

# UPSC MONTHLY MAGAZINE

JULY 2017



## INDIA - ISRAEL

"First Indian P.M to visit Israel"

## INDIA - CHINA - BHUTAN

"Doka La tri-junction Issue"

## Launch of GST

'Good and Simple Tax'

## Aadhaar

'Is Right to Privacy a  
Fundamental Right?'

## Section 498 of IPC

'No arrests in dowry cases  
till charges are verified'

## Boycott Ban

'Maharashtra Law  
against Social Boycott'

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# POLITY

## 1. Minister calls for quota in cricket team

### **What's in news?**

- Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale demanded 25% reservation for Dalits and Adivasis in the cricket team and other sports.
- Reason: Dalits and Adivasis don't get proper representation in sport.

## 2. SC opens to liquor sale on city highways

### **Context:**

- **December 15, 2016 Supreme Court order:** prohibited the sale of liquor within a distance of 500 meters from the outer edge of national and State highways.
- **March 2017 order:** the ban was not restricted to just liquor shops alongside the highways but also to other larger establishments, including pubs and hotels.
- **Intention:** to prevent drunken driving on high-speed thoroughfares.
- Many states started de-notifying highways in order to circumvent the December 15th order.

### **Petition:**

- Filed by NGO Arrive Safe Society challenging the Chandigarh administration's move to de-notify certain roads.

### **What's in news?**

- The Supreme Court observations: nothing wrong in de-notifying particular stretches of highways running inside city limits as city roads and such de-classification does not violate its earlier order of banning liquor sales near National and State highways.
- **Reasons given:**
  - » Traffic inside city limits is usually slow and heavy, and stretches de-notified fall within the city limits.
  - » The goal of the liquor ban was to prevent drunken driving in fast-moving traffic.
  - » The pace of traffic with the city is very different from traffic outside city limits.
  - » Purpose of the ban is to avoid drivers getting inebriated while driving on highways inter-linking cities.
- **Widespread relief:** especially to pubs and restaurants in the metros, which were forced to shut down.

## 3. Allow people with genuine reasons to deposit banned notes: SC to govt

### **Context:** Demonetization.

### **What's in news?**

- The Supreme Court asked the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to come up with a policy to offer a window to people who could not deposit their demonetised notes for legitimate reasons before last year's December 30 deadline.

## 4. Centre may partially lift AFSPA

### **What's in news?**

- As per the inputs from a senior Home Ministry official: The Centre is considering partial removal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) from Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. There was no proposal to withdraw it in Jammu and Kashmir.
- In Arunachal Pradesh, complete withdrawal, except two districts in the east bordering Myanmar and Nagaland.
- Views sought: The Ministry has asked the two States for their views on AFSPA withdrawal and said that it was open to reviewing the stringent law in other States like Manipur.

### **Basics of AFSPA :**

- Armed Forces (Special Powers) Acts (AFSPA), are Acts of the Parliament of India that grant special powers to the Indian Armed Forces in what each act terms "disturbed areas". According to The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976 once declared 'disturbed', the area has to maintain status quo for a minimum of 3 months.
- The AFSPA gives powers to the Army and Central forces deployed in "disturbed areas" to kill anyone acting in contravention of law, arrest and search any premises without a warrant.
- It provides cover to forces from prosecution and legal suits without the Centre's sanction.
- **Active AFSPA:**
  - » Whole of Nagaland, Assam, Manipur (excluding the seven Assembly constituencies of Imphal).
  - » In Arunachal Pradesh, it is in force in 16 police stations and in Tirap, Longding and Changlang districts bordering Assam.
  - » Tripura withdrew AFSPA in 2015.
  - » It is not in force in Meghalaya (except 20 kilometer area along Assam border) and Mizoram.

- **Supreme court ruling:**

- » On July 8, 2016, in a landmark ruling, The Supreme Court of India ended the immunity of the armed forces from prosecution under AFSPA, saying, "It does not matter whether the victim was a common person or a militant or a terrorist, nor does it matter whether the aggressor was a common person or the state. The law is the same for both and is equally applicable to both... This is the requirement of a democracy and the requirement of preservation of the rule of law and the preservation of individual liberties."
- » Supreme Court said that any encounter carried out by armed forces in the garb of AFSPA should be subjected to thorough inquiry.

## 5. **Make registration of marriages compulsory**

### **What's in news?**

- The Law Commission of India- the commission headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice B.S. Chauhan, has recommended compulsory registration of marriages.

### **Why?**

- To protect gullible women who become victims of fake marriages.
- The lack of provisions for compulsory registration of marriages had proven disastrous for women and deprived them of societal recognition and legal security.

### **Key fact:**

- Fraudulent marriages are on the rise especially among non-resident Indians. Compulsory registration can serve as a means to ensure that conditions of a valid marriage have been performed.

### **Minor amendment:**

- Minor amendment to the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969, including a provision for compulsory registration of marriage, would serve the purpose.
- And there was no need to amend any of the personal laws of religious communities.

### **2006 Supreme Court in Seema vs Ashwani case:**

- Marriages of persons who are citizens of India belonging to various religions should be registered compulsorily in their States.

## 6. **Selection of ECs must be transparent, SC tells Centre**

### **Context:**

- Appointment of ECs.
- Fair, just and transparent process for selection of ECs.

### **What's in news?**

### **Supreme Court advice to Centre:**

- Election Commissioners should be selected through the "most transparent and just process" formalised in a

law enacted by Parliament.

### **Supreme Court observation:**

- There is a "gap" caused by the lack of a parliamentary law which transparently spells out the process of appointment of an election commissioner: "Who should be shortlisted? Who shortlists these names? What is the eligibility?"

### **Key Fact:**

Selection procedure of the CBI Director is formalized by a written law, but not that of Election Commissioners.

### **Practice at present:**

- The filtering of names of suitable persons for appointment as Election Commissioners is done under the aegis of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, who in turn advise the President.

### **Constitutional obligation:**

- **Article 324.** Superintendence, direction and control of elections to be vested in an Election Commission.
- **Clause(2):** The Election Commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the President may from time to time fix and the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners shall, subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf by Parliament, be made by the President.

## 7. **Why not use VVPAT units for Gujarat polls, SC asks EC**

### **What's in news?**

- The Supreme Court questioned the Election Commission on its reluctance to use voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) units with electronic voting machines for the Gujarat Assembly polls in 2017, warning the poll panel against making excuses and compelling the court to force its hand.

### **Petition:**

- » Filed by Mohit Singh, represented by counsel Kapil Sibal.
- » Plea to direct the commission to implement the VVPAT voting mechanism in the Gujarat polls or otherwise use ballot papers to ensure a transparent, free and fair election.
- » Gujarat High Court dismissed it.

### **Supreme Court's 2013 judgment in Subramanian Swamy vs Election Commission of India**

- Court's observation: "paper trail is an indispensable requirement of free and fair elections. The confidence of the voters in the EVMs can be achieved only with the introduction of the "paper trail". EVMs with VVPAT system ensure the accuracy of the voting system."



**VVPAT and fair elections:**

- The execution of the VVPAT concept would result in printed receipts of what party the EVM machine has registered a vote for.
- The said printed receipts would then ideally be collected by the voters and subsequently dropped in a ballot box.
- Therefore, the votes registered in the EVM may then be tallied with the ballot papers collected in the ballot box, thus, allowing the commission to ascertain whether a recount is required or not.
- Such printed receipts ensure that the voting is carried out in a more transparent fashion and further inspiring confidence in the election process.

**8. Jobs secured with fake caste claim invalid: SC****What's in news?****Supreme Court:**

- Persons who secured government employment and got academic admissions under reserved categories with the help of forged caste certificates can have their jobs and admission declared invalid.
- **No retrospective effect:** verdict would not be made applicable with retrospective effect.
- Quashed earlier directives issued by Bombay High Court.
- **Bombay High Court decision in 2014:** public servants who got their jobs using fake caste certificates and have spent considerable time in service can be afforded protection. Such persons could be allowed to keep their jobs.

**9. Constitutional status for backward classes panel?****Context:**

- The Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Thaawarchand Gehlot on April 5, 2017.
- It seeks to grant the National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC) constitutional status, at par with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.

**Bone of contention:**

- Constitutional status to the NCBC will take away powers from States to add or remove communities to the backward class category for the purpose of reservation.
- The State governments will then only be left with the power to make a recommendation in this regard.

**10. No-detention policy to go from 2018****What's in news?**

- The government has decided to do away with the no-detention policy for students from the next academic session.

**What does the law say?**

- Under the Right to Education Act, 2009, no child admitted to a school will be held back in any class or expelled till the completion of elementary education covering Classes 1 to 8.

**Why such a move?**

- The decision was taken following representation from most of the States as they said the standard of education had deteriorated because of the policy.
- What is the no-detention policy?
- No student up to Class VIII can be detained or failed. All students up to Class VIII are automatically promoted to the next class.

**When were these implemented? Why?**

- The no-detention policy was implemented as part of the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) under the RTE Act in 2010 to ensure holistic development of students. The idea was also to reduce dropout rates. Several states already had no-detention policies. Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation emphasizes on evaluating a child through the year, and not just based on performance in one or two term exams.

**What is wrong with the no-fail policy?**

- A section of teachers and parents have complained that this policy has led to students developing a lackadaisical attitude, with there being no risk of failing. They also say this system makes no distinction between good and bad students, and between those who work hard and those who don't. Some states have demanded revocation of the policy, claiming this has led to a sharp fall in learning outcomes and academic levels

**11. CJI, governors should come under RTI: SC****What's in news?**

- Supreme Court for the first time favored bringing the **office of the chief justice** within the domain of the transparency law.

**Supreme Court Observation:**

- All constitutional functionaries should be made amenable to the RTI law to bring transparency and accountability in their functioning.
- The court specifically pointed out that the offices of governors and the Chief Justice of India should be brought under the ambit of RTI Act.

- **Central Information Commission (CIC):** declared the CJI's office as public authority under the RTI Act.
- The Delhi high court had in 2009 declared the CJI as a public authority under the Act and asked the top court to make assets of its judges public.

#### A case before Constitutional bench:

- The issue whether the Supreme Court should come within the ambit of RTI Act making it obligatory for the CJI to make public information pertaining to appointment of judges and his correspondences with the government is under consideration before a Constitution bench.
- But it is for the first time that the apex court battled for implementation of RTI in judiciary.

### **12. PETA moves SC to quash T.N.'s amended jallikattu law**

#### Context:

- 2014 Supreme court judgment in the Animal Welfare Board of India vs. A. Nagaraja and others: banned jallikattu as cruelty and held it violative of Sections 3 and 11 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
- The People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) moved the Supreme Court for quashing the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act 2017 and the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Conduct of Jallikattu) Rules, 2017.
- **Tamil Nadu:** brought bulls back into the fold of 'performing animals' and opened the gates for the conduct of the popular bull-taming sport in the name of culture and tradition despite a 2014 ban by the Supreme Court.

#### PETA's contention in the petition filed:

- Jallikattu abuse: events lead to severe injuries, including broken bones, and even the death of humans and bulls.
- Jallikattu Act and Rules violate the five internationally recognised freedoms – the freedom from hunger, malnutrition and thirst; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and disease; and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour.

#### Basic information:

- People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals is an American animal rights organization based in Norfolk, Virginia, and led by Ingrid Newkirk, its international president.

### **Section 3 in The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960**

- 3. Duties of persons having charge of animals.—It shall be the duty of every person having the care or charge of any animal to take all reasonable measures to ensure the well-being of such animal and to prevent the infliction upon such animal of unnecessary pain or suffering.

### **Section 11 in The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960**

- 11. Treating animals cruelly.—
- (1) If any person—
- (a) beats, kicks, over-rides, over-drives, over-loads, tortures or otherwise treats any animal so as to subject it to unnecessary pain or suffering or causes or, being the owner permits, any animals to be so treated; or
- (b) 13 [employs in any work or labour or for any purpose any animal which, by reason of its age or any disease], infirmity, wound, sore or other cause, is unfit to be so employed or, being the owner, permits any such unfit animal to be so employed; or
- (c) wilfully and unreasonably administers any injurious drug or injurious substance to 14 [any animal] or wilfully and unreasonably causes or attempts to cause any such drug or substance to be taken by 14 [any animal]; or
- (d) conveys or carries, whether in or upon any vehicle or not, any animal in such a manner or position as to subject it to unnecessary pain or suffering; or
- (e) keeps or confines any animal in any cage or other receptacle which does not measure sufficiently in height, length and breadth to permit the animal a reasonable opportunity for movement; or
- (g) being the owner, neglects to exercise or cause to be exercised reasonably any dog habitually chained up or kept in close confinement; or
- (h) being the owner of 15 [any animal], fails to provide such animal with sufficient food, drink or shelter; or
- (i) without reasonable cause, abandons any animal in circumstances which render it likely that it will suffer pain by reason of starvation or thirst; or
- (j) wilfully permits any animal, of which he is the owner to go at large in any street while the animal is affected with contagious or infectious disease or, without reasonable excuse permits any diseased or disabled animal, of which he is the owner, to die in any street; or
- (k) offers for sale or, without reasonable cause, has in his possession any animal which is suffering pain by reason of mutilation, starvation, thirst, overcrowding or other ill-treatment; or
- 16 [(l) mutilates any animal or kills any animal (including stray dogs) by using the method of strychnine injections in the heart or in any other unnecessarily cruel manner; or;] 17 [m] solely with a view to providing entertainment—
- » (i) confines or causes to be confined any animal (including tying of an animal as a bait in a tiger or other sanctuary) so as to make it an object of prey for any other animal; or
- » (ii) incites any animal to fight or bait any other animal; or]

- (n) 18 [\*\*\*] organises, keeps, uses or acts in the management of, any place for animal fighting or for the purpose of baiting any animal or permits or offers any place to be so used or receives money for the admission of any other person to any place kept or used for any such purposes; or
- (o) promotes or takes part in any shooting match or competition wherein animals are released from captivity for the purpose of such shooting; he shall be punishable, 19 [in the case of a first offence, with fine which shall not be less than ten rupees but which may extend to fifty rupees, and in the case of a second or subsequent offence committed within three years of the previous offence, with fine which shall not be less than twenty-five rupees but which may extend to one hundred rupees or with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three months, or with both.]
- (2) For the purposes of sub-section (1), an owner shall be deemed to have committed an offence if he has failed to exercise reasonable care and supervision with a view to the prevention of such offence: Provided that where an owner is convicted of permitting cruelty by reason only of having failed to exercise such care and supervision, he shall not be liable to imprisonment without the option of a fine.
- (3) Nothing in this section shall apply to—
- (a) the dehorning of cattle, or the castration or branding or nose-roping of any animal, in the prescribed manner; or
- (b) the destruction of stray dogs in lethal chambers or 20 [by such other methods as may be prescribed]; or
- (c) the extermination or destruction of any animal under the authority of any law for the time being in force; or
- (d) any matter dealt with in Chapter IV; or
- (e) the commission or omission of any act in the course of the destruction or the preparation for destruction of any animal as food for mankind unless such destruction or preparation was accompanied by the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering.

### 13. SC stays HC verdict on Ganga status

#### Context:

- Uttarakhand High Court in March 2017 accorded the status of “legal persons” to rivers Ganga and Yamuna.
- Uttarakhand High Court’s observation: Rights of the two major rivers “shall be equivalent to the rights of human beings and the injury/harm caused to these bodies shall be treated as harm/injury caused to the human beings.”
- The High Court had ordered the Director, Namami Gange project, for cleaning and rejuvenating the river, the Chief Secretary and the Advocate General of Uttarakhand to act as “legal parents” of the holy rivers and work as a human face to protect, conserve and

preserve them and their tributaries.

#### In news:

- The Supreme Court has frozen the status of “legal persons” accorded to rivers Ganga and Yamuna by the Uttarakhand High Court.

### 14. Call for law to end mob killings

#### What’s in news?

- The National Campaign Against Mob Lynchings (NCAML) released a draft law of the Manav Suraksha Kanon to tackle such killings and asked the Modi government to get it passed by Parliament in the upcoming monsoon session.
- The NCAML was launched last month. The move comes in the wake of alleged government indifference to mob killings in different parts of the country.

#### Draft Law:

- The draft law includes a definition of ‘mob’ and ‘lynching’, suggests that lynching be made a non-bailable offence, recommends immediate suspension of the SHO of the area until a time-bound judicial probe takes place and mandates life imprisonment for the for those convicted under mob lynching.
- The draft also has India-specific provisions stating how mobs are created, with technology being used for rumour-mongering.
- It states that a peaceful protest against leaders, policies etc. cannot be termed as a mob.
- Under the draft law, videographic evidence of survivors statements would also act as evidence.
- It also has provisions for a time-bound judicial enquiry, which should not take more than six months.
- Even compensation and rehabilitation has been recommended for the victims’ families.

### 15. India’s tough anti-hijacking law comes into force

#### Context:

- The country’s new anti-hijacking law, which prescribes capital punishment in the event of death of “any person”, has come into force

#### In News:

- The 2016 Anti-Hijacking Act replaces a 1982-vintage law

#### What are the provisions of the new law?

- Hijackers could be tried for death penalty only in the event of death of hostages, such as flight crew, passengers and security personnel
- Definition has been expanded to include death of “security personnel on board” or “ground support staff” as well.

- In other cases of hijacking, guilty will be punished with imprisonment for life and fine, besides confiscation of movable and immovable property held by him or her.
- Making a threat, attempts or abetment to commit the offence were included in the definition of hijacking.
- Those who organise or direct others to commit such offence will also be considered to have committed the offence of hijacking.
- It mandates central government to confer powers of investigation, arrest and prosecution on any officer of the central government or National Investigation Agency (NIA).

#### **16. Don't undermine our powers, southern State backward classes commission chiefs tell Centre**

##### **Context:**

- The Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes had convened a meeting to discuss the implications of the Centre's move to provide constitutional backing to the **National Commission for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (NCSEBC)**.
- Meeting was attended by commission heads of Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Kerala.

##### **Highlights of the meeting:**

- The chairpersons of backward classes commissions of southern States resolved to urge the Centre against "interfering with the acts of inclusion into or exclusion from the list of socially backward classes for the purpose reservation in any State".
- The Bill that seeks to give constitution status to the NCSEBC, they argued, had provisions that were contrary to the federal structure and undermined their powers.
- The commission heads collectively urged the Centre against interfering in the process of extending any benefit of reservation and other welfare measures within the State.
- They sought a review of all provisions that centralise the functions aimed at the welfare of socially and educationally backward classes.
- **12 resolutions passed in the meeting:** In one of the resolutions, they objected to clauses which empower the NCSEBC to make it mandatory for every State government to consult the national commission on all major policy matters.
- They demanded constitutional status for the State commissions on a par with the NCSEBC and the National Commissions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

#### **17. Panel calls for 'light regulation' of NGOs**

##### **What's in news?**

- A high-power committee appointed by the Central government on the orders of the Supreme Court has recommended several steps to ensure the "light regulation" of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) so as to reduce their harassment.
- The committee is headed by S. Vijay Kumar, a former Secretary in the Ministry of Rural Development.

##### **Major recommendations of the Committee:**

- Registration procedures be modernised so as to facilitate the seamless operation of the applicable provisions of the IT (Income Tax) Act and FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) with respect to NGOs, without the need for cumbersome and intrusive processes.
- Steps must be taken to "reduce the need for a physical interface between NGOs and public officials acting under the IT Act and the FCRA, along with reduction in mutual distrust and scope for misuse.
- The committee has drawn up a framework of guidelines for the accreditation of NGOs, audit of their accounts, and procedures to initiate action for recovering grants in case of misappropriation.
- A nodal body to oversee the various interfaces between NGOs and the government, and has recommended that NITI Aayog be vested with the power
- It has recommended an overarching legislation with best practices that would replace various State-level and existing Central laws.
- Details of NGOs should be available as searchable database information.

#### **18. Coming: direct to home coaching for students, IIT aspirants**

##### **Swayam Prabha:**

- The Union government will formally launch Swayam Prabha — a project for telecasting "high-quality educational programmes" through 32 DTH channels — at a National Convention on Digital Initiatives for Higher Education.

##### **Features:**

- The project envisages 24X7 access to educational content.
- Every day, there will be content of four hours that will be repeated six times, thus covering all 24 hours of the day. This will allow the student to choose a time of his own convenience.

