distress in accordance with the Islamic faith. Similar is the case of Qatar, which has offered ₹35 crore.
- This may also have a negative impact on India’s relations with the UAE, whose authorities were directly involved in raising the funds and in conveying the offer to the Prime Minister.

### **UN case**

- India has been the biggest contributor to the UN Development Programme and the biggest recipient of assistance.
- It is a party to the regulations of the UN and its conditionality's for assistance.
- It is true that India does not want foreigners with huge UN salaries to come and destroy the morale of its relief workers.
- But its needs for technology and best practices can be obtained from the UN by careful planning and consultations.
- India will also be able to choose the nationalities of the people it deploys. Nothing should stop it from getting what it needs from the UN, as they can raise the funds and source them from anywhere.

### **Way forward**

- India should also hold discussions with the UN and the Red Cross with a view to formulating plans for reconstruction using the latest technology and international best practices. It should set aside its superpower syndrome at a time of national emergency.
- The government should not just gracefully accept the assistance for Kerala, it should junk the 2004 precedent.

### **How dams can control floods?**

#### **Introduction**

- The world over, dams are constructed mainly for the purposes of irrigation, power generation, and flood control. While the first two roles are acknowledged, the role of dams in flood control has always been underestimated.
- Authorities always look to store the maximum amount of water in reservoirs during the monsoon season, which is then used for irrigation and generation of electricity during the summer months.

#### **Practice should be to keep less water before monsoon**

- It is an internationally accepted practice that the water level of a reservoir should be kept below a certain level before the onset of the monsoon season.
- This is so that when the monsoon rains come, there is space to store the excess rainwater and also so that water can be released in a regulated manner, thus preventing floods downstream when there is heavy inflow to the dams.
- However, it is unfortunate that the maximum amount of water is stored in reservoirs even before the close of the monsoon, only to ensure greater electricity generation and irrigation.

### **Hydro Power**

- In 2015, hydropower generation was only 16.6% of the world's total electricity production.
- The tendency to hold the maximum amount of water in our reservoirs while ignoring the high risk involved in doing so can be attributed to our over-dependence on hydel projects to produce electricity.
- Therefore, it is time to think of non-conventional sources for electricity generation such as solar, wind and tidal power.
- The practice of solar power generation in Kochi airport can be copied in similar large-scale projects by other government agencies. The public too should be encouraged to adopt the practice of solar power generation. This will greatly reduce our dependence on dams for power generation.

### **What should be the water level?**

- In view of above discussed problems and to ensure that the flood control purpose of dams is met, it is important that at least 30% of the storage capacity of dams be kept free before the monsoon.
- The meteorological department can predict rains or cyclones only a few days in advance. Therefore, keeping space in reservoirs before the monsoon begins must be done whether or not there are heavy rains, as no State can afford to take risks in the manner that Kerala did.
- However, even if the monsoons fail and dams fall short of water and there is a shortfall in electricity generation, this is not a loss compared to the possible loss of lives in the event of a flood of this magnitude.

### **Merits of Dam**

- It helps in reducing flood hazard due to inundation of land, crop and property which might result into economic upheavals.
- It reduces congestion of runoff in plains and coastal lands.

### **Institutional Control of dams**

- It is also crucial to follow good reservoir water management policies. At present, the task of dam and water management is vested with the Public Works Department, the Electricity Board, and the Irrigation Department.
- Even in normal conditions, given contradictory opinions from various departments, it is difficult to implement decisions.
- Hence, the State Dam Security Authority, if competent, should be entrusted with the task of water management in reservoirs and with taking decisions in emergency situations.

### **Conclusion**

- Whatever be the extra quantity of electricity produced and area of land irrigated because of the risky storage of water in our dams that cannot compensate for the loss of human lives, infrastructure and agricultural land. Nor can the agony caused by such destruction be compensated for.
- The State government, the State Dam Security Authority and the National Water Commission should all be prepared to take bold decisions together on water management so that there are no such devastating floods in the future.

## **National Disaster**

### **How does the law define a disaster?**

- As per the Disaster Management Act, 2005, “disaster” means a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man-made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or damage to, and destruction of, property, or damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area.
- A natural disaster includes earthquake, flood, landslide, cyclone, tsunami, urban flood, heatwave;
- A man-made disaster can be nuclear, biological and chemical.

### **How can any of these be classified as a national disaster?**

There is no provision, executive or legal, to declare a natural calamity as a national calamity

- MoS (Home) Kiren Rijju said, “The existing guidelines of State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)/ National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), do not contemplate declaring a disaster as a ‘National Calamity’.”
- MoS (Agriculture) Shripad Naik had told Parliament that the government had treated the 2001 Gujarat earthquake and the 1999 super cyclone in Odisha as “a calamity of unprecedented severity”.

### **How, then, does the government classify disasters/calamities?**

- The 10th Finance Commission (1995-2000) examined a proposal that a disaster be termed “a national calamity of rarest severity” if it affects one-third of the population of a state.
- The panel did not define a “calamity of rare severity” but stated that a calamity of rare severity would necessarily have to be adjudged on a case-to-case basis taking into account, inter-alia, the intensity and magnitude of the calamity, level of assistance needed, the capacity of the state to tackle the problem, the alternatives and flexibility available within the plans to provide succour and relief, etc.
- The flash floods in Uttarakhand and Cyclone Hudhud were later classified as calamities of “severe nature”.
- But, the Government of India has treated the Kerala Flood situation as a disaster of serious nature and has categorized the same as L3-level disaster, under national disaster management guidelines."

### **Level 1 to 3 classification of disasters**

- This categorisation doesn't find place in the Disaster Management Act of 2005, it figures in the National Disaster Management Guidelines of July 2007 and the National Disaster Management Plan of May 2016.

L0 (L stands for level)	This refers to normal times when there is no disaster. That's when state-level preparations to deal with disasters, including training in search and rescue operations, must happen.
L1	These are disasters that can be managed at the district level, but the state and Centre must be ready to provide assistance if needed.
L2	These are the disasters that may need assistance and active participation of the state, as well as state-level mobilisation of resources.
L3	These are situations arising from large-scale disasters, wherein districts and the state may not have the capacity to respond adequately and need assistance from the Centre.

- L3-level disaster, which is the most-severe, corresponds to a nearly catastrophic situation or a very large-scale disaster that overwhelms the state and district authorities, according to national disaster management plan.

### **What happens if a calamity is so declared?**

- When a calamity is declared to be of “rare severity”/“severe nature”, support to the state government is provided at the national level.
- The Centre also considers additional assistance from the NDRF.
- A Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) is set up, with the corpus shared 3:1 between Centre and state.
- When resources in the CRF are inadequate, additional assistance is considered from the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF), funded 100% by the Centre.
  - So, when the Central government chooses to label a calamity as a 'national disaster', it can release funds under the National Disaster Response Fund, which is a 100 per cent grant from the Central government to carry out relief and rehabilitation works
  - It is also an indication that the State Disaster Response Funds have proved inadequate to meet the requirements and the onus falls on the Centre to give 100 per cent assistance .
- Relief in repayment of loans or for grant of fresh loans to the persons affected on concessional terms, too, are considered once a calamity is declared “severe”.

### **How do other countries classify disasters?**

- In the US, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) coordinates the government's role in disaster management.

- Here it is essential to declare a disaster as a "national disaster" by way of a Presidential notification to allow the FEMA to move in.
- It is only when the presidential declaration is made, that the central disaster response forces in the US can assist the states.
- When an incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of state and local governments, the Governor or Chief Executive of a tribe can request federal assistance under the Stafford Act. In special cases, the US President may declare an emergency without a request from a Governor.
- The Stafford Act authorizes the President to provide financial and other assistance to local and state governments, certain private nonprofit organizations, and individuals following declaration as a Stafford Act Emergency (limited) or Major Disaster (more severe).

#### **How the funding is decided?**

- Based on the state government's memorandum, the Centre will dispatch a team to the state to study the situation and prepare a report.
- As per the National Policy on Disaster Management, 2009, the National Crisis Management Committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary deals with major crises that have serious or national ramifications.
- For calamities of severe nature, inter-ministerial central teams are deputed to the affected states for assessment of damage and relief assistance required.
- An inter-ministerial group, headed by the Union Home Secretary, studies the assessment and recommends the quantum of assistance from the NDRF/National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF).
- Based on this, a high-level committee comprising the Finance Minister as chairman and the Home Minister, Agriculture Minister, and Planning Commission Deputy Chairman as members approves the central assistance.
- If the State Disaster Response funds fall short, the Centre will open its purse strings to help the state further to recover its losses. Administratively and legally, that responsibility lies with the central government irrespective of whether it labels it a national disaster or not.

#### **Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)**

In pursuance of an appeal by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1948, PMNRF was established with public contributions to assist displaced persons from Pakistan.

- The resources of the PMNRF are now utilized primarily to render immediate relief to families of those killed in natural calamities like floods, cyclones and earthquakes, etc. and to the victims of the major accidents and riots.
- Assistance from PMNRF is also rendered, to partially defray the expenses for medical treatment like heart surgeries, kidney transplantation, cancer treatment, etc.
- The fund consists entirely of public contributions and does not get any budgetary support.
- The corpus of the fund is invested with banks in fixed deposits.
- Disbursements are made with the approval of the Prime Minister.
- PMNRF has not been constituted by the Parliament.
- The fund is recognized as a Trust under the Income Tax Act and the same is managed by Prime Minister or multiple delegates for national causes.
- PMNRF is exempt under Income Tax Act.
- Prime Minister is the Chairman of PMNRF and is assisted by Officers/ Staff on honorary basis.
- These contributions also qualify as CSR (corporate social responsibility) spend for companies, making it more attractive in terms of tax exemptions.

