

# UPSC MONTHLY

## JANUARY-2018

# MAGAZINE



### Super Blue Blood Moon

A supermoon, a blue moon, a blood moon and an eclipse coincided



### National Medical Commission Bill

Bill regulating medical education and practice

### Delhi Declaration- ASEAN

Inching towards new bonhomie



### Australia Group

India admitted as the 43rd member to the Australia Group

### Four SC judges air differences with CJI Misra

Allegations of corruption in the higher judiciary

# INCREDIBLE RESULTS

## — IAS 2016 —

8 Ranks  
in Top 50

18 Ranks  
in Top 100

215 Ranks  
In The Final List



**Rank 2**  
Anmol Sher  
Singh Bedi



**Rank 5**  
Abhilash  
Mishra



**Rank 12**  
Tejaswi  
Rana



**Rank 30**  
Prabhash  
Kumar



**Rank 32**  
Avdhesh  
Meena



Ganga  
Singh  
Rank-33



Anu S  
Rank-42



Surabhi  
Gautam  
Rank-50



Manuj  
Jindal  
Rank-53



Tanai  
Sultania  
Rank-63



Parikh  
Mirant Jatin  
Rank-67



Rohit  
Vyas  
Rank-69



Abhishek  
Chourasiya  
Rank-72



Rajarshi  
Shah  
Rank-81



Prateek  
Jain  
Rank-82



Nair Prajit  
Prabhakaran  
Rank-87



Sushil  
Kumar  
Rank-96



Devendra  
Kumar  
Rank-97



Swarn  
Prabhat  
Rank-105



Hirani  
Adityavikram  
Rank-113



Varun  
Singla  
Rank-114



Shaurya  
suman  
Rank-119



Nitish  
Agarwal  
Rank-122



Ann Mary  
George  
Rank-123



Anand  
Shankar  
Rank-127



Rishav  
Kumar Jha  
Rank-128



Prabhat  
Ranjan Pathak  
Rank-137



Akanksha  
Rana  
Rank-163



Padmini  
Solanki  
Rank-170



Amogh  
Gopinath  
Rank-171



Bindu  
Madhav  
Garikapati  
Rank-172



Rahul  
Gupta  
Rank-182



Sagar  
Bagmar  
Rank-186



Abhay  
Soni  
Rank-188



Tare Anuj  
Milind  
Rank-189



Anurag  
Jain  
Rank-198



Arpit  
Vijayvargiya  
Rank-201



Deepak  
Shukla  
Rank-202



Videh  
Khare  
Rank-205



Akhil  
Mahajan  
Rank-213



Nitika  
Pant  
Rank-217



Tuhin  
Sinha  
Rank-219



Keshav  
Kumar  
Rank-222



Keshav  
Kumar  
Rank-230



mohit  
Garg  
Rank-238



Pansuria  
Toral Pravinbhai  
Rank-239



Odke Digvijay  
Govind  
Rank-247



Bogati  
jagadeeswar  
Rank-249



Abhishek  
Surana  
Rank-250



Pushkin  
Jain  
Rank-252



Amit  
Verma  
Rank-253



Shrey Vats  
Rank-260



Suchismita  
Kanungoe  
Rank-261



Sri Hari Prasad  
Gopishetty  
Rank-268



Aditi Mor  
Rank-277



Zade Parikshit  
Sanjayrao  
Rank-280



Prachi  
Ailawadhi  
Rank-290



Guru  
Prasad  
Rank-299



Shashank  
Shekhar Singh  
Rank-306



Aaditya  
Mishra  
Rank-309



Amilineni  
Bhargav Teja  
Rank-314



Aman  
Bishla  
Rank-315



Arihant  
Singhi  
Rank-322



Mitika  
Dahiya  
Rank-325



Ashima  
Mittal  
Rank-328



Aastha  
Suman  
Rank-331



Ankur  
Rank-341



Avneet  
Punia  
Rank-356



S Chitharanjan  
Rank-357



Ranjan  
Rajeev  
Rank-358



Godhani  
Aksharkumar P  
Rank-365



Sumit  
Balecha  
Rank-368



Basuki Nath  
Jha  
Rank-378



Mayank  
Mishra  
Rank-379



Mrinal Prakash  
Mishra  
Rank-380



Kaustuva  
Rank-381



Sambit  
Mishra  
Rank-385

# OUR RESULTS IN THE PAST YEARS

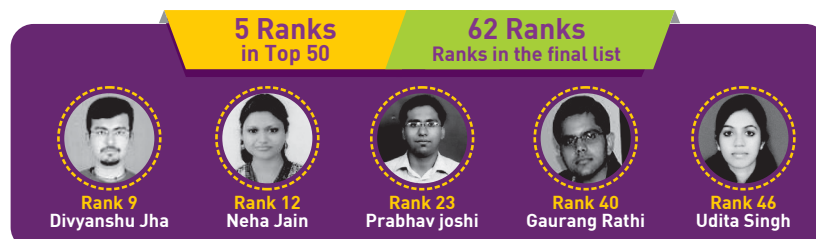
## IAS Result 2015



## IAS Result 2014



## IAS Result 2013



# CONTENT

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
1	Polity	4
2	Economy	12
3	International Relations	27
4	Social Issues	34
5	Science and Technology	39
6	Security and Defence Related	44
7	Health Issues	48
8	Education	54
9	Art and Culture	56
10	Miscellaneous	60
11	Practice Questions	62
12	Answers Keys	81
13	Mains Practice Questions	84



# POLITY

## 1. Committee of Governors

- The Committee of Governors submitted a report on best practices to President Ram Nath Kovind
- The report focuses on key work areas of development and the role that governors can play in taking this forward.
- The report, titled 'Rajyapal –Vikas Ke Rajdoot: Catalytic Role of Governors as Agents for Change in Society', was overseen by the committee that was constituted in October 2017 during the 48th conference of governors.

### Details

- This Committee was constituted to examine the role of Governors in taking forward the developmental process. In its report, it describes an action-outcome framework that can be adopted by Raj Bhavans in their role as change agents and lists out potential priorities
- The report emphasizes identifying priority areas along with activities that can help realise the objectives of Sarv Shrest Bharat (paramount India). It suggests Governors play a mentoring role in overall implementation of developmental schemes in their states
- The report deals with best practices that offices of governors have been adopting, issues and an action-outcome framework to deal with them.

## 2. e-Sansad and e-Vidhan

### Background

- The crucial issue of Efficient Functioning of Legislatures will be deliberated by the Whips of Parliament and Legislatures and the Ministers of Parliamentary Affairs of various States during a two-day Conference to be held in Udaipur

### What is it?

- e-Sansad and e-Vidhan are mission mode projects of Government of India under Digital India, to make the functioning of Parliament and State Legislatures paperless.
- It is an ambitious project by the Centre, where it plans to digitize and make available all Parliament documents, including debates, speeches, committee reports and questions, on the internet.
- Some States have made good progress in the field of automation of their Legislatures, yet consumption of huge volume of papers is still going on in these States. In order to address this issue and economize the entire Legislative process, e-Vidhan is proposed to be implemented in all the States/ UTs with Legislatures.

- MoPA is the Nodal Ministry for implementation of both the projects

### Significance

- According to the agenda prepared by MoPA for the Conference, these projects would make the functioning of Parliament and State Legislatures participative, responsive, transparent, productive and more accountable to the public and make the entire Legislative process more efficient. Further, this environment friendly initiative is in line with the 'Go Green' initiative of the Government.
- Once available online, the database could turn out to be a valuable resource for researchers, historians, academicians and activists.
- It would primarily be helpful for legal professionals who, while preparing arguments, often had to refer to the intention of lawmakers.
- This initiative will also help bring India on a par with developed nations such as the US and the UK, which have advanced digital archives online

## 3. Malimath Committee Report

- The Centre has decided to revisit the 2003 report of the Justice V.S. Malimath Committee on reforming the criminal justice system.

### What are the major recommendations?

- It includes controversial recommendations such as making confessions to a senior police officer admissible as evidence, and diluting the standard of proof required for a criminal conviction.
- It also contains valuable suggestions to revamp the administration of criminal law, covering the entire gamut of the justice system from investigation to sentencing, from matters of policy to the nuances of criminal procedure and the law of evidence.

### What are the accepted recommendations?

- The committee made 158 recommendations, and since then some of these have become law.
- Its suggestion on permitting videography of statements has been implemented.
- The definition of rape has been expanded and new offences against women have been added.
- Its advocacy of substantial witness protection has not been realised, but victim compensation is now part of law

### What are the controversial recommendations?

- The recommendations relating to making confessions to high-ranking officers admissible, and increasing the period of police custody from 15 to 30 days.

- These provisions were available only in anti-terrorism laws that are now no more in force. There is no need to bring them into general criminal laws.

#### What is the new standard of proof suggested?

- The Malimath report suggests a standard of proof lower than the current 'beyond reasonable doubt' standard.
- It moots a 'clear and convincing' standard, that is, it is enough if the court is convinced that something is true. Such a measure would have adverse implications for suspects, and requires considerable deliberation.
- There is some understandable disquiet about the state of criminal justice administration in the country and there is a crying need for a wide range of reforms.
- As the Madhava Menon Committee's 'Draft National Policy on Criminal Justice' (2007) noted, such popular dissatisfaction arises from the low rate of conviction, the apparent role of money and influence in the outcome of cases, delayed and denied justice, lack of protection to witnesses and inadequate attention to crime victims..

#### What are the issues with Criminal justice system in India?

- The perception that there is corruption on the one hand and a deep nexus between crime syndicates and politicians on the other, has added to the erosion of public confidence in the justice delivery system.
- Despite all these considerations, any move to make substantive changes in the way criminal justice is administered will have to be done with great circumspection, lest vital constitutional safeguards against abuse of police and judicial powers are violated in the process.

### **4. Lawyers and Parliamentarians**

#### What is the issue?

- The issue is whether MPs and MLAs should practice law in courts. By doing so, does it affect the quality of work in the legislative work?

#### Rules under Bar Council of India

- Rule 49 of the Bar Council of India states that any full-time salaried employee, whether he or she belongs to a corporation, private firm, or the government, cannot practise as a lawyer before a court of law.
- No public servant can engage in the pursuit of any other vocation and certainly cannot offer his or her services as a lawyer while in service.

#### Court Ruling

- A five-judge Bench in *M. Karunanidhi v. Union of India* (1979) categorically stated that MPs and MLAs are public servants, though the employer-employee relationship will not apply to them. Mr. Karunanidhi had argued that he was not a public servant in a corruption case.

#### Practical issues

- The work of a lawyer is a full-time activity. So is the work of MPs and MLAs; they are full-time members of Parliament and Assemblies.
- They have to take part in the proceedings of the House, meet people in their constituencies, and grapple with and address people's issues. They have their work cut out.
- To facilitate their work, they are given a bungalow and a car, an office and a salary. They should go and serve the people.

#### Ethical Issues

- Also, no lawyer can benefit from the petitioner and the respondent. MPs and MLAs who are practicing lawyers take a fee from the petitioner and get their salary from the respondent, which is the Central or State government.
- This is professional misconduct, as they end up enjoying the benefits of both.
- There is also a conflict of interest. MPs and MLAs have the power to initiate impeachment proceedings against a judge, which means that they can pressurise the judge to give a favourable verdict when they plead before him or her in a case. When you take public money and argue against the government, it is professional misconduct.
- When MPs and MLAs find a draft Bill wanting, they should argue in Parliament, not challenge it in a court of law. Also, they take retainership from a company, which raises questions of professional misconduct as well as conflict of interest.
- Public servants are barred from engaging in other professional services, so on a similar note, we cannot allow legislators who are also public servants to argue cases in courts.
- This is a violation of Articles 14, 15, and 21, which deal with the right to equality, prohibition of discrimination, and protection of life and personal liberty, respectively.

### **5. Hindi as an official language in U.N**

#### Procedure

- According to the UN rules, support of two-third member countries (129 nations) is required out of the total 193 member nations
- Besides, all member nations will have to bear the cost of making Hindi one of the official languages of the UN.

Currently the official languages of the United Nations are Arabic, English, Russian, French, Spanish and Chinese.

#### Why Hindi?

- Hindi is one of the official languages of India and Fiji.

- It has more than 550 million speakers in India alone, of whom 422 million are native, 98.2 million are second language speakers, and 31.2 million are third language speakers
- Hindi is the fourth most-spoken first language in the world, after Mandarin, Spanish and English
- The World Hindi Secretariat is headquartered in Mauritius and the organization seeks to promote Hindi as an international language.

In 2015, Nepal's Vice President Parmananda Jha stated his firm support for the inclusion of Hindi as an official language of the UN

#### Issue Area

- The government has failed to even initiate a discussion on such an important agenda either in Parliament or among the people.
- It is equally worrying that the minister says the government is ready to foot a bill of Rs 400 crore every year when there is no indication that the finance ministry has accorded the provisional sanction of funds or made any budgetary allocation in this regard over the past two years.
- The core issue is whether and why Hindi should be promoted over other languages spoken in India. Article 343 of the Constitution of India deems English and Hindi to be official languages of the Union
- There are more than 600 million (close to 60 per cent) non-Hindi speakers in the country, according to the 2001 Census data.
- There are 22 languages recognized as official languages by the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. There have been repeated requests by non-Hindi speakers to give these languages constitutional status equal to that of English and Hindi.
- It is ironic that the government is expending significant diplomatic capital trying to place Hindi along with the six official languages of the UN when they have consistently denied equal official language status to the languages in the Eighth Schedule.

#### Hindi-ization

- The government accepted the recommendation made by the Committee of Parliament on Official Language that "all dignitaries including Hon'ble President and all the ministers especially who can read and speak Hindi may be requested to give their speech/statement in Hindi only".
- Public sector banks, the Railways and other Central government-run services are all tacitly being Hindi-ised.

#### Established Principles

- Article 120(1) of the Constitution states the speaker "may permit any member who can not adequately express himself in Hindi or in English to address the House in his mother tongue".

- Moreover, the Rajya Sabha Handbook indicates that Parliament provides simultaneous interpretation services for Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Malayalam, Marathi, Punjabi, Oriya, Tamil and Urdu only.
- But when a member speaks in any of these nine languages, the speeches are translated into Hindi and English only.

#### International Experience

- Compare this with the European Union Parliament in Strasbourg where 23 languages are simultaneously translated into one another.

#### What needs to be done?

- Without making the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha multilingual and inclusive, any efforts to make Hindi an official language of the UN will renew the fears of non-Hindi speakers.

### **6. Playing of national anthem in cinema halls optional:**

#### **Supreme Court**

##### Supreme Court orders:

- Current order: the playing of national anthem in cinema halls before screening of movies is optional.
- Earlier order (November 30, 2016): The Supreme Court had ordered the playing of the anthem mandatory in cinema halls before the screening of a film.

##### Inter-ministerial committee:

- The Centre has constituted a 12-member inter-ministerial committee, to take a final call on the playing of national anthem in the cinemas and to suggest changes in the 1971 Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act.
- Mandate: need to frame guidelines describing the circumstances and occasions on which the national anthem is to be played or sung and observance of proper decorum on such occasions.

##### Supreme Court's observations:

- People cannot be forced to carry patriotism on their sleeves and it cannot be assumed that if a person does not stand up for the national anthem, he or she is less patriotic.
- The society does not need "moral policing"
- Next time, the government will want people to stop wearing T-shirts and shorts to cinemas saying this would disrespect the national anthem.
- The exemption granted earlier to disabled persons from standing in the cinema halls when the national anthem is being played, shall remain in force till the committee takes a decision.

### **7. No viable alternative to hanging, Centre tells court**

#### **Supreme Court seeks less painful means of execution**

- The Centre told the Supreme Court that there is no viable method at present other than hanging to execute condemned prisoners

- Lethal injections are unworkable and often fail
- The government was responding to a query from the court on alternative modes of execution

#### Supreme Court's view:

- The court had previously said a condemned convict should die in peace and not in pain
- A human being is entitled to dignity even in death
- The court had asked the government to consider the "dynamic progress" made in modern science to adopt painless methods of causing death

#### Constitutionality of death penalty:

- The court has already clarified that it is not questioning the constitutionality of death penalty
- It has been well-settled by the apex court, including in Deena versus Union of India and earlier in the Bachan Singh case reported in 1980
- Section 354 (5), which mandates death by hanging, of the Code of Criminal Procedure, has already been upheld

#### Death by lethal injections:

- Death by lethal injection is practiced in the U.S., China, Thailand, Vietnam and a few other countries
- The Law Commission of India had recommended lethal injection for death penalty

### **8. Four SC judges air differences with CJI Misra**

- Four senior judges of the Supreme Court held a press conference and publicly accused Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra of selectively assigning cases to judges of his choice without any rational basis.
- The judges said that with the independence of the judiciary and the future of democracy at stake, they had "no other choice but communicates to the nation to please take care of this institution."

#### Trigger for press conference:

- The assignment of a petition, seeking an independent probe into the mysterious death of CBI judge B.H. Loya, to a particular Bench. (Loya was the CBI judge hearing the Sohrabuddin Sheikh encounter case).

#### As per the conventions and the protocol:

- The convention of the court demands that important cases of public interest or sensitive matters should be first heard by the CJI.
- If the CJI is not willing for some reason to hear the case, it should be assigned to the next senior-most judge in the Supreme Court.

Government response: It is an internal matter of the judiciary" and that it was "up to the judiciary to sort out the matter.

### **9. PIL in Supreme Court to declare rape, sexual assault gender-neutral**

- A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed in the Supreme Court seeking to declare the offences of rape, sexual assault, outraging of modesty, voyeurism and stalking in the Indian Penal Code as gender-neutral.
- The petition sought to declare the word 'any man' used in the provisions for such offences under IPC, as ultra vires of the Constitution.
- The concerned sections (section 354 IPC, 354A IPC, 354B IPC, 354C IPC, 354D IPC and also section 375 IPC) categorically demonstrate that all offences under the related provisions would always be committed by an accused who happens to be a 'man' and the victim would always be a 'woman'.
- The section 354 of the IPC which deals with assault of or criminal force against a woman with the intent to outrage her modesty and its allied provisions do not stipulate any law to protect the modesty of a man.
  - \* Section 354 A of IPC deals with the offence of sexual harassment and its punishment.
  - \* Section 354 B is defined as assault or use of criminal force against a woman with the intent to disrobe.
  - \* Section 354 C of the code deals with the offence of Voyeurism.
  - \* Section 354 D lists out the punishment for Stalking. The offence of rape is dealt in section 375 of the penal code.

### **10. Governor's Speech**

- Kerala Governor P. Sathasivam is one of the many governors to omit parts of a speech prepared by the government of the day in his address to the Assembly.

#### Past cases of omission

- Last year, Tripura Governor Tathagata Roy skipped portions of his address containing critical remarks drafted by the Left Front government against the Centre on the communal situation in the country.
- In March 1969, Punjab Chief Minister Gurnam Singh staved off a controversy by agreeing to a request by Governor D.C. Pavate to remove remarks critical of the Union government.
- In Governor's Role in the Indian Constitution(1992), Sibrangan Chatterjee notes that in the early 1980s, following Governor A.P. Sharma's objection, the West Bengal government omitted a reference to the appointment of the Calcutta University Vice-Chancellor.



**Does such an omission violate any constitutional convention?**

- In *Shamsher Singh v. State of Punjab*, the Supreme Court quoted the opinion of the first Attorney General of India, M.C. Setalvad, that the principle that the President (or the Governor) is guided by the aid and advice of the Cabinet covered every function whether it relates to addressing the House or returning a Bill for reconsideration, or assenting or withholding assent.
- In his book, Chatterjee notes that it was the intention of the Constitution-makers that the Governor's speech would be prepared by the Council of Ministers and the Governor would read it.
- Any attempt to violate this would amount to breach of the spirit of the Constitution, if not its word. If a Governor violates this convention and deletes any part of the address under the cloak of his discretionary power, his action may not be 'unlawful' from a rigid legalistic viewpoint; but this will surely strike at the roots of [the] norms of parliamentary system of government.

**The case of Dharam Vira**

- A controversy arose when Governor Dharma Vira skipped two paragraphs in his address to the joint session of the West Bengal legislature on March 6, 1969.
- The portions omitted contained critical references to the events culminating in the dismissal of the Ajoy Kumar Mukherjee ministry in 1967.
- Parties in the opposition termed the Governor's action unlawful and unconstitutional.
- However, some MPs and political leaders defended the Governor on the ground that the paragraphs impliedly ridiculed a High Court judgment that had upheld the Governor's actions, and that the Governor had no option but to omit the portions as he had a constitutional obligation to protect the High Court's position.
- On this issue, Chatterjee says Dharma Vira's action was not unlawful, nor did it violate established convention.
- Just as he had an obligation to read out the speech prepared by the government, the Council of Ministers too had an obligation not to include any remark about the Governor's own past actions.

In other words, when the speech is confined to matters of policy, the Governor will have to read it in its entirety regardless of his opinion, but when it contains irrelevant words that would be inappropriate for him to read, he may omit them at the risk of inviting criticism.

**11. In view of new media, EC panel to suggest changes to model code**

- 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

- Section 126: This provision prohibits poll campaign in the last 48 hours leading to voting
- Due to the multifold expansion of digital and electronic media, the extant Model Code of Conduct, Section 126 of the RP Act, 1951, and other related provisions require revisiting to cater to the requirement and challenges of the present and emerging situations

**Committee's mandate:**

- Study the impact of new media and social media during the "silence period"
- It would study its implication in view of Section 126 and suggest changes to the model code of conduct (MCC) accordingly
- It has also been tasked to examine the difficulties faced in regulating media platforms during the prohibitory 48 hours in a multi-phase election

**12. UIDAI introduces 2-tier security to shield Aadhaar data**

- The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has introduced 'Virtual ID' (VID) to safeguard Aadhaar cardholders' data
- VID will be a 16-digit, randomly-generated number which can be used for authentication instead of the original Aadhaar number, according to UIDAI\

**Modus operandi:**

- VID will be a temporary, revocable 16-digit random number mapped with the Aadhaar number
- VID can be generated only by the Aadhaar number holder
- It will not be possible to derive Aadhaar number from VID
- Last digit of the VID is the checksum using 'Verhoeff' algorithm as in Aadhaar number. There will be only one active and valid VID for an Aadhaar number at any given time
- UIDAI will provide various options to Aadhaar number holders to generate their VID, retrieve their VID in case they forget, and replace their VID with a new number

**13. Disqualification of MLAs on grounds of Office of Profit**

**What is the issue about?**

- The AAP MLAs were appointed as Parliamentary Secretaries and a petitioner, in a complaint to the EC and the President in 2015, said being a parliamentary secretary was holding an office of profit and this invited disqualification.
- President Ram Nath Kovind accepted the recommendation of the Election Commission to disqualify 20 MLAs of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the ruling party in the national capital, for holding offices of profit.
- After the President's decision, the AAP said it would use all legal options available.

**What is Parliamentary Secretary?**

- A Parliamentary Secretary assists a Minister, and the office usually comes with perks as well as a measure of political influence.
- However, in a notification confirming the appointment of the 20 MLAs, the government had said no remuneration or perks would be given to the Parliamentary Secretaries.

**What is an office of profit?**

- It is a position in the government which cannot be held by an MLA or an MP. The post can yield salaries, perquisites and other benefits.
- The origin of this term can be found in the English Act of Settlement, 1701. Under this law, "no person who has an office or place of profit under the King, or receives a pension from the Crown, shall be capable of serving as a member of the House of Commons." This was instituted so that there wouldn't be any undue influence from the royal household in administrative affairs.
- Principles of declaring Office of Profit: Four broad principles have evolved for determining whether an office attracts the constitutional disqualification.
  - \* First, whether the government exercises control over appointment, removal and performance of the functions of the office.
  - \* Second, whether the office has any remuneration attached to it.
  - \* Third, whether the body in which the office is held has government powers (releasing money, allotment of land, granting licenses etc.).
  - \* Fourth, whether the office enables the holder to influence by way of patronage.

**What do parliamentary secretaries do?**

- In the Westminster system, a parliamentary secretary is a Member of Parliament who assists a Minister in their duties. Prime Ministers and Chief Ministers usually appoint parliamentary secretaries from their own parties.

**Why should an MLA or an MP not hold an office of profit?**

- According to Articles 102(1)(a) and 191(1)(a) of the Constitution, an MP or MLA is barred from holding an office of profit as it can put them in a position to gain a financial benefit. "A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of either House of Parliament, (a) if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State, other than an office declared by Parliament by law not to disqualify its holder," says the law.
- Under the Representation of People Act too, holding an office of profit is grounds for disqualification.

**Do other states in India have MLAs holding offices of profit?**

- West Bengal, Karnataka, Telangana, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Punjab, Mizoram and Manipur have had similar incidents. In West Bengal, Telangana and Punjab, the respective High Courts called the appointments "unconstitutional" and struck down the appointments.
- The case regarding appointment of parliamentary secretaries is pending in the Karnataka High Court. In Rajasthan, the State passes a Bill in October 2017 to make the posts constitutional, but the validity of this law has been challenged.
- Odisha too has appointed MLAs as chairpersons of district planning committees by amending an Act. The Supreme Court struck down The Assam Parliamentary Secretaries (Appointment, Salaries, Allowances and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2004 in July 2017 leading to a wave of resignations in Northeastern states.

**On what basis did the Election Commission give the recommendation?**

- The Election Commission has cited several rulings of the Supreme Court in its recommendation to the President that the 20 legislators be disqualified for holding office of profit.
- The recommendation said the Supreme Court in *Maulana Abdul Shakur vs Rikhab Chand* (1958) had defined the concept of office of profit under the government. The court said the government's power to appoint a person to an office, or to keep him in that office, or revoke his appointment at its discretion, and payment from government revenues were important factors in determining if one held an office of profit. Payment from a source other than government revenue was not the decisive factor.
- In *Pradyut Bordoloi vs Swapam Roy* (2001), the Supreme Court outlined the following questions for the test: whether the government makes the appointment; whether the government has the right to remove or dismiss the holder; whether the government pays the remuneration; what are the functions of the holder; does he perform them for the government; and does the government exercise any control over the performance of those functions?
- Three other rulings were cited to highlight the grounds on which a distinction between the holder of an office of profit and of a post/service under the government could be made.
- In *Guru Gobinda Basu vs Sankari Prasad Ghosal* (1964), the court said: "But all these factors need not coexist. Mere absence of one of the factors may not negate the overall test. The decisive test for determining whether a person holds any office of profit under the government, the Constitution Bench holds, is the test of appointment; stress on other tests will depend on the facts of each case."

- The court said the final query was, whether, on account of holding of such office, would the government be in a position to influence him so as to interfere with his independence in functioning as an MLA and/or would his holding of the two offices involve a conflict of interest.
- Citing the judgments, the EC said the AAP MLAs were appointed Parliamentary Secretaries by the Delhi government, which exercised control over them.
- The government had the power to remove them, their work was allocated by Ministers concerned as delegated authority and expenses of their office were paid from government revenues.
- The Commission concluded that there could be no dispute that the office of Parliamentary Secretary was an office under the government;

#### 14. A slow judiciary

The Economic Survey 2017-18 has made a compelling argument that addressing pendency, delays and backlogs in the appellate and judicial arenas is the next frontier for improving Ease Of Doing Business (EODB) in the country.

##### Why is this an Issue?

- In the latest EODB report by the World Bank, India ranked a dismal 164 in the category of enforcing contracts.
- It takes, on average, almost four years to enforce a standard sales agreement in a local court, and costs up to 31% of the claim's value.
- This is much higher than the average for South Asia (three years) and China (a year and four months), and has crippling effects on the dispute resolution mechanism of the economy.

##### Implications

- India's poor ranking in enforcing contracts relates directly to its judicial capacity. A slow judiciary forces participants to adopt loss-minimizing strategies that are not always efficient.
- The most intuitive result is for the cost structure of the entire economy to go up.
- Second, it deters firms from making relationship-specific investments—investments for products that have lower value in alternative uses than they have in the intended use between the parties involved. The threat of hold-ups can dissuade efficient investments, and could even rule out exchanges that are potentially valuable.
- Research on 25 Indian states and Union territories from 1971 to 1996 found that a weak judiciary (defined by the speed and predictability of the trial outcome) has a negative effect on economic and social development, which leads to: lower per capita income; higher poverty rates; lower private economic activity; poorer public infrastructure; and higher crime rates and more industrial riots.

##### What strategies do the firms follow?

Firms and industries have developed ways around this problem.

- In many industries, firms vertically integrate in order to align their incentives in the different stages of production, or sellers require a security amount from the buyer.
  - \* Integration, however, increases the cost of starting a business and makes the industry less competitive.
  - \* Vertical integration also reduces the focus on becoming more competitive in their development and achieving economies of scale.
- Firms also rely on repeat business and reputation norms to discipline the actors, and these norms work fairly well.
- Lastly, some industries follow private rules and use private tribunals to solve disputes.

So the present government which has been vocal about improving India's EODB ranking should involve all stakeholders and take steps to help reduce pending cases by reviewing the existing legal Process.

#### 15. Impeachment of High Court Judge

- A in-house inquiry committee was set up by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra to look into allegations of corruption against a sitting judge of the Allahabad High Court in the Medical Council of India (MCI) case contains certain "adverse remarks" against him.
- This prompted Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra recommend the impeachment of Justice Shri Narayan Shukla, the eighth senior-most judge of the Allahabad High Court
- The trigger was a scathing report by the committee led by Madras High Court Chief Justice Indira Banerjee.

The committee conducted a non-judicial fact-finding inquiry, where Justice Shukla was given full opportunity to defend himself, but no examination or cross-examination of any witnesses was allowed.

##### Why was the Process Initiated?

- Justice Narayan Shukla granted permission to certain private medical colleges to admit students after an MCI ban, and also involved the rulings on the case in the Supreme Court.
- He had abandoned "the concept of judicial propriety" and transgressed judicial rules to "proceed on a path where it was not required to."

##### Impeachment Process

- The CJI has set the process in motion with a letter to the Prime Minister for the impeachment of the judge.
- Following that, the Vice-President, who is the Chairperson of Rajya Sabha, would constitute a three-member inquiry panel, in consultation with the CJI under the Judges (Enquiry) Act, 1968.

- This panel would then examine the allegations made by the in-house committee and based on their advice, it would be decided if the removal motion will be debated in Rajya Sabha. If the findings of guilt are confirmed, the impeachment motion will be put to vote for the removal of the judge by a majority.



# ECONOMY

## 1. Agriculture Ministers Conference

- The Conference was organized with the theme of "Shaping the Future of Livestock Sustainably, Responsibly, Efficiently" was attended by 69 agricultural ministers and heads of 6 international organizations including FAO, WTO and World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).
- A Communique was issued by the Ministers to safeguard the supply of and access to sufficient, safe, nutrients and affordable food from livestock production for the growing world population.