##### **The DTH Channels shall cover the following:**

- Higher Education:** Curriculum-based course contents at post-graduate and under-graduate level covering diverse disciplines such as arts, science,



commerce, performing arts, social sciences and humanities, engineering, technology, law, medicine, agriculture, etc.

- b. **School education (9-12 levels):** modules for teacher's training as well as teaching and learning aids for children of India to help them understand the subjects better and also help them in preparing for competitive examinations for admissions to professional degree programmes.
- c. **Curriculum-based** courses that can meet the needs of life-long learners of Indian citizens in India and abroad.
- d. **Assist students** (class 11th & 12th) prepare for competitive exams.
- e. The content would also include IIT-PAL modules, aimed at helping students of Classes 11 and 12 prepare for the IITs by developing a strong conceptual understanding.

## 19. Committee formed to study legalities for separate State flag

**Context:** separate flag for Karnataka.

### **What's in news?**

- The Karnataka State government has constituted a nine-member committee headed by Principal Secretary, Department of Kannada and Culture, to study and submit a report to the government on the possibility of "designing a separate flag for Karnataka and providing it a statutory standing."
- Constitutional and legal position of the State having its own flag:
- S.R. Bommai v/s Union of India (Supreme Court 1994) case verdict:
- The Supreme Court has declared that federalism is a basic feature of the Constitution and States are supreme in their sphere.

### **Inference:**

- This being the Constitutional position, there is no prohibition in the Constitution for the State to have its own flag. However, the manner in which the State flag is hoisted should not dishonour the national flag. It has to be always below the national flag.
- The national flag code specifically authorises use of other flags subject to the regulation by the court. So State flag is not unauthorized.

## 20. Do what you feel is good for your faith and let others do the same: Chief Justice of India

- A plea was filed before Supreme Court seeking an end to the practice of burning effigy of Ravana on the eve of Dussehra festival.
- Supreme Court dismisses the plea upholding Article 25

of the Indian Constitution.

- Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar's Observation:
- Every person has the right to do what he feels is good for his faith.
- "This court is not about good or bad. It is about what is legal and what is illegal. You do what you feel is good for your faith and let others do what is good for their faith,"

## 21. SC stays cattle sale rules across nation

### **Context:**

- **Union Government's May 26 notification:** banned cattle sale in livestock markets for slaughter and religious sacrifices.
- The rules banned trading in cattle for slaughter at animal markets. The rules included buffaloes in their definition of cattle, raising concerns that they would jeopardize the buffalo meat export business as the supply chain of spent buffaloes will be disrupted.
- The Central rules drew criticism from various quarters, including opposition parties, who argued that they virtually ban the sale of cattle in the country.

### **In news:**

- The Supreme Court stayed the Centre's May 26 notification.
- **Government's stance:** the government acquiesced that public outcry and objections from the States about the law's impact on livelihoods made it realise that the rules need "tweaking".
- **Additional Solicitor- General P. Narasimha response:** the government had received a "large number of representations" that "certain aspects" of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Markets) Rules, 2017 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Maintenance of Case Property Animals) Act, 2017 were "troubling" and threw up some "sensitive" questions about the Central rules.

## 22. Ministry forms panel for cruise tourism

### **What's in news?**

- The Shipping Ministry is setting up a committee to examine cruise tourism reforms.

### **Objectives of the Committee**

- The committee will consider a single window system for
  - » Cruise requirements.
  - » Dedicated approach road for cruise terminals.
  - » Reducing security layer for passengers and other measures.

### **Other efforts by the Government**

- The Ministry had hired a global consultant to firm up an action plan aimed at facilitating customer-friendly

and hassle-free logistics process for the cruise tourism industry

#### **Current Scenario of the cruise tourism in India**

- India's cruise passengers stood at 1.76 lakh in 2016-17, which was merely 0.5% of the global share
- Domestic cruise passengers are estimated to grow to 1.5 million by 2031-32.
- Of the 12 major ports Mumbai, Goa, Cochin, New Mangalore and Chennai have facilities to berth international cruise ships.

### **23. Minimum qualifications for coop. societies' polls**

#### **What's in news?**

- Rajasthan has become the country's first State to lay down the minimum educational qualifications for contesting elections to village cooperative societies and various other cooperative bodies.
- The State Cooperative Societies Rules, 2003, were amended for the purpose and notified on Monday.

#### **Qualification:**

- The educational qualifications will range from Class V to Class VIII for election as members of governing boards of dairy societies, farming societies, consumer societies, weavers' societies, housing construction societies, urban banks, primary land development banks, credit societies, salary earners' societies and cooperative unions.

### **24. Two out of three people lodged in prisons are undertrials: Amnesty**

#### **What's in news?**

#### **Amnesty International India report highlights:**

- Two out of three people lodged in the country's prisons are undertrials.
- While the system struggles with an occupancy rate of 114%, there has been no change to ensure legal safeguards to prevent excessive pre-trial detention.
- The report shows that 29% of undertrials had no formal training and were illiterate.
- According to the report, between September 2014 and February 2015, there were over 1.10 lakh instances of undertrials not being produced in courts for hearings. While there is a shortage of personnel to escort undertrials, this figure includes those who were not produced even through video-conferencing.

### **25. Arunachal, Andaman and Nicobar Islands get exemption from SC highway liquor ban**

#### **Context:**

- Ban on sale of liquor within 500 metres of National and State Highways.
- The ban was ordered to prevent drunk driving, one of the major killers plaguing Indian roads.

#### **In news:**

- The Supreme Court allowed Arunachal Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar Islands to join the club of Sikkim and Meghalaya, both of which enjoy full exemption from the court's ban on sale of liquor within 500 metres of National and State Highways.

#### **Reason for exemption:**

- The geographical quirks of Arunachal Pradesh and the islands.
- The north-eastern States of Sikkim and Meghalaya got a full exemption from the 500-m no-liquor zone ban after the court took into consideration their hilly terrain and also the fact that 82% of its area was forest land and over 90% of its liquor shops would be closed if the ban was imposed strictly in its original form.

### **26. Tribunal prohibits dumping of waste near Ganga banks**

#### **What's in news?**

#### **National Green Tribunal (NGT):**

- Area of 100 metres from the edge of the Ganga between Haridwar and Unnao has been declared a 'No Development Zone.'
- Prohibited dumping of waste within 500 metres of the river.
- An environment compensation of Rs. 50,000 will be imposed on anyone dumping waste in the river.
- Directed the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments to formulate guidelines for religious activities on the ghats of the Ganga and its tributaries.

#### **Other orders by NGT:**

- The authorities concerned should complete projects, including a sewage treatment plant and cleaning of drains, within two years.
- The Uttar Pradesh government is duty-bound to shift tanneries, within six weeks, from Jajmau in Kanpur to leather parks in Unnao or any other place it considers appropriate
- All industrial units in the catchment areas of the Ganga should be stopped from indiscriminate groundwater extraction.
- No in-stream mechanical mining is permitted and even the mining on the floodplain should be semi-mechanical and preferably more manual.

#### **Supervisory panel:**

- The court also appointed a supervisory committee, headed by the Secretary of the Water Resources Ministry and comprising IIT professors and officials of the Uttar Pradesh government, to oversee implementation of the directions passed in its verdict.
- The committee is to submit reports at regular intervals.

## 27. From this year, Kannada is compulsory in all schools

### What's in news?

- **Karnataka:** Students will be taught Kannada in all schools in the State, including private, linguistic minority and Central board schools.
- **Coverage:** from Class one.
- Stringent action, including withdrawal of the no-objection certificate issued by the Education Department, would be initiated in case of non-compliance.
- Singing Nada Geethe likely to be made mandatory in all schools.

## 28. President's nod for Bill against social boycott

### What's in news?

- Maharashtra has become the first State in the country to enact a law against social boycott from caste panchayats.
- President has given his nod to implement the Prohibition of Social Boycott Bill in the State.

### Motive behind the enactment of this law

- There are growing instances of boycotts of individuals or families by caste panchayats.
- Maharashtra Government was considering to enact a special law for such kind of cases from 2010 (Congress at that time).

### Provisions of Punishment under the new law

- The bill makes provision for punishment of up to three years in jail and/or a fine up to Rs. 1 lakh.
- The case has to be fast tracked within six months from the date of filing the charge sheet.
- The fine charged from accused will be partially or fully handed over to the victim.

## 29. SC orders CBI probe into Manipur extra-judicial killings

### What's in news?

- The Supreme Court directed a probe by the CBI into the alleged extra-judicial killings by the Army, the Assam Rifles and the Manipur Police in the insurgency-hit Manipur State.

### Public Interest Litigation:

- The court was hearing a PIL seeking probe and compensation in the alleged 1,528 extra-judicial killings in Manipur from 2000 to 2012 by security forces and police.

### Army's Response:

- It cannot be subjected to FIRs for carrying out anti-militancy operations in insurgency-prone areas like Jammu and Kashmir and Manipur.
- Local bias in judicial inquiries conducted against army

in these regions, have tarnished its image.

### Governments response:

- The alleged extra-judicial killing cases in Manipur are not cases of massacre, rather these are cases of military operations
- Every judicial inquiry cannot be against the Army
- July-2016: the apex court had directed a thorough probe into the alleged fake encounter killings in Manipur saying the use of "excessive or retaliatory force" by the armed forces or police was not permissible in 'disturbed areas' under the controversial Armed Force Special Powers Act.

## 30. 'Scant respect for NHRC'

### What's in news?

- In a 26-page judgment, the Supreme Court throws points out that human rights and the National Human Rights Commission have suffered a slow death at the hands of the government and the State authorities.
- Neglect and stagnation suffered by the NHRC has imperilled human rights in the nation like in fake encounter killings of Manipur

### Problems faced by NHRC:

- The NHRC, which had investigated 20 of these deaths, was stonewalled for years by the authorities.
- It is actually headed by a former Chief Justice of India or judges of the Supreme Court, had declared its own failure and termed itself a "toothless tiger".
- The intention of the NHRC is to more effectively assist the criminal justice delivery system and avoid any factual controversies while respecting human rights.
- It is not as if the dignity of only living persons needs to be respected. Even the dignity of the dead must be given due respect.

### NHRC's revised guidelines of 2010:

- It makes magisterial inquiry into every police encounter death
- The NHRC has to be informed of every encounter death.
- However, these guidelines are given scant respect by the States.
- In many States, human rights commissions are obvious in their absence for years.

### Basic Information:

- National human rights commission.
- It is autonomous body created by an Act of Parliament.
- Headed by a former Chief Justice of India.
- Authority to grant interim relief.
- Authority to recommend payment of compensation or damages.

- The Chairperson and the Members of the Commission are appointed by the President of India, on the recommendations of a Committee consisting of:
  - » The Prime Minister (chairperson).
  - » The Home Minister.
  - » The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha.
  - » The Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha.
  - » The Speaker of the Lok Sabha.
  - » The Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

### 31. Centre seeks debate in SC on J&K special status

#### What's in news?

- The Centre has asked the Supreme Court to debate on the special status granted to the State of Jammu and Kashmir, saying it was both a sensitive and constitutional matter.
- **Public Interest Litigation** : a PIL plea filed by a Delhi-based NGO, We the Citizens, contending that the J&K government, given the State's special autonomous status under **Articles 35A and 370**, was discriminatory against non-residents as far as government jobs and real estate purchases were concerned.

#### J and K government response:

- The State government argued that its special status was sourced from the 1954 Presidential Order, which gave special rights to the State's permanent residents.
- The hearing comes in the backdrop of an earlier Jammu and Kashmir High Court, which ruled that Article 370 assumed a place of permanence in the Constitution and the feature was beyond amendment, repeal or abrogation.
- The court said Article 35A gave "protection" to existing laws in force in the State.

### 32. Sports Ministry lays ground for making online betting legal

#### Context:

- The Sports Ministry has begun the groundwork to frame a legislation to legalise online sports betting in India.
- The Sports Ministry is also likely to seek assistance from its counterparts in the UK, where gambling is legal.
- Sports Secretary Injeti Srinivas, who is currently in England, is likely to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in which online sports betting will be one of the key points.

#### Betting in India

- Betting is seen as a sensitive socio-political issue. More so in sports because of the match-fixing and spot-fixing controversies.
- The issue of legalising betting gathered momentum

when former Chief Justice of India R M Lodha recommended that betting should be legalised in cricket.

- Illegal betting market in India is worth \$150 billion, or roughly Rs 9.6 lakh crore.
- Most of it is via local bookmakers and unregulated offshore websites.
- At present, betting is legal only on horse racing, and it is taxed at 28 per cent under GST.

#### Advantages of legalising betting in India?

- It can address the issue of poor funding for sports at central and state level by making online betting legal.
- The possibility of diverting a sizeable part of the revenue generated from betting towards the ministry's programmes is also being deliberated.
- It can be beneficial to the economy as well as sports overall.

### 33. Centre's proposal to states: Enact your own Aadhaar Acts too

#### Context:

- Central government has floated the idea of state governments enacting their own "State Aadhaar Act", on the lines of the central Act passed by Parliament last year.

#### Background

- The central Act makes Aadhaar mandatory for any "subsidy, benefit or service" for which the expenditure is borne fully or shared partially by the Consolidated Fund of India.
- This means that every welfare subsidy or benefit, from fully-funded or centrally-sponsored schemes (where states share part of the fiscal burden), is conditional on verification through Aadhaar.

#### Why state Aadhaar Act?

- Several state governments have their own subsidies or benefit schemes, where the burden is defrayed out of their Consolidated Fund.
- Consequently, the central Aadhaar Act cannot provide legal basis for making Aadhaar mandatory for such schemes.
- However, a State Aadhaar Act, as suggested by the Cabinet Secretariat, could provide legal basis for making it mandatory for state-funded welfare schemes

#### Other concerns:

- But the Centre's suggestion could prove tricky as the enactment of a state legislation is the prerogative of the state legislatures.
- Also, it impinges on the state government's autonomy to set up a mechanism for expenditure from the state exchequer.



### 34. Aadhaar: 9-judge Bench to consider whether privacy is a basic right

#### ***What's in news?***

- A nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court will hear the question whether privacy is a fundamental human right and is part of the basic structure of the Constitution.

#### ***Petitioner's contention:***

- The Aadhaar scheme, is a violation of the citizens' right to privacy.
- The petitioners have argued that right to privacy is part of Article 21, the right to life, and interspersed in Article 19, though not explicitly stated in the Constitution.

#### ***Supreme Court verdicts on right to privacy:***

- M.P. Sharma case-1954.
- The Kharak Singh case verdict of 1962.
- Both judgments had concluded that privacy was not a fundamental or 'guaranteed' right.
- **The nine-judge Bench to decide:** once and for all whether privacy is negotiable or not.

### 35. State legislatures have 'exclusive' powers to enact laws on cattle protection: Govt

#### ***What's in news?***

- State legislatures have "exclusive" powers to enact laws for preservation of cattle, the government told the Rajya Sabha.
- Rajasthan High Court vide order dated 31.5.2017 advised that cow should be declared a national animal and directed the state government of Rajasthan to take steps for preservation and conservation of cows and for declaring cow as a national animal.
- **Key Fact:** Under the distribution of legislative powers between Union of India and states under article 246(3) of the Constitution, the preservation of cattle is a matter on which the legislature of the states have exclusive powers to legislate.

### 36. Get real on Swachh: on manual scavenging

#### ***Context:***

- Despite the most stringent penal provisions in the law against manual scavenging, it continues in parts of India.
- Recently Madras High Court ordered the Centre and the Tamil Nadu government to ensure the strict enforcement of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, in the wake of the death of 30 people engaged in the activity in the State.

#### ***Current Issue:***

- Vigorous national campaign for the rehabilitation of those engaged to manually clean insanitary latrines,

and urban structures into which human excreta flows without sewerage, has been unable to break governmental indifference and social prejudice.

#### ***Why manual scavenging still persists?***

- Because of the continued presence of insanitary latrines, of which there are about 2.6 million that require cleaning by hand.
- In spite of a legal obligation, State governments are not keen to demolish and rebuild old facilities lacking sanitation.
- Government hasn't conducted a full census of both the latrines and the people engaged in clearing such waste.
- The Central government, which runs the self-employment scheme for the rehabilitation of these workers, has reduced funds from ₹448 crore in the 2014-15 budget to ₹5 crore this year.
- Even high allocation in the past also did not utilise effectively.

#### ***Social prejudices that impedes solutions:***

- Many communities still regard the inclusion of a sanitary toilet as ritual and physical pollution of the house.
- Even the less conservative are ready to accept only large, expensive and unscientific structures much bigger than those recommended by the WHO.
- Entrenched belief in the caste system, that assumes Dalits will readily perform the stigmatised task of emptying latrines.

#### ***Way forward:***

- Effective implementation of the law requires willingness of the courts to fix responsibility on State governments, and order an accurate survey of the practice especially in those States that claim to have no insanitary latrines or manual scavenging.
- Raising the confidence level among those engaged in manual cleaning, even official data show their reluctance to take up self-employment.
- Empowerment holds the key to change.
- Break the caste barriers through education and economic uplift.
- Compensation for the families of those who died in the course of the humiliating and hazardous work should be paid immediately.

### 37. IIITs now Institutes of National Importance

#### ***What's in news?***

- The Lok Sabha passed a Bill to declare the Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIIT) established under the public-private partnership (PPP) route as Institutes of National Importance (INIs).

### 38. SC wonders whether privacy could be an absolute right

#### Context:

- The decision of the nine-judge Bench on whether privacy is a fundamental right or not will be pivotal to the petitioners' challenge that Aadhaar, which mandates citizens to part with their biometrics, is unconstitutional.

#### **What's in news?**

#### Supreme Court Observation:

- Right to privacy is not absolute and cannot prevent the state from making laws imposing reasonable restrictions on citizens.
- Right to privacy' is too 'amorphous' a term. To recognise privacy as a definite right, it has to first define it. But this would be nearly impossible as an element of privacy pervades all the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution.
- An attempt to define the right to privacy may cause more harm than good.
- An exhaustive cataloguing by the court of what all constitutes privacy may limit the right itself.

#### Attorney-General response:

- A common law' right to privacy is merely a common law right and the Constitution makers "consciously avoided" making it a part of the fundamental right.

### 39. Ministry, NITI Aayog moot privatisation of select services in district hospitals

#### **Radical 'Privatisation Project'**

- The Union Health Ministry and the NITI Aayog have developed a framework to let private hospitals run select services within district hospitals, on a 30-year lease.
- Framework prepares in consultation with the World Bank.
- The government will be allowing a single private partner or a single consortium of private partners to bid for space in district level hospitals, especially in tier 2 & 3 cities.
- Under this Public Private Partnership (PPP), care for only three non-communicable diseases — cardiac disease, pulmonary disease, and cancer care — will be provided.
- According to the draft model contract, private hospitals will bid for 30-year leases over portions of district hospital buildings to set up 50- or 100-bed hospitals in smaller towns across the country. The State governments could lease up to five or six district hospitals within the State.
- Viability gap funding: the State governments will give Viability Gap Funding (VGF), or one-time seed money, to private players to set up infrastructure within district hospitals. The private parties and State health departments will share ambulance services, blood

banks, and mortuary services.

- There will be no reserved beds or no quota (sic) of beds for free services in these facilities.

#### Criticism:

- The policy document has come under sharp criticism for the Ministry's failure to consult with key stakeholders from civil society and academia.
- The government is planning to hand over critical public assets without gaining anything much in return.
- NITI Aayog has no locus standi to make health policy, which is a state subject in India. **The logic behind shutting down the Planning Commission was to ensure that policies are not centralised.** NITI Aayog was to be an advisory body but here they are rushing through a policy that will essentially hand over public assets to the private sector, leading to a further dismantling of the public services available for free.
- Only Below Poverty Line (BPL) patients and those in insurance schemes will be able to access free care. This would effectively **exclude** hundreds of millions of the Indian population from vital hospital services.

### 40. Ram Nath Kovind enters Rashtrapati Bhavan with big win

#### **What's in news?**

- India's 14th President gets 65.6% of votes to beat joint Opposition candidate Meira Kumar.
- Mr. Kovind will be the second Dalit President of India after late President K.R. Narayanan but, more significantly, the first from politically significant Uttar Pradesh and the first person from the BJP to hold the office of President since Independence.
- The total number of MPs and MLAs who cast their votes was 4851, bearing a combined value of 1090300. However, with 77 votes being declared invalid — 21 from Parliament alone — the total number of valid votes was 4774, bearing a combined value of 1069358. Mr. Kovind polled 2930 of these votes — bearing a value of 702044 — and Ms. Kumar 1844 votes — with a value of 367314.
- **Highest vote value:** The value of each vote of an MP was 708. Among the States, each vote in Uttar Pradesh had the highest value of 208, while each vote from Sikkim had the lowest value of seven.