**Type of contributions accepted in PMNRF:**

- PMNRF accepts only voluntary donations by individuals and institutions.
- Contributions flowing out of budgetary sources of Government or from the balance sheets of the public sector undertakings are not accepted.



# GEOGRAPHY

## **Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)**

- It is an initiative of Ministry of Earth Sciences
- It will help in improving India's position in ocean research field.
- The mission proposes to explore the deep ocean similar to the space exploration started by ISRO

## **Key Deliverables**

- It is working to deliver offshore desalination plant that will work with tidal energy, and developing a submersible vehicle that can go to a depth of at least 6,000 metres with three people on board.
- So, the focus will be on technologies for deep-sea mining, underwater vehicles, underwater robotics and ocean climate change advisory services

## **India's Exclusive Rights to Explore Polymetallic Nodules**

- India has been allotted a site of 1, 50,000 square kilometers in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) by the UN International Sea Bed Authority for exploitation of polymetallic nodules (PMN).
- These are rocks scattered on the seabed containing iron, manganese, nickel and cobalt.

## **International Seabed Authority (ISA)**

- ISA is a UN body set up to regulate the exploration and exploitation of marine non-living resources of oceans in international waters. It has responsibility for the regulation of seabed mining beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. It was established in 1994.
- India actively contributes to the work of International Seabed Authority.

## **Doyang River**

- It is the longest and biggest river emerging from the Japfu peak, flows northward through Kohima, Zuhneboto and Wokha districts in Nagaland.
- This long river is also called as Dzu or Dzulu by locals in Wokha District.
- The main tributaries of this river are Tsui, Tullo and Tishi.

## **Lotha**

- Lotha is the name of a major Naga tribe inhabiting the Wokha district of Nagaland

## **O-SMART (Ocean Services, Technology, Observations, Resources Modelling and Science) Context**

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for the O-SMART which is an umbrella scheme for 16 sub Projects, for implementation during the period from 2017-18 to 2019-20 at an overall cost of Rs.1623 crore to address ocean developmental activities
- It is an initiative Ministry of Earth Sciences

### **What was the need?**

- As the resources on land are not adequate enough to meet the future demands, India is also embarking on blue economy for effective and efficient use of the vast ocean resources in a sustainable way, which would require a great deal of information on ocean science, development of technology and providing services.
- So this scheme will provide necessary scientific and technological background required for implementation of various aspects of Blue Economy.
- Implementation of O-SMART will help in addressing issues relating to Sustainable Development Goal-14, which aims to conserve use of oceans, marine resources for sustainable development.

### **Impact**

- The services rendered under the O-SMART will provide economic benefits to a number of user communities in the coastal and ocean sectors, namely, fisheries, offshore industry, coastal states, Defence, Shipping, Ports
- The State of Art Early Warning Systems established under the O-SMART Scheme will help in effectively dealing with ocean disasters like Tsunami, storm surges.
- It will help in harnessing the vast ocean resources of both living and non-living resources from the seas around India.

### **Terraforming**

**Context:** The scientists say that with current technologies, it is not possible to do Mars terraforming.

#### **What is terraforming?**

Terraforming is creating a habitable environment on Mars that would allow humans to explore it without life support.

Proponents of terraforming Mars propose releasing greenhouse gases (for their ability to trap heat and warm the climate) from a variety of sources on the Mars to thicken the atmosphere and increase the temperature to the point where liquid water is stable on the surface.

These gases are called “greenhouse gases”.

#### **Why is it not possible?**

- All the tinkering might thicken up the atmosphere and provide greater radioactive shielding, but Mars will continue to face atmosphere loss due to double solar radiation waves. As Mars desperately lacks an electromagnetic field.
- According to scientists, Mars does not retain enough carbon dioxide that could practically be put back into the atmosphere to warm the planet.
- Although the current Martian atmosphere itself consists mostly of carbon dioxide, it is far too thin and cold to support liquid water, an essential ingredient for life.
- Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and water vapour (H<sub>2</sub>O) are the only greenhouse gases that are likely to be present on Mars in sufficient abundance to provide any significant greenhouse warming.
- Although Mars has significant quantities of water ice that could be used to create water vapour, previous analyses show that water cannot provide significant warming by itself. Temperatures do not allow enough water to persist as vapour without first having significant warming by CO<sub>2</sub>.
- Even if Polar Ice caps were melted using thermo nuclear explosions, the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> released would only help in bringing Mars's atmospheric pressure to 1.2% of that of Earth. Any liquid water on the surface would very quickly evaporate or freeze.

## **Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands development Story: Good or bad?**

### **Holistic Development of Islands & Investors Conference**

- It will involve development of eco-tourism hubs with active participation of private developers in Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands under suitable risk-sharing model and through open-competitive bidding
- NITI Aayog has been mandated to steer the Holistic Development of Islands program, along with the respective UT administration/ State Governments
- It is a vision for developing India's maritime economy while preserving the natural eco-system and addressing the security concerns
- Emphasis is laid upon the need for sustainable development of Islands with people's participation.
- The projects on four islands — Long, Neil, Smith and Aves — are being undertaken as per decisions of the Islands Development Agency (IDA)

### **The developmental Story includes**

- Develop 220 rooms Premium Island Resort in 42 hectares land at Long Island, 50 beach tents in 2.75 hectares land at Aves Island, 70 premium tents & tree houses in 25 hectares land at Smith Island and 120 rooms premium beach resort in 9.75 hectares land at Bharatpur, Neil Island
- setting up of infrastructure for power, water, floating jetty, adventure sports, banqueting and conferences
- air strips, jetty, helipads, Roll On/Roll Off (RORO) ferry and roads works

### **Merits**

- It provides economic and livelihood opportunities.
- The islands will be developed as world-class tourism destination
- It will provide world class and sustainable tourism infrastructure with low environmental impact and provision for socio-economic involvement of local population

### **Unanswered Questions**

- Will the promises be delivered?
- How, for instance, will ecological and cultural sensitivity be ensured?
- Does a capacity really exist to ensure the safeguards when the scale and the ambition is so large?
- How much will it really benefit the local people and the local economy?

### **Way forward**

- What is required is addressing key issues and that involves providing transport facility to people of this region.
- This involves the safe shipping which is one of the most important means of travel
- With earlier cases of disaster the imperative part on the govt would be to provide basic infrastructural development that means providing safe and effective means of travelling which is the lifeline of the local community so that any disaster due to ships are avoided

## **Railways' focus misplaced: CAG**

### **Context:**

In a report tabled by the CAG, it was told that the bottlenecks must be removed to ensure timely arrival and departure of trains.

- The focus of Railways' modernization plans for its stations is mainly on improving the façade and passenger facilities.
- Removing bottlenecks to ensure timely movement of trains should be one of the most important parameters to judge the quality of service being provided to the passengers

#### **Blockage of lines:**

- The audit noticed that infrastructure such as platforms; washing pit lines and stabling lines at the stations were not augmented to match the increase in the number of trains handled in all these stations.
- Non-availability of adequate washing pit lines and stabling lines led to the movement of empty trains to other depots for maintenance purposes causing blockage of lines.

#### **What can be done?**

Important activities that could significantly contribute to timely arrival and departure of trains as per the report are:

- Before taking up modernization/redevelopment of stations and constructing new buildings, the possibility of further expansion of the stations by adding more platforms needs to be considered.
- Providing platforms with adequate length for easy boarding of long trains
- Providing adequate facilities for stabling trains
- Providing adequate facilities for the maintenance of trains in the stations
- Providing adequate yard capacity

## GOVERNANCE

### **Banka Unnayan**

#### **Context**

- Banka Unnayan is among three finalists in Commonwealth awards in innovation category.
- It has got award from Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM).
- It was government of India that had nominated Unnayan project as its only entry for innovation incultation category.
- Two others finalists in the category are Singapore and Malaysia.

#### **What is it?**

- 'Banka Unnayan,' is a project devised by District Magistrate of Banka and an education startup for fostering an environment across public schools in the district that encourages active student and teacher participation by building conceptual understanding
- It is an interactive online and offline study method through animated and interactive video lectures.

### **Digitization of courts**

#### **Context**

- The Supreme Court took a giant step towards digitization of courts across the country by launching three applications to facilitate e-filing of cases, making digital payments and service of judicial notices through smartphones to the litigants.
- The applications – e-courts services, E-pay and NSTEP (National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes) would pave the way of quality and speedy justice to litigants.

### **e-Filing application**

- It helps in online registration of lawyers and litigants
- Through the application, one can file cases from any part of India to any court on registration.
- Portfolio management of cases of litigants and lawyers is provided on this portal and one can get updates from time to time about filed cases, cases under objection or rejected cases.
- The facility of eSign is provided for those who cannot afford purchasing token for making digital signatures.

#### **Significance**

- The eFiling application will facilitate efficient administration of Judicial System, as it will ease pressure on filing counters and will speed up work flow processing.
- Data entry will be more accurate which will help to take data driven decisions in court administration.
- The application will help reduce touch point of litigants will also result in more productivity of staff members and can send documents for service to other locations or mail addresses which will be relatively easy and the requirement of scanning the record can be done away with.