### Comments

- Union Minister of State highlighted India's impressive performance in the dairy, meat and poultry sector and the initiatives taken by India in the field of diseases control and animal welfare.
- He also stressed the actions taken by India to mitigate the effect of climate change, both in the animal and crop sector and called upon the developed countries to abide by the principles of equity but common and differentiated responsibilities towards tackling climate change.

## 2. ASPIRE Scheme

- ASPIRE Scheme or Scheme for promotion of innovation, entrepreneurship and Agro-Industry is promoted by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- It will promote Innovation & Rural Entrepreneurship through rural Livelihood Business Incubator (LBI), Technology Business Incubator (TBI) and Fund of Funds for start-up creation in the agro-based industry.
- The ASPIRE Scheme fund has a Rs.200 crore corpus

### The main objectives of the ASPIRE scheme are to:

- Create new jobs and reduce unemployment;
- Promote entrepreneurship culture in India;
- Grassroots economic development at district level;
- Facilitate innovative business solution for un-met social needs; and
- Promote innovation to further strengthen the competitiveness of MSME sector.

### The Ministry of MSME is also implementing various schemes and programmes for promotion and development of MSME sector.

The major schemes/programmes include

- Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP),
- Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI),

- Credit Guarantee Scheme, Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme (CLCSS),
- National Manufacturing Competitiveness programme,
- Micro & Small Enterprises - Cluster Development programme (MSE-CDP),
- Marketing Development Assistance,
- Skill Development Programmes,
- International Cooperation Scheme, etc.

## 3. CIPAM-DIPP launches IP competition for college & university students

- The Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM), Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), in collaboration with ASSOCHAM and ERICSSON India, has launched a one of its kind Intellectual Property (IP) Competition 'IPrism' for college and university students.
- This competition invites students to submit films on piracy & counterfeiting under two categories of 30 and 60 seconds. Another category in the competition is for a mobile gaming app on IP.

### Significance

- Counterfeiting and Piracy cause significant loss to the industry and pose serious safety threats to the consumers.
- Generating awareness can help in tackling such crimes since limited knowledge about their adverse social and economic impact leads to circulation and consumption of pirated content and fake goods.

## 4. Consumer Protection Bill, 2018:

- It will replace the archaic Consumer Protection Act 1986, aimed at overhauling consumer laws in the light of a changed economy – from online shopping to faulty services, such as a botched-up hotel stay.
- The new bill will attempt to deal with issues arising out of disputes with regard to online purchases. At present, there exists no law for refunds or dispute settlement regarding online shopping. Businesses and manufactures will need to update their processes to conform to the new law
- Class-action suits will now be extended to consumer laws, so that a complaint against a faulty product or service could be treated as an interest group of people in similar circumstances.
- It also provides for prosecution of celebrities endorsing products with misleading claims, including a ban and fines

- \* Celebrities endorsing misleading ads will have to pay penalty of up to Rs 50 lakh and serve a ban of up to three years.

#### **Central Consumer Protection Authority**

- The bill provides for the creation of a central consumer protection authority for the first time, which will effectively be the national regulator for consumer rights.
- The CCPA will have the powers to impose penalty of up to Rs 10 lakh on endorsers and manufacturers. For subsequent violation, the penalty will be of up to Rs 50 lakh.
- The authority will also have the power to ban endorser of false or misleading ads from making endorsement of any product or service for a period of one year, while subsequent violation will attract a ban of up to three years.

#### **Why was it required?**

- Earlier, unfair trade practices – misleading ads, cheating and overcharging – were dealt with by the Monopolistic and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act.
- When the Competition Act, 2002, replaced MRTP Act, it left out the provisions dealing with “unfair trade practices”, creating a major lacuna in consumer protection.

#### **Present System**

Under the current system,

- The district forum deals with consumer disputes where the value of the goods or the compensation claimed is less than ~ 5 lakh and
- The state commission hears cases for claims exceeding ~5 lakh but not exceeding ~20 lakh.
- The national commission hears claims exceeding ~20 lakh and also decides cases challenging lower court verdicts.

#### **Issue Area**

- Consumer courts are quasi-judicial in nature. In many instances, they have been unable to effectively deal with “unfair trade practices” due to limitations within the law

### **5. “Drone” cameras to be deployed in railways**

- Indian Railways has decided to deploy “Drone” cameras (UAV/NETRA) for various railway activities especially project monitoring and maintenance of tracks and other railway infrastructure. It has been given directions to Zonal Railways to procure such cameras. This is in-line with Railways’ desire to use technology to enhance safety and efficiency in train operations.

#### **Significance**

- Drone” cameras shall be deployed to undertake monitoring activities of relief and rescue operation, project monitoring, progress of important works, conditions of track and inspection related activities

- Used to assess preparedness of Non-Interlocking (NI) works, crowd management during fairs and melas, to identify scrap and also for aerial survey of station yards.
- It is going to be instrumental in providing real time inputs related to safety and maintenance of tracks and other railway infrastructure

Under this initiative, West Central Railways with headquarter at Jabalpur (M.P) has become the first Zonal Railway to procure “Drone” cameras in Indian Railways.

### **6. Financial Sector Assessment Program (FSAP)**

- FSAP is a joint program of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.
- Launched in 1999 in the wake of the Asian financial crisis, the program brings together Bank and Fund expertise to help countries reduce the likelihood and severity of financial sector crises.
- The FSAP provides a comprehensive framework through which assessors and authorities in participating countries can identify financial system vulnerabilities and develop appropriate policy responses.
- FSAPs analyze the resilience of the financial sector, the quality of the regulatory and supervisory framework, and the capacity to manage and resolve financial crises.
- Based on its findings, FSAPs produce recommendations of a micro- and macro-prudential nature, tailored to country-specific circumstances.

#### **The goal of FSAP assessments is twofold:**

- To gauge the stability and soundness of the financial sector
- To assess its potential contribution to growth and development.

#### **The FSAP follows a three-pronged approach when looking at the country’s financial sector:**

- The soundness of a financial system versus its vulnerabilities and risks that increase the likelihood or potential severity of financial sector crises.
- A country’s developmental needs in terms of infrastructure, institutions and markets.
- A country’s compliance with the observance of selected financial sector standards and codes.

#### **India: Financial Sector Assessment Program 2017-Detailed Assessment Reports (DARs)**

The two main Reports of the 2017 India Financial Sector Assessment Programme (FSAP) –

- The Financial System Stability Assessment (FSSA)
- Financial Sector Assessment (FSA),

Were released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The Report providing 'Detailed Assessment of Observance—Basel Core Principles for Effective Banking Supervision' has been released by the IMF and the World Bank and the Report providing 'Detailed Assessment of Observance of Clearing Corporation of India Limited (CCIL) Central Counter Party (CCP) and Trade Repository (TR)', was released by the World Bank.

#### Details of the report

- The DAR on the observance of Basel Core Principles (BCP) commends the Reserve Bank of India for the remarkable progress in strengthening banking supervision since the last FSAP. It notes that the supervision and regulation by the Reserve Bank remain strong and have improved in recent years.
- Most of the Basel III framework (and related guidance) has been implemented and cooperation arrangements, both domestically and cross-border, are now firmly in place.
- It states that the system-wide asset quality review (AQR) and the strengthening of prudential regulations in 2015 testify to the authorities' commitment to transparency and a more accurate recognition of banking risks.
- A special mention is made of the implementation of a risk-based supervisory approach, in particular the Supervisory Program for Assessment of Risk and Capital (SPARC); as also the phasing-in of the Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) and large exposure limits and states that the recently established Central Repository of Information on Large Credits (CRILC), will provide RBI with a robust supervisory enforcement framework.
- It acknowledges that banking reforms, including the Indradhanush Plan for revitalizing the Public Sector Banks (PSBs) and the Bank Board Bureaus (BBBs) have helped usher in an era of transparency and improved discipline and will go a long way in resolving the problem of bad loans in India.

### **7. Global Manufacturing Index**

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) released its Global Manufacturing Index putting India on the 30th position, five places below China, which is continuously striving to develop better avenues of manufacturing by boosting infrastructure.

#### Ranking

- Japan topped the rankings on the back of developing the best structure of production in the Geneva-based WEF's first 'Readiness for the future of production report' and is followed by South Korea, Germany, Switzerland, China, Czech Republic, the US, Sweden, Austria and Ireland in the top 10.
- The report has categorized 100 countries in four major groups for its ranking which include
  - \* Leading (strong current base, high level of readiness for future);

- \* High Potential (limited current base, high potential for future);
- \* Legacy (strong current base, at risk for future); or
- \* Nascent (limited current base, low level of readiness for future).

#### India

- India is ranked well than its neighbors- Sri Lanka (66th), Pakistan (74th) and Bangladesh (80th).
- Much ahead of its BRICS peers, Brazil, Russia and South Africa, except China which has been placed at 5th spot
- India has been placed in the Legacy group alongside Hungary, Mexico, Philippines, Russia, Thailand and Turkey, among others.
  - \* China figures among 'leading countries', while Brazil and South Africa are in 'nascent' ones.
- Talking about India, which had a total manufacturing value of over \$420 billion in 2016, the report said that the country's manufacturing sector has grown by over 7 per cent per year on average in the past three decades and accounts for 16-20 per cent of India's GDP.
- The forums also took note of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's 'Make in India' initiative to open India into a manufacturing hub, and moving towards a more connected economy with an announcement of a \$59 billion investment in infrastructure in 2017.
- Section wise Ranking:
  - \* Market size: India is ranked 3rd
  - \* Scale of production: India has been ranked 9th
  - \* Female participation in labor force, trade tariffs, regulatory efficiency and sustainable resources: very low ranking (90th or even more lower rankings).

#### Challenges for India:

- Human capital and sustainable resources.

#### What needs to be done?

- The country needs to continue to raise the capabilities of its relatively young and fast-growing labour force.
- Upgrading education curricula, revamping vocational training programmers and improving digital skills
- India should continue to diversify its energy sources and reduce emissions as its manufacturing sector continues to expand.

### **8. Global Talent Competitiveness**

Global index of talent competitiveness measures how countries grow, attract and retain talent.

- The list has been compiled by the INSEAD business school, in partnership with Adecco and Human Capital Leadership Institute of Singapore (HCLI).

- It is released every year on the first day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting.

### **2018**

- India has moved up on a global index of talent competitiveness to the 81st position, but remains a laggard among the BRICS nations, an annual study showed here today while warning that the country faces "serious risk of worsening brain drain".
- India's ranking was the worst among the five BRICS countries in 2017 as well when China was ranked 54th, Russian Federation was placed at 56th, followed by South Africa (67) and Brazil (81).
- India has improved its position from 92nd last year. India was at the 89th place in 2016 on the index that measures how countries grow, attract and retain talent.
- Among the countries, Switzerland is followed by Singapore and the US. European countries dominate the top ranks, with 15 out of the top 25 places.

The report said that although in recent years we have witnessed a cooling off in the growth of emerging markets, the BRICS cannot be ignored in the global talent race and it is China (43rd) that leads the pack. "India (81st) is the laggard of this group. Formal Education (67th) and Lifelong Learning (37th) are keeping pace -- and thus the pool of Global Knowledge Skills (63rd) is solid compared with other emerging markets.

### **9. Government Process Re-engineering (GPR) initiatives**

On the occasion of the 69th Republic Day, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) is launching the Government Process Re-engineering (GPR) initiatives for making the Incorporation Process Speedy, Smooth, Simple and reducing the number of procedures involved for starting a new Business.

- Introduction of "RUN – Reserve Unique Name" Web service for name reservation
- Zero fee for incorporation of all companies with authorized capital upto Rs. 10 lakh.
- Re-engineering the process of allotment of DIN by allotting it through the combined SPICe form only at the time of an individual's appointment as Director (in case he/she doesn't have a DIN).

#### **Some Initiatives in Past**

- Ministry had undertaken major initiatives such as establishing the "Central Registration Centre (CRC)" for delivering speedy incorporation related services and near real time issuance of PAN & TAN through a single on-line process.
- Simplified Performa for Incorporating Company Electronically (SPICe) delivers five services by two different Ministries through a single form filed on the MCA21 Portal.

It is expected that the above initiatives will significantly enhance the "Ease of Doing Business –Starting a Business" in the Country and benefit a large number of Stakeholders.

### **10. Inclusive Development Index**

- It is developed by the World Economic Forum, evaluates the standard of living of the countries based on certain key performance indicators.
- At present, it assesses 109 countries on the basis of these standards and ranks them according to the current level of inclusive development.
- It also evaluates the performance of these countries for the last 5 years.
- This Inclusive Development Index has been developed as a new metric of national economic performance as an alternative to GDP.

#### **2018 Jan**

#### **India's Position in Inclusive Development Index**

- Despite an improved performance, India continues to be ranked below neighbours Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal in the Inclusive Development Index released by the World Economic Forum.
- India has been ranked 62 out of 74 emerging economies on a metric focused on the living standards of people and future-proofing of economies by the WEF.

#### **Other Countries**

- Pakistan has been ranked 47, Sri Lanka is at 40, and Nepal at 22; Uganda (59) and Mali (60) are also higher on the index than India.
- According to the study, Norway tops the chart followed by Iceland and Luxemburg in advanced economies.
- Lithuania, Hungary, and Azerbaijan are the toppers among the emerging economies.

### **11. iCreate**

- iCreate is an independent Centre created with the objective of facilitating entrepreneurship through a blend of creativity, innovation, engineering, product design and leveraging emerging technologies to deal with major issues such as food security, water, connectivity, cyber security, IT and electronics, energy, bio-medical equipment and devices etc.
- iCreate aims to develop an ecosystem in India to generate quality entrepreneurs.

### **12. ICEX world's first diamond futures contracts**

- ICEX is the world's first diamond futures contracts to provide exporters with a hedging tool.
- ICEX offers trading in diamonds of two sizes: 50 cents and 1 carat (1 carat equals 100 cents).
- ICEX will offer HVS2 quality diamond certified by the International Institute of Diamond Grading & Research (IIDGR), a De Beers group company, and vaulting services will be offered by Malca Amit.



Stats

- India is a global diamond polishing hub where 14 out of every 15 rough diamonds in the world are polished
- India imports rough diamond worth \$19 billion and exports polished valued \$24 billion annually. India caters to over 90 per cent of the world's polishing market for rough diamonds.
- Interestingly, India is the world's third largest diamond consumer, accounting for 8% of the global market. It exports 95% of the total imported rough diamond, as per statistics from the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC).

Indian Commodity Exchange Ltd (ICEX)

- Indian Commodity Exchange Limited is a **nation-wide on-line trading platform in commodity derivative**.
- It has put in place grading and vaulting facilities in order to facilitate deliveries. This exchange is ideally positioned to leverage the huge potential of commodities market and encourage participation of actual users to benefit from the opportunities of hedging, risk management and supply chain management in the commodities markets.
- The Exchange is a **public-private partnership** with MMTC Ltd, Indian Potash Ltd, KRIBHCO, IDFC Bank Ltd, Reliance Exchange next Ltd (Reliance Capital) and India bulls Housing Finance Ltd as prominent shareholders.

Background

- Diamond mining in India extends back into antiquity. From ancient times, India was the source of nearly all the world's known diamonds, and until the discovery of diamonds in Brazil in 1726, India was the only place where diamonds were mined. India has not been a major diamond-producing country since the 1700s, but diamond mining continues.
- Diamond deposits occur in three types of geological settings such as kimberlite pipes, conglomerate beds and alluvial gravels.
- The main diamond bearing areas in India are Panna bet in Madhya Pradesh, Munimadugu-Banganapalle conglomerate in Kurnool district, Wajrakarur kimberlite pipe in Anantapur district, the gravels of Krishna river basin in Andhra Pradesh and diamondiferous kimberlite in Raipur, Bastar and Raigarh districts in Chhattisgarh.
- Reserves have been estimated in Panna belt, Madhya Pradesh; Krishna Gravels in Andhra Pradesh; and in Raipur district, Chhattisgarh.
- As per the UNFC system as on 1.4.2005 diamonds are placed at around 4582 thousand carats, out of which about 1206 thousand carats are under reserve category and remaining 3376 thousand carats are under remaining Resources category.

13. Logistics Index

- The LEADS index is based on various parameters such as rail and roads network, warehouses, efficiency of regulatory processes, logistics services, unscheduled stoppages etc and is a perception study on how stakeholders perceive international trade logistics performance across the states and union territories.
- The report on Logistics Ease across Different States or LEADS, prepared by consultancy firm Deloitte, is based on feedback from businesses and has come under attack from states that are ranked low.
- Gujarat has topped logistics index chart, an indicator of the efficiency of logistical services, in the first set of rankings released by commerce & industry.
- Jammu & Kashmir was placed at the bottom of the table with Bihar finishing one rank higher

Details

- On all parameters, barring safety of cargo, Gujarat has topped the list.
- It provides a useful starting point for reliable identification of the right problem area in improving logistics, which is a key focus area for the government.
- The report has also identified focus areas where action can help improve. Regulation through cumbersome rules, rigid slabs for rail cargo, poor customs facilities and frequent stoppages have been flagged as challenges.
- Similarly, it has suggested that digitization and last mile connectivity, specially road links to ports and airports, or inadequate capacity at ports in addition to lack of grievance mechanism, need to be addressed.

14. Matunga Railway Station

- Indian Railways initiative of empowering its women employees has brought laurels as Matunga Railway Station has entered into Limca Book of Records 2018.
- Matunga Railway Station in Mumbai has become the first station in India which has all women staff managing the operations of the stations.
- Ladies staff across all departments viz. operating, commercial, RPF, etc. are posted at Matunga Railway Station to make it first of its kind station on Railways.

Significance

- The staff has been handling overall operations of the railway station round the clock from last six months and results are positive and encouraging.
- The idea is creation of an environment for women where they can make decision of their own for their personal and professional wellbeing, organizational good, notwithstanding.

15. Motor Vehicle Amendment Bill

- The Lok Sabha has passed the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill.

- The Bill amends the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 to address issues such as third party insurance, regulation of taxi aggregators, and road safety.

#### **What is the Bill all about?**

- It authorizes the government to exempt or waive off any section to promote innovation.
- The provisions of the Bill talk about improved citizen centric services, reducing the number of accidents and several steps proposed to reduce the footfalls to regional transport offices (RTO).
- The bill proposes hefty penalties for various traffic offences, three-year jail term for parents of minors caught driving and causing fatal accidents, and a ten-fold increase in compensation for the families of accident victims, among other things.

#### **Highlights of the Bill:**

- The Bill caps the maximum liability for third party insurance in case of a motor accident at Rs 10 lakh in case of death and at five lakh rupees in case of grievous injury.
- The Bill provides for a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund which would provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India for certain types of accidents.
- The Bill defines taxi aggregators, guidelines for which will be determined by the central government.
- The Bill also provides for: (i) amending the existing categories of driver licensing, (ii) recall of vehicles in case of defects, (iii) protection of good Samaritans from any civil or criminal action, and (iv) increase of penalties for several offences under the 1988 Act.
- Improving delivery of services to the stakeholders using e-Governance is one of the major focuses of this Bill. This include enabling online learning licenses, increasing validity period for driving licenses, doing away with the requirements of educational qualifications for transport licenses are some of the features.
- The Bill caps the maximum liability for third party insurance, but does not cap the compensation amount that courts can award. In cases where courts award compensation higher than the maximum liability amount, it is unclear who will pay the remaining amount.
- Under the Act, compensation for hit and run victims comes from a Solatium Fund.
- State governments will issue licenses to taxi aggregators as per central government guidelines. Currently, state governments determine guidelines for plying of taxis. There could be cases where state taxi guidelines are at variance with the central guidelines on aggregators.

#### **What are the challenges in India?**

- The Amendment Bill is robust and rectifies several systemic issues by providing for a uniform driver licensing system, protection of children and vulnerable road users, rationalizing penalties, and much more.

- The World Health Organization (WHO) points out that for effective road safety management, it is imperative to have an institutionalized and sustainable data system.
- This includes information pertaining to drivers, such as types of licenses held and a record of violation of traffic laws.
- The driver licensing system in India controls and filters the number and quality of drivers on the road. Currently, the procedure is largely manual, while the number of licenses issued per year is over a crore.
- The inefficiencies of a predominantly manual system, given the scale of licenses issued every year, results in lakhs of licenses being issued without the prescribed checks and balances.
- In the absence of a central registry, often multiple licenses are held by one person for different States. Low penalties for licensing offences allow erring drivers to be behind the wheel and get away with life-threatening violations.

#### **What are the changes in the Bill?**

- The Bill addresses each of these challenges by introducing technology in the licensing procedure. A digitized, uniform and centralized driver licensing system will go a long way in ensuring ease of access, efficiency and transparency in the filtering process.
- The Bill also proposes to introduce digitization in the monitoring and enforcement of traffic laws. Electronic monitoring and enforcement can already be seen in practice in Kerala.
- The State has a 'city surveillance and traffic monitoring system', and automated traffic enforcement systems to detect traffic light violations as well as speeding.
- The enactment of the Bill will facilitate the replication and creation of such digitized systems for all other States.

#### **How does the Bill address issues of children?**

- Since 2008, in India, over 55,000 children have lost their lives in road accidents. In 2016 alone, 7% of road crash deaths were attributed to children below 18 years.
- The WHO asserts that using child-restraint systems in vehicles decreases the risk of death in a crash by about 70% for infants and 54-80% for small children.
- In the current piece of legislation, there is no provision for protection of children, and this lacuna has been addressed for the first time.
- The Bill proposes to mandate the use of protective headgear by every person above the age of four driving, riding or being carried on a two-wheeler.
- It provides for measures to be laid down for the safety of children below the age of four. Similarly, the Bill mandates the use of safety belts and child restraints for those under 14 years and introduces a fine of Rs. 1,000 for the driver or guardian for the violation of the same.

**Does the Bill rationalise Penalties?**

- For decades, penalties for behavior that results in fatalities and grievous injuries have remained minimal, largely unrevised, and, consequently, have failed to deter violators.
- This Bill promises to rationalize these fines. For instance, the penalty for drunk driving has been increased to Rs. 10,000 for the first offence and Rs. 15,000 for the subsequent one.
- For exceeding lawful speeds, the penalty has been increased to Rs. 1,000 for light motor vehicles and Rs. 2,000-4,000 for medium and heavy motor vehicles.
- For the non-use of helmets and seat belts, the fines have been increased from Rs. 100 to Rs. 1,000.

**What are India's commitments under Brasilia Declaration?**

- As a signatory to the Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety, India has committed to reducing, by 2020, the number of road crash fatalities and serious injuries by 50%.
- This will be impossible to achieve if the sole statute governing road safety in India, the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, is not overhauled. The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2017, will serve as the first and most essential step towards fulfilling this vision.

**16. National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX)**

- In an effort to make the agri-economy more efficient and bring huge amount of value for the farmers of India, the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX), is launching the country's First agri-commodity Options in Guar Seed.
- Guar seed options is an important hedging tool.
- The instrument, which is uniquely designed by NCDEX and approved by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), is expected to deepen trade in that commodity and will benefit farmers in reaping improved price realizations for their produce, with limited downside risk.
- The Official Launch will also see farmers share their experiences on how NCDEX has helped better their lives.
- This launch is largely inspired by the fact that guar seed is one of the most liquid contracts on the NCDEX platform and a large number of informal trading centres in some communities of Rajasthan are already involved in some form of informal options trading.

**Details**

- In order to promote awareness around this new agriculture hedging tool, the Exchange has initiated a series of awareness programs and trainings across the value chain.
- The Exchange will also launch a mobile application on this occasion where farmers can learn more about agri options and the commodities market.

**17. Nirman – Samvaad**

- In a major initiative to ensure expeditious implementation of ambitious Railway Infrastructure Development Plans, Ministry of Railways is organizing a "Mega Conclave"
- The Conclave named as "NIRMAN – SAMVAAD" is being organized by Railways PSU Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd. (RVNL) which is a dedicated arm of the Ministry of Railways for fast track implementation of railway projects.
- The Conclave will provide an opportunity to discuss the impediments/constraints faced in implementation of the projects and to seek suggestions to remove bottlenecks and bring about efficiencies in project execution on Railways.

**Participants**

- Senior Officers of Railway Board, Zonal Railways, CPSEs and top executives of about 400 construction and consultancy companies will be participating to deliberate upon the issues/impediments being faced by the industry and arriving at possible remedies thereof.

**Projects**

- The ambitious Infrastructure Development Projects of Indian Railways include Doubling Projects, Electrification Projects, Hill Railway Projects, Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) and High-Speed Projects on diamond quadrilateral.

**18. Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP)**

- Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) gives an option to a company looking for exploring hydrocarbons to select the exploration blocks on its own, without waiting for the formal bid round from the Government. Under Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP), a bidder intending to explore hydrocarbons like oil and gas, coal bed methane, gas hydrate etc., may apply to the Government seeking exploration of any new block (not already covered by exploration). The Government will examine the Expression of Interest and justification. If it is suitable for award, Govt. will call for competitive bids after obtaining necessary environmental and other clearances.
- National Data Repository, which is envisaged as a centralized database of geological and hydrocarbon information that will be available to all.
- What distinguishes OALP from New Exploration and Licensing Policy (NELP) of 1997 is that under OALP, oil and gas acreages will be available round the year instead of cyclic bidding rounds as in NELP. Potential investors need not have to wait for the bidding rounds to claim acreages.
- By placing greater discretion in the hands of explorers and operators, the Licensing Policy attempts to address a major drawback in the New Exploration Licensing Policy, which forced energy explorers to bid for blocks chosen by the government.

**Significance**

- The company then submits an application to the government, which puts that block up for bid. The new policy will open up 2.8 million square kilometers of sedimentary basins for exploration and eventual production.
- Companies can now apply for particular areas they deem to be attractive to invest in, and the Centre will put those areas up for bids. This is more attractive for prospective operators because in the past, the blocks chosen by the government often were large swathes of land or sea in which only a small fraction had hydrocarbon reserves.
- There are a number of companies around the world that make it their business to simply explore hydrocarbon basins and sell the information they gather. The new initiative seeks to incentivize such prospectors.

**Context**

- Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas launched Bid Round I under the innovative Open Acreage Licensing programmer in New Delhi
- During the event, e bidding portal and the Notice Inviting Offer (NIO) was launched.
  - \* The ebidding portal is a fully safe, secured and transparent ebidding platform wherein the bidders can submit their bids from anywhere in the world.
  - \* In parallel, 'DGH OneTouch' mobile application was also launched which would act as a one stop solution for accessing information about DGH, policy initiatives and other relevant information on the move.

**19. Saksham-2018**

- Saksham (Sanrakshan Kshamta Mahotsav) is an annual flagship event of Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, with active involvement of the Oil & Gas PSUs along with other stakeholders like State Governments, for creating focused attention on fuel conservation through people centric activities and to sensitize the masses about the conservation and efficient use of petroleum products leading to better health and environment.
- The campaign aims to intensify efforts for making citizens aware about the conservation and effective utilization of petroleum products
- Nationwide campaign on various media platforms viz. All India Radio, Doordarshan, TV channels, Private FM channels, Digital Cinema Theaters etc. on fuel conservation and Cyclothon activities are planned for various cities.
- It is going to enthuse the masses with a new energy coupled with an all-out effort for saving the precious treasure, the 'Fuel', which will also contribute in keeping our environment green.

**20. Ministry of Road Transport & Highways signs MoU with Transport for London**

- The MoU is aimed at using the expertise of TFL to revamp the public transport architecture in the country.
- TFL is the agency that manages the transport system for Greater London, and has demonstrated its capability by creating a strong and dependable public transport system in the city.

**Details**

- TFL has created a unique system of operating buses in PPP model with over 17 operators under a single brand.
- A salient feature has been their double decker buses which provide for high capacity with low road space requirement.
- They have also been operating large number of electric and hybrid buses. The common mobility card is another successful product launched by TFL which has made travel easy for the commuters and accounting easier for the operators.

**Significance**

- MoU will help to revamp the public transport and augment passenger capacity by way of creating a sustainable public transport system.
- The MoU can see an increase the use of electric vehicles in public transport and promote digital transaction for ticketing.
- It can also help us improve major procurement strategies including PPP models for operations, infrastructure maintenance strategies, infrastructure design and delivery, besides promoting behavioral change towards promotion of public transport.
- It will also enable improved customer services, harness from scientific data analysis and implement effective IT systems in the transport sector.

**21. National Biogas and Manure Management Programme**

- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is implementing the National Biogas and Manure Management programmer (NBMMP) for setting up of family type biogas plants in rural and semi-urban areas of the country.
- The family type biogas plants generate clean gaseous fuel particularly for cooking and meeting lighting needs and replaces use of fuel wood, avoid cutting of trees thereby reducing pressure on forests.
- The programmer, implemented through state nodal agencies, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), and Biogas Development & Training Centre provides a substantial subsidy for setting up biogas plants to meet the fuel needs of rural and semi-rural households.
- Biogas plants help in reducing emission of Green House Gases (GHGs).



Details

- Under the NBMMP, about 49.6 lakh Household Size Biogas Plants have been installed since the inception of the biogas programmer in the country
- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has been implementing programmers such as NBMMP, Biogas Power (Off-grid) Generation programmer (BPGP), and Waste to Energy programmer for setting up of Biogas Plants based on cattle dung and other mixed biodegradable wastes to meet cooking, heating, lighting & small power and thermal energy needs of the people of remote and rural areas of the country.

Stats

- Among the states, the best performer in NBMMP in 2015-16 has been Uttarakhand
- Other states which have done well are Assam (which has met its target) Andhra Pradesh (67%), Telangana (62.2%), Goa (75%) and Sikkim (65%).

**22. Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Bill, 2017**Background

- Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 was enacted to define and **amend the law relating to promissory notes, bills of exchange, and cheques.**
- The Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Bill, 2017 introduces new clauses which allows the payment of interim compensation to the aggrieved party as an immediate relief when the case reaches the court.

Issues with 1881 Act

- In the statement of objects and reasons for the Bill, the government points out that though the 1881 Act was amended from time to time to provide for the speedy disposal of cases relating to the offence of dishonor of cheques, it has been receiving several representations from the public, including from the trading community, relating to pendency of cheque dishonour cases.
- This is because of delay tactics of unscrupulous drawers of dishonoured cheques due to easy filing of appeals and obtaining stay on proceedings.
- This delay has slowly eroded the faith of the traders in the use of cheques, it reasons.
- Injustice is caused to the payee of a dishonoured cheque who has to spend considerable time and resources in court proceedings to realize the value of the cheque. Such delays compromise the sanctity of cheque transactions.

What the New Bill aims to do?

- The purpose of the Bill is to provide interim relief to the aggrieved party till the final solution of the cheque dishonour case in court, and to discourage frivolous and unnecessary litigation which would save time and money.

- The new Section 143A provides for the court trying a cheque dishonour case under Section 138 may order the drawer of the cheque to pay interim compensation to the complainant at the time of framing of charges. The interim compensation shall not exceed 20% of the amount of the cheque.
- A second provision, Section 148, allows the Appellate Court to first order the party convicted in a cheque bounce case to deposit 20% of the of the fine or compensation awarded by the trial court.
- The proposed amendments will strengthen the credibility of cheques.