### 41. Protect transgenders from Section 377: Panel

#### **What's in news?**

- A parliamentary panel- the standing committee on social justice and empowerment, has suggested that the Centre exempt the transgender community from the ambit of the law criminalising homosexuality, noting that welfare of this socially marginalised group requires an initiative in this direction.

- Other recommendations: the panel has said that the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill should recognise transgender persons' right to marriage, partnership, divorce and adoption.
- **Section 377:** Unnatural offences: Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

## 42. India performs miserably in war on inequality

### *What's in news?*

- India has been ranked 132 out of 152 countries in an index that rates countries by their commitment to reducing inequality.
- The first report edition of the index, released recently, showed that OECD countries headed by Sweden ranked the highest while Nigeria was at the bottom.
- The US had the highest level of inequality among developed countries, though it is the wealthiest country in history.

### *Neighbors ranking:*

- Bhutan-143, Nepal- 81 and China- 87.

### *Index:*

- The index and the inequality report were put together by the international NGO Oxfam and Development Finance International to measure the efforts of governments that had pledged to reduce inequality as part of the sustainable development goals.
- The index mainly focused on redistributive actions governments can take, rather than those that would prevent rising inequality in the first place.

### *Key tool to reduce inequality:*

- Progressive taxation, where corporations and the richest individuals are taxed more in order to redistribute resources and ensure the funding of public services, is a key tool for governments committed to reducing inequality.

### *Why India is unable to reduce inequality?*

- The report noted that government spending on health, education and social protection was woefully low in India.
- The tax structure looks reasonably progressive on paper, but in practice much of the progressive tax is not collected.
- India fared poorly on labour rights as well as respect for women in the work place.
- The report said that if India were to reduce its inequality by a third, 170 million people could be raised out of poverty. In contrast, it noted how Namibia had halved the poverty rate from 53% to 23% with very high

spending on health and education.

## 43. Protection of personal data a right: Centre

### *Context:*

- The Supreme Court's five-judge Constitution Bench is hearing a petition filed by students — led by Karmanya Singh Sareen — alleging that a contract entered into between Facebook and instant messaging platform WhatsApp in 2016 was a violation of the citizens' right to privacy.
- This data includes photographs, messages and pictures shared by users on WhatsApp.

### *Centre's observation:*

- Personal data is an integral part of one's dignity and life.
- Any sharing of personal data by service providers or social media platforms, which impinges on a person's right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution, requires regulation.
- Regulatory mechanism: a regulatory mechanism is in the offing to protect people from personal data leaks online.

## 44. Audit slams Railways on food quality

### *Context:*

- A Comptroller and Auditor General report tabled in Parliament has found severe deficiencies in the catering services of the Indian Railways, with several stations and trains serving food items "unfit for human consumption", unpurified tap water being used for food preparation, and food being left unprotected from insects and rats.

### *CAG audit highlights:*

- Articles unsuitable for human consumption, contaminated foodstuff, recycled foodstuff, shelf life expired packaged and bottled items, unauthorised brands of water bottles, etc, were offered for sale on stations.
- Cleanliness and hygiene standards were not being maintained in the catering units at stations and on trains.
- Unfair trade practices at stations and in trains: Bills were not provided for the food items served on trains; waiters and catering managers on the trains did not carry printed menu cards with tariffs; the food served was less than the prescribed quantity; unapproved packaged drinking water was sold; and Proprietary Article Depot items were being sold in railway stations at their maximum retail prices
- The report also found that the weights and prices of the items sold at railway stations were different from the open market, and that the unit price of food articles sold in railway premises was significantly higher.

**Basic Information:****CAG:**

- The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India is an authority, established by the Constitution under Constitution of India/Part V - Chapter V/Sub-part 7B/ Article 148, which audits all receipts and expenditure of the Government of India and the state governments, including those of bodies and authorities substantially financed by the government.
- The CAG is also the external auditor of Government-owned corporations and conducts supplementary audit of government companies, i.e., any non-banking/ non-insurance company in which Union Government has an equity share of at least 51 per cent or subsidiary companies of existing government companies.
- The reports of the CAG are taken into consideration by the Public Accounts Committees (PACs) and Committees on Public Undertakings (COPUs), which are special committees in the Parliament of India and the state legislatures.
- The CAG is also the head of the Indian Audit and Accounts Department, the affairs of which are managed by officers of Indian Audit and Accounts Service, and has over 58,000 employees across the country.
- The CAG is mentioned in the Constitution of India under Article 148 – 151.
- The CAG is ranked 9th and enjoys the same status as a judge of Supreme Court of India in Indian order of precedence.

**45. 'Major deficiencies in Army's ammunition reserves'****Context:**

- Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report highlights a dismal picture of the Army's War Wastage Reserve (WWR) ammunition, especially of high caliber equipment needed to wage intense war.

**Highlights:**

- No significant improvement in the availability of WWR ammunition.
- On the efforts to procure ammunition, the CAG noted that there continued to be a critical deficiency in the availability and quality of ammunition supplied by the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) since March 2013.
- War Wastage Reserve (WWR): WWR is the reserve quantity of ammunition needed to meet the requirements for the expected duration of operations.

**46. Mentally retarded adult not a child: SC****Context:**

- A "mentally-retarded" adult cannot be considered a child and given refuge under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012, the Supreme Court held.

- The case before the court was that of a rape victim, whose biological age is 38 though medical reports conclude that her "mental age" is that of six-year-old.

**Biological age:**

- The petitioner said the biological age of a person should not be the governing yardstick for POCSO, which seeks to protect children from sexual abuse.
- Treat them with fragility and provide them gentle care throughout the criminal trial and swiftly punish the guilty.
- Any person, even an adult, who is incapable of understanding what is happening to her, is equal to a child.
- A holistic interpretation of the term 'child' to include intellectually-vulnerable adults serves the basic purpose of the 2012 Act.

**SC Judgement:**

- In separate judgments, agreed that a judge cannot take on the role of the legislator.
- It is not for the judge to decide "what the law ought to be instead of what the law is".
- Definition of the term 'child' in Section 2(d) is exhaustive and includes only persons below the biological age of 18.
- The 2012 Act recognises the phenomenon of "mental disability," but confines its ambit to only the mental disability of minors.

**Basic Information:**

- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012
- Definition of a child under the Act: The Act is gender-neutral and defines a child as any person below the age of eighteen years.
- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 provides:
  - » Precise definitions for different types of Child abuse crimes.
  - » Stringent punishments.
  - » Mandatory reporting.
  - » Child-friendly procedures.
  - » Under Section 45 of the Act, the power to make rules rests with the Central Government.
  - » Qualifications and experience of interpreters.
  - » Arrangements for care and protection.
  - » Criteria for award of compensation by the Special Court.
  - » The rules rely on the structures established under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000.



#### 47. Ordinances should be last resort: Pranab

##### Context:

- Bidding farewell to Parliament at a function to mark the end of his tenure, President Pranab Mukherjee said here on Sunday that the institution was for “debate, discussion and dissent.” Disruptions, he said, hurt the Opposition as it took away from it the opportunity to raise people’s concerns.
- The president had a word of advice for the government too:

##### Ordinances should be resorted to only in “compelling circumstances.”

- The President’s remark is significant as the Modi government, after repeatedly failing to amend the Enemy Property Act, 1968 in the last three years, had promulgated five ordinances. The Bill was passed by Parliament in March. Senior Union Ministers were reportedly deputed to convince the President to sign the fourth and fifth Enemy Property ordinances as he was against their promulgation.

##### The passage of the GST Bill

- The passage of the GST Bill was a sign of Parliament’s maturity. Its launch on July 1 was a shining example of cooperative federalism.
- Values like fraternity, dignity and unity had become the lodestar for the country since Independence.

##### Basic Info :

##### Ordinance making powers of the Executive in India

- The Ordinance will only be promulgated after it receives the assent of the President.

##### **I. Separation of powers between the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary**

In India, the central and state legislatures are responsible for law making, the central and state governments are responsible for the implementation of laws and the judiciary (Supreme Court, High Courts and lower courts) interprets these laws.

However, there are several overlaps in the functions and powers of the three institutions. For example, the President has certain legislative and judicial functions and the legislature can delegate some of its functions to the executive in the form of subordinate legislation.

##### **II. Ordinance making powers of the President.**

Article 123 of the Constitution grants the President certain law making powers to promulgate Ordinances when either of the two Houses of Parliament is not in session and hence it is not possible to enact laws in the Parliament.

An Ordinance may relate to any subject that the Parliament has the power to legislate on. Conversely,

it has the same limitations as the Parliament to legislate, given the distribution of powers between the Union, State and Concurrent Lists. Thus, the following limitations exist with regard to the Ordinance making power of the executive:

- Legislature is not in session:** The President can only promulgate an Ordinance when either of the two Houses of Parliament is not in session.
- Immediate action is required:** The President cannot promulgate an Ordinance unless he is satisfied that there are circumstances that require taking ‘immediate action’.
- Parliamentary approval during session:** Ordinances must be approved by Parliament within six weeks of reassembling or they shall cease to operate. They will also cease to operate in case resolutions disapproving the Ordinance are passed by both the Houses.

##### **III. Ordinance making powers of the Governor**

Just as the President of India is constitutionally mandated to issue Ordinances under Article 123, the Governor of a state can issue Ordinances under Article 213, when the state legislative assembly (or either of the two Houses in states with bicameral legislatures) is not in session. The powers of the President and the Governor are broadly comparable with respect to Ordinance making. However, the Governor cannot issue an Ordinance without instructions from the President in three cases where the assent of the President would have been required to pass a similar Bill.

##### **IV. Key debates relating to the Ordinance making powers of the Executive**

There has been significant debate surrounding the Ordinance making power of the President (and Governor). Constitutionally, important issues that have been raised include judicial review of the Ordinance making powers of the executive; the necessity for ‘immediate action’ while promulgating an Ordinance; and the granting of Ordinance making powers to the executive, given the principle of separation of powers.

Table 1 provides a brief historical overview of the manner in which the debate on the Ordinance making powers of the executive has evolved in India post independence.

Year	Legislative development	Key arguments
1. 1970	RC Cooper vs. Union of India	In RC Cooper vs. Union of India (1970) the Supreme Court, while examining the constitutionality of the Banking Companies (Acquisition of Undertakings) Ordinance, 1969 which sought to nationalise 14 of India's largest commercial banks, held that the President's decision could be challenged on the grounds that 'immediate action' was not required; and the Ordinance had been passed primarily to by-pass debate and discussion in the legislature.
2. 1975	38th Constitutional Amendment Act	Inserted a new clause (4) in Article 123 stating that the President's satisfaction while promulgating an Ordinance was final and could not be questioned in any court on any ground.
3. 1978	44th Constitutional Amendment Act	Deleted clause (4) inserted by the 38th CAA and therefore reopened the possibility for the judicial review of the President's decision to promulgate an Ordinance.
4. 1980	AK Roy vs. Union of India	In AK Roy vs. Union of India (1982) while examining the constitutionality of the National Security Ordinance, 1980, which sought to provide for preventive detention in certain cases, the Court argued that the President's Ordinance making power is not beyond the scope of judicial review. However, it did not explore the issue further as there was insufficient evidence before it and the Ordinance was replaced by an Act. It also pointed out the need to exercise judicial review over the President's decision only when there were substantial grounds to challenge the decision, and not at "every casual and passing challenge".
5. 1985	T Venkata Reddy vs. State of Andhra Pradesh	In T Venkata Reddy vs. State of Andhra Pradesh (1985), while deliberating on the promulgation of the Andhra Pradesh Abolition of Posts of Part-time Village Officers Ordinance, 1984 which abolished certain village level posts, the Court reiterated that the Ordinance making power of the President and the Governor was a legislative power, comparable to the legislative power of the Parliament and state legislatures respectively. This implies that the motives behind the exercise of this power cannot be questioned, just as is the case with legislation by the Parliament and state legislatures.
6. 1987	DC Wadhwa vs. State of Bihar	It was argued in DC Wadhwa vs. State of Bihar (1987) the legislative power of the executive to promulgate Ordinances is to be used in exceptional circumstances and not as a substitute for the law making power of the legislature. Here, the court was examining a case where a state government (under the authority of the Governor) continued to re-promulgate ordinances, that is, it repeatedly issued new Ordinances to replace the old ones, instead of laying them before the state legislature. A total of 259 Ordinances were re-promulgated, some of them for as long as 14 years. The Supreme Court argued that if Ordinance making was made a usual practice, creating an 'Ordinance raj' the courts could strike down re-promulgated Ordinances.

#### 48. **Bengaluru Declaration calls for SC/ST quota in judiciary**

- The Bengaluru Declaration adopted by the State government sponsored Dr. B.R. Ambedkar International Conference 2017, on Sunday recommended a slew of affirmative action measures in private sector, judiciary, educational institutions, government contracts and promotions for Dalits.

##### The Bengaluru Declaration :

- The declaration, coming in an election year, significantly concentrates not just on SC/STs, but has also proposed several measures for the larger AHINDA (Kannada acronym for minorities, backward classes and Dalits) community, the political constituency of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.
- It called for reservation of seats in legislature for other backward classes and setting up of a farmers' income commission.
- The eight-page declaration has 40 recommendations under six broad categories — safeguarding the people, strengthening democratic institutions, deepening social justice, enhancing human development, ensuring responsive governance, and promoting social security.
- "This Peoples' Declaration hopes to be a dynamic blueprint that addresses the needs and aspirations of all Indians, and a starting point for an 'alliance of equity' of all progressive forces committed to safeguarding the idea of India," the preamble stated."
- The Bhopal Declaration that called for "liberalisation of capital for Dalits" was adopted in 2002 during the tenure of Congress leader Digvijaya Singh in Madhya Pradesh.
- Significantly, the Bengaluru Declaration called for upholding Rule of Law through police reforms and state action to prevent lynchings. It called for a law against gender and caste discrimination at education institutions.
- It further recommended for SC/ST reservation in appointment of judges, promotions, government contracts up to ₹1 crore, in private higher educational institutions and private sector. It also proposes establishment of an Equal Opportunities Commission, to oversee affirmative action.
- Much focus is also given on ensuring land ownership for SC/STs, including a proposal to establish SC/ST land bank, where government buys these lands at market prices and re-allots to the same community, to ensure non-dilution of ownership. It further recommends allocation of 20% of the land in private housing layouts for urban poor.
- The declaration calls for a wider social security net. It recommended a "living wage" and comprehensive social security scheme for all labourers working in the unorganised sector apart from ensuring dignity in

retirement through enhanced pensions of ₹1,500 per month.

#### 49. **SC gives BCCI some flexibility to implement Lodha reforms**

##### Context:

- July 18, 2016 ruling by Supreme Court: ordered for full implementation of Lodha panel's recommendations.

##### In news:

- The Supreme Court indicated that it was open to relaxing its order directing the Indian cricket board (BCCI) to accept the Justice Lodha panel's recommendations in full.

##### Areas to be rethought of:

- Reduction in the number of national selectors to three from five.
- Restricting the appointment of selectors to players who have played Tests.
- The one-state one-vote norm
- The associate membership criteria.

##### BCCI stance:

BCCI had opposed the panel's recommendations, including sweeping changes in administration, virtually marginalising the board.

##### Basic Information:

##### Lodha Committee:

- The Lodha committee was formed in January, 2015 by the Supreme Court after the Mudgal committee report on IPL.

##### Structural Reforms:

- The committee recommended that a 9-member apex council replace the 14-member BCCI working committee.
- Each of these office-bearers has a three-year term and can contest for a maximum three terms.
- The Lodha Committee also calls for dividing the governance into two parts: cricketing and non-cricketing.
- The non-cricketing management will be handled by 6 professional managers headed by a CEO, and the cricket matters like selection, coaching and performance evaluation should be left to the players

##### Organisation & Office-bearers: Restrictions imposed

- Each of these office-bearers has a 3-year term and can contest for a maximum three terms.
- There will be a mandatory cooling off period after each term. Therefore, no office-bearer can hold office consecutively in a row.

- No BCCI office-bearer can be Minister or government servant.

#### **State Cricket Associations: One Vote/State**

- The Committee recommended that one association should represent an entire state and only one vote per state.

#### **Indian Premier League: Maintain distance**

- It recommends separate governing bodies for the IPL and BCCI.
- There should be a 15-day gap between IPL season and national calendar.

#### **Betting: Legalize it**

- It made a strong recommendation to lawmakers to legalise betting in cricket for all except cricket players, officials and administrators.
- The players and others banned officials should disclose their assets to BCCI in a measure to ensure that they do not bet.
- Betting is a \$ 400 billion phenomenon practised across the globe and lawmakers in India should enact laws to legalise it.

#### **Fixing: Criminalize it**

- The committee said that match-and spot-fixing should be made a criminal offence.

#### **Conflict of Interest & Corruption**

- One individual hold only one post in cricket administration. The office-bearers would have to choose between positions in respective state associations and the parent body.
- A former High Court judge should be appointed as ethics officer by the BCCI to administer issues relating to conflict of interest, misdemeanour and corruption.
- A former Supreme Court judge should be appointed ombudsman to resolve internal disputes.

#### **Transparency: Bringing RTI to BCCI**

- It recommended that the Legislature must seriously consider bringing BCCI within the purview of the RTI Act.

#### **Securing player's interest**

- It recommended the setting up of a Players' Association to safeguard the interests of the cricketers.
- The report said players that are the driving force of the game, but they had been reduced to the status of employees and subordinates of those governing the game.
- The idea is to give players voice, use their expertise and skills for the development and betterment of the game.

#### **Women Cricket: Often ignored by BCCI**

- The Women's Cricket Committee to be formed to exclusively pay attention to this much ignored department, along with Women's Selection Committee.

### **50. To widen SC scholarship net, govt for raising income criteria**

#### **Widening the Scope:**

- According to the current eligibility criteria, the annual income of parents of the SC students seeking scholarships shouldn't exceed Rs 4.5 lakh.
- This figure is now proposed to be revised to Rs 6 lakh per annum.
- The funding, available in 175 notified top institutes, covers much of the expenses incurred towards fees, living expenses, books and computer.

#### **Other proposals**

- For pre-matric scholarships for SC students, the annual income is proposed to be revised from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh.
- The ministry is also looking at revising the varying income criteria for other schemes for students from SC, OBC, and economically backward communities.
- Objective behind the move:
- This is a part of the plans for 'rationalisation of all scholarship schemes', to correct the wide variation in income criteria.

### **51. Govt mulls LPG-like subsidy transfer for PDS foodgrain**

#### **What's in news?**

- Food ministry is working on a pilot to emulate the direct cooking gas subsidy transfer scheme model for public distribution system (PDS) of subsidised foodgrains.
- **Modus operandi:** The beneficiaries will get the subsidy amount in advance in their bank accounts and they will have to buy the foodgrains from any ration shop, which has got the electronic point of sale (e-PoS) devices.

#### **Advantages:**

- This initiative will ensure zero leakage of the subsidy and foodgrain as well.
- The beneficiaries' failure to buy the foodgrains from the e-PoS enabled ration shop would result in no transfer of the subsidy for the next month. This will also ensure that beneficiaries under National Food Security Act don't use the subsidy amount for anything else.
- Elsewhere: Union Territories of Chandigarh, Puducherry and Dadra & Nagar Haveli- the entire subsidy amount is transferred to the beneficiaries' account and they are free to buy the grains from anywhere.



## 52. Reporting sexual harassment at workplace now a mouse click away on 'SHe-Box'

### ***What's in news?***

- On the lines of the POCSO e-box for children, the Central government has now launched an online complaint management system called "Sexual Harassment electronic-Box (SHe-Box)" for registering complaints related to sexual harassment at workplace.
- Currently applicable only for women working in or visiting central government departments, the ministry of women and child development plans to extend to cover private workplaces too.