### **e-Pay**

- It is unified portal wherein facility to pay online court fees is provided
- The platform is user friendly which can be used with very little self-help. ePayment is a safe and secure, quick and easy way to pay court fees .

- At present, the facility will be made operational in two states of Maharashtra and Haryana.
- OTP authentication provides secure way to financial transactions and one can get instant acknowledgement through SMS and print receipt.

### **Significance**

- The application is beneficial to judicial administration since verification of court fees is more easy, secure and transparent and accurate figures of court fees collected can be generated for any court, district or State.
- It paves the path of quality, quantity, affordability and cost effectiveness.

### **NSTEP - National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes**

- It is another innovative application launched as part of the eCourts Project, which is collaboration between Case Information Software (CIS), Web portal and Mobile Application.
- It is a transparent and secure system for transmission of process from one location to another, and shall address delays in process serving particularly for processes beyond jurisdiction.

### **Significance**

- NSTEP will lead to secured auto generation of processes with unique QR Code through CIS, publishing processes on portal and transmission of processes to other court complexes in the country and ultimately to mobile app of the bailiffs.
- The service will empower litigants with real time information relating to status of service of process and will entail litigants to take immediate follow up action which will reduce delays. The status of service can also be tracked on public portal.

### **E-Government Development Index (EGDI)**

- It measures countries use of information and communications technologies to deliver public services.
- The index captures the scope and quality of online services, status of telecommunication infrastructure and existing human capacity.
- The UN has been conducting the survey since 2001 to spread digital government throughout the world and to achieve sustainable development goals by 2030.
- The survey is conducted every 2 years by Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat with the assistance of International Telecommunication Union and Institute for Statistics of UNESCO.
- It is the only global report that assesses the government development status of the 193 UN Member States.

### **India's ranking**

- With an EGDI index score of 0.5669, India is just above the world average of 0.55.
  - The Asian leader in e-government, South Korea, scored 0.9010 (marginally behind world leader Denmark's 0.9150).
  - India's score is also shy of Iran (0.6083).
- Even in the SAARC region, Sri Lanka is ahead of India.
- India does rank very high in one sub-index. It moved up 12 places in the E-Participation Index (EPI), from 27 in 2016 to 15 in 2018.

### **E-Participation Index (EPI)**

- The EPI looks at issues like e-information, e-consultation and e-decision making to arrive at a score.
- India's high ranking does signify two things:
  - that the government is making more information available online



- That more people are in a position to access that information, and also electronically participate in policy formation and decision-making.
- A good example of this was when the government first mooted its 'smart cities' initiative, when citizens were able to actively participate with ideas on what kind of initiatives their city should adopt and how these initiatives should be designed and implemented.

### **World Ranking**

- In a 2018 ranking of countries on e-government development, Denmark has topped with a score of 0.915, followed by Australia, and Republic of Korea
- Somalia has been in last place with a score of 0.0566.

### **Significance**

- It serves as a tool for countries to learn from each other, identify areas of strength and challenges in e-government and shape their policies and strategies in this area.
- It is also aimed at facilitating discussions of intergovernmental bodies, including the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, on issues related to e-government and development and to the critical role of ICT in development.
- The reason the UN compiles this index and urges member countries to focus on e-government initiatives is that there is a clear link between greater e-governance and easier public access to government services and a reduction in poverty and inequality.

### **Examples from India**

- In India, a non-governmental organization has supplanted the role of government in rooting out corruption with its anti-corruption initiative, "I Paid a Bribe".
  - Set up in 2010, it harnesses the collective energy of citizens to tackle corruption in public services across India. The site collects reports on its website about the nature, number, pattern, types, location, frequency and monetary value of actual corrupt acts in specific locations.
  - The information is then used to advocate changes in governance and accountability processes, as well as to confront particular incidences of corruption. That initiative is now in use in several other countries
- In the South Indian province of Kerala, fishermen are using their mobile phones to get price information on what different markets would pay for their catch.
  - This demonstrates the clear benefits of mobile usage, as the fishermen's profits improved by 8 per cent.

### **Flawed implementation of Schemes in India**

- One of the biggest reasons our poverty alleviation measures have failed to achieve the desired impact (apart from corruption and leakage) is inefficient targeting, and lack of information with the intended beneficiaries about plans and schemes meant to assist them.
- In areas like public health and land records, the progress has stopped with putting up some downloadable forms online.
  - Many government departments still insist on physical forms and signatures, despite the near universalization of an identity instrument like Aadhaar, which allows simple and foolproof authentication.
- So, talk of pushing the cause of e-governance in India, actual progress has been slow.

### **Conclusion**

- Knowledge is power, but access to knowledge is another kind of power. This is where digital can be a great disruptor.
- With the India Stack (Aadhaar, UPI, etc. aimed at ensuring presence-less, cashless and paperless service delivery), and the ongoing mobile and broadband revolution, India can become a world leader in e-governance.

### **FASTag**

- It's a reloadable tag that automatically deducts toll charges and allows a vehicle to pass through a toll gate without stopping for the payment.
- It uses radio frequency identification (RFID) technology to make cashless payments through a prepaid account linked to it.
- The tag is fixed to the windscreen of a vehicle and an RFID antenna in the canopy of the toll gate scans the QR code and the tag identification number, following which the boom barrier lifts to allow a vehicle to pass through.
- The tag, which is valid for five years, comes in seven different colours — violet, orange, yellow, green, pink, blue, black. Each colour is assigned to a particular category of vehicles.

### **How does it work?**

- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has tied up with 20 banks to allow people to recharge their cards as well as for owners of old vehicles to purchase a FASTag.
- The tags can also be procured from kiosks set up at toll plazas. The cost of the device varies from one bank to another but on an average a buyer pays ₹600 for the device out of which ₹200 can be used for transactions at toll booth while the balance goes towards the cost of the device and the bank's fee.
- The NHAI also has a mobile application for FASTag that allows users to buy and recharge these tags as well as seek information on toll rates on different routes. It also allows them to give their feedback.
- Once the vehicle passes through a toll booth, the user receives an SMS alert regarding the charge debited to his or her account.

### **Benefits for the users**

- Users are refunded 5% of the total toll paid by them in a given month.
- Users can also pass through the plaza without having to stop their vehicle to make the payment.
- Cab operators and transporters say that the technology also allows them to track the movement of their vehicles as they receive SMS alerts.

### **Concerns**

- Many plazas don't have a dedicated lane for RFID tags, which means that one still has to wait in a queue along with other vehicles which need to stop to make cash transaction
- At many places RFID readers don't work

### **Lateral Entry**

#### **How the Secretariat functions**

- Higher bureaucracy in the secretariat often has to examine proposals received from specialized departments/corporations (say, the Central Public Works Department, Central Water Commission, various Central public sector undertakings, manned largely by technical experts), and in consultation with other ministries/departments like Finance, Personnel and Law prepare a cohesive note to facilitate the Minister concerned or the Cabinet to take a final decision.

- This is a complex consultative process for which detailed procedures have been formulated. How to steer a proposal through this labyrinth requires both expertise and experience.
- A Joint Secretary to the government has this crucial “line” function to perform in policy formulation and its implementation.
- The key officials in the secretariat, from the Joint Secretary to the Secretary, are the point persons guiding this consultative process and advising the political executive to take a final call.
- A final government decision is obtained, after the file moves through this long internal and hierarchical process, when the proposal is approved.
- Though the original proposal is often prepared by technical experts and sent to the “government”, the final decision rests with the Joint Secretary/Additional Secretary, the Secretary and finally the Minister/Cabinet.

### **Questions unanswered**

- The question often raised, is the higher bureaucracy equipped to comprehend complex economic and technical issues in order to properly aid and advise the Minister.
- Can a career civil servant, recruited through a tough competitive examination, cope with the increasingly complex matrix of decision-making at the senior levels of government?
- Can an IAS officer, however brilliant and diligent she might be, based on her experience at the sub-district and district levels, handle diverse portfolios from civil aviation to power to defence?

### **Is lateral entry something new?**

- Specialists like engineers, doctors, agricultural scientists, lawyers have always had a substantial say in the decision-making process as also in its implementation.
- Besides, Secretaries to the Departments of Atomic Energy, Science & Technology, Scientific and Industrial Research, Health Research, and Agricultural Research have always been scientists of eminence.
- Similarly, in departments like the Railways, Posts, etc., all senior positions are manned by Indian Railway or Postal Service officers.
- Therefore, there is nothing very original in the new initiative to allow entry at the level of Joint Secretary.

### **Issues with lateral entry**

- Those inside the system feel threatened that their territory is under assault. One perceived fear is that the number of such lateral entrants may be increased with time and that the political leadership, by creating a ‘divide and rule’ mechanism, would further demoralise the ‘steel frame of governance’.
- The second related fear is that in the garb of recruiting outstanding individuals, politically indoctrinated persons will be inducted into the system.
- It has also been argued that this marks the “privatization of the IAS”.
  - Private business houses would “plant” their people in order to influence government policies.
- These fears could have been allayed by letting the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) handle the recruitment process, after defining the job requirements more explicitly.

### **Reforms within existing domain**

- Admittedly, concerted efforts should be made to help IAS officers, after their first decade of “immersion” in districts, acquire specialization in broad sectors like social, infrastructure and financial, based on their qualification, aptitude and preference. This idea had never been pursued seriously.

- Ideas have also been advanced for IAS and other officers to gain work experience, for a limited period, in the private sector.