**23. Label mandatory for food certified as 'organic'**

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had issued regulations that required food companies selling organic produce to get certified with one of the two authorities — National programmer for Organic Production (NPOP) or the Participatory Guarantee System for India (PGS-India).
- Companies could also get a voluntary logo from the FSSAI that marked its produce as 'organic'.

Details

- Though NPOP and PGS-India had been in the certification business for some years, it was mostly a voluntary exercise.
- From July, any company that claims to sell organic food and not sticking to standards can be prosecuted

Third party certification

- For nearly two decades now, organic farming certification had been done through a process of third party certification under the NPOP.
  - \* It was run by the Ministry of Commerce and was used for certifying general exports.
  - \* Nearly 24 agencies were authorized by the NPOP to verify farms, storages and processing units and successful ones got a special 'India Organic' logo.
- The PGS-India programme, in contrast, had been around for only two years and — unlike the top-down approach of the NPOP — involves a peer-review approach.
  - \* Here, farmers played a role in certifying whether the farms in their vicinity adhered to organic-cultivation practices.
  - \* This programme was implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture through the National Centre of Organic Farming.

**24. Perform Achieve and Trade (PAT) scheme**

- It is in line with the energy conservation and efficiency policies of the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under the Ministry of Power

- Perform Achieve and Trade Scheme (PAT) is a component of the National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE) which is one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).
- It is a market based mechanism to further accelerate as well as incentivize energy efficiency in the large energy-intensive industries.
- The scheme imposes mandatory specific energy consumption targets on the covered facilities with less energy efficient facilities having a greater reduction target than the more energy efficient ones.
- The scheme provides the option to trade any additional certified energy savings with other designated consumers to comply with the Specific Energy Consumption reduction targets. The Energy Savings Certificates (ESCerts) so issued will be tradable on special trading platforms to be created in the two power exchanges – Indian Energy Exchange and Power Exchange India.

## 25. Price Stabilization Fund

- India first created a price stabilization fund for some export oriented plantation crops in 2003, and this ceased to exist in 2013. Another fund was created in 2015 for perishable agricultural and horticultural commodities, but initially limited to support potato and onion prices only.
- PSF mechanism is apart from the Minimum Support Price (MSP) based initiatives already existing in the country for certain agricultural goods. The MSP system has some price tempering properties, but it is from the perspective of the growers / farmers and becomes operative when prices fall below the cost of production. The output thus procured by the Government at MSP is later distributed at affordable rates through the public distribution system.

### 2015

- The Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) was set up in 2014-15 under the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW) to help regulate the price volatility of important **agri-horticultural commodities like onion, potatoes and pulses were also added subsequently.**
  - \* The amount in the fund is generally utilized for activities aimed at bringing down/up the high/low prices say for instance, procurement of such products and distribution of the same as and when required, so that prices remain in a range.
- The PSF scheme was transferred from DAC&FW to the Department of Consumer Affairs (DOCA) w.e.f. 1st April, 2016.

- The Price Stabilization Fund will be managed centrally by a Price Stabilization Fund Management Committee (PSFMC) which will approve all proposals from State Governments and Central Agencies. The PSF will be maintained as a Central Corpus Fund by Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), a society promoted by Ministry of Agriculture for linking agriculture to private businesses and investments and technology.
- Accordingly, the Government of India, on 27 March 2015, approved the creation of a Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) with a corpus of Rs.500 crores as a Central Sector Scheme, to support market interventions for price control of perishable agri-horticultural commodities during 2014-15 to 2016-17.

### Details

- The scheme provides for maintaining a strategic buffer of aforementioned commodities for subsequent calibrated release to moderate price volatility and discourage hoarding and unscrupulous speculation.
- For building such stock, the scheme promotes direct purchase from farmers/farmers' association at farm gate/Mandi. The PSF is utilized for granting interest free advance of working capital to Central Agencies, State/UT Governments/Agencies to undertake market intervention operations.
- Apart from domestic procurement from farmers/wholesale mandis, import may also be undertaken with support from the Fund.

## 26. SFURTI

- SFURTI is Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries.
- Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Govt. of India has launched this scheme in the year 2005 with the view to promote Cluster development.
- The Scheme guidelines of SFURTI have been revamped in 2015 and the Scheme has taken giant strides in 2015. Funds to the tune of Rs.62 Crore have been sanctioned under the Scheme in 2015 as against Nil in 2014.

### Objectives of Scheme

- To organize the traditional industries and artisans into clusters to make them competitive and provide support for their long term sustainability and economy of scale;
- To provide sustained employment for traditional industry artisans and rural entrepreneurs;
- To enhance marketability of products of such clusters by providing support for new products, design intervention and improved packaging and also the improvement of marketing infrastructure;
- To equip traditional artisans of the associated clusters with the improved skills and capabilities through training and exposure visits;

- To make provision for common facilities and improved tools and equipment for artisans to promote optimum utilization of infrastructure facilities

#### Criteria for Selection of Clusters

- The selection of clusters will be based on their geographical concentration which should be around 500 beneficiary families of artisans/micro enterprises, suppliers of raw materials, traders, service providers, etc., located within one or two revenue sub-divisions in a District (or in contiguous Districts).

### **27. Smart Freight Operation Optimisation & Real Time Information (SFOORTI)**

- In a major digital initiative to help plan the traffic flows and optimize freight operations, Ministry of Railways have launched Smart Freight Operation Optimization & Real Time Information (SFOORTI) App for Freight Managers which provides features for monitoring and managing freight business using Geographic Information System (GIS) Views and Dashboard.

#### Salient features of SFOORTI Application are as below:

- With this application, movement of freight trains on Geographic Information System (GIS) view can be tracked.
- Both passenger and freight trains can be tracked over Zones/Divisions/ Sections in single GIS View.
- Freight business can be monitored.
- Comparative Analysis of Zonal/Divisional Traffic.
- Analysis of new traffic captured and traffic lost.
- This app provides a Bird's eye view of all Freight Assets in a single window.
- Provides end to end Rake movement on Geospatial view
- Expected Traffic at Interchange points to evaluate daily performance can be viewed.
- Performance of each zone and divisions with respect to loading and utilization of freight assets can be viewed.
- Sectional performance monitoring for sections, divisions and zones shall help in traffic routing.
- Freight terminal and sidings can be better monitored to ensure better turnaround of rakes.

### **28. World Social Protection Report 2017-19**

#### What is Social protection?

- Social protection is concerned with preventing, managing, and overcoming situations that adversely affect people's wellbeing.
- Social protection consists of policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to manage economic and social risks, such as unemployment, exclusion, sickness, disability and old age.

- The World Social Protection Report 2017-19 is released by the International Labour Organization.

#### What are the major highlights of the report?

- The goal of comprehensive coverage evidently remains a mere slogan in several parts of the world.
- A vast majority of people (4 billion) live without any safeguard against the normal contingencies of life. Less than half (45.2%) have guaranteed access to only one social protection benefit in the face of a whole gamut of risks such as ill health, unemployment, occupational injuries, disability, and old age.
- More than half the population in rural areas are not covered by universal health programmes, as compared to less than a quarter in urban locations.
- Nearly two-thirds of children are not covered by any form of social protection, meaning that their education is unlikely to rank as a priority among households. Furthermore, 41% of mothers of newborns receive no maternity benefits.
- Only 27.8% of persons with severe disabilities worldwide receive appropriate support. The expansion of old-age pensions to include 68% of people in the retirement age is a move in the right direction.

There is growing political support for the idea that public investment in social security is critical to eradicate poverty, boost economic growth, and reduce inequality.

- About 29% of the population enjoy comprehensive social protection.
- There has been a 2% increase in coverage in the last two years.

#### What are the challenges and how can they be addressed?

- Major obstacles in this regard are fiscal austerity measures. The report reinforces the alternative approach, of economic stimulus and productivity-enhancing growth.
- Targets under the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals lay out the framework for concerted efforts in this respect. An earlier ILO study documented the challenges facing countries, at their current rate of progress, to meet the 2025 target of eradicating child labour.
- However, the levels of support are not adequate enough even to lift people out of poverty. A trend away from the privatization of pension protection in Poland, Argentina, Hungary, among others, is a moment for other countries to rethink.
- A highlight in the report is the practical tools and guidance on calculating the cost of different social benefits. It dispels the notion that universal coverage is beyond the reach of poor countries.

### 29. **Zero Budget Natural Farming project**

- Zero Budget Natural Farming, as the name implies, is a method of farming where the cost of growing and harvesting plants is zero. This means that farmers need not purchase fertilizers and pesticides in order to ensure the healthy growth of crops.

#### Context

- Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister, Jai Ram Thakur, launched Zero Budget Natural Farming project.

### 30. **Zojila Tunnel**

- Cabinet approves construction, operation and maintenance of 2-lane bi-directional Zojila tunnel with parallel escape tunnel in J&K
- The project is said to be Asia's longest bi-directional tunnel, is estimated to cost Rs 6,809-crore.
- The 14.1 km two-lane bi-directional single tube tunnel will have a parallel 14.2 km egress tunnel, excluding approaches between Baltal and Minamarg in the Valley. The construction of approaches of this tunnel is being undertaken separately.
- This project, along with other ongoing projects like the 6.5 km long Z-Morh tunnel at Gagangir, would ensure safe, fast and cheap connectivity between the two regions of Kashmir and Ladakh

#### What was the need?

Situated at an altitude of 11,578 feet on the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh National Highway, Zoji La remains closed from December to April due to heavy snowfall and avalanches, cutting off the Ladakh region from Kashmir. The site where the tunnel is planned sees minimum temperatures of -40 degrees Celsius, making construction work difficult.

- This tunnel will not only provide all-weather connectivity for the first time, but will also be of strategic value to the armed forces
- The project will be implemented by Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) through National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).

#### Design

- The tunnel will be an engineering marvel, a first of its kind in such geographical area. It will have all modern technical safety arrangements such as cut and cross ventilation system, two axial fans,, fully transverse ventilation system, uninterrupted power supply, CCTV monitoring, variable messaging boards, traffic logging equipment , tunnel radio, emergency telephone system etc.

#### Impact

- The main objective of the project is to provide all whether connectivity to strategically important Leh region in Jammu & Kashmir which at the moment is limited to at best 6 months because of snow on the passes and threat of avalanches.

- This project along with other ongoing projects like 6.5 km long Z-Morh tunnel at Gagangir would ensure safe, fast and cheap connectivity between the two regions of Kashmir and Ladakh.
- It will further increase the employment potential for the local labourers for the project activities.
- The project, on completion, would lead to enormous boost in employment as local businesses get linked to National market and the beautiful region is able to receive round the year tourist traffic.
- These sectors will generate employment at multiple levels.

### 31. **India's 2nd largest rooftop solar power plant**

- As part of India's target to achieve 40 Giga Watts (GW) of rooftop photovoltaic (PV) by 2022, the state-owned gas utility, Gas India Limited has said in a statement that it has installed India's second largest roof top solar PV power plant at its Petrochemical Complex at Pata, Uttar Pradesh.

#### Why the shift to photovoltaic is good for India

- Solar photovoltaic based power and energy systems are gaining recognition due to the availability and high solar insulation in most parts of India
- Photovoltaic based power and energy systems have the inherent advantage of direct conversion to power, unlike a solar thermal system
- Solar photovoltaic as a technology, its application in remote areas, its advantage as a stand-alone system makes it a wonderful source of energy
- It is also environment-friendly and inexhaustible

#### Previous solar energy initiatives

- As a step towards a solar-powered nation, Tata Power Solar, in December 2015, had commissioned a 12 Mega Watt (MW) solar rooftop project in Amritsar, which produces more than 150 lakh units of power annually and offsets over 19,000 tonne of carbon emissions every year.

#### Background

- This initiative is part of India's target of having 175 GW of non-hydro renewable capacity by 2022. This total target includes 60 GW of onshore wind, 60 GW of utility-scale solar, 10 GW of bio-energy, 5 GW of small hydro and 40 GW of rooftop solar energy.

### 32. **Cabinet approves extension of norms for mandatory packaging in Jute Materials**

#### Features:

- The CCEA has extended the mandatory packaging norms under the Jute Packaging Material (JPM) Act, 1987.
- The approval mandates that 90% of the food grains and 20% of the sugar products shall be mandatorily packed in jute bags.



- The decision also mandates, in the first instance, the entire requirement for packing of food grains would be placed in jute bags thus, making a provision for 100% packing of food grains in jute bags subject to the ability of the jute industry to meet the requirement.

#### **Impact:**

- The decision will benefit farmers and workers located in the Eastern and North Eastern regions of the country particularly in West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura.

#### **Measures taken by Government to give a boost to Jute industry:**

- With a view to boosting demand in the jute sector, Government of India has imposed Definitive Anti-Dumping Duty on import of jute goods from Bangladesh and Nepal
- In order to improve the productivity and quality of raw jute through a carefully designed intervention, called the Jute ICARE, the Government has been supporting close to one lakh jute farmers by disseminating improved agronomic practices such as line sowing using seed drills, weed management by using wheel-hoeing and nail-weeders, distribution of quality certified seeds and also providing microbial assisted retting.
- In order to support jute farmers, Jute Corporation of India (JCI) has been given a grant of Rs. 204 crore for 4 years starting from 2014-15 to enable JCI to conduct MSP operations and ensure price stabilization in the jute sector.
- With a view to supporting diversification of jute sector, the National Jute Board has collaborated with National Institute of Design and a Jute Design Cell has been opened at Gandhinagar.
- Promotion of Jute Geo Textiles and Agro-Textiles has been taken up with the state governments particularly those in the North Eastern region and also with departments such as Ministry of Road Transport and Ministry of Water Resources.
- In order to promote transparency in jute sector, Jute SMART an e-govt initiative was launched in December, 2016, providing an integrated platform for procurement of B-Twill sacking by Government agencies.

### **33. Problem of land hoarding**

- The information provided by the Government Land Information System (GLIS) is both incomplete and patchy. While various Central Ministries admit to owning only about 13,50,500 hectares of land, disparate official sources suggest that the correct figure is several times more than what is disclosed

#### **Facts**

- The Ministries of Railways and Defence, respectively, have 43,000 hectares and 32,780 hectares of land lying vacant, without even any proposed use.

- According to reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), the 13 major port trusts have 14,728 hectares of land lying idle.

- \* The CAG also reports that none of the government agencies maintains adequate ownership records. For instance, the 13 major ports have failed to produce title deeds for as much as 45% of their land holdings.

#### **Problems arising because of land holding by govt**

- Land hoarding by government agencies has created artificial scarcity and is one of the main drivers of skyrocketing urban real estate prices.
- Even after the recent correction in property prices, middle- and lower-income households find adequate housing unaffordable.
- High land prices also reduce competitiveness by increasing the cost of industrial and development projects.
- Moreover, the allocation of unused land is rife with corruption. Scams involving the Adarsh Cooperative Housing Society, the Srinagar airfield project, and the Kandla Port Trust are a few of the many examples of alleged complicity between private developers and local officials to misuse government land.
- The problem of land scarcity has been aggravated by grossly wasteful land use by government agencies

#### **Floor Space Index (FSI)**

It is the total floor area built per square metre of land.

- The demand for land increases with both population density and economic growth. Therefore, to maintain efficiency, the FSI should also increase.
- By this token, the FSI should be the highest in major city centres, where the demand for space is highest, and it should taper off gradually towards the periphery.
- Apart from supplying space for economic activities, such an arrangement would also help maximize the gains from transport infrastructure.

#### **What should be done?**

- The need of the hour is a comprehensive inventory of land resources and usage patterns for all government branches.
- It should include information on the location of each property, its dimensions, the legal title, current and planned use, and any applicable land use restrictions.
- This will enable effective identification of suboptimal land use, as well as of the land that is surplus.
- Surplus land should be utilized to meet the ever-growing demands for services, such as water and waste disposal, as well for government-sponsored housing and transportation projects.
- Land intended for future use can be rented out till such time it is needed, through a transparent auctioning process. This will not only buoy the public exchequer but prevent plots of land lying waste for years.

- A public-government partnership seems to be the way out.
  - \* We could take a cue from Britain. There, the government has pledged to provide details of ownership, location, and intended use for all properties. Citizens are invited to contest official land use and suggest alternatives.

Therefore, as a first step, the government should agree to disclose its land use and release of excess land, the use of which it cannot justify.

### 34. 'Water scarcity may hit thermal power'

#### Highlights of a report published by World Resources Institute (WRI):

- India's thermal power plants, about 90% of which rely on fresh water for cooling, risk facing serious outages because of shortage of water.
- Between 2013 and 2016, 14 of India's 20 largest thermal utility companies experienced one or more shutdowns due to water shortages
- India lost about 14 terawatt-hours of thermal power generation due to water shortages in 2016, cancelling out more than 20% of growth in the country's total electricity generation from 2015
- About 40% of the country's thermal power plants are facing great stress in terms of water availability
- The WRI's report predicts that this problem is set to worsen as India's thermal power sector expands and demand for water from other sectors increases.
- It says that by 2030, 70% of India's thermal power plants are likely to experience increased competition for water from agriculture, industry and municipalities.
- Even in water-abundant or low water-stress regions, thermal plants can still face water shortage-related risks during droughts or when monsoons are delayed. Some of those plants — for example, Farakka, Raichur, and Tiroda — experienced significant, if not the biggest, disruptions in generation caused by water shortages.

#### About WRI:

- The World Resources Institute (WRI) is a global research non-profit organization that was established in 1982 with funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation under the leadership of James Gustave Speth.
- They maintain offices in the United States, China, India, Brazil, and Indonesia.
- The organization's mission is to promote environmental sustainability, economic opportunity, and human health and well-being.
- WRI partners with local and national governments, private companies, publicly-held corporations, and other non-profits, and offers services including global climate change issues, sustainable markets, ecosystem protection, and environmental responsible governance services.

### 35. Politics over Ease of doing business

- The World Bank announced that it would revise the methodology it uses to calculate the ease of doing business index, a move that is expected to affect the rankings of countries in the last four years.
- The decision to revise the methodology comes after the Bank's chief economist Paul Romer raised concerns that the rankings could have been influenced by politics.

#### Why is it significant?

- The ease of doing business index has become a popular tool tracked by governments trying to show the world that they offer a favourable investment climate for private businessmen. This stands true despite the fact that many countries, such as India, have expressed their displeasure in the past over their own standing in the rankings.
- Meanwhile, some critics have pointed to Chile which has seen its ranking fluctuate widely based more on the ideology of the government in power than on underlying business conditions.

#### What are the other issues?

- A common criticism of the ranking is that it limits its sample size to just a few major cities, thus projecting an imperfect picture of overall business conditions.
- Others have wondered if governments may be gaming the rankings by tailoring their policies to specifically fit the World Bank's criteria instead of trying to enact wider structural reforms.
- Another criticism is whether the bank is right to measure a country's business environment based on written legal rules rather than investigating the actual ground conditions in which businesses operate.
- Many businesses, for example, may be able to bribe their way out of bad rules.

### 36. Charging Points for Electric Vehicles

- Achieving the target of all-electric vehicles by 2030 will need a substantial push from the government and the private sector in terms of setting up the charging infrastructure, enabling cheaper availability of raw materials and incentivizing mid-way measures such as hybrid vehicles.

#### What is the aim?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari and erstwhile Energy Minister Piyush Goyal have all spoken about the target to achieve an all-electric fleet of vehicles by 2030, in line with the ongoing global push away from the internal combustion engine.

#### What steps have been taken?

- Different departments and ministries have stepped up their engagement with the electric vehicle industry. Energy Efficiency Services Limited, a government firm, has put in motion plans to procure 10,000 e-vehicles and has already given out tenders to the likes of Tata Motors and M&M.

- EESL aims to lease these vehicles out to government departments so as to replace their existing fleets of petrol and diesel vehicles.
- The Government also notified the scheme for Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME), as a part of its National Electric Mobility Mission Plan 2020. The scheme has four focus areas: technology development, pilot project, charging infrastructure and demand creation. The scheme has been extended till March 31, 2018.

#### Is the infrastructure ready?

- There are several initiatives, by both the government and the private sector, to enhance the required charging infrastructure. The Centre has begun pilot projects in this regard, having already installed 25 charging stations in Bengaluru, and planning to expand this to other metros.
- Last year, Fortum India inaugurated a 22 KW AC charger on a pilot basis in Delhi, and the company said it was looking to install up to 160 charging stations over a year in Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. The parent company Fortum Oyj also signed an agreement with government-owned NBCC (India) to bring cloud-based back-end infrastructure for electric vehicles to India.
- Reliance Energy also has said it planned to install 15 charging stations across its distribution license area in Mumbai over the next three years. The company is also working on a third-party business model to provide charging station facilities for electric two-wheelers and four-wheelers in public places, parking plazas near highways, and offices and malls. Tata Power has also installed two charging stations in Mumbai.

#### What are the roadblocks?

- There are several. The first is that very few global carmakers have brought their electric variants into India. The fact that the government has also made a distinction between EVs and hybrid vehicles under the GST regime is seen as a problem. While EVs are to be taxed at 12%, hybrid vehicles are taxed at 28% plus a 15% cess.
- The view among carmakers is that people are still sceptical about the shift to all-electric vehicles since they fear the charge duration of the batteries. As such, they are more likely to try hybrid vehicles, but that sector is not being encouraged by the current tax structure. The other issue has to do with the charging stations themselves.
- While sector specialists said that EVs can be charged at home using AC power, this would take about 5-8 hours for a full charge. DC chargers, on the other hand, can do the same in a fraction of the time. Most of the chargers being installed across the country, however, are AC chargers.

### **37. India's housing requirements**

#### What does the Survey Say?

The Survey pointed out that India's housing requirements are complex and policies have mostly "focused on building more homes and on homeownership. So it wants a more holistic approach that takes into account rentals and vacancy rates.

- The government needs to address issues such as rent control and unclear property rights rather than focusing on building more homes under its scheme to provide 'Housing for All' by 2022,
- In turn, this needs policymakers to pay more attention to contract enforcement, property rights and spatial distribution of housing supply versus demand
- A successful housing policy should enable the ability to move to, between and within cities as job opportunities arise.
- It should also deliver vertical mobility, so that an aspirational population can climb the socio-economic ladder,
- It highlighted that two important areas that need to be looked at are the rental segment and vacancy rates.

#### Rentals

- The share of rental housing has actually been declining in Indian cities since independence from 54% in 1961 to 28% in 2011.
- As a proportion, renting accommodation is more prevalent in urban areas than in rural. According to the 2011 Census, the share of households living in rented houses was only 5% in rural areas, but 31% in urban areas.

#### Vacant Houses

- It pointed out that despite the shortage of housing in urban India (more than 18 million households in 2012), there is also a trend of increase in vacant houses: from 6.5 million in 2001 to 11.1 million in 2011.
- According to the national census, vacant houses constituted around 12% of the share of the total urban housing stock. Mumbai has the highest number of total vacant houses (0.48 million), followed by Delhi (0.3 million) and Bengaluru (around 0.3 million). In terms of share of vacant houses to total residential stock, Gurgaon ranked highest (26%).

# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## 1. Australia Group- India Admitted

### India admitted to Australia Group

- India joined the Australia Group saying that the membership will be mutually beneficial.
- The Australia Group decided to admit India as its 43rd participant.
- Its entry would be mutually beneficial and further contribute to international security and non-proliferation objectives
- The Australia Group said India's membership will help to counter the "spread of materials, equipment and technologies that could contribute to the development or acquisition of chemical/biological weapons."
- The entry is a show of support from the international community for India's non-proliferation records.

### Background

- It is an informal group of countries (now joined by the European Commission) established in 1985 (after the use of chemical weapons by Iraq in 1984) to help member countries to identify those exports which need to be controlled so as not to contribute to the spread of chemical and biological weapons.
- The group, initially consisting of 15 members, held its first meeting in Brussels, Belgium, in September 1989.
- With the incorporation of Mexico on August 12, 2013, it now has 42 members, including all (OECD) members, all 28 member states of the European Union, Ukraine, and Argentina.
- The name comes from Australia's initiative to create the group. Australia manages the secretariat.

## 2. Delhi Declaration

### Freedom of Navigation

- Security and freedom of navigation will be in the heart of India-ASEAN cooperation in the twenty-first century
- The leaders agreed on establishing a joint mechanism to ensure safety and freedom of navigation in the maritime domain.
- The statement on the maritime mechanism is significant as it is the first time that India has taken up forming of a special maritime mechanism with all the ASEAN heads of states at a single summit.
- Maritime security and freedom of navigation featured prominently in the 'Delhi Declaration'

- The declaration indicated at common concern regarding the South China Sea and reaffirmed the "importance of maintaining and promoting peace, stability, maritime safety and security, freedom of navigation and over flight in the region, and other lawful uses of the seas and unimpeded lawful maritime commerce."
- The maritime domain has been in the centre of India's Act East diplomacy which aims to firm up India's position in the ASEAN and Asia Pacific region.

### Delhi Declaration of the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit:

25th Anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations under the theme of "Shared Values, Common Destiny"

- **REAFFIRMING** our commitment to guide ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations by the principles, purposes, shared values and norms enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations
- **NOTING** the cross-cultural exchanges and civilizational linkages between Southeast Asia and India over several millennia as a strong foundation for cooperation
- **RECOGNISING** with appreciation the achievements made over the past 25 years of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations across the three ASEAN Community pillars, namely political-security, economic and socio-cultural;
- **NOTING** with satisfaction the progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity
- **APPRECIATING** India's support for ASEAN centrality in the evolving regional architecture and its continued contribution to regional peace, security, and prosperity and to ASEAN integration and the ASEAN Community building process

In a significant development, India and 10 ASEAN countries for the first time mentioned "cross-border movement of terrorists" and made a commitment to counter the challenge through "close cooperation". They not only agreed on a comprehensive approach to counter "foreign terrorist fighters", but also supported efforts to target terrorist groups and sanctuaries. The Delhi declaration issued said the leaders reiterated their commitment to "promote comprehensive approach to combat terrorism through close cooperation by disrupting and countering terrorists, terrorist groups and networks, including by countering cross-border movement of terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters and misuse of Internet, including social media, by terror entities; strengthen cooperation to stop terrorism financing efforts, and prevent recruitment of members of terrorist groups; support efforts in targeting terrorist groups and sanctuaries; and take further urgent



measures to counter and prevent the spread of terrorism, while stressing that there can be no justification for acts of terror on any grounds whatsoever."

### **ASEAN Plan of Action on Science, Technology and Innovation (APASTI)**

The APASTI 2016-2025 Implementation Plan (AIP) was adopted by the ASEAN Ministers for Science and Technology at the 9th Informal ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology (IAMMST) held on 29 October 2016 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

### **AAI, Lao PDR sign civil aviation cooperation agreement**

- Celebrating 25 years of the India-ASEAN relationship, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has signed a historic agreement with Lao Air Traffic Management, Department of Civil Aviation, Lao PDR, for providing SkyRev360, a comprehensive e-data gathering, invoicing and collection system
- SkyRev360 has been developed in collaboration with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) under the Government of India's Make in India initiative.

SkyRev360 is a fully automated and comprehensive data gathering invoicing and collection service, which eliminates inaccuracies errors and delays for better revenue management with less manual processing.

### **How does it Work**

- SkyRev360 automates data processing helping ANSP's to overcome strenuous manual processes that are prone to mistakes and makes financial operations more accurate and efficient.
- It is a web based service, with no heavy IT implementation on systems and zero down time with nearly 100 pc collections.
- It makes the process of invoicing and collection easier, ensuring that ANSP's relationships with air operators remain as harmonious and dispute-free as possible.
- This is done by the high quality and industry-standardized e-invoices on ANSP's behalf that are easier for the air operators to validate and pay.

### **Features**

- Data gathering and processing module: SkyRev360 can ensure the essential data for your invoices is always the latest and most complete.
- Invoicing module: The system maintains all account attributes and allows for an extensive view of associated data, including aircraft specifications, flight movements, billing ledger records, etc.
- Collection: All collections are managed with the IATA Enhancement & Financing Services (E&F) process, which offers efficiencies and automation to ANSPs and airlines by settling through IATA Settlement Systems.
- Airline queries: The IATA team handles all queries and disputes related to billing and collection from your air operators.

- Dashboard and reports: Incident reports, airspace usage, traffic volumes, economic values and more are always at your fingertips.

### **India should be pro-active: ASEAN**

- All leaders at the just concluded ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit have urged India to play a proactive role in the Asia-Pacific region
- ASEAN is touted to become the fourth largest economic bloc in the world by 2030. As the region increasingly witnesses Chinese adventures in and around the Indian Ocean, it has become important for India to strengthen its relationship with other Asian economies.

### **Stats**

- ASEAN today is one of the most thriving business and commerce centres globally.
- The region constitutes around 8 per cent of the global exports, and receives 15 per cent of world investments, while having almost 26 per cent in outward investments.
- It is also home to economies such as Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, which are often touted as the last frontier economies in the world having exhibited more than 7 per cent growth consistently over the past few years.

### **What was discussed in the summit?**

- During the summit, India announced 1,000 PhD fellowships in the IITs for students from the ASEAN countries.
- New Delhi also announced a dedicated training course in highway engineering, setting up of a virtual network of universities, and pilot projects to set up digital infrastructure at the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit. Further, an ASEAN-India Startup festival will be held later this year.
- The participating countries also agreed to celebrate 2019 as the year of tourism for ASEAN nations
- Apart from countering 'traditional and non-traditional' threats to freedom of navigation, India plans to work closely with Malaysia and Indonesia on handling radicalization. A conference on de-radicalization will be held soon.

### **Advantages of close engagement with ASEAN**

- Indian businesses could benefit by setting up production units in Asean, which could then act as a platform for them to enter China with whom Asean has an FTA. India could also benefit from Asean's trade agreements with other economies in the region.
- Further, the ambition to have an Asean Economic Community would catapult the ten economies of \$2.6 trillion into a single market and production base, providing Indian business unparalleled access to over 622 million people, almost double the population of the US.

Chinese presence

- There exists the continuous dominance and interference by China in some of the economies in the region as it gets desperate to win control in and around the subcontinent
- The entire Asean region is flooded with Chinese products. For example, in Cambodia, many government vehicles sport the tag, "Gifted by friends from China".
  - \* India was instrumental in Cambodia securing freedom, but today finds it difficult to have a significant commercial presence in that country.
- Investments, soft loans, grants and assistance have been offered to most of the new frontier economies, making it difficult for countries such as India to do genuine business there.
  - \* **Philippines expressed its allegiance to China over its age-old partner the US, which could have far-reaching strategic and defence spillovers.**

Issue Area

- It is true that India's mythology and culture find great resonance across the entire ASEAN region. However, repeated mention of the historical linkages appear rhetorical, and unable to add any real value as these economies anticipate a proactive and constructive commercial engagement with India.
- India's commitment to trade and investment in ASEAN remains far from impressive. While around 10 per cent of India's exports goes to ASEAN, we contribute only 2 per cent to ASEAN's total import from across the globe. In fact, the balance of trade has always been in favour of ASEAN.