### ***Modus operandi:***

- This portal will provide a platform to women working or visiting any office of Central Government (Central Ministries, Departments, Public Sector Undertakings, Autonomous Bodies and Institutions etc.) to file complaints related to sexual harassment at workplace under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.
- Those who have already filed a written complaint with the concerned Internal Complaint Committee (ICC) constituted under the SH Act are also eligible to file their complaint through this portal.
- Once a complaint is submitted to the portal, it will be directly sent to the ICC of the concerned Ministry or department.
- Through this portal, WCD as well as complainant can monitor the progress of inquiry conducted by the ICC.

### ***Basic Information:***

- Vishaka case guideline- Key features
- It mentioned that it is the duty of the employer or other responsible persons in work places or other institutions to prevent or deter the commission of acts of sexual harassment and to provide the procedure for the resolution, settlement or prosecution of acts of sexual harassment by taking all steps required.
- It also provided with the range to behaviour that would be termed as sexual harassment, which includes such unwelcome sexually determined behaviour (whether directly or implication) as :-
  - » physical contact and advances;
  - » a demand or request for sexual favours;
  - » sexually coloured remarks;
  - » showing pornography;
  - » any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.
- It also provided with Complaints mechanism by stating that-
- All workplaces should have an appropriate complaints

mechanism with a complaints committee, special counsellor or other support services.

- A woman must head the complaints committee and no less than half its members should be women.
- The committee should include an NGO/individual familiar with the issue of sexual harassment.
- The complaints procedure must be time-bound.
- Confidentiality must be maintained.
- Complainants/witnesses should not experience victimization/discrimination during the process.

## **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013**

- This act was enacted in April 2013 as India's first law dealing with the protection of women against sexual harassment at workplace. Some important feature of this act are as follows:
- This Act aimed to provide every woman, irrespective of her age or employment status, a safe and secure working environment free from all forms of harassment.
- This Act covered both the organized and unorganized sectors in India. The statute applied to all government bodies, private and public sector organizations, non-governmental organizations, organizations carrying out commercial, vocational, educational, entertainment, industrial, financial activities, hospitals etc.
- This Act defined 'sexual harassment' in line with the Supreme Court's definition in the Vishaka Judgment.
- The Act extended the meaning of the word sexual harassment to include "presence or occurrence of circumstances of implied or explicit promise of preferential treatment in employment, threat of detrimental treatment in employment, threat about present or future employment, interference with work or creating an intimidating or offensive or hostile work environment, or humiliating treatment likely to affect the lady employee's health or safety could also amount to sexual harassment".
- The Act also introduced the concept of 'extended workplace' since sexual harassment is not always confined to the primary place of employment. Therefore, the Act defined 'workplace' to include any place visited by the employee arising out of or during the course of employment, including transportation provided by the employer for the purpose of commuting to and from the place of employment.
- The Act provided for the establishment of Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) at each and every office or branches of the organization employing 10 or more employees, in order to provide a forum for filing complaints to facilitate fast redressal of the grievances pertaining to sexual harassment.
- It also provided for the establishment of local

complaints committee (LCC) at the district level by the Government to investigate and redress complaints of sexual harassment of the unorganized sector or from those establishments where the ICC has not been constituted for the reason being, it having less than 10 employees.

### 53. **NITI Aayog: An institution to fix implementation issues**

#### **Context:**

- NITI Aayog's 'Outcome based monitoring'

#### **Outcome based monitoring of NITI Aayog**

- NITI Aayog is engaged in outcome-based monitoring with states in sectors such as healthcare, education and water supply
- It is also discussing the idea of ranking each state based on health, education and water index, and identifying states with good performance
- For example, it has developed a composite water management index, comprising several key performance indicators, with different weights assigned to indicators
- This is expected to incentivise states to collect data and analyse it to make better policies

#### **Possible Disadvantage of Outcome based monitoring**

- Some experts suggests that owing to self-ranking by states without independent review, reforms remain mostly on paper with key concerns remaining unaddressed
- Also, legitimate beneficiaries may get excluded
- Consequently, such approach of self-ranking and comparing needs to be viewed with caution

#### **Outcomes of efficient policy implementation by States:**

- Experts suggest that significant improvement in the ability to implement policies and projects in the states, cities, and at the centre can considerably add to citizens' well-being
- And also, could even add about 2-3% to the country's GDP, without any additional resources

#### **The way forward**

- Agencies struggling with implementation should not be burdened with additional responsibilities of data collection and analysis.
- NITI Aayog must create a repository of best practices(as a benchmark) for dealing with implementation challenges, based on case studies from around the world.

### 54. **Vande Mataram must be sung in all educational institutions once a week: Madras High Court**

#### **What's in news?**

- The Madras High Court on Tuesday ordered that "Vande Mataram" must be played and sung in all schools, colleges and universities at least once a week, preferably on Monday or Friday
- Vande Matharam" should be played and sung in all government offices and institutions, private companies, factories and industries at least once a month, Madras High Court has ordered
- A person who has difficulty in singing the national song will not be compelled or forced to sing it provided there are valid reasons.

#### **Basic Information:**

##### **National Song**

- The song Vande Mataram, composed in Sanskrit by Bankimchandra Chatterjee, was a source of inspiration to the people in their struggle for freedom. It has an equal status with Jana-gana-mana. The first political occasion when it was sung was the 1896 session of the Indian National Congress.

##### **Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971**

- This act is applicable in whole of India (including Jammu & Kashmir) and it prohibits the desecration of or insult to the National Flag, Constitution, National Anthem, India's Map etc.

##### **Provisions Regarding National Flag and Constitution:**

- This act makes provision that whoever burns, mutilates, destroys, disfigures or otherwise shows disrespect to India's National Flag or Constitution shall be punished with an imprisonment (max-3 years) or a fine or both. The definition of Indian Flag included any picture, drawing, photograph or any other visible representation.

##### **How the above provisions are related to Flag Code of India 2002?**

- Display of National Flag is governed by the provisions of two acts viz. Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950 and Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971. Further, the government also issues non-statutory instructions from time to time. The Flag Code of India brings these laws, conventions and other instructions together and serves as a single reference point about how to properly hoist flag of India with due honour. The Flag Code of India itself is not an act of parliament.

##### **How provisions of IPC are related to disrespect to National Anthem?**

- Disrespect to national insignia has been linked to Section 124(A) of IPC, which refers to sedition. This section was slapped on few people in Kerala who failed to stand while National Anthem was being played in a

theatre. Similarly, a youth was arrested under Section 66-A of the IT Act in 2014 {this section is now null and void} for posting a picture of National Flag with a derogatory comment on it on Facebook.

#### **Provisions Regarding National Anthem:**

- The section 3 of the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act says that whoever intentionally prevents the singing of National Anthem or causes any disturbance in such singing shall be punished with imprisonment (max 3 years) or a fine or both.

### **55. Admiralty Bill gets Rajya Sabha nod**

#### **What's in news?**

- Two Bills were passed by Rajya Sabha.
- On jurisdiction and settlement of maritime claims.
- The Footwear Design and Development Institute.

#### **The Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims), Bill, 2017.**

- It was already passed by the Lok Sabha.
- The Bill seeks to consolidate the laws relating to admiralty jurisdiction, legal proceedings in connection with vessels, their arrest, detention, sale and other related matters.
- Earlier only the High Courts of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras could take up maritime cases.
- The Bill extends the power to the High Courts of Karnataka, Kerala, Hyderabad, Orissa and Gujarat, besides any other High Courts as notified by the Centre.

#### **The Footwear Design and Development Institute Bill, 2017.**

- It was already passed by the Lok Sabha.
- The bill seeks to establish the institute as an institution of national importance.

### **56. Meet on island development**

#### **What's in news?**

#### **Island Development Agency (IDA)**

- Its first meeting is held recently.
- **Decision:** Ten islands Smith, Ross, Aves, Long and Little Andaman in Andaman & Nicobar and Minicoy, Bangaram, Suheli, Cherium and Tinnakara in Lakshadweep have been identified for development in the first phase.
- The IDA was set up on June 1 this year following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's review meeting for the development of islands.

### **57. What's brewing in Darjeeling**

#### **Context:**

- A resurgent Gorkhaland movement and subsequent state crackdown have infused life with violent uncertainty.

#### **What triggered the issue?**

- In May, the West Bengal government announced Bengali as a compulsory language in schools across the State.
- This triggered protests and claims of 'linguistic imperialism' in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts.
- Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee then decided to hold a Cabinet meeting in Darjeeling for the first time in over 40 years.
- But representatives of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) or the three hill MLAs, were not included, eliciting protests.
- Subsequent protests and crackdowns have led to further destruction and deaths.

#### **Gorkhaland:**

- The Gorkhaland movement is a long-standing quest for a separate State of Gorkhaland within India for Nepali-speaking Indian citizens (often known as 'Gorkhas').
- Gorkhaland is a classic sub-nationalist movement, similar to those that have produced other States like Telangana, Uttarakhand etc.
- Gorkhaland is a desire for the recognition, respect, and integration of Gorkha peoples in the Indian nation-state.
- The movement is neither separatist nor anti-nationalist; it is about inclusion and belonging in India.
- It stands as a key means to redress the Gorkhas' enduring history of discrimination, misconception, and marginalisation in India.
- By demanding Gorkhaland, the people of Darjeeling-Kalimpong are opting out of West Bengal's domination, and opting in to the democratic frameworks of India.

#### **Gorkhas hardships on many fronts**

- Gorkhas remain pegged to the lowest levels of employment.
- Outsiders own the tea industry, and profits flow out of the hills.
- Gorkhas face discrimination when they seek education and work in places like Kolkata, Bengaluru, and New Delhi. Called 'foreigners', 'outsiders' and 'chinkys', racial discrimination affects aspiring Gorkhas at every turn.

#### **Reasons for resurgence**

- Since 1947, the Darjeeling-Kalimpong region has remained under West Bengal, despite no substantive

pre-Partition evidence to support West Bengal's territorial claims to this region.

- Conciliatory set-ups like the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (1988-2012) and the GTA (2012-present) have failed to provide meaningful autonomy.
- Banerjee and others stridently lay claim to Darjeeling, insisting that Bengal will never be divided.
- Imposition of compulsory Bengali is an extension of histories of domination that the Gorkhas are trying to escape.
- West Bengal's recent creation of the Kalimpong district (2017) and the State's doling out of Tribal Development Boards to ethnicities within the Gorkha conglomerate (Tamang, Sherpa, etc.) might appear as paving the way for the TMC's electoral gains.
- These seem clear examples of 'divide and rule' — causing splits in the Gorkha electorate and undermining the already-limited authority of the GTA.
- By summoning thousands to the streets, the GJM (Gorkha Janmukti Morcha) demonstrated its ability to evoke the emotional force of Gorkhaland. But then violence took hold.
- For Gorkhas, the troubling realities of colonial and present-day Darjeeling are eerily similar: linguistic chauvinism, ethnic and racial discrimination, resource extraction, unilateral territorial claims, the denial of self-governance, political suppression; and ultimately, an unwillingness to respect the 'native point of view'.

## 58. Law panel nod for DNA bank to fight crime

### ***What's in news?***

- The Law Commission approved a central bill for regulating use of DNA-based technology as a forensic tool in civil and criminal proceedings, and for identification of missing persons and unidentified bodies.
- The 271st report of the Law Commission headed by Justice B S Chauhan submitted to law minister, a new draft bill — the DNA Based Technology (Use and Regulation) Bill, 2017 — in place of an earlier bill on the issue referred to it by the Union government in September 2016 and said it had enough safeguards to protect right to privacy of citizens.
- Concerns raised by sections of civil society: proposed law amounts to breach the privacy of individuals.
- Law panel response: use of DNA-based technology for criminal investigation, identification of missing persons and unidentified bodies as well as the proposed National DNA Data Bank would in no way breach the privacy of individuals.

### ***Why DNA Data Banks?***

- DNA Data Banks, both national and at state level, will be responsible for storing DNA profiles received from accredited laboratories and maintaining certain indices for various categories of data, like crime scene index, suspects' index, offenders' index, missing persons' index and unknown deceased persons' index.

### ***DNA profiling and Law commission recommendations:***

- DNA profiling would be undertaken exclusively for identification of a person and would not be used to extract any other information.
- Strict confidentiality in safekeeping of records of DNA profiles and their use. Violation of confidentiality would be liable for punishment of imprisonment, which may extend up to three years and also fine which may extend to Rs 2 lakh.

### ***DNA Profiling Board:***

- The bill drafted by the commission proposed setting up of a statutory DNA Profiling Board which would lay down procedures and standards for establishment of DNA laboratories, supervise their functioning and frame guidelines for training police and other investigating agencies dealing with DNA-related matters.

## 59. Supreme Court nixes Assam law to bypass mantri cap

### ***What's in news?***

- The Supreme Court struck down as unconstitutional a law passed by Assam assembly 13 years ago to allow the then Congress government headed by Tarun Gogoi to appoint MLAs as parliamentary secretaries after Parliament had put a cap on the number of ministers.
- The SC had earlier declared appointment of parliamentary secretaries by some other states by executive order, as done by the AAP government in Delhi, as illegal and struck down these appointments.
- This SC order striking down a law for appointment of parliamentary secretaries could nudge the Election Commission to decide the issue of disqualification of 21 MLAs who were appointed parliamentary secretaries by Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal.
- The appointment of AAP MLAs as parliamentary secretaries was struck down as unconstitutional by the Delhi high court in September last year.

### ***Constitution 91st Amendment Act:***

- Parliament had on January 1, 2004 passed the Constitution 91st Amendment Bill, 2003, to modify Articles 75 and 164 of the Constitution.
- The Act provided that under Article 164(1A), the size of the council of ministers in a state should not exceed 15% of the total strength of the assembly.



**Background information:**

- When the 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003, came into force, the Assam council of ministers had 36 members in a House of 126 MLAs, or 28.57% of the strength of the assembly.
- In view of Article 164(1A), the number of ministers was to be brought down to 19 to be consistent with the 15% ceiling.
- To appease MLAs who lost their place in the council of ministers, the government promulgated **Assam Parliamentary Secretaries (Appointment, Salaries, Allowances and Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance, 2004**, which took the shape of a law on December 29, 2004.
- In the first instance, the Tarun Gogoi government appointed eight parliamentary secretaries. Six months before elections in September 2015, the government appointed 13 more parliamentary secretaries.

**Similar instances:**

- In June 2015, the Calcutta HC quashed appointment of 24 parliamentary secretaries in West Bengal and termed it unconstitutional. The Bombay HC in 2009 had struck down appointment of two parliamentary secretaries in Goa. The Himachal Pradesh HC in 2005 had in a similar ruling struck down appointment of eight chief parliamentary secretaries and four parliamentary secretaries. In May 2015, the Hyderabad HC had stayed appointment of parliamentary secretaries in Telangana.

**60. Panel for action against farmers using herbicides on GM mustard****What's in news?**

- The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee's (GEAC) sub-committee has drafted several recommendations on GM mustard before it approved the crop for commercial release in May this year.
- These included a proposal for legal action on farmers using the glufosinate-based herbicide (Basta) on the crop unless otherwise approved by the Central Insecticides Board and Registration Committee.

**Detrimental to humans:**

- According to the U.S. National Institute of Health, Glufosinate-based herbicides act as a neurotoxin and have adverse impacts on humans

**61. Will decide in a month-and-a-half on commercial release of GM mustard crop, Centre tells SC****What's in news?**

- The Union government on Monday told the Supreme Court that it would take a decision in a month-and-a-half on allowing the commercial rollout of genetically modified (GM) mustard crop in the country.

- Mustard is one of India's most important winter crops, which is sown between mid-October and late November.

**Basic Information:****GM mustard (DMH-11):**

- GM mustard (DMH-11) was produced by a group of researchers at Delhi University driven by previous bad habit chancellor Deepak Pental under a legislature financed extend.
- Fundamentally, it utilizes three qualities from soil bacterium that makes self-pollinating plants, for example, mustard amiable to hybridisation.

**What proponents are saying?**

- Defenders of GM products say plants and creatures are always swapping bacterial qualities with air, soil and water, and furthermore that the main method for deciding whether a quality can deliver proteins dangerous to people is to subject it to a methodical testing process.
- A long time of field tests on transgenic corn, soyabean and brinjal in different nations have demonstrated no wellbeing dangers that fluctuate with their non-GM variants.

**Arguments of opponents of the commercial release:**

- Many of them are opposed to the commercial release of any form of transgenic plants; they fear that introducing genes from soil bacterium or other forms of animal life into plants will amount to playing with the natural order of plant life.

**Way forward:**

- Farmers require innovation, new information and administrative support to get the best out of their seeds.
- Progressive governments have neglected to proceed onward the draft National Biotechnology Regulatory Bill, 2008 that would empower a biotechnology controller to come to fruition.
- Without such enactment, issues to be settled on the premise of science will be helpless before political practicality.

**62. SC rejects abortion plea of 10-year-old****Context:**

- On July 24, a Bench led by Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar had directed doctors from P.G.I., Chandigarh, to medically examine the 10-year-old rape victim and file a report in court on whether the "health of the girl child concerned, who is stated to be of the age of 10 years, and also that of the foetus, would be adversely affected, if the pregnancy is continued for the full term".

**Termination is not possible:**

- Medical opinion: abortion will endanger both the girl and her 32-week-old foetus.
- Supreme Court: denied the permission to grant abortion of the foetus.

**State-level MTP boards:**

- Supreme Court urged the government to consider setting up permanent medical boards across the States so that women, especially child rape victims, could receive expedient access to medical care.

**Why such boards? To expedite the process.**

- Presently, women are forced to undertake the cumbersome process of approaching different courts, from district courts to high courts and finally the Supreme Court, for permission to medically terminate their pregnancies which are over 20 weeks.
- The frequent number of such cases which have come to the Supreme Court range from child rape victims to destitute women to women with substantial foetus abnormalities.

**Basic Information:****What is MTP Act, 1971?**

- Abortion in India is legal only up to twenty weeks of pregnancy under specific conditions and situations.
- One, the continuance of the pregnancy would involve a risk to the life of the pregnant woman or of grave injury of physical or mental health, or
- Two, there is a substantial risk that if the child were born, it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

**What the draft MTP bill 2014 provides?**

- The draft MTP increased the legal limit for abortion from 20 weeks to 24 weeks.
- It provides for abortion beyond 24 weeks under defined conditions.
- The Bill amends Section 3 of the 1971 Act to provide that "the length of pregnancy shall not apply" in a decision to abort a foetus diagnosed with "substantial foetal abnormalities" or if it is "alleged by the pregnant woman to have been caused by rape".
- Under the 1971 Act, even pregnant rape victims cannot abort after 20 weeks, compelling them to move court.
- It allows a woman to take an independent decision in consultation with a registered health-care provider.
- It also takes into account the reality of a massive shortage of both doctors and trained midwives, and seeks to allow Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha practitioners to carry out abortions.

**Why is it essential to change the MTP law?**

- Foetal abnormalities show up only by 18 weeks, so just a two-week window after that is too small for the would-be parents to take the difficult call on whether to keep their baby.
- Even for the medical practitioner, this window is too small to exhaust all possible options before advising the patient.
- There is an urgent need to empower women with sexual rights, legal protection against sex crimes and sex choices both in their own interest and for the sake of reducing the fertility rate as a whole.
- The lack of legal approval moves abortion to underground and they are done in unhygienic conditions by untrained, thus, putting thousands of women at risk.

**63. Supreme Court stays Election Commission's order on MP minister Narottam Mishra****What's in news?**

- The Supreme Court stayed the Election Commission's order disqualifying Madhya Pradesh minister Narottam Mishra for three years for filing **wrong account of his poll expenditure in 2008** elections by not disclosing the amount spent on paid news.
- As per **Section 7(b) of the Representation of the People Act**, Mishra, a senior minister in the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government, stands debarred from being a member of the state legislature and also from contesting polls for three years from the date of the issuance of the disqualification order.

**64. No arrest in dowry cases till charges are verified, says Supreme Court****Context:**

- Concern over disgruntled wives misusing the anti-dowry law against their husbands and in-laws

**What's in news?**

- The Supreme Court directed that no arrest or coercive action should be taken on such complaints without ascertaining the veracity of allegations.
- Supreme Court acknowledged a growing trend among women involved in marital discord to abuse Section 498A of IPC to rope in their husbands' relatives — including parents, minor children, siblings and grandparents — in criminal cases and said it was high time such frivolous cases which violated the human rights of innocent was checked.