### **Conclusion**

- The government should have the best people at the helm of affairs and if there is a need to supplement the existing stock of talent by attracting fresh blood into the system, the IAS, in fact, should welcome such an inclusionary move.
- The automatic mode of every member of the higher services reaching the top echelons requires a hard look.
  - In view of this recent move, it is hoped that IAS and other officers will introspect why many of them turn out to be indulgent, self-serving and subservient to the political executive and how the system can be shaken to discourage such officers from ceaselessly moving upward, even after retirement.
- The lateral entry scheme, if implemented properly, may foster more competitive spirit, break the complacency of the higher civil servants and eventually prove to be a pioneering initiative in public interest.

### **ODF+ (Open Defecation Free Plus)**

- It means that public areas should be free of public urination and not just open defecation.
- This is the first time that the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) is officially including the elimination of public urination in its agenda.
- Urination has always been implied as part of the ODF agenda. So, there is subsidy for urinals, not just toilets

### **SBM ODF Plus**

- The protocol focuses on sustaining community/ public toilet usage by ensuring their functionality, cleanliness and maintenance.
- If at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating and/or urinating in the open, and all community and public toilets are functional and well-maintained

### **SBM ODF Plus Plus**

- It will focus on achieving sanitation sustainability by addressing complete sanitation value chain, including safe containment, processing and disposal of fecal sludge and septage.
- The faecal sludge/septage and sewage is safely managed and treated, with no discharging and/or dumping of untreated faecal sludge/septage and sewage in drains, water bodies or open areas

It is to address the issue of holistic sanitation, by addressing the entire sanitation value chain.

### **Sangham Radio**

- It is India's first community radio station owned and run by 5,000 poor, mostly Dalit women in one of India's most underdeveloped areas
- It is on the verge of closing down, unless its crowdfunding campaign raises enough funds.

### **Details**

- The radio station, an initiative of the Deccan Development Society (DDS), a local grassroots organization, was started in 1998 in Machanoor village in Telangana's Sangareddy district.
- It caters to the Sanghams (self-help groups) of underprivileged, rural women.
- It got its licence to broadcast in 2008, and has been in operation for ten years.
- The programming content is generated entirely by the 5,000-odd women, most of them semi-literate or illiterate agricultural workers.

### **Concerns**

- The radio station is currently facing both a financial crisis and technical problems.
- The government has not paid for the advertisements aired and its dues to Sangham Radio over the last three years has totalled to ₹3.25 lakhs
- The technical problem pertains to its transmitter, which is supposed to reach an area of 30km but now barely covers a 3 km radius

### **SC junks 'one State one vote' proposal of Lodha panel**

#### **Context**

- The Supreme Court finalised a new charter for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) while rejecting the 'one State one vote' recommendation of the Justice R.M. Lodha Committee

#### **Details**

- The SC disagreed with Justice Lodha that cricket could prosper only if the BCCI was represented by every State and Union Territory in the country.
- Instead, the court restored full BCCI memberships to three associations in Gujarat and Maharashtra each.
  - The cricket associations are the Maharashtra, Mumbai and Vidarbha cricket associations and
  - The Gujarat, Baroda and Saurashtra cricket associations.
  - To utilise territoriality as a basis of exclusion is problematic because it ignores history and the contributions made by such associations to the development of cricket and its popularity
- The bench restored the permanent membership to Railways, Services and Universities
  - The Bench agreed that the National Cricket Club and the Cricket Club of India did not deserve to be full members of the BCCI.

#### **Cooling-off period**

- The court supported the recommendation of the Lodha panel that cricket administrators should undergo a "cooling-off period" before contesting elections to the BCCI or State associations.
  - Cooling-off must be accepted as a means to prevent a few individuals from regarding the administration of cricket as a personal turf
  - Office-bearers should not be given lengthy tenures that enable them to establish personal fiefdoms.
- The court said an administrator need to "cool-off" only after two consecutive terms of six years in office, whether in the BCCI or a State association or a combination of both.
  - The argument against it is that the experience and knowledge that an office-bearer gains over three years should not be frittered away, and a second term could help consolidate such learnings.
  - The Lodha-recommended three-year break between each three-year term.

#### **Composition**

- The council would consist of a Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer and other officers who must be recruited on a transparent and professional basis.
- Of the nine members of the apex council, five (the president, vice-president, secretary, joint secretary, treasurer and a member) are to be elected by the General body.
- The court retained the Lodha panel suggestion of barring government ministers or government servants from holding cricket office. It upheld the age cap of 70 years for cricket administrators.

### **Modifies number of selectors from 3 to 5**

- The court modified the number of selectors from the current three to five, observing that a “broad-based selection committee” was required to tap the prodigious talent pool spread across the country.
- The vast territory of the nation, the extent of cricket being played both at the national and international level, the need for selectors to travel extensively to spot talent from the pool of cricketers and the need to encourage both domestic and international cricket

### **Eligibility**

#### **Eligibility for selection committee members**

##### **SENIOR COMMITTEE**

▪ Should have played seven Tests or 30 First Class matches **or** 10 ODIs and 20 FC games

▪ Should be a retired cricketer of five years

##### **JUNIOR COMMITTEE**

▪ Should have played 25 FC games

▪ Should be a retired cricketer of five years

##### **WOMEN'S COMMITTEE**

▪ Should have played for India and be a retired cricketers of five years

***In all cases the senior most will be the chairperson***

▪ Head coach to be appointed by the Cricket Advisory Committee



# HISTORY

## Montagu-Chelmsford Report

### Context

- July 2018 marks the 100th year of the publication of the 'Report on Indian constitutional reforms', commonly known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Report (MCR).

### Historical background

- Edwin Montagu, then Secretary of State for India, had advocated for increased participation of Indians in the British Indian administration and had begun consultations
- After many meetings with Indian representatives, Montagu and the then Governor-General, Lord Chelmsford, published the MCR on July 8, 1918.

### MCR and Self-Governance

- MCR believed in providing more administrative powers for giving provincial legislatures the mantle of self-governance
- It wanted to emancipate the local governments and legislatures from central control; and to advance, by successive stages, in the direction of conferring responsible government on the provinces
- MCR established the framework for devolution of powers and gave credence to the call for self-governance
  - The report said that the Provinces are the domain in which the earlier steps towards the progressive realization of responsible government should be taken

### Constitutional Framework provided by MCR

- MCR went on to become the basis for the Government of India Act, 1935, and the Constitution.
- The key principles of responsible government, self-governance and federal structure grew out of these reforms.
- The MCR on Indian constitutional reforms along with the Montagu Declaration are, thus, worthy claimants of the title of the Magna Carta of modern India.

## Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML)

### Introduction

- NMML established in the memory of Jawaharlal Nehru is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture
- It is Located in the majestic Teen Murti House
- It aims to foster academic research on modern and contemporary history

### Is it right to turn NMML into a museum for PMs?

#### Yes

- The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) is focused more on India's freedom struggle than Nehru's life.
- The NMML is famous globally because its library, reprography and manuscript sections house the best collection of journals, books, photos and personal papers of individuals and institutions. It is invaluable to researchers on modern and contemporary Indian history.
- The NMML and Teen Murti house the library and other related units, all established after Nehru's death.

- A substantial portion of the Teen Murti Estate has been diverted to other public uses
- Teen Murti was selected in 1948 as the residence of the PM, not of Nehru.
- So the claim that introducing other PMs, and making provision for future ones, would detract from Nehru's legacy does not stand scrutiny, and does not do justice to Nehru himself.

#### **No**

- It was built with an explicit aim of honoring India's first Prime Minister and the national movement. So any idea of bringing in other PM's will belittle the legacy of India's most impactful Prime Minister Nehru and his journey for India's Independence
- Lal Bahadur Shastri was offered the opportunity to move into Teen Murti Bhavan, which was where Nehru lived throughout his prime ministerial years, he declined as a mark of respect, and set in motion the process of converting it into a memorial to Nehru.

#### **It's complicated**

- It is a vibrant research institution. A large number of fellowships were offered to young and senior scholars to work on a various social science themes.
- The NMML became perhaps the best repository of research documents on the British period of India's history, consisting of government records, newspapers, private collections of important individuals and papers of political parties.
- The museum tells the story of the freedom struggle through a display of documents since the late 19th century till 1950.
- Therefore, any symbolism notwithstanding, substantively NMML is not about Nehru. All the four components — library, archive, research centre and the museum — have their own dynamism and relevance, which go far beyond any individual. All the four components need to grow.

#### **Conclusion**

- The library should get more books. The archive should acquire more documents, preserve them and ideally digitise them.
- The research centre should continue to promote social science research on important facets of modern and contemporary India, by inviting distinguished research scholars. And the museum should continue to tell the story of India's freedom struggle, but in more imaginative ways.
- It needs to continue to be what it has been and do a better job of what it has been doing so far.

#### **Teen Murti Bhawan**

- The Teen Murti Bhavan used to be the residence of the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, who stayed here for 16 years until his death in 1964.
- It was designed by Robert Tor Russell, the British architect of Connaught Place and of the Eastern and Western Courts on Janpath during the British Raj
- Teen Murti houses various institutions including the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), which runs under the Indian Ministry of Culture
- The complex also houses the offices of the 'Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund', established in 1964 under the Chairmanship of Dr S. Radhakrishnan, then President of India.
- Also contained within the complex are the 'Centre for Contemporary Studies' and the Nehru Planetarium which opened in 1984.