What should India do?

- The 3Cs, namely commerce, connectivity and culture, should ideally become the pivot of cooperation between ASEAN and India.
- Asean's strength today lies in plantations, electronics and heavy machinery, while for India it is largely in computer services, light engineering and pharmaceuticals. Both sides need to create appropriate frameworks to reduce both tariff and non-tariff barriers to widen the scope of trade, while looking at participation in the value chain.
- India in 2015 announced a ₹500-crore Project Development Fund, which was meant to encourage Indian businesses to set up ventures in CLMV countries (Cambodia, Laos Myanmar and Vietnam). The region offers a lot of opportunities for Indian entities in project exports, supply contracts, and creating utility infrastructure, apart from having manufacturing set-ups. It is important for India that such initiatives are realized soon, especially when it faces competition from an aggressive Chinese.

- India must strive to penetrate in select Asean economies where China is well entrenched, while increasing its influence in others where China is gaining a foothold. India must shrug off its traditional inertia and replicate the Chinese approach of offering the entire bouquet of its services to engage with the Asean economies. This would essentially mean avoiding procrastination and inordinate delay

Way forward

- However, India needs to be cautious while negotiating the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) with China being the big elephant in the room. Trade facilitation is another key area. It is important for Indian banks to set up operations in the region which would help Indian businesses.
- Aspects such as Mutual Recognition Agreement in the context of services should be ratified at the earliest keeping aside any apprehension on the impact that this could have on Asean's services sectors which are largely confined to Singapore. India may also explore opportunity to be a part of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation or APEC, and to the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation (CMIM) — a mechanism created in 2010 to help manage regional financial crisis.
- Both India and Asean would require to chisel their existing policies to facilitate trade and investment and, more importantly, maintain a sustainable environment for peace in the region.
- In this context, a benign and non-hegemonic engagement between India and Asean would yield sound economic results and would be a shot in arm as far as strategy is concerned.

### 3. Innovation Multi-disciplinary Partnerships to Accelerate Community Transformation and Sustainability (IMPACTS)

- The Department of Biotechnology and Department of Science and Technology is collaborating with Canada through the India-Canada Centre for IMPACTS, on programme focusing on Clean Water technology.
- Technologies that are being developed are: Bio-sensors for detection of toxins Heavy metal detection and removal Bio-recovery from waste water

Details

- The India-Canada Centre for Innovative Multidisciplinary Partnerships to Accelerate Community Transformation and Sustainability (IC-IMPACTS) and its partners are developing and implementing community-based solutions to meet the most urgent needs faced by some communities in Canada and India: poor water quality, unsafe and unsustainable infrastructure, and poor health from water-borne and infectious diseases.
- Under IC-IMPACTS' leadership, researchers, industry innovators, community organizations and government agencies work collaboratively to develop and test local solutions that can be scaled up across India and Canada.

- The centre also provides training and professional development to address critical skills shortages.

#### 4. International Dharma-Dhamma Conference

- Nalanda University, in collaboration with the Centre for Study of Religion and Society, India Foundation, Ministry of External Affairs and the Vietnam Buddhist University, is organising the conference
- The event is being organised as part of the commemorative events to celebrate the Silver Jubilee year of ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership, with support of the Union Ministry of External Affairs.
- The central theme of the conference is the ideal state and just social order based on dharmic principles.
- Through this conference it is aimed to facilitate crosspollination of ideas and foster harmony at the global level. In the present era of globalization it is all the more needed to integrate the world through the common bond of Dharma-Dhamma which provides strong thread of interconnectedness.
- Thus, the conference seeks to explore the shared values of the dharmic traditions, which may provide the guiding light to the troubled world today.

#### 5. Teen Murti Haifa Chowk

- India renamed the iconic Teen Murti Chowk, a war memorial as Teen Murti Haifa Chowk
- This was done as a symbolic gesture of friendship with Israel

##### Battle of Haifa:

- 2018 marks a centenary of the end of the World War I and the Battle of Haifa
- The victorious operation by the Indian soldiers carried out on 23 September 1918 targeted the fortification of the city of Haifa which was then controlled by a joint Ottoman, German and Austro-Hungarian force
- The Indian soldiers fighting for the Allied Powers captured Haifa and cleared a crucial route for the Allies
- The liberation of Haifa cleared a supply route for the Allies to the city through the sea

#### 6. Thar Link Express

- Thar Link Express that connects Khokhrapar in Pakistan and Munabao in Rajasthan
- The Government of Pakistan has agreed to extend the agreement of the Rail link between Munabao (India) – Khokhrapar (Pakistan) for another three years from 1 February 2018 to 31 January 2021
- The agreement to run the Thar Link Express was signed in 2006 and is one of the cheapest means of transport between the two rival countries.
- The rail link facilitates people-to-people contacts

#### 7. VINBAX

- For the first time, armies of India and Vietnam began a six day-long military exercise in Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh, reflecting growing defence ties between the two countries.
- It is the first military exercise between the two countries, a senior army official said here. The exercise, christened 'VINBAX' will continue for six days.
- India and Vietnam have been exploring ways to strengthen defence cooperation.

#### 8. Nepal to use Chinese Internet bandwidth

- China became Nepal's second Internet service provider, breaking India's monopoly in providing Internet access to the Himalayan country.
- China Telecom Global (CTG), a company formed in 2012, has teamed up with Nepal Telecom to provide alternative cyber connectivity to Nepal.
- So far, Nepal had been linked to the global internet network through Indian telecom operators, using optical fibre connections in Biratnagar, Bhairahawa and Birgunj, among others.
- Nepal depended on Indian telecom companies, such as Bharti Airtel and Tata Communications, for access to the worldwide web, which Nepali officials said made connections vulnerable to network failures.

##### How do the Chinese side view this?

- The Chinese side views its Nepal venture as part of a larger digital network of countries along the New Silk Road.

##### Advantages

- This will give an alternative to them for cyber connectivity
- Consumers can now look forward to other reliable services

##### Background

- The internet was first introduced to Nepal in 1993 by a venture between the Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (RONAST) and a private firm, the Mercantile Office Systems. The Indian Institute of Technology in Mumbai had a UNDP-funded internet connection and RONAST set up a system whereby it could connect to Mumbai to transfer email messages.
- The first optical fiber link to India was built four years later.

#### 9. Israel seeks 'big data' from India, signs 4 agreements

- Israel has proposed to access India's "big data".
- Israel and India have proposed a data driven method to counter cyber-threats
- Israel has proposed a Precision agriculture methodology to revolutionize Indian farm production.

- The idea of big data was brought into the discussion by the Israeli side in the context of emphasizing how technology can now be used to agglomerate vast amounts of information and then bear on individual field and individual [Indian] farmer's efforts, to improve the yield.
- Data under consideration would be of a magnitude to facilitate monitoring of individual farmers and water utilisation, cutting of crop, plantation, soil condition.

#### 'Precision agriculture'

- Precision agriculture (PA), satellite farming or Site Specific Crop Management (SSCM) is a farming management concept based on observing, measuring and responding to inter and intra-field variability in crops.
- The goal of precision agriculture research is to define a Decision Support System (DSS) for whole farm management with the goal of optimizing returns on inputs while preserving resources.
- The practice of precision agriculture has been enabled by the advent of GPS and GNSS. The farmer's and/or researcher's ability to locate their precise position in a field allows for the creation of maps of the spatial variability of as many variables as can be measured (e.g. crop yield, terrain features/topography, organic matter content, moisture levels, nitrogen levels, pH, EC, Mg, K, and others). Similar data is collected by sensor arrays mounted on GPS-equipped combine harvesters. These arrays consist of real-time sensors that measure everything from chlorophyll levels to plant water status, along with multispectral imagery. This data is used in conjunction with satellite imagery by variable rate technology (VRT) including seeders, sprayers, etc. to optimally distribute resources.

#### **10. Donald Trump administration suspends over \$1.15 billion aid to Pakistan**

- After putting Pakistan on notice earlier, US President Donald Trump walked the talk as his administration suspended all security assistance to Pakistan, beginning from Friday, until Islamabad acts against terror groups.
- This comes days after Trump accused Pakistan of providing "safe haven" to terrorists and feeding the US nothing but "lies and deceit". The suspension of aid money would mean Pakistan will lose out on more than \$1.15 billion which it has been receiving over the years. The payment will remain frozen until at least the end of the year.

#### What funds are suspended?

- Prominent among the suspended amount includes USD 255 million in Foreign Military Funding (FMF) for the fiscal year 2016 as mandated by the Congress.
- In addition, the Department of Defense has suspended the entire USD 900 million of the Coalition Support Fund (CSF) money to Pakistan for the fiscal year 2017.

#### What else did US say?

- This would also mean the US would stop delivery of military equipment, but Washington maintained they would make exemptions on a case-by-case basis.
- The US also hoped to renew its bilateral security relationship when Pakistan is willing to aggressively counter the Taliban and other terrorist groups.

#### A clever ploy?

- A less worrisome interpretation of President's outrage would be that it is a clever ploy to gain more leverage in a region where the U.S. is seemingly losing ground.
- It is steadily losing its Afghan war, losing ground to China in the region, and China is increasingly interested in politically managing the potential outcomes of the Afghan war
- And Islamabad so far is seen to have had the best of both worlds — being China's closest ally, while remaining a non-NATO ally of the U.S.
- In that interpretation, US president decided to end the party for Pakistan on January 1, till of course Pakistan agrees to deliver on American concerns regarding China and Afghanistan.

#### Islamabad's Response

- Any tightening of the noose around the Taliban is likely to be viewed by the Pakistan army as a strategic blunder, the implications of which would outlast the irresolute U.S. commitment in Afghanistan.
- Caving into U.S. demands would have grave implications for the much-weakened civilian government in Islamabad, especially when all eyes are on the general elections later this year.
- The response from Islamabad has so far been verbal, with threats of suspending military and intelligence cooperation with Washington.
- As an immediate measure, Pakistan has banned the Mumbai terror attacks mastermind Hafiz Saeed-led Jamaat-ud Dawa (JuD) and Falah-i-Insaniat Foundation from collecting donations.
- However, it should be noted that American aid and reimbursements (for expenses incurred by Pakistan in the war on terror) have been declining over the past several years.
  - \* If so, the impact of the U.S. withholding aid may not be exceptionally damaging for Pakistan.

It would be instructive to watch what role Beijing would play in this war of nerves between its strategic adversary and closest ally.

#### Implications for South Asia

- This would considerably diminish Pakistan's ability to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds: being China's closest strategic partner while remaining a key U.S. ally in the region even as China and the U.S. inch towards a Cold War of sorts



- Pakistan has been steadily moving towards China from the American camp: this will now be a far quicker shift.
- As a direct consequence of these moves and counter-moves, there would emerge a far severe geopolitical competition in the region, the sharpest since the end of the Cold War.
- The emerging China-Pakistan-Russia axis is set to play a dominant role in the regional geopolitical order. All three members of this axis have scores to settle with the U.S.
- The role of Iran — which also has hostile relations with the U.S. even as it maintains a crucial strategic partnership with New Delhi — in this grouping would be interesting to watch.

#### Implications for India

The freezing of U.S.-Pakistan relations could potentially have negative implications for the country, certainly in the medium to long term.

- This will mean the end of the indirect influence (through the U.S.) that India has traditionally managed to exert on Pakistan, especially on terror-related issues.
- The ever-strong China-Pakistan ties, without the balancing effect of the U.S. in the region, could push India further to the wall.
- American 'absence' would embolden Chinese maneuvers against India, and more so, China will be a far less pro-India broker than Washington ever was.

#### Way forward

- New Delhi's best bet would be to deal with Washington without closing its doors to Moscow or Beijing, such fine balancing would require a great deal of diplomatic acumen, strategic foresight and long-term thinking
- New Delhi should also closely consider the real intent behind Washington's ire at Islamabad: it's the Pakistani Taliban and the Haqqani network the Americans are after, not so much India-centric terror groups. When put under intense international pressure and American ire, Pakistan has managed to weather the storm in the past.
- It is also important to note that even though the relations between the two countries were deteriorating in the recent past, the out-of-the-blue statements from Mr. Trump may not be adequately thought-out; hence the possibility that the U.S. establishment, with long-term interests in Pakistan, might soft-peddle its President's angry outbursts.

A sharper geopolitical competition in the region could also adversely impact the overall sub-systemic stability in the region: when hard-nosed geopolitics takes over, focus on infrastructure development, market access, development of regional organizations, and regional conflict resolution mechanisms is bound to suffer. And that's precisely what India needs to carefully consider; for unlike both China and the U.S., India is deeply invested in stability in South Asia.

### **11. MoU for cooperation in the field of Science & Technology**

The MoU will provide a mechanism and help to foster scientific cooperation between R&D and academic institutions of India and Canada.

- An innovative model of R&D cooperation between India and Canada will be implemented under a MoU concluded by the Department of Science and Technology with the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) of Canada.
- Under this MoU, the India-Canada Centre for Innovative Multidisciplinary Partnership to Accelerate Community Transformation and Sustainability (IC-IMPACTS) programme will be supported to promote India-Canada multidisciplinary research partnerships.
- The R&D projects will be aimed at accelerating social transformation by providing solutions through application of science and technology.
- The participants will include researchers from scientific organizations, academia and R&D laboratories from India and Canada.
- Identified areas of mutual cooperation include safe and sustainable infrastructure and integrated water management.
- This will help to develop institutional networking and support the establishment of connections between scientific organizations, scientists and specialists of India and Canada.

### **12. China to fund base in Afghanistan**

- China will fund construction of an Afghan counterterrorism base in Badakhshan province to block cross-border infiltration of the ethnic Uyghur militants. The precise location of base, in northern Afghanistan, is yet to be determined
- The Chinese side would cover all material and technical expenses for this base — weaponry, uniforms for soldiers, military equipment and everything else necessary for its functioning

#### China's increase presence in Afghanistan

- The largest group of Uyghur militants already resides in Badakhshan, from where they can rapidly shift to China
- Chinese official stated that counter-terrorism focus would not only be confined to Badakhshan but should be extended to Afghanistan's entire northern region
- China was willing to strengthen pragmatic cooperation in areas of military exchange and anti-terrorism

#### India's worry:

- China has already been increasing presence in Indian Ocean region
- With CPEC and now military base in Afghanistan, it will also circumvent India on northern side land border

**13. Saudi Arabia, UAE introduce VAT in first for Gulf**

- Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates introduced value-added tax from Monday, a first for the Gulf which has long prided itself on its tax-free, cradle-to-grave welfare system.
- Saudi Arabia compounded the New Year blow for motorists with an unannounced hike of up to 127 percent in petrol prices with immediate effect from midnight.
- They are the latest in a series of measures introduced by Gulf oil producers over the past two years to boost revenues and cut spending as a persistent slump in world prices has led to ballooning budget deficits.
- But it marks a major change for two super-rich countries where the mall is king. Dubai has long held an annual shopping festival to draw bargain hunters from around the world to its glitzy retail palaces
- The other four Gulf states -- Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar -- are also committed to introducing VAT but have delayed the move until early 2019.
- None of the Gulf states levy any personal income tax and none have any plans to do so.

**14. Visa lottery system to come to an end**

- US President Donald Trump has proposed to end the visa lottery system in favor of reducing backlogs of highly-skilled workers. If passed by the Congress and signed into law, such a move is expected to significantly reduce the green card backlogs for highly skilled immigrants from India.
- The Diversity Immigrant Visa Programme, which the Trump administration wants to terminate, awards up to 50,000 individuals per year a visa for a green card, which allows permanent residency and is a path to US citizenship.

**Why is Trump against this program?**

- Trump is against this Program as this does not attract best of the brains to USA
- In recent past, several of the home grown terrorists including prime accused of New York terrorist attacks came either on diversity visa or chain migration.

**Significance**

- It will benefit Indian IT professionals who are currently having several decades of waiting period to get their Green Cards.

**15. Japan for greater ties with India in food processing**

- Japanese Ambassador to India said there was plenty of room to expand India-Japan ties, especially in food processing, urban development, environment and sanitation as well as medicine.
- Key Fact: In the area of urban development, Japan was helping India in developing Chennai, Ahmedabad and Varanasi as smart cities.

- Priority areas: other priority areas for cooperation included water supply, sewage treatment, natural disaster management techniques, internet of things, artificial intelligence, robotics, start-ups and industrial corridors

**16. Anti-Terror talks between India and Cambodia**

- India and Cambodia held Talks to boost ties in key areas of defence, security and counter-terrorism.
- They called for concerted global efforts to eliminate terrorism, including blocking sources of terror financing and dismantling terrorist bases.

**Pacts**

- Improve cooperation in the prevention and investigation of crimes and legal assistance in criminal matters
- Line of credit from India to finance Cambodia's Stung Sva Hab water resources development project for \$36.92 million.

**Future Programs in Pipeline**

- Both sides expressed a keen interest in enhancing cooperation in maritime domain, including preservation of marine and coastal environment, anti-piracy cooperation, security of sea lanes of communication to maintain peace and ensure safety and security of navigation in the Indo-Pacific Region, and supported complete freedom of navigation and over flight and pacific resolution of maritime issues based on international law.

# SOCIAL ISSUES

## 1. Child Nutrition and Development Nodal Agency Bill, 2017

### Background

- Aiming to eradicate malnutrition among children, Congress MP Jyotiraditya Scindia has proposed setting up a nodal agency, which would work in mission mode, for child nutrition and development.

### What it intends to do?

- According to the Child Nutrition and Development Nodal Agency Bill, 2017, the body would facilitate and supervise multi-sectoral programme in high, medium- and low-burdened districts with malnourished children.
- The Bill states the agency would coordinate and administer policy implementation among various ministries responsible for implementing programmes aimed at eradicating malnutrition.
- At the end of each financial year, the agency will submit a report of its activities to the Central government

The need of the hour is to involve all field functionaries in a productive manner. So consistent monitoring and evaluation of the schemes using technological interventions and real-time data is important.

## 2. Difficult Dialogues 2018

- Difficult Dialogues is an annual forum examining issues of contemporary relevance in South Asia
- Difficult Dialogues 2018 will focus on how Indian gender constructs affect fundamental aspects of daily lives and citizenship.
- The conference will bring together civil society, media, academic experts, activists, and people working at community level [in health, education, labour, sports, law] with government and non-governmental organizations.
- Difficult Dialogues was founded by philanthropist Surina Narula with the intent to bring together leaders from across the spectrum of international society to meet and find equitable solutions to South Asia's most pressing problems.

### Me Too movement

- A two-word hashtag used on social media to help demonstrate the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment, especially in the workplace

## 3. Mankidias- Odisha

- The Mankidias mainly live inside Similipal Forest in Odisha
- They are skilled in trapping monkeys

- They are semi-nomadic tribe, used to hunt monkeys for food.
- Since monkeys are a protected species under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, any attempt to kill the simians invites strong penalties.
- However, if certain areas witness an infestation of monkeys, the animal can be declared a vermin, in which case the Act does not apply.

### Mankidia denied habitat in Simlipal

- Mankidia, one of the 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Odisha, were denied habitat rights inside the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR)
- There are provisions related to this in the historic Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006

### Reasons given:

- The State Forest Department has objected on grounds that tribals could be attacked by wild animals, especially tigers
- Habitat rights would also create barriers for free movement of tigers and other animals

### Impact on Mankidia tribe:

- Mankidia, a marginalised group that critically depends on making rope with siali fibre that's richly available in Similipal, would now be deprived of the non-timber forest produce

### Definition of Habitat

- 'Habitat' as defined under Section 2(h) of the FRA (Forest Rights Act) includes the area comprising the customary habitat and such other habitats in reserved forests and protected forests of primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities and other forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes

### Tribes in Odisha

- In Odisha, processes have been initiated for according habitat rights to PVTGs such as Bondas, Didai, Hill Khadia and Paudi Bhuyan

## 4. NARI

- Developed by the Ministry of Women & Child Development, the portal will provide women citizens with easy access to information on government schemes and initiatives for women.
- Further to provide a platform for NGOs and Civil Societies to interact with the Ministry of Women & Child Development, e-Samvad portal has also been developed which will be inaugurated by the WCD Minister.

**Why was it done?**

- The Government – both Central and State – has implemented a number of schemes & legislations for women to provide them equal rights, economic opportunities, social support, legal aid, housing etc. However, there is often a lack of awareness of these provisions and difficulties in accessing their benefits.
- However, information related to women centric schemes/legislations are all scattered on different websites/portals.
- In order to make this information more easily accessible in one place, the NARI portal summarizes over 350 government schemes and other important information for the benefit of women, with more being added every day.
- It provides links to the Ministries, Departments and autonomous bodies offering these schemes as well as easy access to online applications and grievance redressal.

**How does it help?**

- NARI will provide information to women on issues affecting their lives. There are tips on good nutrition, suggestions for health checkups, information on major diseases, tips for job search and interview, investment and savings advice, information on crimes and against women and reporting procedures, contacts of legal aid cells, simplified adoption procedures and much more.
  - \* It will endow women with the power of information to build their life skills and facilitates them in taking full advantage of the services provided by the Government for them.
- Through e-Samvad portal, NGOs and civil society can provide their feedback, suggestions, put up grievances, share best practices etc.
  - \* Senior Officers within MWCD will be able to view the inputs/suggestions received for their concerned subject areas and appropriately respond to NGOs.
  - \* This will help in formulation of effective policies and measures for welfare of women and children.

**5. Narendra Jadhav Committee**

- The Planning Commission set up a Task Force to Review Guidelines on Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) in June, 2010 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Narendra Jadhav, Member, and Planning Commission.
- The terms of reference of the Task Force were: i) to re-examine and revise the extant Guidelines issued by the Planning Commission for implementation of SCSP and TSP; ii) to understand the operational difficulties in consultation with implementing Ministries and suggest remedial action so that SCSP and TSP can be implemented effectively.

**Context**

- Implementation of Jadhav Guidelines for Allocation of Funds
- The allocation for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes have been worked out keeping the percentage of allocation by the Ministries/Departments prescribed as per the guidelines of Dr. Narendra Jadhav Committee constituted by the erstwhile Planning Commission.

**Allocation for Welfare of SCs/STs**

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has developed an online web-portal e-utthaan.gov.in for monitoring of Allocation for Welfare of Scheduled Castes.
- Similarly, Ministry of Tribal Affairs has developed the online web-portal stcmis.gov.in for monitoring of Allocation for Welfare of Scheduled Tribes.

**6. National Girl Child Day**

- National girl child day is celebrated every year on 24th of January as a national observance day for the girl child. This celebration was started to offer more supports and new opportunities to the girls in the country.
- It is celebrated to increase the awareness among people about all the inequalities faced by the girl child in the society. Inequality about girl child is a vast problem which includes many areas like inequality in education, nutrition, legal rights, medical care, protection, honor, child marriage and so many.

**7. NITI Aayog initiates the first course on Sustainable Urban Planning using Remote Sensing and GIS**

- The First Global Initiative on Academic Network (GIAN) course on Sustainable Urban planning using remote sensing and Geographic Information System, GIS has been launched at Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur's outreach center in NOIDA.
- This course is being conducted under the GIAN Program of the Ministry of Human Resource Development and actively supported by NITI Aayog and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- This course aims to give participants state-of-the-art remote sensing and GIS skills which will allow them to rise to the challenge of managing the rapidly changing urban environment of Indian cities.
- Focus will be on issues such as water resource management, water pollution and strategic emplacements for water treatment facilities.

**8. 'Panic Button' On Mobiles for Women's Safety**

- A pilot project to ensure women safety will kick-start from Uttar Pradesh on the Republic Day on January 26.



- In April, 2016, the Department of Telecommunications had, through a gazette notification, made it mandatory for mobile manufacturers to provide panic buttons in cell phones by January, 2017.
- The order said the phones will have to have the panic button in the form of numeric key 5 or 9 to invoke emergency calls.
- Smart phones without the facility of an emergency call, too, will have to have the same provision, or allow use of power on or off button as the panic button.
- A smartphone user will have to download a mobile application which will send alerts if a victim long presses the panic button on the phone.
- However, a person using a basic phone need only press the designated key.
- Once, a user presses the panic button, five calls will be made to emergency number 112. Following this, five SMSs will be immediately sent to police authorities, and another three to five SMSs will be sent to family members of the victim.
- Nearly 25-50 volunteers in the vicinity of the victim will also be alerted through messages.

## 9. **Smart Star-Rating for Garbage Free Cities**

### Context

- Shri Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister of State (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs along with the Chief Minister of Goa, Shri Manohar Parrikar today launched the 'Protocol for Star Rating of Garbage-Free Cities' in Goa.

### Details

- The star-rating initiative, developed by the Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban will be rating cities on a 7-star rating system based on multiple cleanliness indicators for solid waste management, which will include Door to Door Collection, bulk generator compliance, source segregation, sweeping, scientific processing of waste, scientific land filling, plastic waste management, construction and demolition management, dump remediation & citizen grievance redressal system etc.
- Cities can be rated as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 star based on their compliance with the protocol conditions specified for each of the rating.
- Further city should be ODF (Open Defecation Free) before it could be given rating of 3 star or above.

### Process

- While cities may self-declare themselves as 1-star, 2-star or 4-star, MoHUA will carry out an additional verification through an independent third party to certify cities as 3-star, 5-star or 7-star. Cities will need to get recertified themselves every year to retain their star-status.

### Significance

- The most significant feature of the rating protocol is that it provides stakeholders with a single metric to rate a city's cleanliness, rather than separately evaluating multiple factors which contribute to a city's overall cleanliness and garbage free status.

The SMART rating (Single metric, Measurable, Achievable, Rigorous verification, Targeted towards outcomes) is characterized by Trust and verify model and sustainability (progressive and to be recertified every year).

## 10. **Stree Swabhiman Initiative**

- 'Stree Swabhiman' aims to create a sustainable model for providing adolescent girls and women an access to affordable sanitary products by leveraging CSCs.
- Under the 'Stree Swabhiman' project, sanitary napkin micro manufacturing units are being set up at CSCs across India, particularly those operated by women entrepreneurs.

## 11. **Bhima Koregaon**

- Bhima Koregaon in Pune, Maharashtra is a tiny village and it is associated with an extraordinary phase of Maratha history.
- Two hundred years ago, on January 1, 1818, a few hundred Mahar soldiers of the East India Company, led by the British, defeated the massive Peshwa army, led by Peshwa Bajirao II, in Koregaon. This battle has, since, attained legendary stature in Dalit history.

### Significance of the Event

- Ambedkarite Dalits do not see this from the narrow lens of nationalism versus imperialism. Over the years, as the battle came to be seen as a victory of the Mahars against the injustices perpetuated by the Brahminical Peshwas, thousands of Ambedkarites have been gathering in Bhima Koregaon on January 1 to pay their respect at the Vijay Sthamb (victory pillar).
- The pillar was erected by the East India Company in memory of those who fought the battle and includes the names of the Mahar soldiers who unknowingly brought an end to the Peshwa rule in 1818.

### Present Context

- Dalits are unanimous in drawing inspiration from the victory. In recent years, particularly in Maharashtra, since the Bhima-Koregaon Ranstambh Seva Sangh (BKRSS) was formed, Dalits regard the pillar as a site of positive memory of their valour and a symbol of their renewed political aspiration.
- Their denunciation of the Peshwas is strategic; it helps them relate to their social and political marginalization in contemporary times.
- The debate here, however, is whether such invoking of history is effective in hoisting Dalit politics to a new level.

- Prakash Ambedkar, the grandson of B.R. Ambedkar and a prominent Dalit leader from Maharashtra, has said that a few Hindutva organizations planned and perpetuated violence against the Dalits in Bhima Koregaon.
- He has named Sambhaji Bhide and Milind Ekbote, prominent Maharashtrian leaders who have been actively promoting organizations that advance the cause of Hindutva, as being responsible for bringing the State to a halt.
- These organizations have been polarizing the political landscape on religious and caste lines, particularly against Ambedkarite Dalits who are seen as impediments to their political project.

#### **Background of issue**

- A recent, and crucial, illustration of this was at Wadhu Budruk, a village not far from Bhima Koregaon. Wadhu Budruk is where Sambhaji, the eldest son of the Maratha ruler Shivaji, was cremated after being killed by the Mughals in 1689. As the legend goes, Sambhaji's body was mutilated and thrown into a river by Aurangzeb.
- It was Govind Mahar (Gaikwad), a Dalit resident of Wadhu Budruk, who then gathered the body parts together and made arrangements for the last rites.
- Sambhaji's memorial was said to have been erected by the Mahars of that village. Consequently, Govind Mahar's tomb was also erected in the village after his death.

#### **A planned attack**

- A few days ago, upper caste Marathas, who refuse to acknowledge the role played by Govind Gaikwad and other Mahars in the last rites of Sambhaji, objected to a sign at the site that recounted the story.
- Complaints were filed with the police by both sides. In Maharashtra, there has been a consistent effort to situate Maratha history within the anti-Muslim Hindutva framework — in fact, this even predates the rise of the political right-wing in the State.
- Maratha youth, who are facing unemployment and a lack of educational opportunities, are now being easily pulled into these conflicts by Hindutva organizations that are consequently built by invoking past Maratha glory.
- The violent clashes in Bhima Koregaon were an extension of the conflict in Wadhu Budruk. All indications are that this was a pre-planned attack.
- Being the 200th anniversary, that gathering in Bhima Koregaon this year was much larger than usual. Many Dalit and Bahujan groups collectively organized a big public conference in the name of Elgar Parishad at Shaniwar Wada, which was the seat of the Peshwas until 1818.

- The agenda of this conference was evidently against Hindutva politics which was powerfully manifested by projecting Hindutva politics as the neo-peshwai (new Peshwas). Jignesh Mevani and Prakash Ambedkar were invited.
- The conspicuous politicization of Dalits against Hindutva, particularly after the Una violence in Gujarat, has been a cause of concern for those who propagate the latter.
- The Elgar Parishad helped consolidate their apprehensions against the politicized Dalits. The new political articulation of the Dalits (by equating Hindutva with the Peshwai) has annoyed the right-wing forces and exposed the fault lines we are seeing today.

#### **12. 'Unwanted Girls'**

- The Economic Survey presents the first ever estimate of the number of 'unwanted' girls in India — girls whose parents wanted a boy but had a girl instead — at 21 million.
- The number has been arrived at by looking at the Sex Ratio of the Last Child (SRLC) which is heavily male-skewed, indicating that parents keep having children until they get the desired number of sons.