**Paradigm shift:**

- The above observation is a shift from the dominant judicial conception of women as victims who would silently suffer injustice rather than bring disrepute to their family by taking domestic conflict outside the four walls of the home.

- Family welfare committee (FWC) and other mechanism recommended:
- The Supreme Court directed all states to set up family welfare committee (FWC) in each district and tasked them with testing the veracity of every complaint.
- The bench ruled that all such complaints received by the police or the magistrate must be referred to the family welfare committee and no action should be taken against the husband and the in-laws till the committee gave its report after interacting with the parties.
- Report of such committee be given to the authority by whom the complaint is referred to, latest within one month from the date of receipt of complaint
- The court also said bail applications of husband and in-laws should be decided expeditiously by trial courts, preferably the same day it is filed.
- The court further said impounding of passports or issuance of Red Corner Notice against person living abroad should be avoided and personal appearance of husband's family members should not be insisted upon by trial courts in dowry harassment cases.
- It also directed that a designated police officer should be appointed to deal with complaints under Section 498A.

#### **Basic Information:**

- Section 498A in The Indian Penal Code
- [498A. Husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty.—Whoever, being the husband or the relative of the husband of a woman, subjects such woman to cruelty shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine. Explanation.—For the purpose of this section, "cruelty" means—
- (a) any wilful conduct which is of such a nature as is likely to drive the woman to commit suicide or to cause grave injury or danger to life, limb or health (whether mental or physical) of the woman; or
- (b) harassment of the woman where such harassment is with a view to coercing her or any person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any property or valuable security or is on account of failure by her or any person related to her to meet such demand.]

#### **65. Privacy is a fundamental right with qualifications, Centre tells apex court**

##### **Union Government stand on the issue**

- Government told the SC that right to privacy is a fundamental right but it is a "wholly qualified right"
- Government stand means 'right to privacy' could be subject to reasonable restrictions

##### **Change in stance:**

- This is contrary to the government's earlier stand that

citizens cannot invoke privacy as a fundamental right as the Constitution does not provide for it

##### **Does this covers the issue related to Aadhar?**

- Government also made it clear that the submission was not intended to cover the challenge to Aadhaar.
- It means that those challenging it cannot claim that it violates right to privacy.

#### **66. Don't slap unreasonable maintenance burden on husbands, Madras HC tells family courts**

##### **What's in news?**

- The Madras high court has advised family courts not to treat husbands like "armless soldiers" and not to order them to pay maintenance to wives in a "mechanical manner."
- A man is a son to his parents and is liable to maintain his aged parents as well, the high court said, adding that family courts should not brush this aspect aside lightly and go to the extent of paying even two-thirds of his income to his estranged wife.
- Section 125 in The Code Of Criminal Procedure, 1973- Order for maintenance of wives, children and parents.
- (1) If any person having sufficient means neglects or refuses to maintain-

(a) his wife, unable to maintain herself, or

(b) his legitimate or illegitimate minor child, whether married or not, unable to maintain itself, or

(c) his legitimate or illegitimate child (not being a married daughter) who has attained majority, where such child is, by reason of any physical or mental abnormality or injury unable to maintain itself, or

(d) his father or mother, unable to maintain himself or herself, a Magistrate of the first class may, upon proof of such neglect or refusal, order such person to make a monthly allowance for the maintenance of his wife or such child, father or mother, at such monthly rate not exceeding five hundred rupees in the whole, as such Magistrate thinks fit, and to pay the same to such person as the Magistrate may from time to time direct: Provided that the Magistrate may order the father of a minor female child referred to in clause (b) to make such allowance, until she attains her majority, if the Magistrate is satisfied that the husband of such minor female child, if married, is not possessed of sufficient means. Explanation.- For the purposes of this Chapter,

(a) " minor" means a person who, under the provisions of the Indian Majority Act, 1875 (9 of 1875); is deemed not to have attained his majority;

(b) " wife" includes a woman who has been divorced by, or has obtained a divorce from, her husband and has not remarried.

- (2) Such allowance shall be payable from the date of the order, or, if so ordered, from the date of the application for maintenance.
- (3) If any person so ordered fails without sufficient cause to comply with the order, any such Magistrate may, for every breach of the order, issue a warrant for levying the amount due in the manner provided for levying fines, and may sentence such person, for the whole or any part of each month's allowances remaining unpaid after the execution of the warrant, to imprisonment for a term which may extend to one month or until payment if sooner made: Provided that no warrant shall be issued for the recovery of any amount due under this section unless application be made to the Court to levy such amount within a period of one year from the date on which it became due: Provided further that if such person offers to maintain his wife on condition of her living with him, and she refuses to live with him, such
- Magistrate may consider any grounds of refusal stated by her, and may make an order under this section notwithstanding such offer, if he is satisfied that there is just ground for so doing. Explanation.- If a husband has contracted marriage with another woman or keeps a mistress, it shall be considered to be just ground for his wife's refusal to live with him.
- (4) No Wife shall be entitled to receive an allowance from her husband under this section if she is living in adultery, or if, without any sufficient reason, she refuses to live with her husband, or if they are living separately by mutual consent.
- (5) On proof that any wife in whose favour an order has been made under this section is living in adultery, or that without sufficient reason she refuses to live with her husband, or that they are living separately by mutual consent, the Magistrate shall cancel the order.



# ECONOMY

## 1. At stroke of midnight, India gets a 'good and simple tax'

### ***What's in news?***

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi termed the new Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, to be implemented from Saturday, as a 'Good and Simple Tax' and said its introduction was not just a tax or economic reform, but a social reform that would nudge people on the path to honesty and benefit the poor the most.

### ***'More transparent':***

- GST will do away with 500 different taxes levied across the country's 29 States and seven Union Territories
- It would end the spectre of tax terrorism and Inspector Raj that India's businesses have had to endure for long.
- The GST Council chaired by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley slashed the tax rate on fertilizers from 12% to 5% and tractor parts from 28% to 18%, in a bid to make the new tax regime more farmer-friendly.

## 2. For upstream companies: Exemption of petro products from GST to push up cost of production

### ***What's in news?***

- Keeping petroleum products such as petrol, diesel, natural gas out of the ambit of the Goods and Service Tax (GST) is expected to result in higher cost of production
- This will be for upstream companies such as oil and gas exploration firms as well as for downstream refining companies
- For the end-consumer, this exclusion from GST, however, is unlikely to result in any significant increase in prices

### ***Inclusion/Exclusion:***

- The output of upstream and downstream companies have been kept out of the GST
- The inputs that go into their making is subject to levy of GST
- For instance, an oil or gas refiner that imports inputs such as gases, platforms, parts of platform, cranes, chemicals etc will have to pay 5 per cent tax under the GST regime
- All these are tax-free in the current regime

### ***Increase in prices + No input tax credit:***

- No passing on to customers: Even though the cost of production increases, these can't be totally passed on to customers such as domestic refineries or exports since the prices of these products are linked to international

benchmarks.

- Possible migration: Any increase in prices due to higher taxes locally will encourage buyers to scout for international contracts offering similar products at cheaper prices.
- For refineries, nearly 70 per cent of their refined products are petrol, diesel, natural gas, aviation turbine fuel (ATF), which are out of the GST net.
- Currently, the refineries take input tax credit on almost 80 per cent of the taxes paid.
- Now the refineries cannot take credit for inputs that go in for production of petrol, diesel and ATF.

## 3. Under the GST umbrella, three taxes for states/UTs and Centre

### ***Context:***

- Under the GST regime, the Centre and states/Union Territories shall simultaneously levy indirect taxes on a common tax base

### ***Taxes within GST:***

- Within the umbrella of GST, the GST levied by the Centre on intra-state supply of goods and/or services will be called Central GST (CGST) and levied by states/UTs, State GST (SGST/UTGST)
- Integrated GST (IGST) will be levied and administered by the Centre on the inter-state supply of goods and services

### ***Why the state tax?***

- CGST and SGST/UTGST were decided keeping in mind the federal structure of the country
- Here both the Centre and the states have the powers to levy and collect taxes through appropriate legislation
- The CGST and SGST will be levied simultaneously on every transaction of supply of goods and services except exempted goods and services
- They will not be implemented on goods which are outside the purview of GST, and transactions which are below the prescribed thresholds

### ***Some understanding of GST implementation***

- SGST and CGST will be levied on the same price or value.
- This will be unlike state VAT, which is levied on the value of the goods inclusive of CENVAT.
- The location of the supplier and recipient within the country is immaterial for the purpose of CGST.
- SGST will be chargeable only when the supplier and recipient are both located within a state.

- IGST shall be levied and collected by the Government of India, and such tax shall be apportioned between the Centre and the states

#### ***How Will GST Work?***

- Under the GST regime, tax liability arises when the taxable person crosses the turnover threshold of Rs 20 lakh.
- For Northeastern and 'Special Category' states, it is Rs 10 lakh.
- Cross-utilisation of input credit of one component of tax against the other is allowed except utilisation of credit of CGST for SGST and vice versa.

#### **4. Don't Tax Clean Energy**

##### **Context:**

- The GST Rate Schedule for goods has put 'solar power generating systems' and 'photovoltaic cells whether or not assembled into modules or made into panels' into different tax brackets.

##### **Tax on solar power**

- GST rate schedule suggested that all solar power generating systems will be taxed at 5%.
- This will be similar to the tax on wind systems.
- This would put solar and wind in the same tax bracket as coal.
- Coal was previously taxed at 11.69%.
- Nuclear fuel too will be taxed at 5%.

##### **The state of confusion.**

- Another chapter of the GST rate schedule noted that semi-conductor devices including PV cells, which may or may not be assembled into modules or panels, would be taxed at 18%.
- The council has put solar panels in the 5% category
- The issue of tax on the remaining components of solar systems remains unresolved even on the eve of the rollout of the new fiscal regime.

##### ***What will be the impact?***

- In the first scenario, utility scale solar (panels and parts), along with other renewable energy sources of electricity as well as coal, is taxed at 5%.
- Analysis suggests that GST would result in a minor rise of 1.6% in solar tariffs.
- In a thriving solar market, this is unlikely to create any setback for the sector.
- While 5% doesn't seem a mammoth figure, the rise in price of solar power is not insignificant when seen in conjunction with the decline in taxes on coal.
- 60% decline in taxation on coal is likely to make thermal power cheaper by as much as Rs 0.15.

- This would set back some of the rapid advances made in recent times to close the price gap between the prices of solar power and thermal power.

- The cumulative result, with a lower tax bracket for coal and higher (effective) tax implication for solar, would do little to incentivise already apprehensive utilities to purchase more solar power.

##### ***What about the cess?***

- The change in the tax regime would be accompanied by a change in use for the coal cess.
- The cess is currently contributing to the National Environment Fund (NEF), with a mandate to finance and promote clean energy initiatives.
- It is a carbon tax that will now be redirected.

##### **Use of cess:**

- Collections from the cess on coal are now expected to be used to compensate states for the loss of revenue due to the GST regime.
- Between 2010 and 2017, this cess has been used to make budgetary allocations to the ministries of New and Renewable Energy; Environment, Forests, and Climate Change; Water Resources, etc.

#### **5. Indians' money in Swiss banks hit record low at Rs. 4,500 crore**

##### ***What's in news?***

- Money parked by Indians in Switzerland's banks nearly halved to 676 Swiss francs (about Rs. 4,500 crore) in 2016 to hit a record low.
- In comparison, the total funds held by all foreign clients of Swiss banks somewhat rose to CHF 1.42 trillion or about Rs 96 lakh crore (from CHF 1.41 trillion a year ago).
- The total money of Indians fell by 45 % during 2016 to CHF 675.75 million, marking the biggest ever yearly decline in such funds.
- Swiss banks have also said Indians have "few deposits" in Swiss banks compared to other global financial hubs like Singapore and Hong Kong amid stepped-up efforts to check the black money menace.

##### **Automatic exchange of information:**

- A new framework for automatic exchange of information between Switzerland and India, to help check the black money menace.
- Adopting the dispatch on introduction of the AEOI, a global convention for automatic information exchange on tax matters, the Swiss Federal Council said on June 16 that the implementation is planned for 2018 and the first set of data should be exchanged in 2019.
- There have been several rounds of discussions between Indian and Swiss government officials on the new framework and also for expediting the pending

information requests about suspected illicit accounts of Indians in Swiss banks.

**Possible transfer:**

- SNB's official figures also do not include the money that Indians, NRIs or others might have in Swiss banks in the names of entities from different countries.
- There is a view that the Indians alleged to have parked their illicit money in Swiss banks in the past may have shifted the funds to other locations after a global clampdown began on the mighty banking secrecy practices in Switzerland.

## 6. BIZ-GDP-ANANT

**What's in news?**

- The base year of the new GDP series has been fixed at 2017-18.
- The current base year is 2011-12.

**Why revision?**

- It is necessary to review the base year every five years or so.
- Change of base year to calculate GDP is done in line with the global exercise to capture economic information accurately.
- This ensures capturing latest information and hence accurately reflects the current economic situation in the country.
- The new series is compliant with the latest United Nations guidelines in System of National Accounts-2008.

## 7. One lakh suspect firms deregistered

**Context:** Demonetisation.

**What's in news?**

- The government has cancelled the registration of one lakh companies.
- These companies had suspicious and questionable operations, identified on the basis of data mined from the deposit of bank notes following last November's demonetization policy of the govt.

**Who has the power to cancel the registration?**

- The Registrar of Companies has removed these one lakh companies
- **Quote:** Quoting Chanakya, the Prime Minister held out a sombre warning to accountants: "After the time to do the right thing has passed, time itself consumes those who didn't act."

**Basic information:**

- The Registrar of Companies
- The Registrar of Companies (ROC) is an office under the Indian Ministry of Corporate Affairs that deals with administration of the Companies Act 1956 and

Companies Act, 2013.

- There are currently 22 Registrars of Companies (ROC) operating from offices in all major states of India.
- Some states, such as Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, have two ROCs each. Section 609 of the Companies Act, 1956 tasks the ROCs with the primary duty of registering companies and LLPs- limited liability partnership, floated in the respective states and the union territories under their administration.
- **Administrative control:** The Union Government maintains administrative control over ROCs through Regional Directors. There are 7 Regional Directors, and they supervise the functioning of ROCs within their respective regions.
- **Function:** The Registrar of Company takes care of company registration (also known as incorporation) in India, completes reporting and regulation of companies and their directors and shareholders, and also oversees government reporting of various matters including the annual filing of various documents.

## 8. GST positive for India's credit profile: Moody's 'To support higher government revenue through improved tax compliance'

**What's in news?**

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime will be positive for India's credit profile as it will contribute to productivity gains and higher GDP growth as well as support higher government revenue generation through improved tax compliance, according to global ratings agency Moody's.
- The GST regime is expected to contribute to ease of doing business and accelerate new ventures.

## 9. ADB, Centre ink pact for road revamp

**What's in news?**

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India signed a \$220 million loan agreement meant to improve connectivity, transport efficiency, and safety on the State highways of Rajasthan.
- The loan is the first tranche of the \$500 million Rajasthan State Highways Investment Program, approved by ADB Board in May this year that will upgrade about 2,000 km of State highways and major district roads to two-lane or intermediate-lane standards to meet road safety requirements.

**Basic Information:**

**The Asian Development Bank (ADB):**

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a regional development bank established on 19 December 1966, which is headquartered in the Ortigas Center located in Mandaluyong, Metro Manila, Philippines.
- **Purpose:** social and economic development in Asia.

- **Motto:** Fighting poverty in Asia and Pacific.
- ADB is an official United Nations Observer.

#### Members:

- The bank admits the members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, formerly the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East or ECAFE) and non-regional developed countries.
- ADB now has 67 members, of which 48 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.
- **Voting System and shares:** The ADB was modeled closely on the World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions. At the end of 2014, Japan holds the largest proportion of shares at 15.7%. The United States holds 15.6%, China holds 6.5%, India holds 6.4%, and Australia holds 5.8%.
- **Aim:** The ADB defines itself as a social development organization that is dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration. This is carried out through investments – in the form of loans, grants and information sharing – in infrastructure, health care services, financial and public administration systems, helping nations prepare for the impact of climate change or better manage their natural resources, as well as other areas.

#### Focus Areas:

- Education
- Environment, Climate change and Disaster risk management
- Finance sector development.
- Regional co-operation and integration
- Private sector lending
- Infrastructure, including transport and communications, energy, water supply and sanitation, and urban development.

### **10. India in 88th place in money hoarded in Swiss banks**

#### ***What's in news?***

- India has slipped to the 88th place in terms of money parked by its citizens with Swiss banks, while the U.K. remains on the top
- Money officially held by Indians now accounts for a meagre 0.04 percent of total funds
- India was placed at 75th position in 2015 and at 61st in the year before that and till 2007 it used to be among top-50 countries in terms of holdings in Swiss banks.
- Automatic exchange of information between Switzerland and India helped to check the black money menace.

- The funds are the official figures and do not indicate the quantum of black money.

### **11. Integration of oil & gas majors is best avoided**

#### ***What's in news?***

- Recently in his Budget speech, Finance minister Arun Jaitley revisited the idea of an integrated oil and gas sector

#### ***Historical View of the idea***

- The idea first made its appearance during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government in 1998
- The proposal was then rejected for encouraging a monopolistic scenario in distribution of essential goods like LPG, petrol, kerosene etc.

#### ***Krishnamurthy committee :***

- The Krishnamurthy committee formed by the UPA government, in 2005, debunked the idea
- As it would reduce competition and manpower in the oil and gas sector

#### ***Why did the idea of an integrated oil major surface again in 2017?(by Arun Jaitley) Mr. Jaitley stated five major reasons for the same:***

- (1) better capacity to bear higher risks, (2) avail economies of scale, (3) create more shareholder value, (4) make better investment decisions and (5) be more competent globally.

#### ***Issues with this proposal***

##### **a. Adversely affect Employment.**

- » The Krishnamurthy Committee had earlier deduced that such integration will result in manpower reduction.
- » At a time when the government is struggling with job creation, it will be difficult to justify job losses due to restructuring.

##### **b. Will restrict competition**

- » The Indian oil market today has hardly any competition.
- » Indian Oil Market is dominated by IOCL, HPCL and BPCL.
- » Curbing competition in the past has already adversely affected the aviation and banking sectors.
- » So, any decision that creates a monopoly in the oil and gas sector must be carefully thought through.

### **12. Two commodity exchanges merge**

#### ***What's in news?***

- National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE), India's first de-mutualised online national multi-commodities



exchange, will merge with the Indian Commodity Exchange (ICEX).

**Advantages:**

- The merger will help ICEX to further strengthen its position in the commodity derivatives market in India
- The large base of warehousing facilities of CWC (Central Warehousing Corporations) with storage capacity of 9.89 million tonnes will become available to the combined entity pan India, which will help generate more liquidity due to wider participation of the larger base of active members of the combined entity.

**Indian Commodity Exchange (ICEX):**

- ICEX is a deemed recognised stock exchange providing a nationwide online trading platform in commodity derivatives. It has put in place assaying and warehousing facilities in order to facilitate deliveries. Reliance Capital is its largest investor.

**13. Tap GST for jobs data: PM-appointed panel**

**What's in news?**

**Task force led by NITI Aayog vice chairman Arvind Panagariya recommends:**

- The task force to improve India's data on jobs was set up by Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- The Centre could use lakhs of firms registered under the new Goods and Services Tax (GST) as the sample frame to capture employment data through a new Annual Survey of Enterprises.
- The traditional Employment-Unemployment Surveys carried out by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) every five years must be scrapped.

**New definition of formal employment:**

- The task force has called for a fresh definition of formal employment to include any person who gets a Form 16 reflecting income tax deductions at source.
- Workers covered under any one of the The Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948 or EPF and miscellaneous Provision Act 1952, government and other public sector employees, workers having coverage under private insurance or pension schemes of PFs, be considered formal workers

**Labour force survey:**

- A new periodic labour force survey (the first one has already begun this April) will be conducted annually to provide estimates of labour force, employment, unemployment, nature of employment and industry.
- To get more frequent employment trends data, an urban module of this survey will be updated every quarter.