#### **"Teen Murti" (Three statues)**

- The memorial comprises life-size statues of three soldiers, and was built in 1922 in the memory of the Indian soldiers from three Indian princely states, namely; Jodhpur State, Hyderabad State and Mysore State
- In 1918, Indian soldiers fought the World War I alongside British forces.

- The British were in war with the then Ottoman Empire, who controlled a large part of West Asia. Haifa was part of the Turkish empire.
- The memorial was built in memory of soldiers, officers and men of the 15th imperial service cavalry brigade, composed of cavalry regiments from Indian states, who lost their lives in the great war of 1914 - 1919 in Sinai, Palestine and Syria

## MISCELLANEOUS

### **Fields Medal**

- It is a prize awarded to two, three, or four mathematicians under 40 years of age at the International Congress of the International Mathematical Union (IMU)
- It is a meeting that takes place every four years.
- The Fields Medal is widely regarded as the highest honor a mathematician can receive, and has been described by many as the mathematician's "Nobel Prize".

### **Context**

- Akshay Venkatesh, an Indian-born Australian mathematician, was one of the four winners of the prestigious Fields medal
- He was recognized for his use of dynamics theory, which studies the equations of moving objects to solve problems in number theory, which is the study of whole numbers, integers and prime numbers.
- Venkatesh has worked at the highest level in number theory, arithmetic geometry, topology, automorphic forms and ergodic theory. His research has been recognized with several awards, including the Ostrowski Prize, the Infosys Prize, the Salem Prize and Sastra Ramanujan Prize.

### **National Skill Training Institute (NSTI) for Women in Mohali**

#### **Context**

- The Union Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, laid the foundation stone for permanent campus of National Skill Training Institute (NSTI) for Women at Mohali

#### **Details**

- This is the first NSTI Institute for Punjab and only one of its kind in India which is exclusively for women
- The institute would not only be imparting training in traditional areas for women like beauty care, cosmetology & fashion design but also in cutting edge technologies of various kinds.

### **Go whats That**

- The minister also launched India's first in-phone guide and mobile application "Go whats That"

### **Ramon Magsaysay Award**

- Ramon Magsaysay Award is Asia's highest honour and is often regarded as the region's equivalent of the Nobel Prize.
- It was established in 1957 in the memory of Philippines 3rd President Ramon Magsaysay who had died in air disaster in March 1957.
- It was established by trustees of the New York City based Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Philippine government.
- It is awarded annually to individuals or organizations from Asia region for their altruistic and philanthropic service.
- The award carries a Medallion bearing the likeness of the late President Ramon Magsaysay, cash prize and a certificate.

## **2018 Awards**

- Bharat Vaswani and Sonam Wangchuk are among six individuals who were declared winners of the award
- Vaswani was recognized for rescuing mentally-ill persons living on the streets; providing free shelter, food, and psychiatric treatment; and reuniting them with their families
- Wangchuk, 51, was recognized for his uniquely systematic, collaborative and community-driven reform of learning systems in remote northern India, thus improving the life opportunities of Ladakhi youth, and his constructive engagement of all sectors in local society to harness science and culture creatively for economic progress, thus setting an example for minority peoples in the world

## **HRD Ministry approves norms against plagiarism**

### **Context**

- The Human Resource Development Ministry approved new regulations on plagiarism drafted by the University Grants Commission (UGC)
- The objective of the regulations is to promote academic research and curb plagiarism by developing systems to detect it

## **UGC (Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2018**

- Plagiarism of up to 10% would not invite any penalty
- Students may have to submit a revised research paper if found plagiarized in between 10 per cent and 40 per cent. The duration of re-submission will be 6 months
- If plagiarized in between 40 to 60 per cent, students will be deprived of submitting the revised paper for the duration of one year
- The student's registration for a programme will be cancelled if found plagiarized beyond 60 per cent
- Teachers in academics, if found having their research papers plagiarized in between 10 to 40 per cent, will be asked to withdraw the manuscript
- If found in between 40-60 per cent, they will be debarred to supervise Masters/Phd or Mphil students for two years and will be denied to single annual increment
- Over 60 per cent of plagiarism will lead the teachers' suspension and dismissal

### **Implications**

- Student researchers found guilty of plagiarism may lose their registration and teachers could lose their jobs

## **TRAI calls for zero telecom equipment imports by 2022**

### **Context**

- Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recommended for setting up of a ₹1,000 crore Telecom Research and Development Fund (TRDF) for promoting research, innovation, standardization, design, testing, certification and manufacturing indigenous telecom equipment

### **Details**

- The import of telecom instruments are far greater than the export
  - As per available data, the export of telecom instruments stood at \$1,201.7 million in 2017-18 while imports totaled \$21,847.92 million.
- So TRAI has recommended that Indian telecom equipment manufacturing sector to take a transition from import-dependent sector to a global hub of indigenous manufacturing.

- TRAI has asked Telecom Equipment Manufacturing Council (TEMC) to identify and recommend specific areas of priorities
- The regulator has suggested that the progress of indigenous telecommunication equipment manufacturing be monitored by Department of Telecommunications (DoT).
- It also said setting up of Telecom Entrepreneurship Promotion Fund (TEPF) and Telecom Manufacturing Promotion Fund (TMPF) should be considered

### **UAE top source of inward remittances in 2016-17: RBI**

#### **Context**

- Reserve Bank of India's survey of inward remittances for 2016-17.

#### **Details**

- UAE's share in total remittances was 26.9%, followed by the United States (22.9%), Saudi Arabia (11.6%), Qatar (6.5%) and Kuwait (5.5%).
- According to the survey, 82% of the total remittances received by India originated from eight countries — UAE, the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, the United Kingdom and Malaysia.
- Among destinations, Kerala has the highest share with 19%, followed by Maharashtra (16.7%), Karnataka (15%), Tamil Nadu (8%) and Delhi (5.9%).
- Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu together received 58.7% of total remittances.

#### **Channels of remittances**

- The rupee drawing arrangement (RDA) is the most popular channel of remittances which accounts for 75.2% of remittances, followed by SWIFT (19.5%), direct transfers (3.4%) and cheques and drafts (1.9%).
- Private Banks got the lions share in total remittances with 74.1%, while public sector banks share was 17.3% and the remaining with foreign banks.

#### **How was remittance money utilized?**

- More than half of remittances received by Indian residents were used for family maintenance, i.e., consumption (59.2%), followed by deposits in banks (20%) and investments in landed property and shares (8.3%)

### **Satya Pal Malik to be Jammu and Kashmir governor**

#### **Context**

- Satya Pal Malik will be the governor of Jammu and Kashmir, which will be ending the five-decade-long practice of retired bureaucrats being appointed to the post.

#### **Details**

Malik (72) has the experience of working with almost all political hues of the country and will be the first career politician to assume the position after Karan Singh, who held the office from 1965 to 1967.

- The first is to accelerate development projects.
- The second priority is internal security
- The third is to bridge the governance gap, in terms of appointments in key positions and cracking down on corruption.



## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Zika Virus is related to which of the following virus/es

1. Yellow fever
2. Dengue
3. Japanese encephalitis

Options:

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) None of the above

2. New Southern Policy, recently seen in news is the policy adopted by

- a) India
- b) USA
- c) South Korea
- d) China

3. Consider the following statements:

1. India is a signatory to UN Convention on Refugees.
2. Rohingyas as classified as Refugees by the Indian Government.
3. Government of India launched "Operation Insaniyat" to help Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

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

4. Consider the following statements:

1. The parliament is empowered to make laws to affect the Fundamental Rights, even if the matter is classified under the State List
2. The State Legislatures cannot make laws to affect the Fundamental Rights

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

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

5. Consider the following statements:

1. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India is a statutory body
2. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India fixes and revises the tariffs for telecom services in India

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

6. Public Interest Litigation could be linked to which of the following?

- a) Judicial Activism
- b) Judicial Review
- c) Judicial Intervention
- d) Judicial Sanctity

7. The Phrase "Equality before law" used in Article 14 is borrowed from:

- a) Greece
- b) France
- c) Britain
- d) USA

8. The Fundamental Duties were added to the constitution with the recommendation of

- a) Swaran Singh Committee
- b) Chavan Committee
- c) Anil Kakodkar Committee
- d) Punchhi Committee

9. Which of the following countries is not a SAARC member?

- a) Afghanistan
- b) Maldives
- c) Myanmar
- d) India

10. Consider the following statements:

- 1. Oxytocin becomes more effective when exposed to heat.
- 2. Carbetocin is a safe and effective alternative to oxytocin.

Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?

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

11. Consider the following statements:

- 1. The IUCN conservation status of Black Buck is "Endangered".
- 2. Velavadar Blackbuck Sanctuary is in Andhra Pradesh.
- 3. Black Buck is the state animal of Andhra Pradesh.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

12. Terraforming is

- a) A type of farming that consists of different "steps" or terraces.
- b) Creating a habitable environment on Mars, that would allow humans to explore it without life support.
- c) Making of clay-like earthenware ceramic that can be either glazed or unglazed.
- d) A method that involves the cutting and burning of plants in a forest or woodland to create a field

13. Bonalu is an annual festival celebrated in

- a) Andhra Pradesh
- b) Telangana
- c) Karnataka
- d) Tamil Nadu

14. 'E-bird project' in news is

- 1. The surveillance programme for monitoring the Tigers in the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve through drones.
- 2. The project launched to observe the migration patterns of Birds in Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary using CCTV cameras.