#### **Details**

- The Survey points out that the huge number of 'unwanted girls' (in the 0-25 age group in the population currently) is a direct outcome of the 'son meta preference' where parents do not stop having children after having a daughter.
- The biologically determined natural sex ratio at birth is 1.05 boy for every girl. The Survey points out that in India, the sex ratio of the last child is skewed towards male all throughout — for first-born, it is 1.82, 1.55 for second born, 1.65 for third child and so on.
- The report compares India's heavily-skewed-in-favour-of-boys SRLC to that of Indonesia, where the sex ratio at birth is close to the biological ideal, irrespective of whether the last child is a boy or a girl.
- The estimate on the notionally "unwanted girls" goes beyond the Amartya Sen framework of "missing women" (owing to sex selective abortion or girl children who die owing to deliberate neglect). Using Sen's methodology of sex ratio difference, as devised in 1990, the Survey pegs the number of "missing women" as of 2014 at 63 million, an increase from the 37 million as per Sen's estimate.
- The sex ratio of last birth (females per hundred births) has merely changed from 39.5 per cent to 39 per cent between 2005-06 and 2015-16.
- The Survey points out that following the implementation of Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act, 1994, which outlawed sex selection, India has seen a relatively stable Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB). The SRLC, as an indicator, points to the continued societal preferences for a male child.

- The Survey looks at both SRB and SRLC to state that in Meghalaya, both indicators are close to the ideal benchmark. Likewise, Kerala does not seem to practise sex selective abortions as their SRB is close to the ideal benchmark but the son preference is evident in a skewed SRLC, while Punjab and Haryana, two of the richest states, have a highly skewed SRB and SRLC.

This is detrimental to female children because it may lead to fewer resources devoted to them

#### Unpaid Work

- Between 2005-06 and 2015-16, the proportion of women who took up paid work has gone down from 36 per cent to 24 per cent, making India a glaring outlier in this respect. One of the main reasons for this continues to be the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work that falls on women, including looking after elders and children.

Overall, using data from the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) and National Family Health Survey (NFHS), the Survey states that over the last 10-15 years, India's performance has improved on 14 out of 17 indicators of women's agency, attitudes, and outcomes.

# SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

## 1. Autolykiviridae

### In News

- Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine have reported a new tailless virus prevalent in the world's oceans.
- The virus has been named after a character in Greek mythology, Autolykos, who was a trickster and difficult to catch.

### Details

- These viruses remained undiscovered till now as they cannot be detected using standard tests.
- The new find was made possible by novel genomic studies
- These viruses mainly feed on bacteria, and could be helping in regulating the bacterial populations of the ocean.
- The researchers also think that these new viruses may be widespread on earth and can even be present in the human body.

## 2. Har Gobind Khorana : The Nobel laureate

- Nobel Laureate Har Gobind Khorana's contributions to biology are of contemporary relevance for some of the most exciting areas such as synthetic biology and gene editing.
- A Google Doodle to mark the 96th birth anniversary of the Indian-origin American scientist this week stoked much interest in his work.

### What were his contributions to biology?

- After James Watson and Francis Crick found that DNA (De-oxy ribonucleic acid) had a double-helix structure, Khorana was among those who significantly built on that knowledge and explained how this sequence of nucleic acids (better known as the genetic code) goes about making proteins, which is critical to the functioning of cells.
- The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for 1968 was awarded jointly to Robert W. Holley, Har Gobind Khorana and Marshall W. Nirenberg "for their interpretation of the genetic code and its function in protein synthesis."
- Khorana was able to create nucleic acids in the lab and did so by figuring out the order in which nucleotides needed to be to make a suite of amino acids, which are the basic units of proteins.

- Khorana is credited with making the first synthetic genes by cutting and pasting different bits of DNA together. This is considered a forerunner to the method called Polymerase Chain Reaction that is among the methods used to commercially read the unique genetic structures of organisms today. He further placed the lab-made gene in a living bacterium and was, in that sense, a founding father of biotechnology.
- The CRISPR/Cas9 system, which is the glitziest new toy in genetics and is used alter the functioning of certain genes, references the work of Khorana as a key influence.

### What was his connection with India?

- Khorana was born in 1922 in Raipur, a village in Punjab now part of Pakistan. He lived in India until 1945, when the award of a Government of India Fellowship made it possible for him to go to England for a PhD at the University of Liverpool. Khorana became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1966.

### Background

- Genome editing (also called gene editing) is a group of technologies that give scientists the ability to change an organism's DNA.
- These technologies allow genetic material to be added, removed, or altered at particular locations in the genome. Several approaches to genome editing have been developed.
- A recent one is known as CRISPR-Cas9, which is short for clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats and CRISPR-associated protein 9.
- The CRISPR-Cas9 system has generated a lot of excitement in the scientific community because it is faster, cheaper, more accurate, and more efficient than other existing genome editing methods.
- CRISPR-Cas9 was adapted from a naturally occurring genome editing system in bacteria. The bacteria capture snippets of DNA from invading viruses and use them to create DNA segments known as CRISPR arrays.
- The CRISPR arrays allow the bacteria to "remember" the viruses (or closely related ones). If the viruses attack again, the bacteria produce RNA segments from the CRISPR arrays to target the viruses' DNA. The bacteria then use Cas9 or a similar enzyme to cut the DNA apart, which disables the virus.



### 3. **IMAGE (Imager for Magnetopause-to-Aurora Global Exploration)**

- It is a NASA Medium Explorers mission that studies the global response of the Earth's magnetosphere to changes in the solar wind. It was launched 25 March 2000 by a Delta II rocket from Vandenberg AFB on a two-year mission. Four years later while in its extended mission, it unexpectedly ceased operations in December 2005 and was declared lost
- In January 2018, an amateur satellite tracker found it to be transmitting some signals back to Earth, so NASA is attempting to reset its systems and reactivate it
- IMAGE was the first spacecraft dedicated to imaging the Earth's magnetosphere
- IMAGE employed a variety of imaging techniques to "see the invisible" and to produce the first comprehensive global images of the plasma populations in the inner magnetosphere. With these images, space scientists were able to observe, in a way never before possible, the large-scale dynamics of the magnetosphere and the interactions among its constituent plasma populations.

### 4. **INSPIRE (Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research)**

- INSPIRE is an innovative programme sponsored and managed by the Department of Science & Technology (Ministry of science and tech) for attraction of talent to Science.
- The basic objective of INSPIRE is to communicate to the youth of the country the excitements of creative pursuit of science, attract talent to the study of science at an early age and thus build the required critical human resource pool for strengthening and expanding the Science & Technology system and R&D base.
- A striking feature of the programme is that it does not believe in conducting competitive exams for identification of talent at any level.
- It believes in and relies on the efficacy of the existing educational structure for identification of talent.
- The Scheme selects promising research scholars under 32 and offers them a salary of Rs.80,000 a month as well as an annual research grant worth Rs.7 lakh to work at a university of their choice for five years.

#### **Why was the scheme launched?**

- It was conceived in 2008 amid concerns that not enough talented students were opting for research careers in basic sciences and were being lured away by higher salaries in banking, information technology and management.

#### **Present Scenario:**

- The scheme is drawing flak with complaints of harassment, tardy fund disbursement and concerns that the scheme hasn't catalyzed enough jobs.

### 5. **Kilopower**

- The Kilopower project is a near-term technology effort to develop preliminary concepts and technologies that could be used for an affordable fission nuclear power system to enable long-duration stays on planetary surfaces.
- It is a program designed to create small nuclear power sources to fuel further space exploration.
- The principal goal of the project is to sufficiently develop and test nuclear power system technologies by 2018 so fission power can be a viable option for NASA decision makers to consider when making their informed selection of exploration surface systems.
- Kilopower tackles a few different problems in spacecraft design: existing nuclear power systems rely on a fuel we've essentially run out of, solar power becomes increasingly feeble the further from the sun the spacecraft goes, and more complicated space activities—like those involving humans—would require significantly stronger power supplies than current projects.
- Its compact size and robustness allows to deliver multiple units on a single lander to the surface that provides tens of kilowatts of power
- The technology could power habitats and life-support systems, enable astronauts to mine resources, recharge rovers and run processing equipment to transform resources such as ice on the planet into oxygen, water and fuel. It could also potentially augment electrically powered spacecraft propulsion systems on missions to the outer planets.

### 6. **Mihir**

- India commissioned its High Performance Computer (HPC) system - named 'Mihir' (meaning Sun) - at the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting at Noida, Uttar Pradesh.
- The facility will improve India's capacity in weather forecasting and help it to come out with weather forecast down to the block level (for about 6500 blocks) across the country later this year. At present, such facility is available at district level.
- The new system will be India's largest HPC facility in terms of peak capacity and performance and will propel India's ranking from the 368th position to the 30th in the list of top 500 HPC facilities in the world.
- The country will now also be ranked 4th - after Japan, UK and USA - for dedicated HPC resources for weather/climate community.

## 7. Parker Solar Probe

- NASA's Parker Solar Probe will be launched in the summer of 2018 to explore the sun's atmosphere.
- The purpose of the launch will be to study sun's outer atmosphere and to understand how sun works.
- The name of the probe initially called the Solar Probe Plus has been renamed as the Parker Solar Probe in honor of astrophysicist Eugene Parker. This is the first time NASA has named a spacecraft after a living person.
- Astrophysicist Eugene Parker published a research paper predicting the existence of solar wind in 1958. At that time, it was thought that the space between planets was a vacuum. Parker's theory of solar wind was later on confirmed by satellite observations.

### Details

- The 10-feet high Parker Solar Probe will fly within 6.4 million km of the sun's surface right into the solar atmosphere.
- The probe will be subjected to brutal heat and radiation that has not experienced by any other man-made probes previously.
- The objective of the mission will be to study sun in detail and shed light on Earth and its place in the solar system.
  - \* The primary science goals for the mission are to trace how energy and heat move through the solar corona and to explore what accelerates the solar wind as well as solar energetic particles.
- The mission will work towards determining the structure and dynamics of the plasma and magnetic fields at the sources of the solar wind. This will be NASA's first mission to the sun and its outermost atmosphere corona.
- The probe will use Venus' gravity during seven flybys over nearly seven years to gradually bring its orbit closer to the Sun
- The spacecraft will fly through the Sun's atmosphere as close as 6.2 million kilometres to our star's surface, well within the orbit of Mercury and closer than any spacecraft has gone before.

### Why do we study the sun and the solar wind?

- The sun is the only star we can study up close. By studying this star we live with, we learn more about stars throughout the universe.
- The sun is a source of light and heat for life on Earth. The more we know about it, the more we can understand how life on Earth developed.
- The sun also affects Earth in less familiar ways. It is the source of the solar wind; a flow of ionized gases from the sun that streams past Earth at speeds of more than 500 km per second (a million miles per hour).
- Disturbances in the solar wind shake Earth's magnetic field and pump energy into the radiation belts, part of a set of changes in near-Earth space known as space weather.

## Pratyush Supercomputer

- India unveiled Pratyush, an array of computers that can deliver a peak power of 6.8 petaflops.
- One petaflop is a million billion floating point operations per second and is a reflection of the computing capacity of a system.
- Pratyush is the fourth fastest supercomputer in the world dedicated for weather and climate research, and follows machines in Japan, USA and the United Kingdom.
- It will also move an Indian supercomputer from the 300s to the 30s in the Top500 list, a respected international tracker of the world's fastest supercomputers.

### Key Functions:

- A key function of the machine's computing power would be monsoon forecasting using a dynamical model. This requires simulating the weather for a given month — say March — and letting a custom-built model calculate how the actual weather will play out over June, July, August and September.
- With the new system, it would be possible to map regions in India at a resolution of 3 km and the globe at 12 km.

## 8. Satyendra Nath Bose

- Satyendra Nath Bose was one of the world's pioneering theoretical physicists, known for his discovery of Boson, or a class of particles that obey Bose-Einstein statistics. His work on quantum mechanics in the early 1920s laid the foundation for Bose-Einstein statistics and the theory of the Bose-Einstein condensate. He is widely called the 'Father of the God Particle' for his work on the Boson.
- Satyendra Nath Bose, also known as SN Bose, was born on January 1, 1894, in Calcutta, the eldest and only male in a family with seven children.

### Research

- He moved back to Calcutta in 1945 and continued his research on various theories of Physics. In 1924, while working in Dhaka, he wrote a paper deriving Planck's quantum radiation law without any reference to classical physics. He did this by counting states with identical particles and his paper in a way gave birth to the field of quantum statistics.
- But the paper was not accepted for publication. However, Albert Einstein, to whom Bose had sent a copy, himself translated the paper into German and submitted it on Bose's behalf to the prestigious Zeitschrift für Physik. He later went on to work for a considerable amount of time in European X-ray and crystallography laboratories as a recognition of his paper. This was when he got to work with Einstein as well as Louis de Broglie and Marie Curie.

- Bose was honoured with Padma Vibhushan in 1954, the second-highest civilian award in India. In 1959 he was appointed National Professor, the highest honour in the country for a scholar. He was also part of several research and development committees.

### Context

- Bose's 125th birth anniversary

### Bose-Einstein statistics

- Bose-Einstein statistics, one of two possible ways in which a collection of indistinguishable particles may occupy a set of available discrete energy states.
- The aggregation of particles in the same state, which is characteristic of particles obeying Bose-Einstein statistics, accounts for the cohesive streaming of laser light and the frictionless creeping of superfluid helium.
- The theory of this behaviour was developed (1924–25) by Albert Einstein and the Indian physicist Satyendra Nath Bose, who recognized that a collection of identical and indistinguishable particles can be distributed in this way.
- This is applicable to the identical, indistinguishable particles of zero or integral spin. These particles are called Bosons. The examples of Bosons are helium atoms at low temperature and the photons.

### Background

- The quantum statistics was first formulated in 1924 by Satyendra Nath Bose in the deduction of Planck's law of radiation by purely statistical reasoning on the basis of fundamental assumptions that were radically different from those of classical statistics. Einstein in the same year used the same principles in evolving kinetic theory of gasses, as a substitute for classical Boltzmann Statistics. Thus a new quantum statistics, known as Bose-Einstein statistics, came to be accepted.

### How is it different from Fermi-Dirac statistics?

- In 1926, Fermi and Dirac independently modified Bose-Einstein statistics in certain cases, on the basis of additional principle, the Pauli's Exclusion Principle.
- In contrast to Fermi-Dirac statistics, the Bose-Einstein statistics apply only to those particles not limited to single occupancy of the same state—that is, particles that do not obey the restriction known as the Pauli Exclusion Principle.
- This is applicable to the identical, indistinguishable particles of half spin. These particles obey Pauli's exclusion principle and are called Fermions. The examples of Fermions are electrons, protons, neutrons, etc.

## **9. Station Explorer for X-ray Timing and Navigation Technology (SEXTANT)**

- NASA has invented a new type of autonomous space navigation that could see human-made spacecraft heading into the far reaches of the Solar System, and even farther - by using pulsars as guide stars.

- It uses X-ray technology to see millisecond pulsars, using them much like a GPS uses satellites.

### What are Pulsars?

- Pulsars are highly magnetized, rapidly rotating neutron stars - the result of a massive star's core collapsing and subsequently exploding.
- As they spin, they emit electromagnetic radiation. If an observer is in the right position, they can appear as sweeping beams, like a cosmic lighthouse.
- They're also extraordinarily regular - in the case of some millisecond pulsars, which can spin hundreds of times a second, their regularity can rival that of atomic clocks.

### How does it work?

- SEXTANT works like a GPS receiver getting signals from at least three GPS satellites, all of which are equipped with atomic clocks.
- The receiver measures the time delay from each satellite and converts this into spatial coordinates.
- The electromagnetic radiation beaming from pulsars is most visible in the X-ray spectrum, which is why NASA's engineers chose to employ X-ray detection in SEXTANT.
- To do so, they used a washing machine-sized observatory attached to the International Space Station. Called Neutron-star Interior Composition Explorer, or NICER, it contains 52 X-ray telescopes and silicon-drift detectors for studying neutron stars, including pulsars.

### What is it used for?

- SEXTANT could be used to calculate the location of planetary satellites far from the range of Earth's GPS satellites, and assist on human spaceflight missions, such as the space agency's planned Mars mission.

## **10. Star-Planet Activity Research CubeSat (SPARCS)**

- Scientists are planning to launch a small telescope into the Earth's orbit that will monitor the flares and sunspots of small stars to assess how habitable the environment is for planets orbiting them.

### What is it?

- The spacecraft, known as the Star-Planet Activity Research CubeSat, or SPARCS, is a new NASA-funded space telescope and will be launched in 2021. The mission, including spacecraft design, integration and resulting science, is led by Arizona State University's School of Earth and Space Exploration (SESE).
- The stars that SPARCS will focus on are small, dim, and cool by comparison to the Sun. Having less than half the Sun's size and temperature, they shine with barely one per cent its brightness.
- Astronomers have discovered that essentially every M dwarf star has at least one planet orbiting it, and about one system in four has a rocky planet located in the star's habitable zone.

- This is the potentially life-friendly region where temperatures are neither too hot nor too cold for life as we know it, and liquid water could exist on the planet's surface.
- The heart of the SPARCS spacecraft will be a telescope with a diameter of nine centimetres plus a camera with two ultraviolet-sensitive detectors to be developed by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.
- Although the orbiting Hubble Space Telescope can view stars at ultraviolet wavelengths unhindered, its overcrowded observing schedule would let it dedicate only the briefest of efforts to M dwarfs.

### 11. Zuma Mission

- SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket will deliver the Zuma spacecraft to low-Earth orbit
- "Zuma" mission: SpaceX is planning the first test flight of Falcon Heavy. Falcon Heavy is the most powerful operational rocket in the world.
- A successful test would be an important step toward demonstrating SpaceX's ability to send spacecraft beyond Earth's orbit, perhaps even to Mars.
- SpaceX also could try to prove it can carry people into space in 2018.

### 12. New Programmes of DST and SERB for young scientists and researchers

- Union Minister for Science & Technology, Dr. Harsh Vardhan announced four schemes to promote young scientists and researchers in the country.
- The scheme primarily aims at early recognition and reward to young talent in the field of science.
- The schemes focus on youth to empower, recognize and motivate them

#### Teacher Associateship for Research Excellence (TARE) Scheme

- TARE Scheme of SERB, DST aims to tap the latent potential of faculty working in state universities, colleges and private academic institutions who are well trained but have difficulty in pursuing their research due to varied reasons including lack of facilities, funding and guidance.
- This scheme facilitates mobility of such faculty members to carryout research in well-established public funded institution such as IITs, IISc, IISERS and other National Institutions (NITs, CSIR, ICAR, ICMR labs, etc) and Central Universities located preferably nearer to the institution where the faculty member is working.
- Up to 500 TAs will be supported under this scheme.

#### Overseas Visiting Doctoral Fellowship of SERB

- It has been instituted for enhancing the international mobility of Indian research students which has the potential to create a talented pool of globally trained manpower.

- The scheme provides an opportunity for research students to gain exposure and access to top class research facilities in academia and labs across the world.
- This scheme offers opportunities for up to 100 PhD students admitted in the Indian institutions for gaining exposure and training in overseas universities / institutions of repute and areas of importance to country for period up to 12 months during their doctoral research.
- The selected fellows will be paid a monthly fellowship amount equivalent to US \$ 2000, one-time Contingency / Preparatory allowances of Rs. 60,000/- to cover visa fee, airport transfer charges, medical insurance etc.

#### Distinguished Investigator Award (DIA)

- It has been initiated to recognize and reward Principal Investigators (PIs) of SERB/DST projects who have performed remarkably well.
- The scheme aims not only to reward the best PIs of completed projects but also to motivate the ongoing PIs to perform exceedingly well.
- This positive reinforcement strategy would effectively improve the productivity of the research undertaken and the overall efficiency of the research ecosystem.
- DIA is a one-time career award devised to specifically cater to the younger scientists who have not received any other prestigious awards or fellowships.
- The award carries a fellowship of Rs. 15,000/- p.m. and an optional research grant for three years, based on peer review of the project proposal submitted.

### 13. AWSAR (Augmenting Writing Skills for Articulating Research)

- AWSAR of National Council of Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC), DST has been initiated to encourage, empower and endow popular science writing through newspapers, magazines, blogs, social media, etc. by young PhD Scholars and Post-Doctoral Fellows during the course of their higher studies and research pursuits.
- As over 20,000 youth are awarded PhD in S&T every year in India, the scheme aims to tap this tremendous potential to popularize & communicate science and also to inculcate scientific temperament in the masses.



# SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED

## 1. Charlie-435

- A state-of-the-art patrol vessel of the Indian Coast Guard has been commissioned at Karaikal in the Union Territory of Puducherry.
- The patrol vessel 'Charlie-435' is equipped with modern navigation and communication systems
- The vessel would strengthen coastal security between Chennai and Kanyakumari in the Eastern Coastal region
- The patrol vessel would be of great help in rescuing fishermen who go adrift in the sea due to bad weather.

## 2. Cyber Surakshit Bharat

### Background

- Recognizing the need to strengthen the cyber security ecosystem in India, and in alignment with the Honourable Prime Minister's vision for a 'Digital India', the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), announced the Cyber Surakshit Bharat initiative in association with National e-Governance Division (NeGD) and industry partners.

### Details

- Conceptualized with the mission to spread awareness about cybercrime and building capacity for safety measures for Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) and frontline IT staff across all government departments, Cyber Surakshit Bharat will be operated on the three principles of Awareness, Education and Enablement.
- It will include an awareness program on the importance of cyber security; a series of workshops on best practices and enablement of the officials with cyber security health tool kits to manage and mitigate cyber threats.
- Cyber Surakshit Bharat is the first public-private partnership of its kind and will leverage the expertise of the IT industry in cyber security.

### Partners

- The founding partners of the consortium are leading IT companies Microsoft, Intel, WIPRO, Redhat and Dimension Data. Additionally, knowledge partners include Cert-In, NIC, NASSCOM and the FIDO Alliance and premier consultancy firms Deloitte and EY.

## 3. Global Centre for Cybersecurity

- In a bid to safeguard the world from hackers and growing data breaches — especially from nation-states — the World Economic Forum (WEF) announced a new Global Centre for Cyber security.
- Headquartered in Geneva, the centre will become operational from March.

- The centre will help bring all the stakeholders together
- As a borderless problem, urgent action is needed to create a safe operating environment for new technologies like Artificial Intelligence, robotics, drones, self-driving cars and the Internet of Things (IoT)
- The global centre will be an excellent opportunity to safeguard verticals like automotive and health care where wireless connectivity is the key

## 4. Rizhao -China commissions new missile frigate

- A new missile frigate, named Rizhao, was commissioned by the People's Liberation Army Navy in a naval port in China's Dalian.
- Rizhao is a 140-metre-long and 16-metre-wide missile frigate designed and made by China. Its displacement is more than 4,000 tonnes,
- The missile frigate is equipped with an advanced weapons systems and can attack enemy ships and submarines alone or in coordination with other naval forces.

## 5. Spike Anti-Tank Guided Missiles

- India was moving forward with a \$1 billion purchase of Spike anti-tank guided missiles from Rafael Advanced Defense Systems of Israel, overlooking the single-vendor situation in the deal, according to an Indian Ministry of Defence.
- Under the deal, the Indian Army would procure 321 Spike ATGM launchers, 8,356 missiles, 15 training simulators and associated accessories from Rafael on a single-vendor basis.
- "The single-vendor situation had arisen as the other option, American Javelin, was found to be too expensive and has been accepted as a fait accompli keeping in view the needs of the Indian Army for third-generation ATGM
- The deal also included an option to build another 1,500 launcher systems and about 30,000 additional missiles under technology transfer to state-owned Bharat Dynamics Limited. The first delivery of the Spike ATGM is likely to being 58 to 60 months after the deal is signed.
- The Army currently faces a shortage of ATGMs and has a total requirement of 40,000 ATGMs in the next 20 years. In the meantime, it is using second-generation Milan missiles (with a 2-kilometer range) and Konkurs missiles (with a 4-kilometer range) produced by BDL under license from French and Russian companies, respectively.

**India calls off deal for Israeli anti-tank missiles**

- Ministry of defence has called off an order to buy Spike anti-tank guided missiles from Israel's state-owned defence contractor Rafael.
- The deal was worth about \$500 million. The cancellation has been made prior to the signing of the final contract.

**6. Smartphone sensors give hackers a way in**

- Instruments in smartphones such as the accelerometer, gyroscope and proximity sensors represent a potential security vulnerability as researchers have found that data from these sensors could be used by hackers to guess the security password.

**How is this done?**

- Using a combination of information gathered from six different sensors found in smartphones and analyzing them with machine learning and deep learning algorithms, the researchers succeeded in unlocking Android smartphones with 99.5% accuracy within only three tries, said the study.
- Researchers took Android phones and installed a custom application which collected data from six sensors: accelerometer, gyroscope, magnetometer, proximity sensor, barometer and ambient light sensor.
- There is a significant flaw in smartphone security, as using the sensors require no permissions to be given by the phone user and are available for all apps to access.
- The classification algorithm was trained with data collected from a group of people. Although each individual enters the security PIN on their phone differently, the scientists showed that as data from more people is fed to the machine learning algorithm, success rates improved over time.

**7. URL blocking**

- The data shows that in the last four years, the number of social media URLs blocked on the recommendation of the government committee under Section 69A of the IT Act were 10 in 2014, 587 in 2015, 964 in 2016 and 1,329 till November 2017.
- Additionally, 432 URLs were blocked through court orders in 2014, 632 in 2015, 100 in 2016 and 83 till November 2017.

**Why is it done?**

- Social media sites are a good medium to share and exchange information, some miscreants are also using this platform to spread rumors and posting objectionable content thereby causing disturbance in the society
- Misuse of social networking sites for malicious purposes is on the rise. These websites are being used by malicious people to harvest personal information of the targeted users or group of users

**Laws**

- There are provisions in the Information Technology (IT) Act 2000 and Indian Penal Code to deal with "objectionable content" posted online.
- Social media sites are required to disable or remove any unlawful information as and when it is brought to their knowledge through a court order or by an appropriate government agency.
- Blocking is a sovereign power that is given to the government by virtue of Section 69A of the Information Technology Act. So under certain specified considerations, the power of blocking can be exercised. This power was inserted in the IT Act by virtue of the Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008, which came into effect from October 2009.
- Various law enforcement agencies notify social media sites for removal of content or disabling of content under Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act 2000.

**Issue Area**

- Blocking as a phenomenon is an outdated paradigm. In today's context of the Internet and its architecture, it is almost impossible to block any content
- A number of these blocking events happen for political reasons.
- There is a lack of transparency in terms of having in place adequate parameters on what kind of instances the power of blocking can be exercised because parameters like sovereignty and integrity of India are vast. And a large number of things can be brought under it as per the subjective interpretation of the concerned authority

**Way forward**

- Merely saying that blocking of a website or URL is in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, would not suffice. Clear illustration of how the same would impact the sovereignty and integrity will be far more helpful

**8. Vajra Prahar**

- 'Vajra Prahar' is an Indo-US Special Forces joint training exercise conducted alternately in India and the US.
- Though the exercise began in 2010, there was a gap of three years between 2012 and 2015.
- The last edition was held in Jodhpur in March 2017. This edition's Indian Army team is from the Pune-headquartered Southern Command.
- The aim of the exercise is to promote military relations between the two countries by enhancing interoperability and mutual exchange of tactics between Special Forces.
- The objectives of the joint training is to share the best practices between the two armies and to develop joint strategies by sharing expertise of conducting operations in a counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism environment, while capitalising on the rich repository of experiences of each other armies

**2018**

- IN line with the increasing military cooperation between India and the US, yet another edition of the joint military exercise 'Vajra Prahar' will be held at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) in Seattle, in which a 45-member Special Forces team from Indian Army's Southern Command will train alongside US soldiers in the third week of January.
- The exercise will mainly focus on special operations in urban areas.

**9. Armed Security forces numbers to be cut in Northeast**

- The Home Ministry will conduct a "security audit" in the Northeast and chalk out a plan to reduce the number of Central armed police force personnel deployed.

**Stats**

- The number of incidents in terms of insurgency has significantly reduced to 308 in 2017, the lowest since 1997.
- As the incidents have dropped by 85%, the deployment of central forces will be reduced and more responsibility will be given to Local Police
- A report presented said the abductions were down by 36% in 2017, compared with the previous year.
- 168 incidents were reported in 2016, and the number fell to 102 in 2017.

**10. Continuing dependence on foreign arms**

- India's acute dependence on imported arms and ammunition, 60 per cent-70 per cent of Russian origin, will constitute a grave handicap and vulnerability in a conflict.
- Over the years, not only have Indo-Russian relations become purely transactional, but the (post-Soviet) Russian arms industry has been found incapable of providing timely support for its products; a fact repeatedly pointed out in the CAG reports.
- Other foreign suppliers may prove equally unreliable in wartime.

**Pakistan**

- Pakistan has the world's seventh largest army, and even though permeated by religious fundamentalism and embroiled in politics, its professional capabilities cannot be ignored.
- Pakistan as a military-client of "all-weather friend", China, it has ensured steady arms transfers to all wings of the Pakistani military.
- Having created a high level of equipment commonality with the People's Liberation Army (PLA), Pakistan can go to war, confident that its attrition losses will be expeditiously replaced from PLA stocks.

**China**

- Coming to India's main adversary, the Chinese PLA constitutes the world's largest military organization, with formidable capabilities in the conventional, nuclear, cyber, maritime and space domains.
- Of greater significance is the fact that China is self-sufficient in major weapon systems, and has surpassed Britain, France and Germany as an exporter of arms, 70 per cent of which are supplied to neighboring Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar.
- Ironically, in 1949, when the People's Republic of China (PRC) came into being, India was industrially well ahead, because the demands of WW II had led to the establishment of arms, ordnance and aircraft production facilities to support the Allied war effort world-wide.

**How did China overtake us?**

- In the early 1950s, a fraternal Soviet Union commenced a massive transfer of arms to the PLA, under a Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship.
- However, as ideological fissures emerged and the Soviets threatened to stop aid, the Chinese leadership ordered seizure of hardware as well as drawings and technological data relating to Soviet weapons.
- Once the split actually occurred, in the mid-1960s, the Chinese leadership took a far-sighted decision to launch a project for attaining self-reliance in arms, through reverse engineering ("guochanhua" in Mandarin), as a national endeavour.
- This helped China establish, by the mid-1980s, serial production of Soviet-origin tanks, artillery, submarines, jet fighters and bombers, as well as strategic systems like ballistic missiles and nuclear submarines.
- Manufactured without Soviet licenses, many of these products had serious flaws and contained imported Western components. But they were "Made in China" and constituted a "great leap forward" towards self-reliance.

**China's Present Status**

- China has, subsequently, launched repeated cycles of "guochanhua", with the aim of acquiring the latest military and dual-use technologies; legitimately, if possible, but through industrial espionage and violation of intellectual property rights, when required.
- At the turn of this century, China had reached a level of technological development surpassing Russia's. Today, China has stunned the world by its ingenuity, exemplified by the world's fastest super-computer (the Sunway Taihu-light), J-31 fifth generation stealth-fighter, an electro-magnetic aircraft catapult to equip its new aircraft-carrier and huge strides in robotics, artificial-intelligence and drones.