**14. UDAY covers 97% of discom debt: Centre**

**What's in news?**

- About 97% of the total outstanding debt of all state power distribution companies (discoms) has been covered under the Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY), the government announced
- 86% of the restructurable debt has been revamped under the scheme

**What was the debt amount?**

- As on September 30, 2015, the total debt of all state-owned discoms was Rs. 3.95 lakh crore
- The total liability opted for restructuring by the states through the issuance of bonds was Rs. 2.69 lakh crore

**National average:**

- The national average of aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses (from all UDAY states) stood at 20.2% in FY17
- The difference between the average cost of supply (ACS) and the average revenue realised (ARR) had come down in the last year

**15. MRP to be sole price decider from Jan. 1**

**Context:**

- From January 1, 2018, the price of a packaged good would be same, whether it is a local kirana store, a mall, a five-star hotel or an airport

**What's in news?**

- The Consumer Affairs Ministry has amended the rules that govern packaged commodities to this effect.

**What the amended law says?**

- Retail sale price shall be the maximum retail price (MRP) inclusive of all taxes, with the provision to round off the price to the nearest rupee or 50 paise.
- No person shall declare different MRPs on an identical pre-packed commodity.
- Require sellers to enhance the size of letters and numerals for making declarations such as "best before date, month and year" to indicate shelf life, for making it easier for consumers to read vital information.

**E-Commerce:**

- For e-commerce marketplaces, declaring the month and year in which a commodity is manufactured or packed is not mandatory
- And if they fulfill certain conditions, they will not be held liable for whether the declarations were correct or incorrect.

## 16. Loan waivers: State government borrowings may jump to 5.30 lakh Cr

### What's in news?

- Farm loan waivers announced by several states will push up borrowings by at least Rs 1,50,000 crore and raise the cost of funds for states, rating agencies have said.
- Full funding of announced crop loan waivers through state development loans (SDL) could push up fresh issuance to Rs 5,30,000 crore in FY18 from Rs 3,80,000 crore in FY17

### Mode of funding not clear:

- It is unclear whether the loan waivers would be funded through issuance of State Development Loans (SDL) or other modes of financing, such as loans from banks to the state governments or bonds issued by the latter to the banks
- If the funding of the announced waivers of Rs 88,170 crore is done entirely through SDL in FY2018 (which is unlikely), the issuance of fresh SDL could rise to Rs 5,30,000 crore in FY18

### Effects of SDL issuance:

- The rise in SDL issuance would firm up their yields and widen their spread relative to Central Government securities (G-sec) to above 100 bps during second half of FY2018
- The expected increase in SDL issuance is likely to contribute to crowding out the private sector from accessing the bond markets at competitive rates

### Do states have desired fiscal capacity for farm loan waivers?

- Punjab government lacks the fiscal space to accommodate the full funding of the loan waiver in FY18
- Uttar Pradesh would have to curtail its budgeted capital expenditure by more than 70 per cent to accommodate loan waiver
- Karnataka government appears to have the fiscal space to fully fund the crop loan waiver in FY18
- Maharashtra state government may lack the space to raise borrowings to fund the entire loan waiver of Rs 34,000 crore in FY18, which may be on account of other spending that is not fully budgeted

### Basic Information:

#### State Development loans

- State Development Loans (SDLs) are dated securities issued by states for meeting their market borrowings requirements. In effect, the SDL are similar to the dated securities issued by the central government.

- Purpose of issuing State Development Loans is to meet the budgetary needs of state governments. Each state can borrow upto a set limit through State Development Loans.

## 17. IMF, World Bank and WTO call for removing trade barriers to boost growth

### What's in news?

- IMF, World Bank and WTO suggested for removing trade barriers and expediting economic reforms to boost global growth and employment, at G-20 Summit.

### Reason behind low employment

- According to all the three organisations, technology is the prime reason for job losses in some regions.

### Way forward:

- Deeper trade integration and supportive domestic policies is required by the leaders of the grouping(G-20).
- Deeper trade integration twinned with supportive domestic policies can help boost incomes and accelerate global growth.

### Basic Information:

#### Economic or Trade Integration:

- Economic integration is the unification of economic policies between different states through the partial or full abolition of tariff and non-tariff restrictions on trade taking place among them prior to their integration.
- This is meant in turn to lead to lower prices for distributors and consumers with the goal of increasing the level of welfare, while leading to an increase of economic productivity of the states.
- The trade stimulation effects intended by means of economic integration are part of the contemporary economic Theory of the Second Best: where, in theory, the best option is free trade, with free competition and no trade barriers whatsoever.
- Free trade is treated as an idealistic option, and although realized within certain developed states, economic integration has been thought of as the "second best" option for global trade where barriers to full free trade exist.

## 18. Two large groups bid to supply equipment for Chabahar port India keen to expedite work on the strategic facility in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan

### What's in news?

- Two major Indian conglomerates have bid for supplying key equipment for the strategic Chabahar Port in Iran, while the process is on to expand financial eligibility criteria to attract more bidders.
- India is keen on expediting work on this port, located in the Sistan-Baluchistan province on the energy-rich Persian Gulf nation's southern coast that can be easily accessed from India's West coast, bypassing Pakistan.

## 19. 5 States, a UT sign pact with Centre on e-Marketplace

### ***What's in news?***

- In a spirit of cooperative federalism, 5 States and a Union Territory (UT) on Tuesday formally adopted the Centre's initiative called the Government e-Marketplace (GeM)
- **Aim :** GeM ensures that public procurement of goods and services in India worth more than Rs. 5 lakh crore annually is carried out through the online platform for transparency and to eliminate corruption.
- The States and the UT that signed an MoU with the Centre include Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Telangana, Puducherry and Arunachal Pradesh.
- GeM can enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement.

## 20. Sugar import duty increased to 50% to support domestic prices

### ***What's in news?***

- The government on Monday raised the import duty on sugar to 50 per cent from 40 per cent to discourage dumping of cheaper supplies from abroad and as local prices stabilise after a spike earlier this marketing year
- The move will improve the ability of sugar mills to pay farmers for their supplies of cane, according to the sugar industry

### ***Relief for producers:***

- The hike in the duty comes as a relief for mills amid slowing domestic demand, especially after demonetisation.
- Cost of production is also increased due to high cane prices.
- This will help the sugar industry pay the cane price (fair and remunerative price), which has been raised by 11 per cent for the marketing year starting October 2017.

### ***Sugar import:***

- In April this year, the government had allowed duty-free imports of raw sugar up to five lakh tonnes to improve domestic availability.
- It was due to fear that a drop in domestic output in 2016-17 could trigger a spiral in prices to irrational levels.
- This was for the first time since 2012 that imports of sugar under the open general license (OGL) was allowed at zero duty, albeit in limited quantity.

## 21. Railways to promote small entrepreneurs in big way

### ***What's in news?***

- Indian Railways has taken a big step in a plan to promote micro and small enterprises.
- It has reserved 358 items including cleaning apparatus, stationery and leather items exclusively for procurement

from the MSE sector.

- Besides, the sector has been exempted from paying tender cost and earnest money deposit for participating in the railway tender.

### ***Other changes:***

- MSEs will be now encouraged to participate in the business of maintenance and operation of rolling stock and also in procurement of cables, linen, paints, coupler body, wall panelling, cutting and drilling machines.

### ***Taking up advice:***

- Recently the national transporter has organised a meeting to increase the participation of micro and small enterprises in railway procurement.
- The meeting was attended by Railway Minister and senior officials from the ministry and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) besides MSE vendors.
- The Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO), the research wing of the Railways, was advised to extend its support to MSE vendors on technical issues and SIDBI was advised to provide financial support to MSEs.

## 22. Bitcoin trade may come under SEBI

### ***What's in news?***

- The government is considering the introduction of a regulatory regime for virtual or crypto currencies, such as Bitcoin, that would enable the levy of the Goods and Services Tax on their sale.
- The new regime may possibly bring their trading under the oversight of the stock market regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- In India, they are neither legal nor illegal.

### ***Why such a move?***

- The idea is to treat such currency in a manner similar to gold sold digitally, so that it can be traded on registered exchanges in a bid to "promote" a formal tax base, while keeping a tab on their use for illegal activities such as money laundering, terror funding and drug trafficking.
- **Crypto-Currency:** Crypto-currency is a digital currency which allows transacting parties to remain anonymous while conforming that the transaction is a valid one. It is not owned or controlled by any institution – government or private.
- Eg: Bitcoin, Ethereum and Ripple.

## 23. PM's task force recommends scrapping 5-yearly job survey

### ***What's in news?***

- The Prime Minister-appointed task force headed by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Arvind Panagariya, in the report has recommended that traditional Employment-

Unemployment Surveys carried out by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) every five years be scrapped.

- Other measures recommended:
- A new periodic labour force survey to provide estimates of labour force, employment, unemployment, nature of employment and industry.
- To get more frequent employment trends data, an urban module of this survey will be updated every quarter.
- A time use survey should also be conducted at three year intervals to provide data on time spent in various occupations and non-market activities. This survey will collect information on how individuals allocate their time over a specified time period, usually a day or a week.
- The survey will help track how time spent by households has been changing and measure women's participation in unpaid work.
- Centre can tap the GST Network database as a sample frame for a new annual survey of enterprises.

#### **24. APG meet on money laundering in Colombo**

##### ***What's in news?***

##### ***Asia Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering meet:***

- **Main issue focus:** Policy frameworks on checking terror financing. The Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) initiatives on curbing money laundering and terror funding in different parts of the world will also be discussed.
- Meeting to be held in Colombo.

#### **25. WPI inflation slows to 11-month low of 0.9% in June**

##### ***What's in news?***

- Wholesale price inflation slowed to a 11-month low of 0.90% in June due to subdued food inflation and weak manufacturing prices, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

##### ***WPI components weight:***

- **Manufactured Products:** Wiegthage-64.97
- **Primary Articles:** Wiegthage-20.12
- **Fuel & Power:** Wiegthage-14.91

#### **26. USIBC plans to break free from Chamber**

##### ***What's in news?***

- Delinking from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- The U.S. India Business Council (USIBC) has decided to delink from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and function as an autonomous entity
- MasterCard, Pepsi, Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Federal Express are on the board that decided that the USIBC must maintain its policy and financial autonomy

in the face of Chamber of Commerce interference

##### ***More about the USIBC***

- The U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) was formed in 1975 as a business advocacy organization to enlighten and encourage the private sectors of both India and United States to enhance investment flows
- The organization serves as a direct link between business and Government leaders, resulting in increased trade and investment to strengthen ties between the two nations

#### **27. Plea in SC seeks curbs on cryptocurrencies**

##### ***What's in news?***

- The Supreme Court has asked the Reserve Bank of India to consider the issues raised by a PIL petitioner seeking urgent steps to restrain the sale and purchase of illegal cryptocurrencies or "Virtual Currency" (VCs) like bitcoins.

##### ***PIL was filed in SC to seek curb on cryptocurrencies on following grounds:***

- Virtual currency was being traded anonymously over the Internet and used for a host of anti-national and illegal activities, from terror funding to illicit trade of arms and drugs and so on.
- The use of the parallel currency is having a negative impact on Indian currency.
- The online use of this currency, was without any border restrictions or geographical constraints, resulting in danger to the integrity and sovereignty of the nation.

#### **28. IBBI notifies rules for bankruptcy probe**

##### ***What's in news?***

- IBBI, which is implementing the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), has notified the regulations for inspection and investigation of service providers registered with it.

##### ***New regulation:***

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has powers to start probe against service providers registered with it without intimating them.
- As per the regulations, the investigation authority has to serve a notice intimating the entity concerned about the probe at least ten days in advance.
- However, the requirement could be done away with on grounds such as apprehensions that the records of the particular service provider might be destroyed before the probe starts.
- Insolvency professional agencies, professionals, entities and information utility are considered as service providers under the Code.



## 29. Industrial policy, clusters for manufacturing on anvil

### Context:

- The process for formulation of a new industrial policy has been initiated and consultations are being held with stakeholders.

### What's in news?

- Manufacturing clusters: The government is preparing a national plan for manufacturing clusters with an aim to bring about convergence in development of industrial areas by central and state governments.

## 30. When too much is too little

### What's in news?

### Food wastage in India

- Food wastage means, Food is lost or wasted throughout the supply chain, from initial agricultural production to final household consumption. The losses, represent "a waste of resources used in production such as land, water, energy and inputs, increasing the green gas emissions in vain".
- According to FAO, "One third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally, which amounts to about 1.3 billion tons per year.
- India ranked 97th among 118 countries in the Global Hunger Index for 2016
- According to one estimate, 21 million tonnes of wheat are wasted in India every year

### Reasons behind food-wastage?

- It can be linked to people's behaviour.
- Absence of an effective distribution mechanism and legal framework.
- Due to food's perishability.
- Poor supply-chain management, results in significant wastage, both at pre- and post-harvest stages
- A recent study by the IIM, Calcutta, revealed that only 10% of food is covered by cold storage facilities in India

### Food wastage has multiple socio-economic and environmental impacts.

### Social

- Wastage of food is not less than a social delinquency.
- Though hunger cannot be tackled directly by preventing food wastage, food that is wasted in our country can feed many hungry people.

### Environmental

- The increasing wastage results in land degradation by about 45%, mainly due to deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices, and excessive groundwater extraction.
- The energy spent over wasted food results in 3 billion

tonnes of carbon dioxide production every year.

- Decay also leads to harmful emission of other gases in the atmosphere; for instance, decaying of rice produces methane.
- Food waste emissions have a major impact on climate change and result in greater carbon footprint

### Economic

- Wastage results in national economic loss.
- Monetary value of the loss in terms of wastage, accounts to ₹58,000 crore every year–The CSR Journal.

### Initiatives in India?

- There are many civil society, private sector and community initiatives aimed at distributing food among the poor.
- National Food Security Act, 2013 securing availability of food grains for two-thirds of the 1.3 billion population.
- India Food Banking Network (IFBN), promoting the concept of collaborative consumption with support from the private sector and civil society organisations.
- Such initiatives, creating networks and channels of distribution between those who have surplus food and those who are in need of them, are necessary.

### Global best practices:

- 1996 Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act in the U.S, encourage donation of food and grocery products that meet quality and labelling standards
- France, first country in the world to ban supermarkets from destroying unsold food, forcing them instead to donate it to charities or food banks or send it to the farmers to be used as fertilisers in crop production.

### Way forward?

- Devise a national-level strategy to combat the problem so that surplus of food can be turned into an advantage instead of resulting in wastage.
- The government can create a time-bound task force under Niti Aayog, with experts from different sectors, to frame a national policy to address the issue, which can recommend the legal framework to support initiatives to reduce food loss and waste.
- Hunger and food wastage are two sides of the coin. The cycle of hunger cannot be broken without channelising the wasted food to help the needy.

## 31. Does a minimum wage kill jobs?

### Context:

- The Union Cabinet is expected to approve a bill that, mandates a universal minimum wage.
- The code empowers the Centre to set a minimum wage to help poor, unskilled workers earn more.

**Problems with minimum wage**

- Economists warned that price floors prevent the available supply of goods from being fully sold.
- So, the minimum wage would logically hurt workers by increasing unemployment

**Minimum wage and unemployment:**

- Famous 1993 study by David Card and Alan B. Krueger found that a rise in the minimum wage in New Jersey actually decreased unemployment.
- "Seattle's Minimum Wage Experience 2015-16", a 2017 found that since the city raised its minimum wage in 2015, unemployment dropped from 4.3% to 3.3%.
- Since then, a flurry of studies has concluded that a minimum wage has either no, or very little, negative effect on employment.
- But another paper, found that employment among the youth in Denmark decreased by one-third when they attained the age at which their minimum wage increases by 40%.

**The real effect:**

- The minimum wage increases unemployment, except when it is set below the market price for labour; or only marginally higher, in which case the minimum wage enhances the bargaining power of workers. But figuring out, and also periodically adjusting, the wage rate at which the worker benefits is often impractical.

**Other effects of minimum wage?**

- Even when it looks like the minimum wage has no negative effect on employment, it can have other unintended effects.
- Companies, for example, instead of firing workers, may employ them for fewer hours, which in turn will affect the quality of their services
- "Minimum Wage and Restaurant Hygiene Violation", a 2017 paper found that hygiene violations by restaurants increased significantly after a rise in the minimum wage as the restaurants tried to cut down on cleaning-staff expenses.

**32. After globalisation's promise****Context:**

- 'Hyperglobalisation' has been used to describe the dramatic increase in international trade witnessed for about a decade and a half from the early 1990s up to the global financial crisis of 2008
- The imagery intended is one of an increasing connectedness among nations leading to a virtuous cycle of economic expansion.

**History of Globalisation:**

- Starting some time in the last quarter of the 19th century, for close to 50 years, the world saw an

expansion in trade that was actually as great or even greater than during the recently concluded phase

- Then had also occurred an unprecedented movement of capital and of people
- British capital flowed into building the railways across the world, immigrants moved from Europe to the United States and Asian labour was moved to the sites of deployment of western capital
- The phase of high trade starting 1870 came to an end with the First World War and was to revive, slowly, only after the Second
- Then, following the collapse of East European communism in the early 1990s, there was a resurgence in global trade
- Now even this phase has somewhat abruptly ended with the global financial crisis

**Role of technology:**

- 19th century globalisation was underpinned by technological advances that facilitated trade.
- It may as well be said that trade expanded as the demand for goods grew.

**The slowdown and India:**

- If the world economy is set to grow slowly for the foreseeable future, a premise of much of the economic policy in India since 1991 would have to be replaced.
- The shift that has taken place is most visible in the IT industry.
- Now, "bricks and mortar" is no longer something to be spurned and soiling our hands may be part of the business of earning our living for some time to come.

**What does India need to do?**

- Recognising the diminished tempo of globalisation, India's economic policymakers must address the growth of the home market.
- This means increasing the demand for goods and services emanating from within the country.
- There is a case for cutting the repo rate now, but its effects are doubtful.

**Way forward:**

- Independently of the 'twin balance sheet problem', Keynesian economics has long recognised that lowering the rate of interest may not do much for private investment if the expected rate of return is depressed.
- The slowing of both global trade and domestic manufacturing may have had precisely this effect by lowering the long-term expectations held by private investors.
- Buoying up of flagging demand can be done through public investment.

- Infrastructure is unique in that spending on it raises aggregate demand and when it actually comes on stream, it raises the productivity of investment elsewhere in the economy.
- 'Roads and bridges' are a metaphor for the public infrastructure that the Indian economy can fruitfully absorb today.

### 33. New social security net planned

#### What's in news?

- The Union government plans to introduce a universal social security network for workers in both the informal and formal sectors.
- The scheme will be rolled out in a phased manner.

#### Amnesty scheme

- The government brought in an amnesty scheme for employers who were earlier not part of the Provident Fund regime.
- 20 lakh new employees were included as part of the amnesty scheme and 80 lakh contract labourers, including construction workers and those engaged by the public sector units at the Centre and the States, were also registered.
- **Key fact:** EPF security network currently covered 4.8 crore contributory members and had a corpus of over ₹10.43 lakh crore.

### 34. Think beyond loan waivers

#### Current scenario of Indian Agriculture

- Indian agriculture is characterised by low scale and low productivity.
- About 85% of the operational landholdings in the country are below 5 acres and 67% farm households survive on an average landholding of one acre.
- More than 50% of area under cultivation does not have access to irrigation.
- Agriculture income generated is not adequate to meet farmers' needs.

#### Increasing trends of debt burden

- The share of institutional loans disbursed to agriculture and allied sectors has risen from 9% in 2000-01 to 31.4% in 2015-16.
- The amount of short-term institutional loans for agriculture exceeds the total cost of inputs including hired labour. This indicates that a part of crop loans is spent on non-agricultural purposes.
- According to NSS surveys on Investment and Debt (NSS-I&D), loans taken by cultivators from non-institutional sources is rising faster than from institutional sources.
- Much of the growth in household demand in rural India has been debt-ridden and not supported by growth in income.

#### Reasons:

- Modern agriculture requires investment in farm machinery and inputs like seed, fertiliser, agri-chemicals, diesel and hired labour.
- Savings generated from unremunerative crop enterprise are inadequate for such investments.
- Rising expenses on health, education, social ceremonies and non-food items put additional financial demand on farm families.

#### Loan waiver scheme

- States like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and Karnataka have rolled out farm loan waiver schemes for immediate relief to farmers.
- The demand for such measures is spreading to other States too.
- Ultimate goal is to lessen the debt burden of distressed and vulnerable farmers and help them qualify for fresh loans.
- The success of the loan waiver lies on the extent to which the benefits reach the needy farmers.