The correct option is:

- a) 1 only

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

15. Consider the following statements with respect to Coalbed Methane:

- 1. It is a sweet gas.
  - 2. It is one of the cleanest burning fossil fuels.
- Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

16. Consider the following statements with respect to Mission Kakatiya:

- 1. It is a programme by the Andhra Pradesh state government.
  - 2. The project aims at restoring all minor tanks and lakes in the state.
  - 3. The mission is a tribute to the Kakatiya rulers, who are known to have developed a large number of chain tanks across the region for agriculture.
- Which of the statement/s is/ are correct?

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

17. Mattala international airport is in

- a) Northwest of Sri Lanka
- b) Northeast of Sri Lanka
- c) Southwest of Sri Lanka
- d) Southeast of Sri Lanka

18. Consider the following about PMI:

- 1. It is an indicator of business activity both in the manufacturing and services sectors.
- 2. PMI is usually released at the start of the month.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither of them

19. Which road category has highest road length in India?

- a) National Highways
- b) State Highways
- c) District Roads
- d) Rural Roads

20. With reference to Black buck consider the following statements:

- 1. IUCN: Near Threatened
- 2. They are the "state animal" of Haryana and Punjab
- 3. They are found only in India

Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?

- a) Only 1 and 2
- b) Only 3
- c) Only 2 and 3
- d) Only 1

21. Which of the following countries have soft landed on the Lunar surface?

1. Russia
2. USA
3. China
4. India

Select the correct code:

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

22. Consider the following statements:

1. National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) is a statutory body.
2. National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) is a Constitutional body.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

23. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 35 A was incorporated into the Indian constitution through the Presidential order
2. Article 35A lets the Central Government decide the "permanent residents" of the State of Jammu and Kashmir

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

24. Consider the following statements:

1. The Ellora caves were initially built by the Rashtrakutas
2. There are 32 caves in Ellora.
3. The five Jain caves at Ellora belong to the Digambara Sect.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

25. Consider the following statements regarding National Mission for Clean Ganga:

1. It is the implementation wing of the National Ganga Council.
2. It is a statutory body.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

26. Consider the following statements:

1. All natural Earthquakes take place in the lithosphere
2. Tectonic Earthquakes occur due to the sliding of the rocks along the fault line.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

27. Consider the following statements:

1. S-Waves are the first waves to arrive at the surface at the time of an Earthquake.
2. P-Waves arrive after some time after the happening of Earthquake.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

28. Consider the following statements:

1. Richter scale is used to measure the intensity of earthquake
2. The energy released during a quake is expressed in absolute numbers of 0-10

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

29. Consider the following statements about Scrub typhus:

1. Scrub typhus is an infectious disease caused by a virus.
2. The disease has no cure, only its symptoms can be treated.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

30. Consider the following statements:

1. The Iran nuclear deal framework was a preliminary framework agreement reached in 2015 between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America
2. USA unilaterally pulled out of the Iran Nuclear Deal Framework in 2018

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

31. Consider the following statements:

1. Assam, is recognized as an endemic zone for acute encephalitis syndrome (AES).
2. Japanese encephalitis (JE), a vector-borne viral disease

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

32. Who among the following can be appointed as the chairman of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

- a) Retired Chief Justice of any High Court
- b) Any retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
- c) Any specialist in the field appointed by the President
- d) Any sitting judge of the Supreme Court

33. Choose the incorrect statement:

- a) FICCI was established by the capitalists like G.D. Birla and Purshottamdas, to lobby with the colonial government
- b) Post War Economic Development Committee drafted the Bombay plan
- c) The Bombay Plan, drafted by the capitalists, took up the question of equitable distribution
- d) None of the above

34. Which of the following is incorrectly matched?

- a) Kisan Manifesto – All India Kisan Committee
- b) Karshaka Sanghams – Malabar
- c) Summer Schools of Economics and Politics – Andhra Pradesh
- d) Utkal Provincial Kisan Sabha – Maharashtra

35. Consider the following statements with regards to the Clean Ganga Fund:

- i. Activities outlined under the 'Namami Gange' programme for cleaning of river Ganga will be financed from the Clean Ganga Fund.
- ii. NRIs and PIOs can contribute to the fund.
- iii. It is being managed by the National Mission for Clean Ganga

Which of the statement/s is/are incorrect?

- i) only
- ii) only
- ii) and iii) only
- None of the above

36. Consider the following statements:

- i. Right to Information Act, 2005 mandates timely response to citizen requests for government information.
- ii. All the citizens have the Right to Information.
- iii. Exemptions from disclosure of information have been provided in the Act.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

- a) i) and ii) only
- b) ii) and iii) only
- c) i) and iii) only
- d) All of the above

37. Consider the following statements:

- i. The Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha presides over the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha in the absence of the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.
- ii. The Deputy Chairman is elected internally by the Rajya Sabha.

Choose the correct option:

- a) Only i is correct
- b) Only ii is correct
- c) Both i and ii are correct
- d) Both i and ii are incorrect



38. Which of the following statements is incorrect with respect to the Inter-creditor agreement?
- It is aimed at preventing minority lenders from blocking a resolution plan of distressed loans and find a resolution outside the bankruptcy court.
  - An inter-creditor agreement spells out the differences between different creditors and their rights in the event of a bankruptcy or default.
  - Creditors can make these arrangements without the consent of the borrower.
  - None of the above
39. Consider the following statements in relation to The Information Technology Act, 2000:
- It deals with cybercrime and electronic commerce.
  - Publishing child porn and acts of cyber-terrorism are covered under this Act.
  - The Act prescribes penalties for the offences.
- Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?
- i) only
  - ii) and iii) only
  - iii) only
  - None of the above
40. Which of the following statements is incorrect with respect to the great jagged narrow-toothed shark (*Carcharocles angustidens*)?
- The great jagged narrow-toothed shark is extinct.
  - Its fossils can be found in Australia.
  - It is almost twice the length of today's great white shark.
  - None of the above
41. Majority as under Article 368 is needed in which of the following?
- for the passage of Constitutional Amendment Bill in the Parliament.
  - for the removal of judges of SC and HCs.
  - for the continuation of national emergency.
  - for the removal of Speaker of Lok Sabha.
  - for the removal of Vice-president in Rajya Sabha.
- Choose the correct option:
- Only 1
  - 1, 2 and 3 only
  - 1, 4 and 5 only
  - 4 and 5 only
42. The objective(s) of the Theory of Separation of Power is/are:
- To prevent the concentration of powers of government in a single authority.
  - To safeguard the individual's liberty.
- Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
- Only 1
  - Only 2
  - Both 1 and 2
  - Neither 1 nor 2
43. The real aim of the political work of the Congress, in words of the moderates, was:
- Indian independence
  - Swaraj (self-rule)
  - To educate Indian people
  - Change in government policies

44. Which of the following introduced bicameralism and direct elections in India?

- a) Government of India act, 1919
- b) Government of India act, 1935
- c) Indian council act of 1909
- d) None of the above

45. Article 371J of the Indian Constitution provides for:

- a) Establishment of a separate Development Board for Hyderabad-Karnataka region.
- b) Local reservation in education and Government jobs.
- c) Both a and b
- d) None of the above

46. Consider the following statements with respect to Gecko:

- i. Geckos are lizards and are found in warm climates throughout the world.
- ii. Most geckos are nocturnal.
- iii. Common house Gecko is found in India.

Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?

- a) i) only
- b) ii) only
- c) i) and iii) only
- d) None of the above

47. Which of the following statements is incorrect?

- a) Article 342 prescribes procedure to be followed in the matter of specification of scheduled tribes.
- b) It provides for listing of scheduled tribes on an all India basis.
- c) President, after consultation with the Governor, can specify a Tribe.
- d) No community has been specified as Scheduled Tribe in relation to the State of Haryana and Punjab.

48. Consider the following statements about the Wardha scheme of education:

- i. Zakir Hussain committee drafted the national scheme for basic education.
- ii. Wardha scheme rejected the trickle down methodology used by Britishers.
- iii. It supported vernacular education.
- iv. It recommended inclusion of basic handicraft in the syllabus.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- a) II and III only
- b) I only
- c) I, II and III only
- d) All of the above

49. Consider the following statements?

- 1. National Disaster Response Fund is a fund managed by the Central Government.
- 2. NDRF is constituted to supplement the funds of the State Disaster Response Funds (SDRF) of the states to facilitate immediate relief in case of calamities of a severe nature.

Choose the correct option:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) None of the above

50. Consider the following statements:

1. The National Disaster Response Force is a unit created by the government.
2. The NDRF works under the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

51. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India is an authority, established by:

- a) Executive
- b) Legislature
- c) Judiciary
- d) Constitution of India

52. Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), a statutory authority established in January 2009 by the government of India, under the jurisdiction of :

- a) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
- b) Ministry of Social Justice and Welfare
- c) Ministry of Telecom
- d) None of the above

53. Consider the following:

- i. Land degradation
- ii. Depletion of ground water table
- iii. Depletion of biodiversity
- iv. Environmental pollution

Which of the above is/are the ill effects of the Green Revolution?

- a) i and ii only
- b) ii and iii only
- c) iii and iv only
- d) All of the above

54. How are Green House Effect and Ozone layer depletion related?

- i. Greenhouse effect causes ozone layer depletion.
- ii. Ozone layer depletion causes greenhouse effect.
- iii. There is no relation between the two phenomenon.
- iv. Chlorofluorocarbons are one of the culprits in both the cases.