**India's Flawed Policies**

- India is in the anomalous situation of being a nuclear-weapons state with the world's fourth-largest armed forces, but having to support their operational needs through massive arms imports.
- All this, inspite of a vast military-industrial complex, with a large pool of DRDO scientists and a network of sophisticated laboratories, backed by advanced production facilities of the defence PSUs.

**Lessons to be learnt**

- The Bangladesh War was won only because General Manekshaw sought a grace of nine months to equip his troops.
- The brief Kargil War required desperate replenishment of ammunition, midway through the operation.
- India's continuing dependence on foreign arms, coupled with a dysfunctional acquisition process has eroded the combat readiness of our armed forces. Our myopic failure to learn from experience, and to acknowledge the deleterious impact of this void on India's national security, may cost us dearly vis-a-vis future machinations of the China-Pak axis. I



# HEALTH ISSUES

## 1. Chief Minister-gi Hakshelgi Tengbang (CMHT)

- Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh today launched the Chief Minister-gi Hakshelgi Tengbang (CMHT), a pioneering health assurance scheme for the poor and disabled people.
- The chief minister launched the CMHT along with 10 advanced life support ambulances as a gift of Statehood Day to the people of Manipur at a function at Khuman Lampak Indoor Stadium
- The CMHT will provide cashless treatment to the poor at government hospitals, health centres and other empanelled selected private hospitals.
- The scheme will provide cover up to Rs 2 lakh per eligible family identified from the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) in the treatment of seven critical identified critical ailments - cardiovascular diseases, kidney ailments, neurological conditions, liver ailments, cancer, neo-natal diseases and burns per year.
- The beneficiaries may get themselves enrolled for the scheme with the help of ASHA workers at the kiosks opened in nearby PHCs, CHCs and District Hospitals.

### The most special aspect of the scheme is its innovative features.

- Firstly, CMHT will have convergence with Government of India programme like PMs Jana Aushadhi Programme and Free Diagnostic Programme.
- Secondly, the scheme will be a truly IT platform driven scheme.

## 2. Food Poisoning: A Common Outbreak

- Recent data put out by the Union Health Ministry's Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) has indicated that food poisoning is one of the commonest outbreaks reported in 2017. This is apart from Acute Diarrhoeal Disease (ADD).
- Acute diarrhoeal disease and food poisoning have been common outbreaks since 2008. This is followed by chickenpox and measles.
- It is a matter of concern for all as food poisoning outbreaks have increased from 50 in 2008 to 242 in 2017. Similarly, ADD cases have increased from 228 in 2008 to 312 in 2017.

### Causes of Food poisoning

- The IDSP has interpreted that the incidence of ADD and food poisoning is high in places where food is cooked in bulk, such as canteens, hostels and wedding venues.

- Food poisoning, also called food-borne illness, is caused by eating contaminated food. Infectious organisms including bacteria, viruses and parasites or their toxins are the most common causes.
- Pointing out that the increase in the number of cases was due to better and increased reporting of cases, he said the good thing was that the overall mortality was not alarming.
- Infectious organisms or their toxins could contaminate food at any point of processing or production.
- Contamination can also occur at home if food is incorrectly handled or cooked.
- While it is known that raw meat, poultry and eggs can also harbour diseases, in recent years most outbreaks of food-borne illnesses have been due to contaminated fresh fruits and vegetables.

## 3. Kala-azar (Leishmaniasis)

- Kala azar is caused by bites from female phlebotomine sandflies – the vector (or transmitter) of the leishmania parasite. This type of leishmaniasis affects the internal organs, usually the spleen, liver and bone marrow.
- The sand flies feed on animals and humans for blood, which they need for developing their eggs. If blood containing leishmania parasites is drawn from an animal or human, the next person to receive a bite will then become infected and develop Leishmaniasis.
- Kala-azar is the second largest parasitic killer in the world – only Malaria is more deadly.
- Along with Chagas disease and sleeping sickness, kala-azar is one of the most dangerous neglected tropical diseases (NTDs)
- Protozoan organism causes kala-azar. The organisms are oval-shaped, and each has one long whip-like structure. One organism (arrow) is dividing, while a cell of the immune system (lower right) has gripped on the two whips of the dividing organism and is sending cell processes up to eat up the organism. The immune cell is about ten micrometres in diameter.

### India misses Kala Azar elimination deadline

- India has missed the 2017 deadline.
- Finance Minister had announced for elimination of Kala-Azar (black fever) in his Budget speech last year
- Endemic blocks have increased from 61 to 68 in 17 districts of Bihar and Jharkhand

### Elimination criteria

- Elimination is defined as reducing the annual incidence of Kala-Azar (KA) to less than 1 case per 10,000 people at the sub-district level

Reasons for the increase in case:

- Kala-Azar vector needs to be eliminated to eliminate Kala Azar
- As the endemic blocks have majority of houses made from wood, it is very difficult to eliminate the vector as it dwells in the wooden structure and escapes various measures to kill it
- Further, a little-known skin condition called Post Kala Azar Dermal Leishmaniasis (PKDL) — a red flag for transmission of Kala-Azar — has been growing steadily over the past few years

Measures need to be adopted:

- To stop the infection transmission, pucca houses need to be built
- Even after treatment of Kala-Azar patients, it is the PKDL cases which become a source for future Kala-Azar cases

**4. National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)**

- NCDC (previously known as National Institute of Communicable Diseases) is an institute under the Indian Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- It was established in July 1963 for research in epidemiology and control of communicable diseases
- The institute was established to function as a national centre of excellence for control of communicable diseases. The function of the institute also included various areas of training and research using multi-disciplinary integrated approach.
- The institute was, in addition, expected to provide expertise to the States and Union Territories (UTs) on rapid health assessment and laboratory based diagnostic services. Surveillance of communicable diseases and outbreak investigation also formed an indispensable part of its activities.
- Doctors from NCDC had been previously summoned to investigate potential outbreaks of diseases including suspected cases of Pneumonic plague in Punjab in 2002, SARS outbreaks in 2004, meningitis outbreak in Delhi in 2005, and avian influenza in 2006

Context

- Smt. Anupriya Patel, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare reviewed the activities of National Centre for Disease Control and issued necessary directions for disease surveillance, monitoring of health status, educating the public, providing evidence for public health action and enforcing public health regulations.

**5. National Medical Commission Bill**Why was it done?

- Over the years, there have been numerous allegations about the functioning of MCI, with its system of annual inspections being accused of being “random” and susceptible to corruption.

How different is National Medical Commission from MCI?

- National Medical Commission (NMC), intended by policymakers to be a dynamic regulator responsive to India's needs.
- In contrast with the MCI, which does everything from advising universities on curriculum to disciplining errant doctors, the NMC distributes powers among four autonomous boards — those for undergraduate education, postgraduate education, medical assessment and rating, and ethics and registration.
- Also, unlike the MCI, the commission includes non-doctors like patient-rights advocates and ethicists, in line with the medical regulators of the U.K., Australia and Canada. These are all steps in the right direction.

What are the issues with new body?

- The problem with NMC bill is in how it chooses the members of the new regulator.
- The authors of the NMC bill, a committee headed by ex-vice chairman of Niti Aayog, Arvind Panagariya, argued that the electoral process through which MCI members were picked was fundamentally flawed, because conscientious doctors tended to avoid such elections.
- Because there was no bar on re-elections, this had created a revolving door through which the same group of members controlled the MCI for years.

Bad precedents

- Sometime around 2008, Gujarati urologist Ketan Desai was elected MCI president, even though he had been prosecuted in the Delhi High Court for abusing power as president in 2001. Further, corruption charges against Dr. Desai and his team led to the MCI being disbanded in 2010.
- The NMC Bill's solution to the pitfalls of the electoral process is for the central government to select most of the commission's members. But this would tip the scales towards bureaucracy, say experts.
- Such political hold on the commission is especially problematic given the close ties that private medical colleges in southern India have with politicians.

Does NMC Bill address rural health care needs?

- The NMC Bill misses an opportunity to plan for India's rural health- care needs in the coming decades. It eases regulations to set up private medical colleges; a move that will hopefully produce more doctors.
- As of today, India has one doctor for 1,700 people, compared to the WHO norm of 1:1,000. Most of these doctors are in urban regions, while close to 70% of Indians live in rural provinces.
- A 2015 Parliamentary Standing Committee report mentioned that even if India were to add 100 medical colleges per year for five years, it would take till 2029 to achieve the WHO prescribed ratio.

- Even in States like Tamil Nadu, which has successfully attracted doctors to rural primary health centres (PHCs), tribal regions like Settling are underserved and rely heavily on informal health-care providers.
- India must think of quicker fixes to the doctor shortage instead of waiting for MBBS doctors to fill the gap.

#### Is training of non-doctors a good idea?

- Several sub-Saharan countries have successfully addressed this problem by training non-doctors in basic medicine and even surgery. Such non-doctors include nurses, or even informal health-care providers, often referred to as quacks.
- A 2016 study published in Science magazine showed that nine months of training led to a marked improvement in the ability of informal providers in West Bengal to correctly manage chest-pain, respiratory distress and childhood diarrhoea.
- International organizations like Médecins Sans Frontières and Red Cross have endorsed training programmes for non-doctors to carry out critical surgical procedures like caesarians and intestinal resections.
- Evidence from countries like Mozambique and Thailand shows that such training can be a safe, effective and cheap way to provide life-saving health care when no doctors are available.
- Chhattisgarh attempted to create a cadre of rural doctors in 2001, through a three-year programme. Even though the Indian Medical Association has strongly opposed such ideas, they cannot be off the table, given the evidence backing them.
- It is time to recognize that MBBS doctors may not be the best means of health-care delivery in isolated parts of rural India.

### **6. Pulse Polio Immunisation (PPI) programme**

#### In News

- President Ram Nath Kovind, launched the Pulse Polio Immunisation (PPI) Programme for 2018
- The event was organized on the eve of the National Immunisation Day, which is observed on 28 January

#### Background

- India launched the Pulse Polio Immunization (PPI) program in 1995 as a result of World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Polio Eradication Initiative.
- Under this Programme, all children under 5 years are given 2 doses of Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) in December and January every year until polio is eradicated.
- PPI was initiated with the objective of achieving hundred percent coverage under OPV. It aims to reach the unreached children through improved social mobilization, plan mop-up operations in areas where poliovirus has almost disappeared and maintain high level of morale among the public.

### **7. Res Extra Commercium**

- Res extra commercium (lat. "a thing outside commerce") is a doctrine originating in Roman law, holding that certain things may not be the object of private rights, and are therefore insusceptible to being traded. In some contexts, it can refer to areas beyond national borders, such as space and the seabed; "these regions are subject to a common freedom of exploitation without exercising national sovereignty" This is said of things which cannot be bought or sold, such as public roads, rivers, titles of honour

#### Context

- The Indian government is pushing the Supreme Court to apply a rarely used doctrine that would strip the \$11 billion tobacco industry's legal right to trade, an effort aimed at deterring tobacco companies from challenging tough new regulations.

#### Implications

- If applied, the doctrine would deny an industry's legal standing to trade, it gives authorities more leeway to impose restrictions.
- For example, the Supreme Court's application of the doctrine to alcohol in the 1970s paved the way for at least two Indian states to ban it completely and allowed courts to take a stricter stance while regulating liquor - something constitutional law experts say could happen with tobacco if a similar ruling was made.
- Seeking to apply the doctrine to tobacco, the government argued it should have the power "to regulate business and to mitigate evils" to safeguard public health

#### Area of contention

- India's tobacco labeling rules, which mandate 85 percent of a cigarette pack's surface be covered in health warnings, have been a sticking point between the government and the tobacco industry since they were enforced in 2016.
- That year, the industry briefly shut factories across the country in protest and filed dozens of legal cases challenging the rules.
- The federal health ministry says stringent health warnings on packages help reduce consumption of tobacco by making people aware of its ill-effects. A government survey last year found 62 percent of cigarette smokers thought of quitting because of warning labels on the packets.

Therefore such a classification will help protect tobacco control measures from being challenged, particularly for developing countries where the bulk of the smokers are.

### **8. Romberg's Test**

- Also known as the Romberg manoeuvre, this refers to a simple medical test conducted by doctors and physiotherapists to gauge the neurological condition of a patient.

- It works on the principle that a person, in order to maintain his balance with his eyes closed, needs to be aware of at least the position of his body and head in space.
- When a patient cannot maintain balance with his eyes closed, the doctor can conclude that there may be something wrong with the patient's proprioception and vestibular system.
- The Romberg's test is also used sometimes by law enforcement agencies to test people who are suspected of drunken driving.

### 9. **Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)**

- A mood disorder characterized by depression that occurs at the same time every year.
- Seasonal affective disorder occurs in climates where there is less sunlight at certain times of the year.

#### Stats

- In India, more than 10 million people experience similar or the same symptoms of this usually self-diagnosable ailment called Seasonal affective disorder (SAD).
- Women are overwhelmingly more susceptible to SAD than men
  - \* Statistics released by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) show that SAD occurs four times more often in women than in men.
  - \* The age of onset is estimated to be between 18 and 30 years but can affect anyone irrespective of age.

#### Symptoms

- The most common symptoms with which patients come to us include feeling low, a tendency to overeat or not at all, nausea, difficulty waking up in the morning and concentrating on tasks, withdrawal from social situations, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness, and a lack of pleasure in daily activities
- SAD generally starts in late fall and early winter and goes away during spring and summer.
- Depressive episodes linked to summer can occur, but are much rarer than winter episodes.

#### Treatment

- It includes light therapy (phototherapy), talk therapy and medication.
- People can prevent winter depression include ensuring a healthy and balanced diet.
- Staying well hydrated is key during the winter months since it gives you more energy, mental clarity and an enhanced digestive function.
- Getting enough sunlight and engaging in regular outdoor physical exercise are also important.
- Treatment for SAD involves enough light exposure, artificial light exposure, sun therapy and drugs

### 10. **Severe Acute Malnutrition**

- Severe acute malnutrition is defined by a very low weight for height (below -3z scores of the median WHO growth standards), by visible severe wasting, or by the presence of nutritional oedema.

#### Stats

- Across the globe, an estimated 16 million children under the age of 5 are affected by severe acute malnutrition. This number is staggering – most importantly, because children with severe acute malnutrition are nine times more likely to die than well-nourished children.
- These deaths are the direct result of malnutrition itself, as well as the indirect result of childhood illnesses like diarrhea and pneumonia that malnourished children are too weak to survive.

#### How is severe acute malnutrition prevented and treated?

- Ending acute malnutrition is a complex social and political challenge.
- Prevention and long term solutions involve dismantling unequal power structures, improving equitable access to health services and nutritious foods, promoting breastfeeding and optimal infant and young child feeding practices, improving water and sanitation, and planning for cyclic food shortages and emergencies.
- But in the short term, children with severe acute malnutrition need urgent lifesaving treatment to survive.
- Until relatively recently, these children were only treated in hospitals where they received therapeutic milks along with medical care; and many more were never reached at all. With the creation of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) however, the picture has changed dramatically.

#### What are the challenges?

In 2014, just over 3 million children under age 5 were treated for severe acute malnutrition. This figure had almost doubled in only a few years, yet much more remains to be done to reach the millions of remaining children with this condition worldwide.

- Governments face immense challenges in building capacity and allotting sufficient resources to prevent and treat acute malnutrition.
- There is also work to be done in making governments aware of the links between acute malnutrition (wasting) and chronic malnutrition (stunting) and the need to address these issues in tandem

### 11. **Typbar TCV**

#### Background

- Bharat Biotech said its Typbar TCV or the typhoid conjugate vaccine against typhoid fever, has received pre-qualification from the World Health Organization (WHO).



**What is it?**

- TyphbarTCV is the first typhoid vaccine, clinically proven to be administered to children from six months of age to adults and confers long term protection against typhoid fever,
- Typhoid conjugate vaccines (TCVs) are innovative products that have longer-lasting immunity than older vaccines, require fewer doses, and can be given to young children through routine childhood immunization programs.
- Typhbar TCV is a result of dedicated product development at Bharat Biotech since 2001, where all aspects of the product profile were studied and evaluated in human clinical trials.

**12. SC for larger warnings on cigarette packs**

- SC stays Karnataka High Court order reducing pictorial warning size on cigarette packs
- The Supreme Court stayed a Karnataka High Court order reducing the size of pictorial warnings on packages of tobacco products to 40% of the package space
- The court foregrounded the health of citizens over the concerns of the tobacco industry
- SC favored a government regulation requiring packets of tobacco products to sport pictorial warnings covering 85% of their packaging space

**Background**

- The Division Bench of the High Court had struck down the amendment to the Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labelling Rules) 2008, as amended in 2014

**Government Stand:**

- In a country where illiteracy is rampant, the more prominent the warning, the better impact it would have on the minds of the people
- It is the obligation of the State to make the people aware as regards the injurious nature of these indulgences
- Apart from the victim of the habit, the family suffers. The whole society faces peril

**View of industry:**

- The use of such pictures on 85% packaging space is a violation of their fundamental right to do business under Article 19 (1) (g)

**Recommendations of parliamentary standing committee:**

- Pictorial warnings should cover 50% space and this should be adopted till March 31, 2018, when the issue would be re-examined

**13. Development of antibiotic resistance to colistin**

- India's poultry farms are spawning global superbugs by giving medicines to the birds to protect them against diseases or to make them gain weight faster so more can be grown each year at greater profit. One drug typically given this way is colistin.

- Researchers who tested meat from supermarkets in the country in 2014 found residues of six antibiotics, suggesting they were being used liberally on farms.

**Why is this cause of worry?**

- Doctors call it the 'last hope' antibiotic because it is used to treat patients critically ill with infections which have become resistant to nearly all other drugs.
- The World Health Organization has called for the use of such antibiotics, which it calls "critically important to human medicines", to be restricted in animals and banned as growth promoters.
- Their continued use in farming increases the chance that bacteria will develop resistance to them, leaving them useless when treating patients.
- Thousands of tonnes of veterinary colistin was shipped to countries including Vietnam, India, South Korea and Russia in 2016, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism can reveal. In India, at least five animal pharmaceutical companies are openly advertising products containing colistin as growth promoters.

**Resistant genes**

- A colistin-resistant gene was discovered in Chinese pigs in 2015.
- The gene, mcr-1, could be transferred within and between species of bacteria. That meant that microbes did not have to develop resistance themselves, they could become resistant just by acquiring the mcr-1 gene.
- The discovery was met with worldwide panic in the medical community as it meant the resistance could be passed to bugs which are already multi-drug resistant, leading to untreatable infections.
- Rampant use of the drug in livestock farming has been cited as the most likely way mcr-1 was spread. It has been detected in bacteria from animals and humans in more than 30 countries, spanning four continents. Another four colistin resistant genes (mcr-2 to mcr-5) have been discovered.

**New Delhi metallo-beta-lactamase 1 (NDM-1)**

- Bugs bred in the country spread globally. One which particularly worried scientists is a gene called New Delhi metallo-beta-lactamase 1 (NDM-1), which makes bugs resistant to carbapenem antibiotics.
- This has been dubbed "the nightmare bacteria" by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the U.S. because it kills half the patients who develop a bloodstream infection.
- NDM-1 was first found in a patient who acquired it in India in 2008 and has since spread all over the world, with over 1,100 laboratory-confirmed cases in the U.K. since 2003.

**Implications**

- Unregulated sale of the drugs for human or animal use — accessed without prescription or diagnosis — has led to unchecked consumption and misuse.

- Overuse of the drugs in hospitals has created antibiotic resistant hotspots, and poor infection control means these bugs spread within the hospital and into the community. Some of the pharmaceutical companies manufacturing antibiotics have also failed to dispose of antibiotic-ridden waste properly, fuelling the spread of resistant bugs in the environment.
- All of these factors have led to high rates of resistance. In India, 57% of the *Klebsiella pneumoniae* bacteria — which commonly cause urine, lung and bloodstream infections — are resistant to last-line antibiotics known as carbapenems.

#### **Are there laws that administer this?**

- There is no legal requirement for one in the country as Colis V was bought over the counter from a poultry feed and medicines shop in Bangalore without a prescription.
- In 2014 the Agriculture Ministry sent an advisory letter to all State governments asking them to review the use of antibiotic growth promoters. However, the directive was non-binding, and none have introduced legislation to date.
- In its National Action Plan on AMR published in 2017, the Centre banned using antibiotics as growth promoters. The plan is not currently linked to any regulatory action.

#### **International Experience**

- The World Health Organization released guidelines in November 2017 recommending reducing use of critically important antibiotics in food-producing animals and banning their use as growth promoters. It also recommended banning the mass medicating of livestock with antibiotics to prevent disease.
- Using antibiotics as growth promoters has been banned in the European Union since 2006, and was made illegal in the U.S. in 2017.
- In Europe, colistin is available to farmers only if prescribed by a vet for the treatment of sick animals.

#### **Way forward**

- Consumer pressure is need of the hour, rather than regulation. In India, that level of awareness doesn't exist. This needs social change. It needs leaders, it needs stories, and it needs organizations. So a great level of awareness is an important call that needs to be taken

# EDUCATION

## 1. All India Survey on Higher Education report (2106-2017)

- Tamil Nadu has emerged as the leader in the country in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education.
- Tamil Nadu State leads with a GER of 46.9%.
- Among Union Territories, Chandigarh recorded 56.1%.
- Tamil Nadu has also done very well in terms of male and female GER figures, as also the GER figures for the Scheduled Castes.
- Bihar, Assam, West Bengal and Odisha posted low GERs of 14.4%, 17.2%, 18.5% and 21% respectively
- Uttar Pradesh fared marginally better at 24.9%, close to the national average.

### GER for higher education:

- GER for higher education is calculated with reference to the age group 18-23.
- It is the total enrolment in higher education, irrespective of age, expressed as a percentage to the eligible official population (18-23 years) in a given school year.

## 2. Maitreyi Yatra

- The Maitreyi Yatra is an exchange programme for schoolchildren as part of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the J&K government and the Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- The Student Exchange Programme organized by Ministry of Human Resource development provides a good opportunity for the youth of J&K to be acquainted with culture, language and development story of different parts of the country.
- The objective of this programme was to integrate the youth of Jammu and Kashmir to the rest of the country and to promote brotherhood and harmony.

## 3. Margdarshan (Share and Mentor Institutions)

### Objectives

- Mentoring to institutes by a well performing Institute.
- The Hub 'n Spoke system is to be established by a Institute of repute as a Mentor within an existing facility to serve as the hub to guide and disperse knowledge to ten technical institutions to encourage best practices.

- \* The secondary branches, the spokes, are additional services provided to faculty for self-improvement.

- \* Eventually, the Hub 'n Spoke system will allow for inter-hamlet information sharing, such as technical education, research and sharing of resources to the entire system

## 4. National Knowledge Network (NKN)

- The project is aimed at establishing a strong and robust Indian network which will be capable of providing secure and reliable connectivity.
- NKN aims to connect all universities, research institutions, libraries, laboratories, healthcare and agricultural institutions across the country to improve access to knowledge and meet communication and computational need of the institutions.
- NKN is a multi-gigabit pan-India network which facilitates the development of India's communications infrastructure, stimulates research and creates next generation applications and services.
- It enables collaboration among researchers from different educational networks such as TEIN4, GARUDA, CERN and Internet2. It also enables sharing of scientific databases and remote access to advanced research facilities.
- The leading mission oriented agencies in the fields of nuclear, space and defence research are also part of NKN.
- To strengthen research facility in various critical and emerging areas for NKN community, the network has established its international points of presence or PoP in Geneva, Amsterdam and Singapore, and plans to soon establish a PoP in New York too.

### Role of NKN:

- Establishing a high-speed backbone connectivity which will enable knowledge and information sharing amongst NKN connected institutes
- Enabling collaborative research, development and innovation amongst NKN connected institutes
- Facilitating advanced distance education in specialized fields like engineering, science, medicine etc.
- Facilitating an ultra-high speed e-governance backbone
- Facilitating connection between different sectoral networks in the field of research

### India's NKN, Sri Lanka's LEARN connect with high capacity Net

- India's National Knowledge Network and Sri Lanka's LEARN which connect to educational institutions between the two countries have now been linked with each other through high capacity internet

- Both countries signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for enhancing cooperation between India and Sri Lanka in the IT sector, cyber security and eGovernance.
- NKN has already connected over 1,648 institutions under various categories throughout the country.
- Similarly Lanka Education And Research Network (LEARN) also connects leading educational institution in Sri Lanka.

## 5. **Operation Digital Board**

- The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) passed a resolution to take steps towards Operation Digital Board on the lines of Operation Blackboard of 1987.
- Operation Blackboard was started with the purpose of providing minimum basic facilities to all primary schools.

### Idea behind operation Digital Board:

- The idea of Operation Digital Board is aimed at providing better digital education in all schools.
- This will offer new opportunities and new ways of teaching and learning to schools.

### Operation Blackboard:

- Operation Blackboard is a centrally sponsored programme which was started in 1987 immediately after the Rajiv Gandhi NPE of 1986 was released to supply the bare minimum crucial facilities to all primary schools in the country.
- The objective of the scheme is providing students studying in primary settings with the necessary institutional equipment and instructional material to facilitate their education.
- There is a provision to provide salary for an additional teacher to those primary schools that have an enrolment of more 100 students or for a consecutive period of two years.
- In the ninth five year plan the scheme was extended to all upper primary schools as well.

## 6. **36% rural youth can't name India's capital, finds survey**

### Highlights of Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)-2017:

- Fourteen per cent of rural youth in the age group of 14-18 failed to identify the map of India.
- 36% of those surveyed did not know that Delhi is the capital of India.
- 79% answered the questions 'Which State do you live in?' and 42 % could point to their home State on the map.
- About 25% of this age group (14-18) still cannot read basic texts fluently in their own language.
- 53% of all 14 year-olds in the sample can read English sentences

### Tapering enrolment:

- Most 14-18 year olds are in the formal education system — only 14.4% are not currently enrolled in school or college.
- At age 14, only 5.3% are not enrolled, but by age 17 this percentage quadruples to 20.7% and further increases to 30.2% at age 18.
- With almost 10% of India's population in this age group, these percentages translate into large numbers of youth who are not in the formal education system
- Gender aspect of enrolment: the number of girls falling sharply with age. While the enrolment ratios for boys and girls are almost the same at 14, at 18 years 32% of girls are not enrolled, as against 28% for boys.

### ASER 2017

- The ASER 2017 was conducted in 28 districts spread across 24 States and generated only district level estimates.
- The survey looks 'Beyond Basics', exploring a wider set of domains beyond foundational reading and arithmetic in an attempt to throw light on the status and abilities of youth in this age group.



# ART AND CULTURE

## 1. Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (or AMASR Act)

- AMASR Act is an act of parliament of the government of India that provides for the preservation of ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance, for the regulation of archaeological excavations and for the protection of sculptures, carvings and other like objects.
- It was passed in 1958. The Archaeological Survey of India functions under the provisions of this act.

### 2010 Amendment

- It was amended in 2010 to strengthen its penal provisions, to prevent Encroachments and illegal construction close to the monuments- which was happening on a large scale.
- As a result of the increased pressure of habitation, especially in urban areas, protected monuments and sites were getting hemmed in from all sides. This affected their safety, security and aesthetics.
- The main features of the amendments were the creation of a "prohibited area" 100 meter around every national monument where no construction, public or private is permitted, "regulated area" 200 meter beyond the prohibited area, where any construction requires permission of a newly constituted National Monuments Authority.
- Given the unique nature of each monument, the Act also proposed heritage bye-laws for each monument to be prepared by an expert body.
- The UPA government's decision to designate a 100-metre prohibited perimeter around every monument was upheld by the Supreme Court of India.

### 2017 proposed amendments

To make way for certain constructions limited strictly to public works and projects essential to public within the prohibited area, the following amendments have been approved:

- Insertion of a new definition of "public works" in section 2 of the Act.
- Amendment to section 20A of the Act so as to allow any Department or Office of the Central Government to carry out public works in the prohibited area after obtaining permission from the Central Government.
- Insertion of a new clause (ea) to section 20-I of the principal Act.

### Issues with above amendment

- It is violation of article 51A which intends to protect important monuments.
- A 2013 report by CAG said that about 1/3rd of the National Monuments of the country have been encroached upon and a majority of them were poorly guarded due to the lack of manpower.
- The monuments which are already deteriorating due to pollution, human interference and development activities around are further put under direct threat with the proposed changes.
- Public works by central government are executed more often than other small infrastructure projects which may even cause disturbance to tourism.
- The construction methods and tools may cause great loss to some architecturally and structurally weak monuments, viz. vibrations, and particulate pollutants.
- It will give people the wrong message of govt. giving priority to development over environment, deterring the public from being conscious about the environment.
- The vibrations produced due to construction may cause damage to surrounding monuments.
- Construction of these infrastructure may prevent archeological explorations in future.

## 2. Bharat Parv

- The 'Bharat Parv' event is being organized by the Government of India at the Red Fort, Delhi from 26th to 31st January, 2018 as part of the Republic Day 2018 celebrations.
- The prime objective of organizing the event is to generate a patriotic mood, promote the rich cultural diversity of the country and to ensure wider participation of the general public.
- The Ministry of Tourism has been designated as the nodal Ministry for the event, the highlights of which include Display of Republic Day Parade Tableaux, Performances by the Armed Forces Bands (Static as well as dynamic), a Multi-Cuisine Food Court, Craft Mela, Cultural Performances from different regions of the country and Photo Exhibition by the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP).

- The Cultural Performances include choreographed Folk/Tribal Dances and Music arranged through the North Zonal Cultural Centre as well as performances by cultural troupes from the different States / UTs of the country. The Food Court will have stalls set up by the States/ UTs, National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) showcasing street food from different regions as well as by the Institutes of Hotel Managements and ITDC.
- There will be Theme State Pavilions where each State would showcase their strengths along with tourism products.
- DAVP is also setting up an exhibition on the theme "Naya Bharat Hum Karke Rahenge".

### 3. **Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat**

- In order to further good governance and to strengthen understanding of each other, Union Budget 2016-17 proposes to create a closer engagement between different States and Districts in a structured manner.
- "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat" programme will be launched to link States and Districts.
- It is an annual programme that will connect people through exchanges in areas of language, trade, culture, travel and tourism.
- The programme aims to further strengthen the existing cultural connect between different parts of the country and enhance interaction between people living in different states.

#### **Cultural Mapping of India**

- The project of 'Cultural Mapping of India' under which data of artists shall be collected, has been initiated by the Ministry of Culture in order to carry out a survey on Cultural Topography of the country.
- Mission is a part of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat initiative.
- Under this scheme, a Web Portal would be developed through National Informatics Centre (NIC) for collection of data directly from artistes online for cultural mapping, which will serve as an Artist Repository and which can be used in future for the purpose of providing grant-in aid under various cultural schemes administered by this Ministry.
- The mandate of Ministry of Culture is to preserve, promote, explore and share India's culture and heritage along with its ethos and values for the benefit of mankind.
- In pursuance of this vision, among others, Ministry has been administering a few finance-based schemes to identify, nurture hand-hold and train the upcoming and budding artistes on a sustained basis.
- With a view to reach every nook and corner throughout the length and breadth of the country; there is a need to have data-base of such art forms and artists, which we refer to as cultural mapping".