#### Drawbacks of loan waiver scheme

- It covers only a tiny fraction of farmers. According to 2012-13 NSS-SAS, 48% of the agricultural households did not have any outstanding loan.
- Out of the indebted agricultural households, about 39% borrowed only from non-institutional sources.
- The farmers investing from their own savings and borrowing from non-institutional sources are equally vulnerable, but are outside the purview of loan waiver.
- Provides only a partial relief because half of the institutional borrowing of a cultivator is for non-farm purposes.
- Many household has multiple loans either from different sources or in the name of different family members, which entitles it to multiple loan waiving.
- Loan waiving excludes agricultural labourers who are weaker than cultivators in bearing the economic distress.
- It severely erodes the credit culture, with dire long-run consequences to the banking business.
- Scheme is prone to serious exclusion and inclusion errors, as evidenced by the Comptroller and Auditor General's findings in the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008.

#### Implementation errors

- According to the CAG report, 13.46% of the accounts, eligible for the benefits under the scheme were not considered by the lending institutes while preparing the list of eligible farmers.

- In 8.5% of the cases, the beneficiaries were not eligible for either debt waiver or debt relief but were granted the benefits.
- Around 28% of the beneficiaries were not issued debt relief certificates which would have entitled them to fresh loans.

#### Other issues with loan waiver scheme:

- Implications for other developmental expenditure, having a much larger multiplier effect on the economy.
- A similar amount spent on improvement of agriculture infrastructure and other developmental activities would create a base for future growth and development of the sector.
- Loan waiving can provide a short-term relief to a limited section of farmers;
- It has a meagre chance of bringing farmers out of the vicious cycle of indebtedness.
- There is no concrete evidence on reduction in agrarian distress following the first spell of all-India farm loan waiver in 2008.

#### Sustainable solutions

- More inclusive alternative approach is to identify the vulnerable farmers based on certain criteria and give an equal amount as financial relief to the vulnerable and distressed families.
- Raise income from agricultural activities and enhance access to non-farm sources of income
- Strengthen the repayment capacity of the farmers by improving and stabilising their income.
- Improved technology, expansion of irrigation coverage, and crop diversification towards high-value crops are appropriate measures for raising productivity and farmers' income.
- Another major source of increase in farmers' income is remunerative prices for farm produce.
- More public funding and support.
- Removal of old regulations and restrictions on agriculture to enable creation of a liberalised environment for investment, trading and marketing.
- States must undertake and sincerely implement long-pending reforms in the agriculture sector with urgency.

### **35. Taxing Body Parts**

#### Context:

- Unfortunately, items of luxury, whose deprivation causes no challenges to human existence is being prioritised and charged less compared to aids and appliances that are essential items for persons with disabilities.

#### Current tax bracket:

- The GST on aids and appliances for persons with disabilities uses such as Crutches, callipers, hearing aids, walking frames, etc. would attract a GST of 5 per cent.
- But the items used to embellish your body, will attract less and in some cases, no GST.
- Kajal, kumkum, bindi, bangles and even human hair are not taxed at all, and gold and diamonds will attract a GST of just 3 per cent.
- Puja samagri like rudraksha, prasadam, panchamrut, cotton wicks etc. are also exempt from GST.
- There is a lower slab of 0.25 per cent for items like unpolished stones.
- Rationale: It is to enable the domestic manufacturer to claim input tax credit for raw materials used in the manufacture of these products.

#### Impact on the disabled and other vulnerable sections:

- Aids and appliances that are essential items for persons with disabilities for their daily routine, access opportunities of education or employment or enjoyment of other rights or the discharge of duties as a responsible citizen.
- The fact that without aids and appliances the disabled are deprived of all these and forced into a dis-empowered state of seclusion

#### Earlier tax regime

- Items like Braille printer, refreshable Braille display and Braille note-taker, talking watches and clocks, audio labelling devices, DAISY players are entirely imported items and did not attract any taxes earlier.
- There are no domestic manufacturers of these products.
- Raw materials like aluminium extrusions, square tubes and round tubes of aluminium used in the manufacture of artificial limbs and many rehabilitation aids were exempt from the earlier tax regime.
- It needs to be underlined that input tax credit is, in any case, merely a by-product of the tax channels' unification, the weeding out of redundancy and the cascading taxes rife in the system that existed earlier.

#### Possible Solution:

- If the intent of the government is to protect the domestic industry, the government has to take the following concrete steps.
- Help Indian manufacturers build capacity by way of a technology incubator.
- Extend existing indigenous manufacturers' scattered production centres into a nation-wide network of distribution, customisation and servicing.



**Basic Information:**

- **GST Council:** The GST Council aims to develop a harmonized national market of goods and services. The composition of the GST Council includes:
  - The Union Finance Minister (as Chairman),
  - The Union Minister of State in charge of Revenue or Finance, and
  - The Minister in charge of Finance or Taxation or any other Minister, nominated by each state government.
- The decisions of the GST Council will be made by three-fourth majority of the votes cast. The centre shall have one-third of the votes cast, and the states together shall have two-third of the votes cast.

**The GST Council will make recommendations on:**

- Taxes, cesses, and surcharges to be subsumed under the GST;
- Goods and services which may be subject to, or exempt from GST;
- The threshold limit of turnover for application of GST;
- Rates of GST;
- Model GST laws, principles of levy, apportionment of IGST and principles related to place of supply;
- Special provisions with respect to the eight north eastern states, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Uttarakhand; and
- Other related matters.

**36. Agrarian crisis: the challenge of a small farmer economy****Context:**

- problems faced by farmers.

**Importance of Agricultural sector:**

- With a large population to feed, imports will not solve our problem if there is a severe drought and food shortage.
- Though agriculture now accounts for less than 15% of gross domestic product (GDP), it is still the main source of livelihood for nearly half our population.

**Reason behind the current Agrarian crisis**

- **(1). Landless Farmers**
  - Around 83% of rural households are either entirely landless or own less than 1 hectare of land
  - Farmers' tiny plots of land can no longer sustain whole families, especially in rain-fed agriculture, which accounts for two-thirds of India's total cultivable area
- **(2). Shortage of money**
  - Landless or marginal farmers lack the resources to either buy or lease more land or invest in farm infrastructure like irrigation, power, farm machinery, etc.

- About 52% of agricultural households are estimated to be in debt, and the average size of household debt is Rs 47,000
- **(3). Different kind of Risks**
  - **Weather:** The large majority of small farmers are dependent on the rains. A weak monsoon or even a delayed monsoon means a significant loss of output
  - **Soil:** The next risk is weak soil fertility, pests and plant diseases
  - **Price:** The better the crop the lower would be the price
- Net income sometimes collapses if there is a very good crop of perishables
- MSP benefits large traders instead of farmers:
  - For foodgrains like rice and wheat, government procurement at the minimum support price is supposed to protect the farmer.
  - But MSP benefits the large traders who sell grain to the government.
  - Small farmers typically do not have enough marketable surplus to justify the cost of transporting the crop to government corporations in the towns.
  - In the case of other crops, Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) have the opposite effect.
  - Farmers have to sell their produce through auctions in regulated markets controlled by cartels of licensed traders.
  - These licences give traders oligopolistic market power

**Solution to farmer problems: Cooperative farming systems.**

- There are several variants of cooperation ranging from collective action in accessing credit, acquiring inputs and marketing to production cooperatives.
- This also includes land pooling; labour pooling; joint investment, joint water management and joint production.

**Advantage of Cooperative farming systems.**

The advantages of aggregating small farms into larger, voluntary, cooperatives include.

- (1) Greater capacity to undertake lumpy investment in irrigation and farm machinery,
- (2) More efficient farming practices,
- (3) Greater bargaining power and better terms in the purchase or leasing of land,
- (4) Access to credit,
- (5) Purchase of inputs and the sale of produce.

### 37. WCO lauds India's trade facilitation plan

#### ***What's in news?***

- The World Customs Organisation (WCO) describes India's National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP) as a 'best practice' other nations can adopt
- The WCO is impressed by the fact that as many as 51 of the 76 activities mentioned in the NTFAP "go beyond" the implementation requirements of the World Trade Organisation's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)
- The TFA is meant to ease Customs norms for faster flow of goods across borders- had come into effect in February 2017

#### ***What is NTFAP?***

- It aims to cut cargo release time for exports and imports as part of measures to boost goods trade
- The NTFAP is to be implemented between 2017 and 2020, is part of India's efforts to improve its ease of doing business ranking.

#### ***Basic Information:***

#### ***World Customs Organization***

- The World Customs Organization (WCO) is an intergovernmental organization headquartered in Brussels, Belgium
- It has 182 member nations (including India) that manage more than 98% of world trade.
- The WCO is noted for its work in areas covering the development of international conventions, instruments, and tools on topics such as commodity classification, valuation, rules of origin, collection of customs revenue, supply chain security, international trade facilitation, customs enforcement activities, combating counterfeiting in support of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), drugs enforcement, illegal weapons trading, integrity promotion, and delivering sustainable capacity building to assist with customs reforms and modernization.
- The WCO maintains the international Harmonized System (HS) goods nomenclature, and administers the technical aspects of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements on Customs Valuation and Rules of Origin.

#### ***Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)***

- The TFA is the WTO's first-ever multilateral accord that aims to simplify customs regulations for the cross-border movement of goods. It was outcome of WTO's 9th Bali (Indonesia) ministerial package of 2013.
- The agreement includes provisions for Lowering import tariffs and agricultural subsidies: It will make it easier for developing countries to trade with the developed world in global markets.

- Abolish hard import quotas: Developed countries would abolish hard import quotas on agricultural products from the developing world and instead would only be allowed to charge tariffs on amount of agricultural imports exceeding specific limits.
- Reduction in red tape at international borders: It aims to reduce red-tapism to facilitate trade by reforming customs bureaucracies and formalities.

### 38. Digital trade games

#### ***Context:***

- Need for an efficient 'data flow' strategy for India.
- Many countries are placing great limitations on digital policymaking in the name of promoting e-commerce.
- Few people understand the real nature of the digital issues involved.
- And the relevant policy requirements of the present and the future.

#### ***Wrong consideration***

- Free global flow of data is wrongly presented as being the same as the free flow of information
- The data that underpins global media, or personal/ social communication networks is one thing
- And the data basic to banking, retailing, the defence forces, public services, health, education services, etc is an entirely different matter

#### ***Needs to be done?***

- Instead of seeing it as a global flow of data, one must see it as a global flow of intelligence

#### ***Nature of digital intelligence***

- First, digital intelligence is going to be by far the single most important economic resource
- Whoever has it controls everything
- Second, digital intelligence tends to concentrate strongly around a few poles or centres

#### ***Effects of digital intelligence on future world***

- The nature of digital intelligence will result in every sector getting organised around a very few centres of sectoral digital intelligence
- Countries will be forced to negotiate with countries which supply most of their A.I. software, for example, China or the United States
- **Why:** to essentially become that country's economic dependent
- **How:** by taking in welfare subsidies in exchange for letting the "parent" nation's A.I. companies continue to profit from the dependent country's users
- Such economic arrangements would reshape today's

geopolitical alliances

#### **Digital Industrialisation in India**

- India must consider a digital industrialisation strategy
- **Why:** to ensure that digitally-induced efficiencies in every sector to be retained within India and not allowed to flow out without any obstruction
- This will not only ensure that our economy and society are not controlled from outside but also protect existing jobs and create many more new ones.
- But if it allows such outflows, it will soon find itself on the wrong side of digital colonisation.

#### **Requirements for starting a Digital Industrialisation in India.**

- This requires an independent digital policy, including protections for India's digital industry.

### **39. Digital trade games**

#### **Constitutional scheme regarding Taxation**

- The Central government was given the power to tax income other than agricultural income, and levy indirect taxes in the form of customs and excise duties.
- The State governments were given the sole power to tax the sale of goods and the entry of goods into a State.

#### **Why this division?**

- This division of fiscal responsibility was made with a view to making States self-sufficient.
- And with a view to supplying to regional powers the flexibility needed to govern according to the respective needs of their people.

#### **Functions of GST Council**

- This council will recommend a number of things.
- the list of taxes that will be subsumed by the GST.
- the goods and services that will be exempt from the levy of tax.
- the rates at which tax shall be levied.

#### **Virtual Veto of the Union Government in the GST Council.**

- The council's decisions will require a three-fourths majority.
- But the Central government's votes will have a weightage of one-third of the total votes cast.
- This gives a virtual veto to the Union Government.

#### **Confusion regarding GST Council.**

- The newly introduced Article 279A describes Council's decisions as "recommendations" (advisory).
- Due to this advisory recommendations, States can choose to ignore the council's advice, by levying additional tax not only on the sale of goods but also on services and manufacturing.

- On the other hand, if these recommendations are treated as obligatory, we are left with a situation where States would have altogether surrendered their fiscal autonomy to the Central government.

### **40. Finance Ministry introduces bill to replace Banking Regulation Ordinance**

#### **The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2017**

- It seeks to amend the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 and replace the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017
- It aims to authorise the RBI to direct banking companies to resolve the problem of stressed assets

#### **Greater power to RBI**

- The measure in the bill allows the RBI to initiate insolvency resolution process on specific stressed assets.
- The RBI would also be empowered to issue other directions for resolution, appoint or approve for appointment, authorities or committees to advise the banking companies for stressed asset resolution.

### **41. CAC adopts Codex norms for three spices**

#### **What's in news?**

- The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) adopted three Codex standards for black, white and green pepper, cumin and thyme paving the way for an universal agreement on identifying quality spices in various countries.
- The CAC cleared these standards at its session held in Geneva recently.
- **Why?** The adoption of Codex standards for the three spices, it is pointed out, will help evolve a common standardisation process for their global trade and availability of high quality, clean and safe spices to the world.

#### **What is 'Food code'?**

- The Codex Alimentarius or "Food Code" is a collection of standards, guidelines and codes of practice adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
- The Commission, also known as CAC, is the central part of the joint FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations)/WHO (World Health Organisation) Food Standards Programme.
- It was established by FAO and WHO to protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade.

#### **CAC and India:**

- The CAC move is considered a crucial endorsement of the India's initiatives to usher in a common standard across the globe for spices trade.
- The adoption of Codex standards by CAC must be read in the context of the efforts put in by New Delhi in

arriving at a common code for spices trade.

- India conducted three sessions of Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) at Kochi (2014), Goa (2015) and Chennai (2017).
- The Chennai session especially succeeded in achieving this consensus. Subsequently, these drafts were placed before the CAC and the member-nations adopted them by consensus.

#### 42. 'India's concerns slowing RCEP talks'

##### India's concern

- India's concern is regarding the potential adverse impact of eliminating duties on its local manufacturing and job creation
- Effect: It said to be (by other members) slowing down the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations

##### Other members view:

- According to some of the members, most RCEP countries have agreed to quickly eliminate barriers affecting goods trade
- India is seeking more time to do so, and that is delaying the negotiations

##### India's View

- According to CII, many countries were urging greater focus on duty elimination
- But India ought to highlight the need for removal of non-tariff barriers including those in China

#### 43. Most private hospitals evade tax: CAG

##### Highlights of "A performance audit of India's private hospitals" by CAG

- Majority of the institutions is evading tax.
- Data on 'non-filers' of income tax was available only in three states — West Bengal, Assam and Gujarat.
- Delhi, Kerala, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu had no process of identifying hospitals that were evading tax.
- Most private hospitals and practitioners did not submit valid Permanent Account Numbers (PAN).
- **Key Fact:** The private sector accounts for 80% of out patient care and 60% of in patient care in the country.

#### 44. 'Regulators shouldn't restrain innovation'

##### What's in news?

- Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant opinion: India's financial sector regulators should stop hindering ideas in the financial technology sector and instead opt for a regulatory sandbox approach to nurture innovative financial technology applications.

##### What is a regulatory sandbox?

- A regulatory sandbox is an experimental oversight

mechanism for innovative products and services that do not fall into an existing regulatory regime or cut across traditional regulators' domains.

- For example when you make payment transfers or remittances, assess your personal finance or insurance needs, compare financial products that you are considering buying or to track the performance of your investments.
- Such innovations are permitted to operate for a limited period of time at a limited scale to understand its efficacy and implications, so that the best alternatives for regulation can be evolved based on concerns that emerge.
- The (sandbox) option can be a great way to unlock innovations for mass public adoption, because a regulatory sandbox balances the twin objectives of nurturing financial innovation and safeguarding consumer interests.

##### Practice elsewhere:

- Globally, regulatory sandboxes have been introduced in the U.K., Singapore, Australia, Malaysia and UAE. Each country has a certain "target group" for which sandboxing is done.
- All these countries have so far created a sandboxed environment to support financial institutions (FIs) and fintech firms

##### Allowing the start-ups:

- There are over 600 start-ups in the country in the financial technology (fintech) space
- Letting them operate in a 'live, but controlled environment with some regulations relaxed, will provide a solid evidence base' on their strengths and weaknesses.
- More than 30 of those start-ups are focused on the peer-to-peer lending space alone and their market potential is expected to reach \$5 billion by 2020.
- Several start-ups are working in areas such as virtual currencies like Bitcoins, Blockchain-based settlements and so on.
- The total fintech market in India is estimated to be worth \$8 billion and is expected to grow to about \$14 billion by 2020. India is ranked amongst the top ten FinTech markets globally.

#### 45. NPCI gets RBI nod to operate Bharat Bill Payment System

##### What's in news?

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), the umbrella organisation for all retail payment systems, has said it has received a final nod from the Reserve Bank of India to function as the Bharat Bill Payment Central Unit



(BBPCU) and operate the Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS).

- The final clearance from RBI comes almost a year after NPCI launched the BBPS pilot project to make payment of utility bills easier.

#### **Basic information:**

##### **BBPS:**

- The Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS) is an RBI conceptualised system driven by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). It is a one-stop payment platform for all bills, providing an interoperable and accessible "Anytime Anywhere" bill payment service to customers across the country with certainty, reliability and safety of transactions.
- Payments through BBPS may be made using cash, transfer cheques and electronic modes. Bill aggregators and banks, who will function as operating units, will carry out these transactions for the customers.

##### **NPCI:**

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is an umbrella organization for all retail payments system in India. It was set up with the guidance and support of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Indian Banks' Association (IBA). NPCI has ten promoter banks.

#### **46. 'Scheme for banks not applied as envisaged'**

##### **Context:**

- According to a report by the CAG, the Centre's 'Indradhanush' scheme to recapitalise public sector banks (PSBs) based on their performance was not implemented in a manner envisaged.

##### **Highlights of the report:**

- As per the scheme, a portion of the recapitalisation was to be based on the bank's performance. However, this was not followed during disbursement of funds.
- The parameters used to determine whether banks required capital changed from year to year and in some years the rationale for capitalising banks was not even recorded. Hence, the scheme's target of raising Rs. 1.1 lakh crore from the markets by 2018-19 was not likely to be met.
- Also, some banks that did not qualify for additional capital as per the decided norms, were infused with capital, and in some cases, banks were infused with more capital than required.

##### **Background:**

- Gross NPAs with PSBs had risen sharply in recent years, from Rs. 2.27 lakh crore as of March 31, 2014 to about Rs. 5.4 lakh crore at the end of March 2016.

##### **Mission Indradhanush:**

- In 2015, under the Indradhanush plan, the government had announced capital infusion of ₹70,000 crore in

public sector banks for four years, starting from 2015-16. In the first two financial years, ₹25,000 crore had been earmarked per year with ₹10,000 crore to be disbursed in each of the remaining two years. However, credit rating agencies had pointed out that the sum was insufficient as banks needed to meet Basel-III norms as well as make provisions for rising bad loans.

- The mission includes the seven key reforms of appointments, board of bureau, capitalisation, de-stressing, empowerment, framework of accountability and governance reforms.

#### **47. India among top nations with potential for digital payments': Digital Evolution Index**

##### **Context:**

- India has emerged strong, exhibiting a high potential in terms of digital payments and has been categorised under the "break out" segment among 60 countries, according to the Digital Evolution Index 2017.

##### **Digital Evolution Index:**

- The Fletcher School at Tufts University in partnership with Mastercard, unveiled the Digital Evolution Index 2017.
- The Index is a comprehensive research that tracks the progress countries have made in developing their digital economies and integrating connectivity into the lives of billions.
- The Index measures four key drivers – supply, consumer demand, institutional environment, and innovation.
- With nearly half of the world's population online, the research maps the development of 60 countries, demonstrating their competitiveness and market potential for further digital economic growth.