Which of the above statements are true?

- a) i and iv only
- b) ii and iv only
- c) iii and iv only
- d) i only

55. Consider the following statements:

- i. The idea of local self-government had existed in India in the ancient times.
- ii. The idea of decentralization in India as an organizational concept can be traced to Ripon's resolution in 1882.
- iii Article 40 of the Indian Constitution advised the government to take steps to organize village panchayats.

Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?

- a) i) only
- b) ii) only
- c) ii) and iii) only
- d) None of the above

56. The difference between the interest paid to the depositors and the interest charged on the borrower by a bank is called

- a) Bank spread
- b) Bank Stretch
- c) NDTL
- d) Bank Run

57. Which of the following with respect to the Rainbow Trout is incorrect?

- a) It is native to cold-water tributaries of the Pacific Ocean in Asia and North America.
- b) They generally live out their lives in fresh water
- c) It is listed as Threatened by the IUCN.
- d) None of the above

58. Greasing the wheel of commerce is the apt description for

- a) Creeping inflation
- b) Trotting inflation
- c) Galloping inflation
- d) Runaway inflation

59. In which of the following categories of protected areas in India are local people not allowed to collect and use the biomass?

- a) Biosphere reserve
- b) National Park
- c) Wildlife sanctuary
- d) Wetlands declared under Ramsar convention

60. Consider the following statements:

- i. Faizpur session of INC was the first session held in a village.
- ii. Belgaum session was the only INC session presided over by Gandhi.
- iii. All the INC sessions were presided over by Indians.
- iv. Sarojini Naidu was the first Indian woman to preside over an INC session.

Which of the above statements are true?

- a) iii only
- b) i, iii and iv only
- c) i and iii only
- d) None of the Above

61. Given below are two statements, one labeled as Assertion (A) and the other labeled as Reason (R). Select the correct answer from the codes given below:

Assertion (A): Fundamental Duties are non-justiciable.

Reason (R): They are supposed to inculcate a sense of patriotic and sensible citizenship.

Codes:

- a) Both (A) and (R) are true and (R) is the correct explanation of (A).
- b) Both (A) and (R) are true, but (R) is not the correct explanation of (A).
- c) (A) is true, but (R) is false.
- d) (A) is false, but (R) is true.

62. Latitude is the angular distance of a point on earth's surface measured from the:

- a) Centre of the earth
- b) Poles
- c) Equator
- d) Prime meridian

63. Which of the following factors are considered as determinants in 'Land Use Pattern'?

- i. Topography
- ii. Soil
- iii. Climate
- iii. Human population and technology
- iv. Availability of water

Which of the above statements are true?

- a) i, ii & iv only
- b) ii, iii, iv & v only
- c) i, ii, iii & iv only
- d) i, ii, iii, iv & v

64. Which of the following statement/s is/are incorrect?

- i. A split in congress happened during the Surat session in 1907 due to violent clashes between the moderates and the extremists.
- ii. Rash Behari Bose presided over the Surat session.
- iii. Extremists effectively organized an alternative party afterwards.

Options:

- a) iii) only
- b) ii) and iii) only
- c) ii) only
- d) i) and iii) only

65. Which of the following statement is correct regarding the power of Parliament in enacting the Budget?

- a) It cannot increase a tax but can reduce or abolish it.
- b) It can neither increase a tax nor reduce it.
- c) It can increase a tax but not reduce it.
- d) It can increase a tax as well as reduce it.

66. What is Rat hole mining?

- a) Mining practice in North-East India with narrow long tunnel.
- b) Mining practice in western India with narrow long tunnel.
- c) Agricultural practice in tribes of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- d) None of the above

67. Consider the following statements:

- i. U.P is the largest producer of Bajra in India.
- ii. Maharashtra is the largest producer of Ragi in India.

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- a) i only
- b) ii only
- c) Both
- d) None of these

68. Consider the following statements:

- 1. Mahadayi originates in Bhimgad in Belagavi district of Karnataka.
- 2. It is described as the lifeline of Karnataka.

The option/s is/are:

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

69. Consider the following statements with respect to the MPLADS Scheme

1. The MPLAD Scheme is Central Sector Scheme.
2. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MSPI) is the nodal ministry to coordinate work under the scheme.
3. Funds released under the scheme are lapsable.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

70. Consider the following about Ischemic stroke:

1. The State Disaster Response Fund corpus is contributed by the Union government and the respective State governments in a 50:50 ratio for general category States and 75:25 ratio for the Special Category States.
2. As per the Disaster Management Act, 2005 a disaster would be given more importance or urgency in relief only if it is declared as a national disaster.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

71. Consider the following statements:

1. River waters use/harnessing is included in states jurisdiction.
2. The Union Government cannot make laws on regulation and development of inter-State rivers and river valleys.

The correct code is:

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

72. Consider the following statements:

1. Cabinet Secretary heads the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC).
2. NCMC can give directions to any ministry, department or organization for specific action needed for meeting the crisis situation.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

73. Consider the following statements:

1. The Oxides and dioxides of sulphur and nitrogen are released during the burning of crackers.
2. Oxides and Dioxides of Sulphur and nitrogen are greenhouse gases.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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



74. Consider the following statements:

1. In elections, None of the above is also known as “against all” or a “scratch” vote
2. It means the voter is not interested in voting for any of the candidates.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

75. Consider the following statements:

1. The Fields Medal, popularly seen as the equivalent of a Nobel Prize, is awarded once in four years to two-four mathematicians below the age of 40.
2. In the recently announced prize for 2018, an Australian mathematician of Indian origin, Akshay Venkatesh, was awarded.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

76. Consider the following statements:

1. A city/ward is notified as ODF city/ward if, at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating in the open.
2. A city, ward or work circle could be declared ODF+ if, at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating and/or urinating in the open, and all community and public toilets are functional and well-maintained.”

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

77. Consider the following statements:

1. The Quad grouping refers to countries of India, Australia, Japan and the U.S.
2. Quadripartite Commission on Indian Ocean Regional Security put out a series of 20 policy recommendations for stability in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

78. Consider the following statements about National Disaster Response Fund:

1. NDRF is constituted to supplement the funds of the State Disaster Response Funds (SDRF) of the states to facilitate immediate relief in case of calamities of a severe nature.
2. The financial assistance from SDRF/NDRF is for providing immediate relief and is not compensation for loss/damage to properties /crops.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

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

79. Consider the following statements about Disaster Management in India:

1. The DM Act defines “disaster” to mean a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man-made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or property, or environment,
2. Disaster is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area.
3. The July 2015 guidelines states that natural calamities of cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack and cold wave and frost considered to be of severe nature by Government of India (GoI).

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) Only 1 and 2
- b) Only 2 and 3
- c) Only 1 and 3
- d) All of the above

80. Consider the following statements about Disaster Management in India:

1. For projects exclusively for the purpose of mitigation, i.e, measures aimed at reducing the risk, impact or effect of a disaster or threatening disaster situation a separate fund called National Disaster Mitigation Fund is provided.
2. The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the National Disaster Management Authority takes decisions on the expenses from National Disaster Response Fund, in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Central Government in consultation with the National Authority.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

81. Consider the following statements about Disaster Management in India:

1. NDRF is financed through the levy of a cess on certain items.
2. The requirement for funds beyond what is available under the NDRF is met through general budgetary resources.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

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

82. Consider the following statements

1. CAMPA Act ensures speedy utilisation of funds for forest lands that are diverted for non-forest purpose.
2. The Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Act, 2016, and its Rules, specify the kind of projects that would be eligible under the CAF, the composition of the national and State authorities, and how decisions regarding the utilisation of these funds ought to be taken.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

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

83. Consider the following statements

1. The Western Ghats is spread over 6 states.
2. UNESCO has acknowledged the Western Ghats as a biodiversity hotspot.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

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

84. Consider the following statements

1. Godavari, Kaveri and Krishna originate in the Western Ghats.
2. Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) was constituted by the Central Government, under the chairmanship of Madhav Gadgil.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

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

85. Bhoomi Rashi portal is developed by

- a) Ministry of Commerce
- b) Ministry of Agriculture
- c) Ministry of Rural development
- d) Ministry of Road Transport and Highways

86. Consider the following statements about Boka Saul:

1. It is a wheat variety grown in Assam
2. It recently got GI tag

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

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

87. With reference to National Statistical Commission (NSC)

1. It is a statutory Body
2. Established on the recommendations of the Rangarajan Commission
3. It is an attached office under Central Statistical Office

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) Only 3
- b) Only 2
- c) Only 1 and 3
- d) Only 2 and 3

88. Kowsar is a medium-range, land-based anti-ship missile made by

- a) Pakistan
- b) Saudi Arabia
- c) Iran
- d) Israel

89. Krem puri recently in news is in the state of

- a) Odisha
- b) Jammu and Kashmir
- c) Meghalaya
- d) Sikkim

90. RERA is a
- Statutory body
  - Constitutional body
  - Executive body
  - None of the above

91. Consider the following statements about Buyback of shares:

- A buyback is a mechanism through which a listed company buys back shares from the market.
- A buyback can be done either through open market purchases or through the tender offer route.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- Only 1
- Only 2
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