- Hold talent hunt competitions from Block level to National level

#### **Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav**

- To celebrate the idea of unity in diversity, the Ministry of Culture is organising the 7th edition of the Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav under the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat matrix in Karnataka
- The Mahotsav will cover a profusion of art forms from classical and folk, music and dance, theatre to literature and the visual arts and would offer the chance to experience the best in established and emerging virtuosity.
- A handloom and handicrafts-utsav is part of the proposed event.
- The gastronomic culture of several partnering states will be showcased through a food festival

### 4. **Guru Shishya Parampara Scheme**

- Guru Shishya Parampara Scheme was introduced in 2003-04 with a view to promote development of new talents in the field of music and dance, folk and tribal art forms, under the able guidance of Gurus.
- To preserve and promote rare and vanishing art forms whether classical or folk/tribal so that the young talents be nurtured to acquire skills in their chosen field of art through some financial assistance by the Zonal Cultural Centre (ZCCs) in the form of scholarship under the guidance of Experts and Masters in these fields.
- To implement this scheme, Great Masters (Gurus) of different art forms of constituent states of NZCC, who are capable to train the interested shishyas are identified.
- This scheme has provided security to a large number of old and retired artistes. Most of the artistes covered under this scheme are from rural areas and teaching shishyas from within reasonable catchment area of their residence.

### 5. **Jangalmahal Utsab in West Bengal**

- The festival is organized in the state to promote tribal art and culture
- Different folk songs and dances such as Tusu, Bhadu, Ahira and Jhumur are performed by the locals of the Jangalmahal area during the festival.
- The world Jangalmahal is used to refer four districts of the state — Purulia, Bankura, Jhargram and West Midnapore.
- These four districts were once affected by Maoist insurgency.

### 6. **Jaipur Literature Festival**

- The Jaipur Literature Festival is an annual literary festival which takes place in the Indian city of Jaipur each January

- Jaipur Literature Festival, now in its 11th year, is the largest literary festival in the world.
- The Festival's core values remain unchanged; to serve as a democratic, non-aligned platform offering free and fair access.
- Every year, the Festival brings together a diverse mix of the world's greatest writers, thinkers, humanitarians, politicians, business leaders, sports people and entertainers on one stage to champion the freedom to express and engage in thoughtful debate and dialogue.
- The Diggi Palace Hotel serves as the main venue of the festival with sessions held in the Hall of Audience and throughout the gardens of the Diggi Palace in the city centre.

### 7. Makar Sankranti

- Makar Sankranti, a Hindu festival that is dedicated to express gratitude to the Sun God (Surya) is one such festival. Observed in the second week of January every year, people thank the nature for its abundant resources and good produce during the winter harvest festival.
- The festival, celebrated in different parts of the country in diverse ways, denotes the entry of the sun into the zodiac sign of Makara (Capricorn) as it travels on its celestial path.
- The festivities associated with Makar Sankranti are known by various names such as
  - \* Lohri by north Indian Hindus and Sikhs
  - \* Maghi in Punjab
  - \* Sukarat in central India
  - \* Magh Bihu by Assamese
  - \* Pongal by Tamilians
  - \* Uttarayan in Gujarat
  - \* Sakraat in Delhi and Haryana and many neighbouring states
  - \* Saaji in Shimla District of Himachal Pradesh, Makara Sankranti is known as Magha Saaji. It is the Pahari word for Sakranti, start of the new month.

#### Context

- PM greets the people on the occasion of various festivals across India

### 8. Megalithic era sarcophagus unearthed at Viyur

- A rare sarcophagus (stone coffin), said to be 2,000-year old from the Iron Age–Megalithic era, was discovered from a rock-cut cave at Viyur village of Kollam, near Koyilandy, in Kozhikode district.
- The coffin contains bone fragments.
- It was found during an excavation.
- So far, such a rare finding has been discovered only from two sites in Kerala.

- Both these sarcophagi were recovered from Megalithic sites at Chevayur and Atholi, also in Kozhikode district.
- Different types of pottery, mostly four-legged jars and iron implements, were found in the cave.
- Sarcophagi were found in many archaeological sites in South India earlier. Some are adorned with a sculpture or inscription. But two types are usually found with bovine features or with legs.

### 9. Sammakka Saralamma Jatara

- Sammakka Saralamma Jatara or Medaram Jatara is a tribal Hindu festival of honouring the goddesses celebrated in the state of Telangan
- The Jatara begins at Medaram. It is a remote place in the Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary, a part of Dandakaranya, the largest surviving forest belt in the Deccan.
- It commemorates the fight of a mother and daughter, Sammakka and Saralamma, with the reigning rulers against an unjust law.
- It is believed that after Kumbha Mela, the Medaram jatara attracts the largest number of devotees in the country.
- It is a four-day festival held once in two years.
- The festival is celebrated in Medaram during the time the goddesses of the tribals is believed to visit them.

### 10. Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA)

- The Sangeet Natak Akademi established by the Government of India in 1953, is India's National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama.
- It is responsible for the promotion and preservation of the performing arts of the country, and works to achieve these goals by means of specially designed programmes in various fields.
- One of the important activities of the Akademi is to recognize the contribution of outstanding musicians, dancers and theatre artists, bestowing on them its Fellowship and Awards.
- The ultimate aim of the activity is to create benchmarks in the practice of the performing arts.

#### Sangeet Natak Akademi Award

- It is the highest national recognition given to practicing artists, gurus and scholars.
- It carries a purse money of Rs. 1,00,000/-, a shawl, and atamrapatra (a brass plaque).
- The Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowships (Akademi Ratna) and Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards (Akademi Puraskar) are national honours bestowed by the Republic of India on performing artists as well as teachers and scholars in the field of performing arts.
- The recipients are selected by the Akademi's General Council, consisting of musicians, dancers, theatre artists and scholars in these disciplines, and nominees of the Government of India and of the States and Union Territories of the India Union.

- The number of awards given annually is 33 at present and, till date over 1000 artists has been honored.

#### **11. Surajkund International Crafts Mela**

- Every year from 1–15 February, a colorful traditional craft festival of India is held in the precincts of Surajkund.
- This fair was first started in 1987
- Traditional craftsmen (artists, painters, weavers and sculptors) from all parts of the country participate in this annual celebration named as the “Surajkund Crafts Mela” or “Surajkund designer’s Village”
- The theme, specific to a state of India, is depicted at the entrance to the Mela grounds and provides an ambience of that particular state with characteristic colors, materials, architecture, furniture and decorations.

#### **32nd Surajkund International Crafts Mela**

- Mela to be held in Faridabad district. It will be a ‘child-friendly event’ and highlight zero tolerance towards child rights violation
- This year, Uttar Pradesh has been chosen as the Theme State for the event.
- At least 20 countries and all States of India would participate in the fair.
- The fair is being organized by the Surajkund Mela Authority in collaboration with the Union ministries of tourism, textile, culture and external affairs, Haryana tourism department and Haryana Tourism Corporation.



# MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

## 1. Arunachal Pradesh declared Open Defecation Free

- Arunachal Pradesh emerged as the second state in the Northeast, after Sikkim, to be declared Open Defecation Free. The three remaining districts – Upper Subansiri, Siang and Changlang — were declared Open Defecation Free (ODF)
- Arunachal has 21 districts and the state attained the feat much before the national deadline of October 2, 2019. The state government had cut short the ODF target by one year and 10 months ahead of the national target and set December 31 this year as the deadline.
- The project undertaken under Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) SBM (G) saw the light of day only after the state government extended an incentive of Rs 8,000 per toilet. This is in addition to the Centre's support of Rs 12,000, raising the grant for constructing a toilet to Rs 20,000.

## 2. India's first floating market opens in Kolkata

- India's first floating market is now open in Kolkata's Patuli area in West Bengal. The market houses over 200 shops.
- Set up by the Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA), the market functions solely on boats at the lake in Patuli, where shopkeepers sell fruits, vegetables, fish among other produce.
- Around Rs 10 crore has been spent to develop the water body, said councillor of Ward 110 of KMC. To help buyers and shopkeepers reach the boats, wooden walkways have been constructed.

## 3. International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

- The workshop is organized by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in collaboration with United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).
- The workshop will bring together countries from different parts of the world - from Chile to Australia and from Japan to Sri Lanka - with different socio-economic backgrounds and geographical features.
- This will be a great opportunity to learn from their unique experiences in their efforts towards building disaster resilient infrastructure.
- The workshop will also see multilateral development banks, the United Nations, the private sector and academics coming together to identify best practices in the infrastructure sector, as well as key issues in existing practices and ways to address them.

- This workshop aims to take this dialogue on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and global cooperation further.

## 4. Jeevan Raksha Padak Awards

- Jeevan Raksha Padak series of awards are given to a person for meritorious act of humane nature in saving the life of a person.
- The award is given in three categories, namely, Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak, Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak and Jeevan Raksha Padak.
- Persons of either sex in all walks of life are eligible for these awards.
- The award can also be conferred posthumously.
- The decoration of the award (medal, certificate signed by the Home Minister and lump sum monetary allowance) is presented to the awardee in due course by the respective State Government to which the awardee belongs.

## 5. 'Latte levy' could be imposed on UK coffee drinkers

- British MPs have proposed a "latte levy" be imposed on disposable coffee cups to curb waste and fund more recycling services.

### Background

- The UK Parliament's environmental audit committee, which looks at how various government departments and public bodies contribute to the environment, also recommended banning disposable coffee cups if they are not all recyclable by 2023.
- The UK throws away 2.5 billion disposable coffee cups every year; enough to circle the planet five and a half time
- Coffee cup producers and distributors have not taken action to rectify this and government has sat on its hands

### What intends to do?

- The fee would amount to 50 cents on top of every coffee sold, and it's intended to encourage people to use reusable coffee cups.

## 6. National Youth Festival

- The National Youth Festival in India is an annual gathering of youth with various activities including competitive ones.
- Celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of youth icon Swami Vivekananda, it is organized by Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
- This is the first time that the National Youth Festival is being organized in NCR.

- The objective of organizing NYF is to provide a platform to bring the youth of the country together in an attempt to provide them opportunity to showcase their talents in various activities.
- This is the 22nd National Youth Festival. The 1st National Youth Festival was held in 1995 in Bhopal.
- The Festival also provides an arena, by creating a Mini-India, where youth interact in formal and informal settings and exchange their social and cultural uniqueness. This blend of diverse socio-cultural milieu creates 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat'.

#### **Theme**

- The Theme of the Festival is 'Sankalp Se Siddhi', to capitalize on the demographic dividend of young India, to capture the vibrancy and fresh perspective of youth and to pledge to accomplish the Goal of New India.

#### **7. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Fund For Sportspersons**

- Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Fund for Sportspersons (PDUNWFS) was set up in March, 1982 with a view to assisting outstanding Sportspersons of yesteryear, living in indigent circumstances who had brought glory to the Country in sports.
- The Scheme 'Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Fund for Sportspersons' provides for lump sum financial assistance for medical treatment to outstanding sportspersons now living in indigent circumstances.
- Provision of pension has been done away with as there is already a Scheme of Pension for Meritorious Sportspersons.
- Now, lump sum ex-gratia assistance is given to the Sportspersons or their families for medical treatment etc.

## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. RBI's affairs are governed by the Central Board of Directors (CBD) which also responsible for its general superintendence and direction. It consists of

1. Union Minister of Finance as the Chairperson
2. Governor of RBI as the Vice-Chairperson
3. Members nominated by Union Government
4. Nominees from SEBI and IRDA

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2, 3 and 4 only
- C. 3 only
- D. None of the above

2. With reference to Rotavirus, consider the following statements.

1. It is the most common cause of severe typhoid among infants and young children.
2. It infects and damages the cells that line the small intestine.
3. An indigenous Rotavac has been developed in India to tackle Rotavirus.
4. It does not infect animals.

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 2, 3 and 4 only
- D. 1 and 2 only

3. What are the qualifying features of a Crypto-currency?

1. It does not have real monetary value in the market.
2. It is not owned or controlled by any institution.
3. It allows transacting parties to remain anonymous.
4. It is a virtually held asset.

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2, 3 and 4 only
- C. 3 and 4 only
- D. 1 and 3 only

4. The powers and the independence of the Indian judiciary allow it to act as the guardian of Indian democracy. What are these powers?

1. Anyone can approach the higher judiciary if public interest is hurt by the actions of government.
2. Higher Judiciary can issue directives to check malpractices on the part of public officials.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None

5. With reference to North East Road Network Connectivity Project (NERNCP), consider the following statements:

1. The project will be based on public-private partnership model.
2. It will enhance connectivity with inter-state roads and International Borders concerning the North eastern region.
3. Recently, India and Japan signed a document on Japanese loan and aid for the project.

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 2 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

6. Consider the following statements

1. Tefillin ceremony is a religious celebration that marks a Jewish boy's initiation into the rights and obligations of adulthood.
2. A synagogue is a Jewish house of prayer.

Choose the correct statements from the options given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

7. What is the current position of India in terms of World's largest economy rankings?

- A. Third
- B. Fifth
- C. Sixth
- D. Seventh

8. The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Bill, seeks to

- A. Set up a National Compensatory Afforestation fund and Union Territory Compensatory Afforestation fund
- B. Set up a National Compensatory Afforestation fund, State Compensatory Afforestation fund and Union Territory Compensatory Afforestation fund
- C. Set up a National Compensatory Afforestation fund and North East States Compensatory Afforestation fund
- D. None of the above

9. Choose the correct statement/s with reference to Personal Rapid Transit

- A. PRT is an advanced public transport using automated electric pod cars.
- B. PRT provide a taxi-like demand responsive feeder and shuttle services for small groups of travellers
- C. PRT is a green mode of uninterrupted journey
- D. All of them above are correct

10. Which of the statements were correct with respect to Justice Verma Committee Report?

- 1. The Committee recommended that the exception to marital rape should be removed
- 2. The Committee accepted the proposal for chemical castration
- 3. It opined that death penalty should not be awarded

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2 and 3
- C. Only 1 and 3
- D. All of the above

11. Consider the following statements with reference to UN Environment's Clean Seas

- 1. The campaign aims to halt the tide of plastic trash polluting the oceans
- 2. UN Environment launched #Clean-Seas in February 2017, with the aim of engaging governments, the general public, civil society and the private sector in the fight against marine plastic litter
- 3. The campaign contributes to the goals of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter

Choose the correct statements from the options given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 1 and 3
- C. 2 and 3
- D. All are correct

12. With reference to Autolykiviridae, consider the following statements

- 1. It is a virus eating bacteria found in oceans
- 2. It has been named after a character in Greek mythology, Autolykos, who was a trickster and difficult to catch

Select the incorrect answer using the code given below.

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. All of the above
- D. None of the above

13. Consider the following statements with reference to the Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) Faculty Scheme

- 1. INSPIRE is an innovative programme sponsored and managed by the Department of Science & Technology for attraction of talent to Science
- 2. striking feature of the programme is that it does not believe in conducting competitive exams for identification of talent at any level

Choose the correct statements from the options given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 1 and 2
- C. 2 only
- D. Neither 1 nor 2



14. The Betla National Park (BNP) is located in which state?

- A. Punjab
- B. Jharkhand
- C. Haryana
- D. Himachal Pradesh

15. Edaphology is concerned with the?

- A. Influence of human development on soil
- B. Influence of soils on human development
- C. Influence of soils on living things
- D. None of the above

16. Raut Nacha is folk dance performed mainly by the tribal communities of which state?

- A. Rajasthan
- B. Jammu & Kashmir
- C. Assam
- D. Chhattisgarh

17. Ghumura is an ancient folk dance that originated in which of the following states?

- A. Odisha
- B. Madhya Pradesh
- C. Rajasthan
- D. Karnataka

18. Haemoglobin in humans has the highest affinity for which of the following gases?

- A. Methane
- B. Carbon Monoxide
- C. Nitrous oxide
- D. Carbon dioxide

19. Which of the following countries does not share its border with Black Sea?

- A. Georgia
- B. Bulgaria
- C. Belarus
- D. Turkey

20. The Nitisara of Kamandaka, also known as the Kamandakiya-Nitisara, was composed during the period of:

- A. Satavahana dynasty
- B. Gupta dynasty
- C. Kalachuri dynasty
- D. Nanda dynasty

21. Consider the following statements

1. The Bhitarkanika National Park is located in the state of West Bengal.
2. The Bhitarkanika National Park is located in the delta of rivers Brahmani, Baitarani and Dhamara).

Identify the correct statements from the options given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

22. Consider the following statements

1. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) is the regulator for overseeing insolvency proceedings
2. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India also oversees entities like Insolvency Professional Agencies (IPA), Insolvency Professionals (IP) and Information Utilities (IU) in India)
3. IBBI handles the cases using two tribunals like NCLT (National company law tribunal) and Debt recovery tribunal.

Identify the correct statements from the options given below

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 2 and 3
- C. 1 and 3
- D. 1, 2 and 3

23. Consider the following statements

1. Symbiodinium is a unicellular alga that provides its host with photosynthetic products in return for nutrients and shelter.
2. These unicellular algae reside in the endoderm of tropical cnidarians such as corals, sea anemones, and jellyfish.

Identify the correct statements from the options given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**24. Autonomous district councils are mentioned in which schedule of the constitution?**

- A. Sixth Schedule
- B. Fifth Schedule
- C. Eleventh Schedule
- D. Tenth Schedule

**25. Consider the following statements**

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

Identify the correct statements from the options given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**26. Identify the correct relationship**

- A.  $GDP = GVA + \text{taxes on products} - \text{subsidies on products}$
- B.  $GDP = GVA - \text{taxes on products} + \text{subsidies on products}$
- C.  $GDP = GVA - \text{taxes on products} - \text{subsidies on products}$
- D. None of the above

**27. Consider the following statements:**

1. National Programme for Organic Production is implemented by Ministry of Agriculture.
2. The Participatory Guarantee System for India is implemented by Ministry of Commerce
3. The Participatory Guarantee System for India involves a peer-review approach

Identify the correct statements from the codes below

- A. 1 only
- B. 1 and 2
- C. 2 and 3
- D. 3 only

**28. As per the latest "All India Survey on Higher Education report", which state has been ranked the first in terms of GER for higher education?**

- A. Tamil Nadu
- B. Andhra Pradesh
- C. Kerala
- D. Karnataka

**29. Consider the following statements with reference to the Consumer Protection Bill, 2018 which was in news recently**

1. As per the bill, Celebrities endorsing misleading ads will have to pay penalty of up to Rs 50 lakh and serve a ban of up to three years.
2. One of the major objectives of the bill is to crack down on misleading advertisements.
3. The bill seeks to set up a Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)

Identify the correct statements from the codes below

- A. 1 only
- B. 1 and 2
- C. 2 and 3
- D. 1, 2 and 3

**30. With reference to "flammable ice", recently seen in news, consider the following statements:**

1. It consists of methane trapped within water crystals.
2. It is another name for permafrost.
3. All of its reserves are trapped in plateaus at higher latitudes.
4. India is considering it as an alternative energy source.

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

- A. 1, 3 and 4 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 4 only
- D. Only 1

**31. Consider the following statements**

1. CFCs are Short-lived chemical compounds that eventually rise into the stratosphere; where they are broken apart by the sun's ultraviolet radiation, releasing chlorine atoms that go on to destroy ozone molecules.
2. Tropospheric ozone protects life on the planet by absorbing potentially harmful ultraviolet radiation that can cause skin cancer and cataracts, suppress immune systems and damage plant life.

Choose the incorrect statements from the options given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

32. The Kachin Hills make a boundary between India and which of the following neighbours?

- A. Bhutan
- B. Myanmar
- C. Nepal
- D. China

33. Consider the following statements about the Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP):

- 1. It is mandated to recommend minimum support prices (MSPs)
- 2. Union Agriculture Minister is the ex-officio chairperson of the commission

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 Only
- B. 2 Only
- C. Both 1 & 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

34. Umiam Lake, also known as Barapani Lake, is located in which state?

- A. Meghalaya
- B. Assam
- C. Sikkim
- D. Tripura

35. Tat Tvam Asi, a sanskrit phrase, originally occurs in which of the following Upanishads?

- A. Mundaka Upanishad
- B. Chandogya Upanishad
- C. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad
- D. Mandukya Upanishad

36. Constitution of India guarantees which of the following to the states of India?

- A. Territorial Integrity
- B. Sovereignty
- C. Right to secede from Union
- D. None of them

37. Consider the following statement/s with reference to Kala-Azar

- 1. It is a slow progressing indigenous disease
- 2. It is caused by Protozoan parasite.
- 3. In India, Leishmania donovani is the only parasite causing the disease.
- 4. The parasite primarily infects reticuloendothelial system.

Select the correct statement/s from the codes given below

- A. 1 and 4
- B. 1 and 3
- C. 1, 2 and 3
- D. All are correct

38. Consider the following statements

- 1. The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has introduced 'Virtual ID' (VID) to safeguard Aadhaar cardholders' data
- 2. VID will be a 16-digit, randomly-generated number which can be used for authentication instead of the original Aadhaar number
- 3. 3VID can be generated only by the Aadhaar number holder

Choose the correct statement/s from the options given below

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 2 and 3
- C. 1 and 3
- D. All are correct

39. Which among the following are the symptoms of Kala-Azar?

- A. Recurrent fever
- B. Loss of appetite
- C. Spleen enlargement and anaemia
- D. All of the above

40. Which article in the Indian constitution prohibits the State from providing any religious instruction in an educational institution run on public funds?

- A. Article 28
- B. Article 29
- C. Article 19
- D. Article 25

41. As per IUCN's RED DATA book Celebes crested macaque is

- A. Critically endangered species
- B. Vulnerable species
- C. Least concerned species
- D. None of the above

42. Consider the following statement/s with reference to Model Code of Conduct

- 1. The Code of Conduct does not have any statutory basis.
- 2. The Model Code of Conduct comes into force immediately on announcement of the election schedule by the commission.
- 3. The objective of MCC is to ensure that the party in power is not able to use public money to improve its electoral prospects.

Select the correct statement/s from the codes given below

- A. 1 and 3
- B. 2 and 3
- C. 3 only
- D. All are correct

43. Consider the following statement/s with reference to Model Code of Conduct

- 1. Bioethanol is an alcohol made by fermentation, mostly from carbohydrates produced in sugar or starch crops such as corn, sugarcane, or sweet sorghum
- 2. Syngas is a mixture of carbon monoxide, hydrogen and other hydrocarbons
- 3. Microbial gastrointestinal flora in a variety of animals has shown potential for the production of biofuels.
- 4. Jatropha curcas, a poisonous shrub-like tree that produces seeds considered by many to be a viable source of biofuels feedstock oil.

Select the correct statement/s from the codes given below

- A. 1 and 3
- B. 2 and 4
- C. 1, 3 and 4
- D. All are correct

44. Consider the following statements with reference to the Logistics Exchange Memorandum Of Agreement (LEMOA).

- 1. LEMOA is a facilitating agreement that establishes basic terms, conditions, and procedures for reciprocal provision of Logistic Support, Supplies, and Services between the armed forces of India and the United States.
- 2. The Agreement creates obligations on either Party to carry out joint activity.
- 3. It provides for the establishment of any bases or basing arrangements.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 2 and 3 only

45. Consider the following statements

- 1. The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) is an informal and voluntary partnership to prevent the proliferation of missile and unmanned aerial vehicle technology capable of carrying above 1000 kg payload for more than 300 km.
- 2. The People's Republic of China is not a member of the MTCR..

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

46. At present, India is a member of

- A. Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and Wassenaar Arrangements
- B. Missile Technology Control Regime and Australia Group on chemical and biological weapons
- C. Wassenaar Arrangements and Australia Group on chemical and biological weapons
- D. Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar Arrangements and Australia Group on chemical and biological weapons

47. The recent edition of Global Manufacturing index published by World Economic Forum, ranks India at which position? largest inland saline wetland?

- A. 30th
- B. 31st
- C. 32nd
- D. 33rd



48. The Global competitiveness report is a yearly report published by

- A. IMF
- B. UN
- C. World Bank
- D. World Economic Forum

49. As per the recent edition of Global Manufacturing index published by World Economic Forum, India has been placed under which category?

- A. Legacy
- B. Leading
- C. High Potential
- D. Nascent

50. The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is an intergovernmental organisation consisting of which of these countries?

- 1. Switzerland
- 2. Norway
- 3. Germany
- 4. France

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 3 and 4 only
- C. 2, 3 and 4 only
- D. 1 and 3 only

51. What is Farmer Zone that was recently seen in news?

- A. It is an open-source data platform for smart agriculture.
- B. It is an Agricultural mandi which will not be regulated by APMC Acts.
- C. It is a food processing zone that will be heavily subsidized by the state.
- D. It is a farmer distress service to counsel farmers against suicides.

52. Consider the following statements with reference to Operation Blackboard scheme:

- 1. It is a centrally sponsored programme.
- 2. The programme main aim is to supply the bare minimum crucial facilities to all primary schools in the country.
- 3. The programme has a provision to provide salary for an additional teacher to those primary schools that have an enrolment of more 100 students or for a consecutive period of two years.

Identify the correct statements from the options given below

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 1 and 3
- C. 2 and 3
- D. 1, 2 and 3

53. Consider the following statements with reference to The National Medical Commission Bill, 2017

- 1. The bill seek to conduct a National Licentiate Examination for the students graduating from medical institutions to obtain the license for practice
- 2. The National Licentiate Examination will also serve as the basis for admission into post-graduate courses at medical institutions.

Identify the correct statements from the options given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

54. Consider the following statements with reference to The Battle of Haifa

- 1. The Indian soldiers on 23 September 1918 targeted the fortification of the city of Haifa which was then controlled by a joint Ottoman, German and Austro-Hungarian force
- 2. The liberation of Haifa cleared a supply route for the Allies to the city through the sea)
- 3. 2018 marks a centenary of the end of the World War II and the Battle of Haifa

Identify the correct statements from the options given below

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 2 and 3
- C. 1 and 3
- D. 1, 2 and 3

**55. Consider the following statements.**

1. Any ordinary law needs to be passed by both the Houses.
2. Money bills need to be passed only by the Lok Sabha)
3. In case of a disagreement between the two houses on ordinary bills, a joint sitting is called that is presided by the President.

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

**56. Consider the following about Sodium Nitrite, recently seen in news.**

1. It is both an oxidising and a reducing agent.
2. It is a food additive to enhance botulism.
3. It is on the World Health Organization's List of Essential Medicines..

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

**57. Consider the following statements with reference to removal of Supreme Court judges**

1. A Judge of the Supreme Court shall not be removed from his office except by an order of the Parliament..
2. Supreme Court Judges can be removed from the office on grounds of proved misbehaviour or incapacity.

Choose the correct statement/s from the options given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**58. 'Vajra Prahar' is a joint exercise between India and \_\_\_\_\_?**

- A. Japan
- B. US
- C. Vietnam
- D. Sri Lanka

**59. Consider the following statements with reference to Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana**

1. Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana is a State Plan Scheme of Additional Central Assistance launched as a part of the 12th Five Year Plan by the Government of India)
2. RKVY was started to incentivize the states in order to increase their investment in Agriculture and allied sectors
3. The pattern of funding under RKVY is 100% Central Government Grant

Choose the correct statement/s from the options given below

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 2 and 3
- C. 1 and 3
- D. 1, 2 and 3

**60. Consider the following statements with reference to World Resources Institute (WRI)**

1. The World Resources Institute (WRI) is a global research organization that works under United Nations organization.
2. The organization's mission is to promote environmental sustainability, economic opportunity, and human health and well-being.
3. WRI partners with local and national governments, private companies, publicly-held corporations, and other non-profits, and offers services including global climate change issues, sustainable markets, ecosystem protection, and environmental responsible governance services.

Choose the correct statement/s from the options given below

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 2 and 3
- C. 1 and 3
- D. 1, 2 and 3

**61. Consider the following statements with reference to "Sholas"**

1. Sholas are the local name for patches of stunted tropical montane forest found in valleys amid rolling grassland in the higher montane regions of South India
2. Shola forests are found in the higher altitude hill regions of the Nilgiris, Kanyakumari district, Idukki district, the Western Ghats and associated ranges in the states of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Choose the correct statement/s from the options given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**62. Consider the following statement/s with reference to Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)**

1. The Home Minister had announced the setting up of I4C to deal with all types of cyber Crime at the State level
2. I4C will be set up under the newly created Cyber and Information Security (CIS) division of the Ministry of Home Affairs
3. CIS will have four wings, namely security clearance, cybercrime prevention, cyber security and information security

Choose the correct statement/s from the codes given below

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 1 and 3
- C. 2 and 3
- D. 1, 2 and 3

**63. Consider the following statement/s with reference to Budapest Convention**

1. Budapest Convention on Cybercrime is the first international treaty seeking to address Internet and computer crime by harmonizing national laws, improving investigative techniques, and increasing cooperation among nations
2. Important countries like Brazil and India have declined to adopt the Convention on the grounds that they did not participate in its drafting.

Choose the correct statement/s from the codes given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**64. Consider the following statement/s with reference to coliform bacteria**

1. Coliform bacteria are a commonly used indicator of sanitary quality of foods and water.
2. The permissible limit of Coliform bacteria as per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) guideline is 500.

Choose the correct statement/s from the codes given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**65. Consider the following statement/s with reference to "The Raisina Dialogue"**

1. The Raisina Dialogue is a multilateral conference held annually in New Delhi.
2. The theme for the 2018 Conference is "Managing Disruptive Transitions: Ideas, Institutions and Idioms"

Choose the correct statement/s from the codes given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**66. Doha Development Round is often in news. It relates to which of the following?**

- A. Talks regarding international monetary system
- B. Talks regarding refugee crisis
- C. Talks at WTO regarding world trade
- D. None of the above

**67. With reference to the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) and El Nino, consider the following statements:**

1. While the El Nino causes the warming of the surface of Pacific Ocean, IOD causes warming of the Indian Ocean
2. While the El Nino always brings deficient rainfall in India, IOD always brings more rains in India"

Which among the above statements is / are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 & 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**68. Consider the following statements with reference to Electoral Bonds**

1. An electoral bond can be purchased by any citizen of India or a body incorporated in India)
2. The bonds will be issued in multiples of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore, and will be available at specified branches of the State Bank of India)
3. Donors can donate the bonds to their party of choice which can then be cashed via the party's verified account within 15 days.

Identify the correct statement/s from the codes given below

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 2 and 3
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

**69. Consider the following statements with reference to Agni-V missile**

1. It is an intercontinental surface to surface ballistic missile
2. It is the most advanced version of indigenously built missile series.
3. Its range is more than 5000Kms.

Identify the correct statement/s from the codes given below

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 2 and 3
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

**70. With reference to the Agreement at the UNFCCC Meeting in Paris in 2015, which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. The Agreement was signed by all the member countries of the UN and it will go into effect in 2017.
2. The Agreement aims to limit the greenhouse gas emissions so that the rise in average global temperature by the end of this century does not exceed 2 °C or even 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels.
3. Developed countries acknowledged their historical responsibility in global warming and committed to donate \$ 1000 billion a year from 2020 to help developing countries to cope with climate change.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

**71. Consider the following statements about Sukanya Samridhi Yojana**

1. It is subpart of Beti Bachao campaign
2. Account will remain operative until she reaches 18 age.
3. For initial account opening, minimum deposit Rs.1000 required

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only 1 and 2
- B. Only 2 and 3
- C. Only 1 and 3
- D. All of the above

**72. India is a member of which of the following groupings**

- A. Missile technology control regime and Wassenaar Arrangement
- B. Missile technology control regime and Australian grouping
- C. Australian grouping and Wassenaar Arrangement
- D. Missile technology control regime, Australian grouping and Wassenaar Arrangement

**73. Consider the following statements about the term "Office of Profit" used in Indian Constitution:**

1. If he/she holds "Office of Profit" under any government other than those allowed by the parliament
2. The final power to decide whether a person holds an office of profit under government of India lies with the Law Ministry of India

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 Only
- B. 2 Only
- C. Both 1 & 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**74. The business proceedings of the Parliament are conducted as mentioned in the**

- A. Provisional rules under the constitution
- B. Conventions as followed by political parties in India
- C. Procedures prescribed in the rule books of the Parliament
- D. Rules of Business of the Government of India as decided by the Cabinet Secretariat



**75. Nanog is**

- A. Cross-linked three-dimensional polymer chain networks of nanogels
- B. Class of extremely small droplets that appear to be transparent or translucent with a bluish Colouration
- C. a key pluripotency regulator critically important in the process of self-renewal of Un differentiated stem cells
- D. Smallest known self-replicating bacteria

**76. According to constitutional provisions, writs can be issued by the**

- 1. High Courts to enforce a fundamental Right
- 2. Supreme Court to enforce a statutory Right

Which of the above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None

**77. Consider the following statements with reference to Habitat III**

- 1. It is a bi-decennial United Nations (UN) conference on housing and sustainable urban development.
- 2. The Habitat III Conference reinvigorates the global commitment to sustainable urbanization, to focus on the implementation of a "New Urban Agenda".

Identify the correct statement from the codes given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**78. Consider the following statements**

- 1. The Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) has developed a set of 'Liveability Standards in Cities' to generate a Liveability Index and rate cities.
- 2. 'Liveability Standards in Cities' includes various parameters like education, healthcare, roads, mobility, jobs, grievance redressal, pollution, emergency response, green open spaces, as well as cultural and entertainment opportunities

Identify the correct statement from the codes given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**79. Consider the following statement with reference to a device Genexpert which was in news recently**

- 1. Genexpert can run molecular test
- 2. It can diagnose TB and HIV infections
- 3. The device size is equivalent to that of a microwave oven

Choose the correct statement

- A. 1 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. All are correct

**80. Consider the following statement with reference to Global Entry Programme which was in news recently**

- 1. India recently signed to join this programme.
- 2. This scheme will allow expedited entry into the US to all travellers from India .

Choose the correct answer

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1 and 2 only
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**81. Consider the following statement with reference to CERT-In which was in news recently**

- 1. The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) is an office within the Ministry of defense.
- 2. It is the nodal agency to deal with cyber security threats like hacking and phishing.

Choose the correct statement

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1 and 2 only
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**82. Consider the following statements:**

- 1. The Australia Group is a multilateral export control regime with 43 members.
- 2. It aims to help member countries to identify those exports which need to be controlled so as not to contribute to the spread of chemical only.
- 3. EU is a member of Australia Group.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only.
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. All of the above

**83. Consider the following statements:**

1. MTCR, Wassenaar Arrangement, NSG and Australia Group are the 4 global non-proliferation regimes.
2. India is a member of NSG.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**84. Consider the following statements:**

1. Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies is a multilateral export control regime.
2. India joined the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 2016.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**85. Consider the following statements about Daylight Saving:**

1. it's a practice by which all the clocks in these places are moved forward by an hour during the summer months and brought back during the winter.
2. The reason behind this is to take advantage of the longer-lasting sunlight in summer and save energy.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**86. Consider the following statements about the goals of National Health Policy 2017:**

1. Increase Life Expectancy at birth from 67.5 to 70 by 2025.
2. Increase health expenditure by Government as a percentage of GDP from the existing 1.15 % to 2.5 % by 2025.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**87. Consider the following statements with reference to standing committee**

1. It is a permanent and regular committee which is constituted from time to time according to the provisions of an Act of Parliament or Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business
2. These committees play an important role in exercising a check over governmental expenditure and Policy formulation
3. These standing committees are elected or appointed every year by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha or the Speaker of the Lok Sabha

Identify the correct statement/s from the codes given below

- A. 1 and 3
- B. 1 and 2
- C. 2 and 3
- D. 1, 2 and 3

**88. Consider the following statements with reference to global index of talent competitiveness**

1. Currently India stands at 81st position
2. It is released every year on the first day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting
3. The index measures how countries grow attract and retain talent

Identify the correct statement/s from the codes given below

- A. 1 and 3
- B. 1 and 2
- C. 2 and 3
- D. 1, 2 and 3

**89. The discretionary powers of the President of India include**

1. Sending back the advice given by the Council of Ministers and asking them to reconsider a decision that has already been made
2. Delaying assent to Bills passed by the Parliament by use of pocket veto
3. Dissolving the Lok Sabha when the government has lost confidence of the house

Select the correct answer using the codes below:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

90. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved two new World Bank supported schemes - Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) and Skill Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE). Consider the following with reference to them.

1. Both the schemes are being funded by World bank loan assistance apart from Central Government assistance.
2. The schemes mark a shift in government's implementation strategy in vocational education and training from inputs to results.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None

91. The business proceedings of the Parliament are conducted as mentioned in the

- A. Provisional rules under the constitution
- B. Conventions as followed by political parties in India
- C. Procedures prescribed in the rule books of the Parliament
- D. Rules of Business of the Government of India as decided by the Cabinet Secretariat

92. Consider the following statements with reference to The INSPIRE (Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research) Faculty scheme

1. The scheme is managed by the Centre's Department of Science and Technology (DST).
2. The main aim of the scheme is to help young, talented scientists embark on independent research careers at Indian labs.
3. The Scheme selects promising research scholars under 32 and offers them a salary of ₹80,000 a month as well as an annual research grant worth ₹7 lakh to work at a university of their choice for five years

Identify the correct statement from the codes given below

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 1 and 3
- C. 2 and 3
- D. 1, 2 and 3

93. Identify the correct statement with reference to Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana

- A. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana is a scheme of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas for providing LPG connections to women from Below Poverty Line (BPL) households.
- B. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana is a scheme of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas for providing LPG connections to all the households in rural areas.
- C. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana is a scheme of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas for providing LPG connections to all the households in semi urban areas.
- D. None of the above

94. In the recently released Environmental Performance Index (EPI) rankings, India stands at which position?

- A. 177th
- B. 176th
- C. 175th
- D. 174th

95. Consider the following statements with reference to impeachment of judges

1. For the impeachment of a Supreme Court or HC judge, 100 Lok Sabha MPs or 50 Rajya Sabha members have to move a motion before the Speaker or chairman of the Upper House.
2. Both the houses of Parliament will have to separately pass motion by two-thirds majority of members present and voting.

Identify the correct statement from the codes given below

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

96. Consumer Price Index (CPI) Inflation in India is measured on a

- A. Weekly basis
- B. Quarterly basis
- C. Monthly basis
- D. Yearly basis

**97. Look at the following statements about Red Sanders**

1. Found in whole of South India)
2. This tree is valued for the rich red color of its wood.
3. The wood is Aromatic and Mysore Sandal Soap is a GI Produced from this.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2 and 3
- C. Only 2
- D. All of the above

**98. The Langkawi Declaration recently seen in news is related to**

- A. ASEAN India Treaty on advancement in Science and Technology
- B. ASEAN India Treaty on Space research
- C. A declaration on the issue of environmental sustainability by Commonwealth
- D. Defence Treaty for sale of Brahmos.

**99. With respect to Mahadayi River, consider the following statements**

1. It is an east flowing river in Karnataka with disputes between Goa and Karnataka only
2. This would help in addressing water issues in south of Karnataka in the regions of Kolar, Chikmagalur.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. All of the above
- D. None of the above

**100. The Government Process Re-engineering (GPR) is the initiative of**

- A. Ministry of Commerce
- B. Ministry of Corporate Affairs
- C. Ministry of Electronics
- D. Ministry of Science and technology

**101. Consider the following statements regarding International Dharma-Dhamma Conference**

1. Organized as part of the commemorative events to celebrate the Silver Jubilee year of ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership
2. It is aimed to facilitate crosspollination of ideas and foster harmony at the global level

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. All of the above
- D. None of the above

**102. Consider the following: Fluorescent in-situ hybridization (FISH)**

1. is a physical mapping approach that uses fluorescein tags to detect hybridization
2. is used for finding specific features in DNA for use in species identification

Which of the above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None

**103. Consider the following with reference to 'Paryatan Parv'**

1. It is being organized by the Ministry of External Affairs.
2. Ministry of Culture as a part of 'Paryatan Parv' is organising 'Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav'.
3. It is being organized in all major countries where Indian embassies are present.
4. The main focus of the festival is to showcase Indian heritage abroad and increase foreign exchange received by India)

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 3 and 4 only



104. Which of the following countries have a system of "Inheritance tax"?

1. USA
2. UK
3. Spain
4. India

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 2 and 4 only
- C. 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 3 and 4 only

105. Consider the following: "Value Engineering Program" will

1. Be implemented by Department of Science and Technology
2. Look to use new technologies and materials in highway construction projects

Which of the above is/are correct?:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None

106. Choose the correct circuits that comes under thematic tourism circuit - Swadesh darshan Scheme

1. North-East India Circuit
2. Buddhist Circuit
3. Himalayan Circuit
4. South Indian Circuit

Choose the correct statement

- A. 1, 2 and 4
- B. 1 and 3
- C. 1, 2 and 3
- D. All are correct

107. Middle income trap refers to

- A. Economic development situation, where a country which attains a certain income will get stuck at that level
- B. Economic policy through which one country attempts to remedy its economic problems means that tend to worsen the economic problems of other countries
- C. A country having conflict of economic interests that arises between short-term domestic and long-term international objectives.
- D. An economic condition where the economy is ruled by Middle class because of high demand of Consumer Products.

108. With respect to the Surajkund International Crafts Mela, consider the following statements

1. It was first introduced by Modi Govt to help address issues of Artists
2. This year, Uttar Pradesh has been chosen as the Theme State for the event

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. All of the above
- D. None of the above

109. Consider the following statements regarding Nirbaya Fund

1. Government contribution of Rs. 1000 Crores for empowerment, safety and security of women and girl children
2. The Fund is administered by Ministry of Women and Child Development
3. Nirbhaya (fearless) was the pseudonym given to the 2012 Delhi gang rape victim to hide her actual identity

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. Only 1 and 2
- B. Only 2 and 3
- C. Only 1 and 3
- D. All of the above

110. Consider the following with respect to "Electoral Bonds"

1. Electoral bonds will be valid for 6 months during which they could be used to make donations to registered political parties
2. Only those political parties that have secured not less than 1% of votes polled in the previous Lok Sabha elections or general election to the Assembly can avail funding through these bonds.
3. Electoral bonds are interest-free banking instruments.
4. India is the first country to introduce bonds for electoral funding.

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1, 2 and 3 only
- D. All of the above

111. According to the insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2017, which of the following persons are prohibited from submitting resolution plan, in case of default?

1. Wilful defaulters
2. Disqualified directors
3. Promoters or management of the company that has outstanding non-performing debt for more than a year.

Identify the correct statement/s from the codes given below:

- A. Only 1 and 2
- B. Only 2 and 3
- C. All of the above
- D. None of the above

112. Consider the following with respect to FAME India Scheme:

1. The objective of the scheme is providing monetary and fiscal incentives for market creation and adoption of electric & hybrid technology vehicles in the country
2. It is a part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan 2020
3. It intends to achieve about 9500 million litres of cumulative fuel savings, which would result in the reduction of emission of Greenhouse Gases and pollution of 2 million tonnes.
4. The scheme was formulated by the Department of Heavy Industry under the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises

Select the correct answer using the codes below:

- A. 2 only
- B. 3 only
- C. 1 and 2 only
- D. 4 only

113. Consider the following statements:

1. The point when the moon is closest to the earth is called Perigee
2. The point when it is farthest from it is called Apogee
3. When a full moon occurs at its Apogee, it is called a super moon.
4. The second full moon in a month is called a "Blue moon".

Identify the correct statement/s from the codes given below:

- A. Only 1 and 2
- B. Only 1, 2 and 4
- C. 4 only
- D. 3 and 4 only

114. Alipore Zoological Garden is in which of these States?

- A. Uttar Pradesh
- B. Madhya Pradesh
- C. Bihar
- D. West Bengal

115. Which of the tiger reserves are located in Assam?

1. Orang
2. Kaziranga
3. Manas
4. Nameri

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. Only 1 and 3
- B. Only 2, 3 and 4
- C. Only 1, 3 and 4
- D. All of the above

116. With reference to Neonicotinoid, consider the following statements

1. It is an herbicide
2. It has the potential to kill bees

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both are correct
- D. None of them

117. With respect to Parali Island, consider the following statements

1. It is a part of Bangaram atoll in South Andaman
2. It has been eroded resulting in inundation

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- A. Only 1 is correct
- B. Only 2 is correct
- C. Both 1 and 2 are correct
- D. Neither 1 nor 2 are correct

118. Falta Special Economic Zone is in which of these states?

- A. Maharashtra
- B. Odisha
- C. West Bengal
- D. Rajasthan

119. Sjögren's Syndrome is related to

- A. Breathing problem due to excessive Pollution
- B. It is a disorder characterized by dry eyes and dry mouth
- C. A fatal bacterial infection that affects the nerves
- D. It is a genetic blood disorder

120. Look at the following statements about the animal

- 1. IUCN recently moved the animal's status from "endangered" to "vulnerable" on its Red List
- 2. It is also called as mountain ghost

The animal in reference to above statements is

- A. Black bears
- B. Snow Leopard
- C. Himalayan Tahr
- D. Chiru

121. Read the following statements carefully

- 1. Potassium Chlorate' which is a dangerous and hazardous chemical and can ignite or explode spontaneously
- 2. Possession and sale of fireworks of foreign origin is illegal and punishable
- 3. Till date, no license for import of fireworks has been granted under the Explosives Rules, 2008

Which of the statements given above are incorrect?

- A. Only 1 and 2
- B. Only 2 and 3
- C. All of the above
- D. None of the above

122. The term Mith/Mit or Mitini was recently in news. This is related to

- A. Animal conservation Plan in Odisha
- B. SHG in WB to help Women in Poverty
- C. Preserving Trees by forging relationship with Trees
- D. A program to send weekly messages on Child care for Mothers

123. Which State becomes the first state in the country after its assembly unanimously passed a bill awarding death to those found guilty of raping girls aged 12 and below?

- A. Rajasthan
- B. Haryana
- C. Uttar Pradesh
- D. Madhya Pradesh

124. Sultan Bin Zayed Heritage Festival is held in which country?

- A. Saudi Arabia
- B. Iran
- C. United Arab Emirates
- D. Qatar

125. With respect to Akashvani Maitree, consider the following statements

- 1. Akashvani Maitree is AIR's cross-border Myanmar service
- 2. To counter the presence of CRI (Chinese Radio International with its strong programming)

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. All of the above
- D. None of the above

126. With reference to core of the core Schemes, consider the following statements

- 1. The funding is in the ratio 75:25
- 2. MGNREGA is included in the classification
- 3. Development of Backward Classes and other vulnerable groups are not included

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- A. Only 1 and 2
- B. Only 2 and 3
- C. Only 1 and 3
- D. All of the above

127. Schizophrenia is related to

- A. A hereditary disorder which leads to increase in performance of Thyroid glands
- B. A breathing Problem due to increase in Pollution levels
- C. A chronic and severe mental disorder that affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves.
- D. A chronic neurodegenerative disease

128. Which of the following statements are correct with reference to SECURE Himalaya?

1. It is to ensure conservation of locally and globally significant biodiversity, land and forest resources in the high Himalayan ecosystem
2. It is launched by the Union environment ministry in association with WWF
3. Protection of snow leopard and other endangered species and their habitats is one of the key components of the project

Choose the correct statements from the options given below

- A. All of the above
- B. Only 2
- C. Only 1 and 3
- D. Only 2 and 3

129. KUSUM Scheme recently in news is related to

- A. A scheme to provide Loans to farmers as Price Stabilization Mechanism
- B. Health insurance component under Ayushman Initiative
- C. Organic farming to reduce Soil Pollution
- D. A scheme for promoting decentralized solar power production to help farmers

130. Look at the following statements about Nifty

1. It is based upon 50 firms in India.
2. It is regulated by the Reserve Bank of India.
3. It does not trade in mutual funds

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. c) 3 only
- D. 1 and 3

131. J curve in the economics is related to

- A. It is a type of cost-of- living index that uses an expenditure function such as one used in assessing expected compensating variation
- B. Show the relationship between tax rates and the amount of tax revenue collected by governments
- C. The inverse relationship between unemployment rate and inflation
- D. Refers to the trend of a country's trade balance following a devaluation

132. With reference to the Baltic Dry Index, consider the following statements

1. It is an economic indicator issued daily by the London-based Baltic Exchange
2. They are restricted to Baltic Sea Countries

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. All of the above
- D. None of the above

133. Great Firewall is a tool

- A. Used by Google to Prevent Penetration of Viruses in its core Network
- B. A USA Program to monitor any security breach in its defence establishment
- C. A security alert to Prevent attacks like Ransomware
- D. A Chinese censorship system to control social media

134. Sela Pass is located in which of the State?

- A. Himachal Pradesh
- B. Uttarakhand
- C. Sikkim
- D. Arunachal Pradesh

135. Consider the following about allotment of Budget to MEA

1. India's annual financial allocation to Nepal for 2018-19 has nearly doubled
2. SAARC countries like Bhutan and Myanmar has also increased Substantially

Select the incorrect answer using the code given below.

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both are correct
- D. None of them is correct

136. Amyloid beta is linked to which Disease?

- A. Diabetes
- B. Measles
- C. Alzheimer
- D. Zika



137. Select the incorrect answer using the code given below.

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both are correct
- D. None of them is correct

142. Safe Harbour Regime was notified by

- A. Ministry of Water resources
- B. Ministry of Finance
- C. Ministry of Shipping
- D. Ministry of Commerce

138. Operation Green in Budget is related to

- A. An infrastructure corridor along the Western Ghats
- B. An operation to Plant trees in the highway to reduce Air Pollution
- C. A Program for rejuvenating all rivers by stopping all development programs around them
- D. It is essentially a price fixation scheme that aims to ensure farmers are given the right price for their produce.

139. With respect to Legion of Honour, consider the following statements

- 1. It is an award Initiated by Germany Govt
- 2. This was given to Soumitra Chatterjee of India recently.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both are correct
- D. None of them is correct

140. With reference to Project 75I, consider the following statements

- 1. Indian Navy intends to acquire 6 diesel-electric submarines
- 2. INS Druva is the second Submarine after Kalvari
- 3. Kalvari is named after the Island fort of Maratha forces

Select the incorrect answer using the code given below.

- A. Only 1 and 2
- B. Only 2 and 3
- C. Only 1 and 3
- D. All of the above

141. Hill Area Development Programme was initiated for

- A. Himachal Pradesh
- B. North East
- C. Darjeeling
- D. Naxal affected Areas

# ANSWER KEYS

Question No	Answer Keys
1.	C
2.	B
3.	B
4.	C
5.	D
6.	C
7.	D
8.	D
9.	D
10.	C
11.	D
12.	A
13.	B
14.	B
15.	C
16.	D
17.	A
18.	B
19.	C
20.	B
21.	B
22.	D
23.	C
24.	A
25.	C

Question No	Answer Keys
26.	A
27.	D
28.	A
29.	D
30.	A
31.	C
32.	B
33.	A
34.	A
35.	B
36.	D
37.	D
38.	D
39.	D
40.	A
41.	A
42.	D
43.	D
44.	C
45.	C
46.	A
47.	A
48.	D
49.	A
50.	A

Question No	Answer Keys
51.	A
52.	D
53.	C
54.	B
55.	C
56.	C
57.	B
58.	B
59.	B
60.	B
61.	C
62.	C
63.	C
64.	C
65.	C
66.	C
67.	D
68.	D
69.	D
70.	B
71.	C
72.	D
73.	A
74.	C
75.	C

Question No	Answer Keys
76.	A
77.	C
78.	C
79.	D
80.	A
81.	B
82.	B
83.	A
84.	C
85.	C
86.	C
87.	D
88.	D
89.	D
90.	C
91.	C
92.	D
93.	A
94.	A
95.	C
96.	C
97.	C
98.	C
99.	D
100.	B

Question No	Answer Keys
101.	C
102.	C
103.	B
104.	A
105.	B
106.	C
107.	A
108.	B
109.	C
110.	C
111.	C
112.	B
113.	B
114.	D
115.	D
116.	B
117.	B
118.	C
119.	B
120.	B
121.	D
122.	C
123.	D
124.	C
125.	B

Question No	Answer Keys
126.	A
127.	C
128.	C
129.	D
130.	A
131.	D
132.	A
133.	D
134.	D
135.	B
136.	C
137.	D
138.	D
139.	B
140.	B
141.	B
142.	B

# MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

## Paper- 1

1. Women's Issues
2. Any young man, who makes dowry a condition to marriage, discredits his education and his country and dishonors womanhood". Discuss.
3. Discuss the mechanism and origin of Monsoon winds and explain the role of El Nino on Monsoon circulation
4. Distinguish between religiousness/religiosity and communalism giving one example of how the former has got transformed into the latter in independent India.



**Paper- 2**

1. Discuss the issues faced in the regulation of medical education in India. How does the National Medical Commission address this issue?
2. Critically analyse the need for regulation of Land use in India.
3. "Love and respect for the motherland is reflected when one shows respect to the national anthem as well as to the national flag". Discuss.
4. What is the objective behind idea of paying a salary to legislators in India? Should we bar MLAs and MPs from practicing as an advocate?
5. Leniency shown by election commission in the violation of model code of conduct for extremely wrong conduct can set bad precedent. Examine.
6. The hallmark of a good democracy are independent and impartial judges," Examine
7. Justify the demand for inclusion of fishermen in the list of STs. Suggest some measures to improve the condition of fishermen.
8. Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, has an exception for marital rape. What's the basis of this exception? Examine how marital rape is treated in other countries.
9. Do you think "The National Medical Commission Bill, 2017" that was introduced in the Lok Sabha is a remedy that can improve quality and quantity of medical education and practice in India? Comment critically
10. Khap panchayats have been in the news for functioning as extra-constitutional authorities, often delivering pronouncements amounting to human right violations. Discuss critically the actions taken by the legislative, executive and judiciary to set the things right in this regard.
11. Strength, peace and security are considered to be the pillars of international relations. Elucidate.
12. Critically comment on the objectives and implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act in India. In your opinion what needs to be done to address its shortcomings?
13. Life expectancy in India is on the rise, but the quality of health care services is inadequate. Discuss.
14. Examine the powers of Election Commission in Anti-defection law in the context of recent case of Delhi MLAs being disqualified.
15. In the light of Primary Health in India, discuss the role of AYUSH as an alternative system of medicine.
16. Discuss the role of Standing Committee in establishing accountability of the government to the people.
17. Simultaneous elections may be logistical advantageous but raise concerns on sanctity of democratic processes. Comment.
18. Critically comment on Emerging Security Order in Indo-Pacific and its Implications for India.
19. With the US President Donald Trump's Call of 'America First' what are the possible implications India is bound to Suffer. Should India also follow 'India First' Strategy if Need be?
20. Justice Shukla has "disgraced the values of judicial life, acted in a manner unbecoming of a judge", lowered the "majesty, dignity and credibility of the office" and acted in breach of his oath of office. In the light of this statement explain the Impeachment process and also discuss if the current method needs a change.
21. Should India carry a slender stick or speak softly and carry a big stick in its global outreach Program? Justify your view.

**Paper- 3**

1. Discuss the scope of Electronics manufacturing in India with respect to promotion of exports. What steps can be taken by the Government in this regard?
2. What is Gene Editing? Examine the scope and significance of Genomic Research in India.
3. FRDI Bill seeks to resolve the issue of bankruptcy. However, the Bill has become controversial due to the bail-in clause. Critically analyse the provisions of the bill.
4. What is Gene Editing? Examine the scope and significance of Genomic Research in India.
5. FRDI Bill seeks to resolve the issue of bankruptcy. However, the Bill has become controversial due to the bail-in clause. Critically analyse the provisions of the bill.
6. What are the Challenges being faced by Electronics sector in India? What has the government done and what needs to be done to overcome this issue?
7. Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) Might Boost Economic Ties with India. Comment.
8. Tackling Climate change is not just a global or national problem, rather the solution lies in the collective efforts at the sub-national level. Discuss.
9. What is a Kala-Azar disease? According to you what measures needs to be taken to eliminate the same?
10. Burning of biomass and crop residue is one of the leading factors contributing to air pollution in India. What prompts farmers to burn crop residue and biomass? What measures do you think the government should take to discourage this practice?
11. Examine the differences between GSLV and PSLV launch vehicles.
12. Discuss the implications of GST on budget making and fiscal policy in India.
13. On December 2004, tsunami brought havoc on 14 countries including India. Discuss the factors responsible for occurrence of Tsunami and its effects on life and economy. In the light of guidelines of NDMA (2010) describe the mechanisms for preparedness to reduce the risk during such events.
14. The government has taken number of initiatives to address the issue of Ease of doing business. What are the challenges faced and how can we overcome these issues?
15. The rough diamond cutting and polishing business has moved from Antwerp to Surat in Gujarat. What factors have led to its Success, Also explain about diamond reserves in India
16. The Indian logistics sector needs a revamp. Discuss.
17. The Indian economy is getting formalized. Critically comment.
18. Is India on the cusp of a fiscal revolution? Substantiate.

**Paper- 4**

## 1. Case Studies

2. Do you consider the practice of Dowry as unethical and immoral? Justify your answer

3. Critically analyse various ethical issues associated with death penalty?

4. You are recently posted as district development officer of a district. Shortly thereafter you found that there is considerable tension in the rural areas of your district on the issue of sending girls to schools.

The elders of the village feel that many problems have come up because girls are being educated and they are stepping out of the safe environment of the household. They are of the view that the girls should be quickly married off with minimum education. The girls are also competing for jobs after education, which have traditionally remained in boys' exclusive domain, adding to unemployment amongst male population.

The younger generation feels that in the present era, girls should have equal opportunities for education and employment, and other means of livelihood. The entire locality is divided between the elders and the younger lot and further sub-divided between sexes in both generations. You come to know that in Panchayat or in other local bodies or even in busy crossroads, the issue is being acrimoniously debated.

One day you are informed that an unpleasant incident has taken place. Some girls were molested, when they were en route to schools. The incident led to clashes between several groups and a law and order problem has arisen. The elders after heated discussion have taken a joint decision not to allow girls to go to school and to socially boycott all such families, which do not follow their dictate

\* What is the objective behind idea of paying a salary to legislators in India? Should we bar MLAs and MPs from practicing as an advocate?

\* What is the objective behind idea of paying a salary to legislators in India? Should we bar MLAs and MPs from practicing as an advocate?

5. The crisis of ethical values in modern times is traced to a narrow perception of the good life. Discuss.

6. You are the Executive Director of an upcoming InfoTech Company which is making a name for itself in the market.

Mr. A, who is a star performer, is heading the marketing team. In a short period of one year, he has helped in doubling the revenues as well as creating a high brand equity for the Company so much so that you are thinking of promoting him. However, you have been receiving information from many corners about his attitude towards the female colleagues; particularly his habit of making loose comments on women. In addition, he regularly sends indecent SMS's to all the team members including his female colleagues.

One day, late in the evening, Mrs. X, who is one of Mr. A's team members, comes to you visibly disturbed. She complains against the continued misconduct of Mr. A, who has been making undesirable advances towards her and has even tried to touch her inappropriately in his cabin. She tenders her resignation and leaves your office

a. What are the options available to you?

b. Evaluate each of these options and choose the option you would adopt, giving reasons.

7 Do you think a public servant holding an 'office of profit' is unethical? Critically comment

8. You are a no-nonsense, honest officer. You have been transferred to a remote district to head a department that is notorious for its inefficiency and callousness. You find that the main cause of the poor state of affairs is the indiscipline of a section of employees. They do not work themselves and also disrupt the working of others. You first warned the troublemakers to mend their ways or else face disciplinary action. When the warning had little effect, you issued a show cause notice to the ringleaders. As a retaliatory measure, these troublemakers instigated a woman employee amongst them to file a complaint of sexual harassment against you with the Women's Commission. The Commission promptly seeks your explanation. The matter is also publicized in the media to embarrass you further. Some of the options to handle this situation could be as follows :

I. Give your explanation to the Commission and go soft on the disciplinary action.

II. Ignore the Commission and proceed firmly with the disciplinary action.

III. Brief your higher-ups, seek directions from them and act accordingly.

Suggest any other possible option(s). Evaluate all of them and suggest the best course of action, giving your reasons for it.

9. What is 'emotional intelligence' and how can it be developed in people? How does it help an individual in taking ethical decisions? (2013 mains)

10. Given below are three quotations of great moral thinkers/philosophers. For each of these quotations, bring out what it means to you in the present context: (2013 mains)

1. "There is enough on this earth for every one's need but for no one's greed." Mahatma Gandhi.

2. "Nearly all men can withstand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."—Abraham Lincoln

3. "I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who overcomes his enemies."—Aristotle

11. Conflict of interest in the public sector arises when (a) official duties, (b) public interest, and (c) personal interest are taking priority one above the other. How can this conflict in administration be resolved? Describe with an example.

### Part B: Case studies

You are the manager of a spare parts company A and you have to negotiate a deal with the manager of a large manufacturing company B. The deal is highly competitive and sealing the deal is critical for your company. The deal is being worked out over a dinner. After dinner, the manager of manufacturing company B offered to drop you to the hotel in his car. On the way to hotel, he happens to hit motorcycle injuring the motorcyclist badly. You know the manager was driving fast and thus lost control. The law enforcement officer comes to investigate the issue and you are the sole eyewitness to it. Knowing the strict laws pertaining to road accidents you are aware that your honest account of the incident would lead to the prosecution of the manager and as a consequence the deal is likely to be jeopardised, which is of immense importance to your company

What are the dilemmas you face? What will be your response to the situation?

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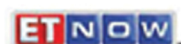


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