92. Consider the following statements about Catastrophe bonds:

- Catastrophe bonds are issued by insurance companies which have exposure to property and calamity insurance. There is also insurance bought by U.S. State governments against calamities.
- The cost of issuing and managing catastrophe bonds is cheaper than the cost of reinsuring these risks and does the same function of transferring risk.
- Insurance companies do not prefer issuing catastrophe bonds.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- Only 3
- Only 2
- Only 1 and 2
- Only 2 and 3

93. Consider the following statements:

- India's first biofuel-powered flight was successfully tested by SpiceJet .
- The Fuel was developed by Indian Institute of Petroleum(IIP)

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- Only 1
- Only 2
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

94. Consider the following statements:

- Rudrasagar Lake Annual boat racing festival is held in Tripura.
- Local fishermen community participates in the event every year.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- Only 1
- Only 2
- Both 1 and 2
- None of these

95. The Bagwal festival is a festival for

- RakshaBandhan festival
- Kites festival
- Holi festival
- Boat festival

96. Consider the following statements:

- The Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (NMML) is a museum and library in New Delhi, India, which aims to preserve and reconstruct the history of the Indian independence movement.
- NMML is an autonomous institution under the Indian Ministry of External Affairs

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- Only 1

- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

97. Consider the following statements:

1. National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is a statutory body under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005.
2. It is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) None of these

98. Kudumbashree is the women empowerment and poverty eradication program by the State of

- a) Karnataka
- b) Kerala
- c) Tamil Nadu
- d) Odisha

99. Consider the following statements:

1. S-400 is a long-range surface-to-air missile (MLR SAM) system built by Russia.
2. The mobile S-400 system can engage all types of aerial targets.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

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

100. Consider the following statements about O-SMART

(Ocean Services, Technology, Observations, Resources Modelling and Science):

1. O-SMART is an umbrella scheme which comprised of ocean services, technology, observations, resources modelling and science.
2. The services under this O-SMART will provide economic benefits to a number of user communities in the coastal areas, namely fisheries.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

## ANSWER KEYS

1	C
2	C
3	D
4	C
5	C
6	A
7	C
8	A
9	C
10	A
11	D
12	A
13	B
14	A
15	B
16	C
17	D
18	C
19	D
20	B
21	A
22	B
23	A
24	C
25	A
26	B
27	D
28	B
29	D
30	B
31	C
32	A
33	D
34	D
35	D
36	D
37	C
38	D
39	D
40	D
41	B
42	C
43	C
44	C
45	C
46	D
47	B
48	D



49	C
50	C
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80	C
81	D
82	C
83	C
84	C
85	D
86	A
87	B
88	C
89	C
90	A

91	D
92	C
93	D
94	C
95	A
96	B
97	C
98	B
99	D
100	C

## MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the challenges associated with drain water management in urban areas.
2. The Srikrishna committee report on Data protection contradicts the Supreme Court's judgement on Right to privacy. Critically analyse
3. Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently. Explain.
4. If more people start using PILs to claim their rights and uphold responsibilities, governance in India can become much more efficient. Critically analyses.
5. It may be argued that the transfer of all commercial disputes above three lakh rupees may overburden the commercial courts and defeat the objective with which they were established. Comment
6. Write a note on the regulation of E-Commerce in India. Elaborate on the challenges associated with it
7. The Union Cabinet's decision to amend the provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act appears both reasonable and unavoidable. Critically Examine.
8. Artificial intelligence is a disruptive technology. Elucidate on the future of this technology?
9. Abolition of NJAC has created vacuum in the judicial appointments and reinforces the judicial supremacy over Executive and Legislature. Critically Comment.
10. Establishing the embassy in another country is not important. Critically analyze.
11. India's architectural expertise was much advanced than other civilizations. Illustrate with examples.
12. Define the terms:
  - Fortitude
  - Jus ad bellum
  - Veracity
  - Ethical governance
13. With recent amendments to RTI, democracy will become government off the people, government buy the people and government far the people. Critically comment.
14. Safeguard duty on solar panels is a boon or a bane. Discuss its implications for India.
15. "It is not the severity of the punishment but the certainty and uniformity of it which will reduce crime". Critically analyze this statement in the context of recent Criminal Law Amendment Bill
16. The good news is that there has been a steady decline in the number of HIV cases in India. The bad news is that Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura have emerged as the new hotspots for HIV. In this context evaluate our country's efforts in dealing with HIV AIDS.
17. Mother's breast milk within one hour of birth is called the baby's first vaccine. Elaborate on the initiatives taken by the government in this regard
18. Discuss the nature of working of National Regulatory Commissions in India. Suggest measures to bring about changes in these Commissions
19. The digital divide in India still remains a challenge to the developmental goals. It has not been able to prove itself as a revolutionary tool in bridging the divide in the society. Critically analyze
20. Article 35A of the Indian Constitution, which 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, is currently being challenged in the Supreme Court. Discuss the circumstances in which it was brought about and the significant role that it plays in India's reconciliation efforts vis-à-vis Kashmir.
21. Media can be accorded the status as the fourth pillar of Democracy. Critically analyze
22. Discuss poverty as a challenge to Sustainable development.
23. Important safeguards and a cost-benefit analysis are still lacking for the DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018. Discuss.
24. The lateral entry scheme, if implemented properly, may foster more competitive spirit, break the complacency of the higher civil servants and eventually prove to be a pioneering initiative in public interest. Critically analyses.
25. Caste is a product of colonial modernity. Discuss.

26. The impact of climate change is no longer risks that exist in the distant future. Comment.
27. Begging is the oldest profession in India. Criminalizing begging will not help in removing this from our society. Critically analyze.
28. Judicial intervention has been immensely helpful in making cricket administration more efficient and professional, and addressing the credibility deficit. Comment with respect to Lodha committee recommendations.
29. The expected growth rate of 7.3-7.4% may be reassuring but it falls short of India's potential. It is below of what is needed to raise job opportunities and reduce poverty. Discuss.
30. Discuss the areas of concern which are directly relevant to the problems of internalizing integrity and Ethics in democratic governments and the Civil Service
31. In an administrator, the quality of empathy is considered to be important. What are the challenges to empathy and how it can be overcome?
32. The significance of the American War of Independence was more than independence and it was basically a revolution. Explain
33. Give reasons for regionalization of world politics.
34. Globalization has led to triple burden on Indian women. Discuss.
35. Discuss the concept of multidimensional poverty and the challenges in eradication of poverty.
36. "Skill Development in India is supply-driven but it should be demand-driven." Analyze.
37. What is the concept of 'truth' in Gandhian philosophy?
38. What role does emotional intelligence play in strengthening democratic values in a society like India?
39. The Delhi high court judgement of decriminalizing begging is a welcome move but there are some inherent difficulties. Critically Analyze.
40. Explain in detail the foreign policy under each of the Prime Ministers.
41. Pakistan and India should aside their political misunderstanding to bridge the economic functions. Explain the importance of India Pakistan trade with relevant examples.
42. There are strategic pitfalls of either slowing down India's RCEP engagement or walking out of the talks. Critically analyse.
43. Climate change has the potential to disrupt and reshape lives. Critically comment on the recent issues regarding the nature's devastations impacting the lives and livelihood.
44. Discuss the significance of State Finance Commission. Explain the challenges involved in its functioning.
45. The recent Kerala floods pose a challenge to the existing mechanism of Disaster Management in India. Discuss the reasons for escalation of the disaster in Kerala.
46. The standpoint regarding foreign assistance stems from the fact that India is "capable" of dealing with natural calamities. Critically analyses the rationale behind such policy.
47. In order to stabilize the earth, we would have to recognize and then carry out deliberate, sustained action to secure earth systems and also adapt to a warmer world. Discuss in the context of a "Hothouse Earth".
48. There are several problems with the EPFO data and its use as a gauge of formal sector employment in the country is not effective. Discuss.
49. Pakistan's arch-rival India remains Pakistan's biggest foreign policy challenge. Comment.
50. In countering the Indo-Pacific strategy led by the U.S, China should forge closer ties with India, Japan, and Australia. Comment in the context of the reemergence of multiple power blocs in International politics
51. Technology has a flip-side but live-streaming of Supreme Court proceedings is a true representation of the "open courtroom" system. Discuss
52. Visual Media has become a battle ground for high intense debates, a platform for sharp judgements devoid of facts and news. Critically Analyze.
53. The Kerala Floods is a sign of strong commitment of people and strength of local community as first responders. But lack of muscle is reflected in Sustainable development. Do you agree? Justify your View.
54. What is Stoicism? Illustrate with example from your personal experiences.
55. Although complete cure for Leprosy is discovered, the social stigma attached to it still remains. Discuss.

56. The world over, dams are constructed mainly for the purposes of irrigation, power generation, and flood control. Discuss the role of dams in flood control.
57. India still has to develop a strategy to leverage its soft power and optimize its military power to effectively counter China's cash and hard power. Comment
58. The bilateral deal between the U.S. and Mexico offers hope of winding down global trade wars. Discuss this in the context of NAFTA trade deal between U.S and Mexico.
59. Compare and contrast the role of the SAARC and BIMSTEC in India's regional governance. Has BIMSTEC emerged as a new platform to take forward India's economic and security policies in the South Asian region?
60. Simultaneous polls can be achieved if there is "political will" and if the States agree voluntarily. Discuss the issue of simultaneous polls in the context of federalism
61. Dissent and criticism of the government are essential ingredients of a robust public debate in a vibrant democracy- the Law Commission. Is sedition relevant in a modern democracy? Elucidate.