##### **What is break out segment?**

- The 'break out' segment refers to countries that have relatively lower absolute levels of digital advancement, yet remain poised for growth and are attractive to investors by virtue of their potential.

##### **Performance of India:**

- India has been experiencing rapid strides of progress with an evolving payments landscape, catalysed by the government's demonetisation decision.
- The government's endeavour to boost the acceptance infrastructure coupled with a host of other economic reforms have further hastened the momentum for the country's journey towards a cashless society.
- Adoption of digital payments has also witnessed a massive growth with a shift in behaviour change as more people adopt digital payments in daily life.

- With new players foraying into the market and an entire gamut of solutions for alternate payments, the India payment ecosystem is growing each day.

#### **48. Reserve Bank may cut rate at policy review meet**

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is expected to reduce the key policy rate or the repo rate by 25 basis points (bps) to 6% in at its monetary policy review meeting scheduled for August 2 while maintaining neutral stance on interest rates.
- If the RBI does cut repo rate, this could only be the second such instance by the monetary policy committee (MPC) since it was established in October 2016.
- The expectation of a rate cut is mainly due to decreasing retail inflation, which eased to 1.54% in June — a record low, after reading 2.18% in May.
- The benign consumer inflation reading for successive months has made economists to believe that inflation may have fallen to 4% on a durable basis.

#### **Prelims Fact :**

#### **BASIC INFORMATION**

##### **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)**

- Is a specified minimum fraction of the total deposits of customers, which commercial banks have to hold as reserves either in cash or as deposits with the central bank.

##### **Statutory liquidity ratio (SLR)**

- Is the Indian government term for reserve requirement that the commercial banks in India require to maintain in the form of gold, government approved securities before providing credit to the customers.
- Statutory Liquidity Ratio is determined by Reserve Bank of India maintained by banks in order to control the expansion of bank credit.
- The SLR is determined by a percentage of total demand and time liabilities. Time Liabilities refer to the liabilities which the commercial banks are liable to pay to the customers after a certain period mutually agreed upon, and demand liabilities are such deposits of the customers which are payable on demand. An example of time liability is a six month fixed deposit which is not payable on demand but only after six months. An example of demand liability is a deposit maintained in saving account or current account that is payable on demand through a withdrawal form such as a cheque.

##### **Repo rate**

- Is the rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) lends money to commercial banks in the event of any shortfall of funds.
- In the event of inflation, central banks increase repo rate as this acts as a disincentive for banks to borrow from the central bank. This ultimately reduces the money

supply in the economy and thus helps in arresting inflation.

- The central bank takes the contrary position in the event of a fall in inflationary pressures.

##### **Reverse repo rate**

- Is the rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) borrows money from commercial banks within the country.
- It is a monetary policy instrument which can be used to control the money supply in the country.
- Repo and reverse repo rates form a part of the liquidity adjustment facility.

##### **Marginal standing facility (MSF)**

- Is a window for banks to borrow from the Reserve Bank of India in an emergency situation when inter-bank liquidity dries up completely.
- Banks borrow from the central bank by pledging government securities at a rate higher than the repo rate under liquidity adjustment facility or LAF in short. The MSF rate is pegged 100 basis points or a percentage point above the repo rate. Under MSF, banks can borrow funds up to one percentage of their net demand and time liabilities (NDTL).

##### **Bank rate**

- Is the rate charged by the central bank for lending funds to commercial banks.
- Bank rates influence lending rates of commercial banks. Higher bank rate will translate to higher lending rates by the banks. In order to curb liquidity, the central bank can resort to raising the bank rate and vice versa.

##### **Market Stabilization scheme (MSS)**

- Is a monetary policy intervention by the RBI to withdraw excess liquidity (or money supply) by selling government securities in the economy. The MSS was introduced in April 2004. Main thing about MSS is that it is used to withdraw excess liquidity or money from the system by selling government bonds.

##### **Open market operations (OMO)**

- Refers to the buying and selling of government securities in the open market in order to expand or contract the amount of money in the banking system, facilitated by the RBI.

#### **49. RBI changes norms for appointment of auditors**

##### **What's in news?**

- An audit firm will not be eligible for appointment as statutory central auditor (SCA) of a bank for six years after completing its four-year tenure in that particular private or foreign bank.
- This follows the decision of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to modify the rest period in the appointment of

SCAs by banks.

**Earlier position :**

- Hitherto, an audit firm, subject to its fulfilling the prescribed eligibility norms, was allowed to continue as the SCA for a particular bank for a period of four years, and, thereafter, it was compulsorily rested for a period of two years.

**It will help improve corporate governance :**

- The rest and rotation policy in appointment of SCAs for banks had been mandated to ensure that the audit functions were looked at afresh.
- The policy also aims to deter the auditors and auditee from establishing a comfortable relationship that may lead to compromise, in strict adherence to audit principles.
- The modification of rest period was done to ensure that the 'rest and rotation policy' was followed in letter and spirit. The new guidelines are also applicable to foreign banks.

**50. Union Cabinet clears minimum wage code bill**

**Context:**

- The Union Cabinet approved the new wage code bill which will ensure a minimum wage across all sectors by integrating four labour related laws.

**The new wage code**

- The Labour Code on Wages Bill will consolidate the Minimum Wages Act, 1948; the Payment of Wages Act, 1936; the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965; and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
- The bill seeks to empower the Centre to set a minimum wage across all sectors in the country and states will have to maintain that.
- However, states will be able to provide for higher minimum wage in their jurisdiction than fixed by the central government.
- The new minimum wage norms would be applicable for all workers irrespective of their pay.
- At present, the minimum wages fixed by the Centre and states are applicable to workers getting up to Rs 18,000 pay monthly.
- This would ensure a universal minimum wage for all industries and workers, including those getting monthly pay higher than Rs 18,000.

**Second National Commission on Labour**

- It has recommended that the existing labour laws should be broadly grouped into four or five labour codes on functional basis.
- Accordingly, ministry has taken steps for drafting four Labour Codes on — Wages; Industrial Relations; Social Security & Welfare and Safety and Working Conditions,

respectively.

- It will be done by simplifying, amalgamating and rationalising the relevant provisions of the existing central labour laws.

**51. RCEP. Boost for India on easier visa norms**

**Easier Visa Norms**

- India is pushing for easier norms on movement of professionals for short-term work in 16 Asia-Pacific nations, under the RCEP.
- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed FTA.
- The RCEP technical level talks are currently going on in Hyderabad.

**Possible support from ASEAN countries**

- A few ASEAN countries are also supporting India's proposal for an RCEP Travel Card.
- The Travel Card will facilitate visa-free multiple short-term entry across the RCEP region for business and tourism purposes.

**Concerns of RCEP Members:**

- According to some members, Travel card would lead to migration of professionals from India and loss of jobs for locals.
- But India has been saying that its demands on temporary movement of professionals and skilled workers should not be confused with permanent movement (or immigration).

**52. 'Enough political will to seal RCEP talks'**

**What's in news?**

- India is 'fully committed' to taking forward the negotiations for a mega Free Trade Agreement (FTA) called the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), to ensure that it is a 'balanced' pact that benefits all the 16 Asia-Pacific nations including itself that are participating in the talks.
- India is pushing for liberalisation of services, including easing norms for movement of professionals across borders for short-term work. However, the slow progress of the services negotiations has been worrying India.

**Basic Information:**

**Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**

- Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and the six states with which ASEAN has existing free trade agreements (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand).

- RCEP negotiations were formally launched in November 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
- The agreement is scheduled to be finalized by the end of 2017.
- RCEP is viewed as an alternative to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a proposed trade agreement which includes several Asian and American nations but excludes China and India.

### **53. India pressed to open up procurement**

- More RCEP nations seek commitments on market access.
- Members of the RCEP wants India to open up its more than \$300 billion-worth public procurement market.
- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed mega Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- Many countries pushing for binding commitments to mutually liberalise government procurement markets, including themselves and India involved in the mega-FTA talks.

#### ***What is Public/government procurement?***

- It refers to the process by which government (at the Central, State and local levels), its agencies/departments and State-owned enterprises procure goods and/or services.
- Only for their own use, and not for sale/resale commercially.
- India is not a signatory to the Government Procurement Agreement within the WTO framework.
- **Why:** because it wants to retain its policy space to meet its development needs through public procurement process.

#### ***Other developments on the issue:***

- Currently, 19th round of the RCEP Trade Negotiating Committee meeting at the technical level is going on at the Hyderabad.
- Here, the 16 countries agreed to constitute a Working Group on government procurement to take forward negotiations on the topic and include it as a separate chapter in the final agreement.



# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## INDIA- AUSTRALIA

### Australia and India: Partners in Regional Security and Prosperity

#### Context:

- Rising ties between India and Australia.
- Importance of Indo-Australian relationship:
- India is Australia's ninth largest trading partner, with boundless potential for growth.
- Indian-origin residents are the fourth largest group of overseas-born Australians.
- Australia-India Exercise (AUSINDEX): Military cooperation between Australia and India includes the regular joint naval exercise AUSINDEX.

#### Areas that needs to be focused upon:

- India and Australia need to build and strengthen international institutions that promote cooperation.
- And manage competing interests in fair and transparent ways, in order to maintain regional and global stability.

#### What Australia wants from India?

- Australia looks forward to India liberalising its trade and investment regime further to realise its economic growth prospects and increase its influence in the region.

#### The way forward:

- India and Australia need to increase bilateral cooperation and collective efforts with other like-minded countries
- Together both countries can shape a future region in which strong and effective rules and open markets deliver lasting peace and prosperity.

- The JIN includes interpretative notes to be jointly adopted for many clauses, including, the definition of investor, definition of investment, exclusion of taxation measures, Fair and Equitable Treatment, National Treatment and Most Favoured Nation treatment, expropriation, essential security interests and Settlement of Disputes between an Investor and a Contracting Party.

## INDIA- BHUTAN

### **Why Bhutan is special to India?**

#### Context:

- Standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in Doka La (Doklam)

#### India's role in Bhutan's security:

#### **2007 India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty:**

- The two sides have agreed to "cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests. Neither Government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other."
- India to "guide" Bhutan on foreign and defence policies.
- The 2007 treaty, is meant to respect the sensitivities of Bhutan regarding its sovereignty.
- Indian military is virtually responsible for protecting Bhutan from the kind of external threat that the Chinese military poses.
- The Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT), headed by a Major General, plays a critical role in training Bhutanese security personnel.
- The Eastern Army Command and the Eastern Air Command both have integrated protection of Bhutan into their role.

## INDIA- BANGLADESH

### Nod for Bangladesh JIN pact

#### In news:

- The Cabinet gave its approval for the Joint Interpretative Notes (JIN) on the Agreement between both the nations for the Promotion and Protection of Investments.
- The JIN would impart clarity to the interpretation of the existing Agreement between India and Bangladesh for the Promotion and Protection of Investments.

## INDIA- CHINA

### 1. Now, a hard trek via Lipulekh

#### In news:

- The Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra through the Nathu La pass in Sikkim has been cancelled due to ongoing face-off between Indian and Chinese troops along the India-China border.
- China had declined permission for the first group of 50 pilgrims to proceed to Mount Kailash through the Nathu La pass.
- The pilgrims had to return to Gangtok after they were denied permission.

#### Lipulekh pass in Uttarakhand

- Lipulekh pass in Uttarakhand is another pass used by pilgrims to proceed to Mount Kailash.

#### Nathu La versus Lipulekh pass:

- The route through the Nathu La pass that opened two years ago shortens the entire distance, making the pilgrimage less arduous.
- The Lipulekh route involves a treacherous trek of about 200 km, while the Nathu La route calls for trekking for only 35 km.

### 2. Step back Sustained tension at the Bhutan tri-junction suits neither China nor India

#### Context :

- The boundary stand-off with China at the Doka La tri-junction with Bhutan is by all accounts unprecedented; it demands calmer counsel on all sides. The tri-junction stretch of the boundary at Sikkim, though contested, has witnessed far fewer tensions than the western sector of the India-China boundary even as India and Bhutan have carried on separate negotiations with China.

#### Issue:

- China's action of sending People's Liberation Army construction teams with earth moving equipment to forcibly build a road upsets a carefully preserved peace.

#### Other concerns and issues:

- Delhi has expressed disappointment over China's rejection of its concerns on sovereignty issues, and refusal to corner Pakistan on cross-border terrorism or help India's bid for Nuclear Suppliers Group membership.
- In turn, India's spurning of the Belt and Road Initiative and cooperation with the U.S. on maritime issues has not played well in China — neither has the uptick in rhetoric, including statements from the Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister questioning India's "One

China Policy" on Tibet, and from Army chief Bipin Rawat on India being prepared for a two-and-a-half front war.

#### Conclusion and Way Forward:

- These issues have to be addressed through sustained dialogue.
- In the immediate term, however, talks must focus on defusing the tensions at the tri-junction.
- China has made the withdrawal of Indian troops a precondition for dialogue. This would be unacceptable to India, unless the PLA also withdraws its troops and road-building teams.
- Apart from its own commitments to the status quo, Beijing must recognise the special relationship India and Bhutan have shared since 1947, the friendship treaty of 2007 that commits India to protecting Bhutan's interests, and the close coordination between the two militaries.
- For its part, India would be keen to show that it recognises that the face-off is in Bhutanese territory, and the rules of engagement could be different from those of previous India-China bilateral clashes — at Depsang and Demchok in the western sector, for example.
- Bhutan's sovereignty must be maintained as that is the basis for the "exemplary" ties between New Delhi and Thimphu.
- The Indian government has been wise to avoid escalation in the face of China's aggressive barrage, but that should not stop it from communicating its position in more discreet ways.

### 3. Incursions by PLA rose in 2017

#### In News:

- Incidents of transgression by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has increased marginally this year along the disputed Sino-Indian border compared to 2016.
- **Key Fact:** 20-25% increase in transgressions by the Chinese PLA till May this year, particularly in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh. On an average around 300 transgressions are reported along the China border due to "difference in perception."

#### Sovereignty claims:

- Over the years both sides have developed a strategy of sending long patrols into disputed areas in summer months to assert their claims for sovereignty.
- These patrols are undertaken at eight of the key disputed locations, mostly in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh and are believed to enjoy political sanction.
- Reasons for increased transgression:
- Indian troops have improved their observation of the presence of Chinese patrols in disputed areas.

- The Chinese have stepped up border patrols as part of an aggressive posture along the border.

#### Ladakh border:

- Along the Ladakh border, India sticks mostly to a boundary drawn by British civil servant W.H. Johnson in 1865, which showed Aksai Chin as part of J&K.
- China disputes this claim and in the 1950s and built a road connecting Xinjiang and Tibet which ran through Aksai Chin.
- In northeast India, New Delhi sticks to the McMahon Line. China claims that McMahon Line has no legal standing and claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of Tibet.

#### **4. China holds military drill near Arunachal border, 'enemy' aircraft the target**

##### In News:

- China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has held "live-fire drills" in Tibet, close to the India's border in Arunachal, to practice quick movement of troops and destroy enemy aircraft.
- The drill is being seen as a message to the Indian government and military, as China claims large parts of Arunachal, India's easternmost state, as southern Tibet.
- The drill was held in the Tibet Autonomous Region in the middle and lower reaches of Yarlung Zangbo river, which is located in the upper stream of the Brahmaputra river which flows through China, India and Bangladesh.
- The Yarlung Zangbo enters India through Arunachal where it is called Siang before it becomes the Brahmaputra in Assam. China has been building dams over it, causing concern in India that it could affect the flow of the Brahmaputra.

#### **5. The crossroads at the Doklam plateau**

##### Context:

- The Indo-Bhutanese relationship amid the current stand off between Indian and Chinese Army.

##### Historical overview

- Since 1960, 1,500 Km of roads have been built by India across Bhutan's most difficult mountains and passes.
- These roads built and maintained by the Indian Border Roads Organisation (BRO) under Project Dantak.

##### Past discussions on Doklam Plateau

- The Doklam plateau is an area that China and Bhutan have long discussed (over 24 rounds of negotiations that began in 1984).
- Chinese also offered a "package deal" to Bhutan,

under which the Chinese agreed to renounce their claim over the 495-sq.-km disputed land.

- In exchange for a smaller tract of disputed land measuring 269 sq. km, the Doklam plateau.
- But India was able to convince Bhutan to defer a decision.
- Indian Government must give importance to Bhutan's sovereignty.
- India should avoid any irresponsible comment on Bhutan.
- **Why:** because it matter to Bhutanese people.

##### India's Concerns

- India must also be aware that other neighbours are watching the Doklam stand-off closely.
- Bhutan is also the only country in the region that joined India in its boycott of Chinese President Xi Jinping's marquee project, the Belt and Road Initiative.
- That's why, India relations with Bhutan has become more important.

## INDIA - EUROPEAN UNION

### **1. EU, India set up Fund for Investments**

##### In news:

- European Union (EU) and India announced the establishment of an Investment Facilitation Mechanism (IFM) for EU investments in India.
- The mechanism will allow for a close coordination between the European Union and the Government of India with an aim to promote and facilitate EU investment in India.

##### Objective:

- The IFM has been established with the key objectives of paving the way for identifying and solving problems faced by EU companies and investors with regard to their operations in India.
- The IFM is also going to serve as a platform for discussing general suggestions from the point of view of EU companies and investors with regard to ease of doing business in India.

### **2. U.K. raises issue of overstaying Indians**

##### In news:

- Britain claims a thousand Indians overstay their visa in Britain every year, and the two countries are working together to improve the process for returning those who remain in Britain illegally, and can be successfully identified as Indian.
- Home Affairs remains one of the most sensitive areas

of bilateral relations, with Britain repeatedly raising the issue of overstaying Indians, and India pointing to the process and cost of obtaining visa for its citizens as issues that stood in the way of improving relations in a number of areas.

### **3. India set to extradite Bangladeshi national to Britain**

#### **In news:**

- India is all set to extradite a Bangladeshi national, Mohammad Abdul Shakur, to the U.K., where he is accused of murdering his wife and children ten years ago.
- **Positive step:** This is being seen as another signal of increasing cooperation between the two nations on sensitive and potentially thorny issues in the home affairs arena.

## **INDIA- ISRAEL**

### **1. On eve of PM's tour, Palestine hopes to keep India ties firm Modi will be in Tel Aviv & Jerusalem from July 4; will not travel to Palestinian side**

#### **Context:**

- Mr. Modi will travel to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem from July 4, and will be the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel.

#### **In News:**

- India's relations with Israel should not come at the "expense of ties" with Palestine, but the Palestinian Authority (PA) understands the need for India to de-hyphenate ties with both, says the Palestinian President's diplomatic adviser Dr. Majdi ElKhaldi in an interview ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel.

### **2. Israel backs India's fight on terror**

#### **Context:**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel— the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister — which they described as "historic" with "huge symbolic significance".
- 25th anniversary of Israel-India setting up full diplomatic ties

#### **In news:**

- Israeli government has unequivocally supported India on the issue of terrorism.
- Israel believes there is no difference between Pakistan-based "Lashkar-e-Taiba" and the Hamas group operating in Israel and Palestine.
- Israel to help ensure food security in India which will bring maximum benefits to people of both sides

- **Close cooperation:** India and Israel could cooperate even more closely and complement each other's efforts to fight with the menace of terrorism.

#### **Strategic Partnership on non-security issues:**

- India and Israel will sign a unique Strategic Partnership on non-security issues including Agriculture, Water, Science, technology and Space.

#### **Prime Minister to receive protocol reserved for U.S. President and the Pope:**

- On his arrival on Tuesday in Tel Aviv, Mr. Modi will receive protocol reserved only for the U.S. President and the Pope.

### **3. Not Jerusalem, Tel Aviv to remain Indian Embassy's location**

#### **In news:**

- India's stand on the Jerusalem question:
- India support for the "two-state" solution in which both Israel and a future Palestinian state coexist peacefully.
- India supports all efforts for a resolution, including on the contentious issue of Jerusalem, which Israel has claimed in its entirety since 1967.
- Indian Embassy in Tel Aviv will remain there at least until a "final-status" agreement between the two parties.

#### **Previous bilateral:**

- Modi is the first Indian PM to visit Israel.
- In October 2015, Pranab Mukherjee became the first Indian President to visit Israel since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries in 1992.
- Visit of Israeli President Reuven Rivlin to India in November 2016.
- Earlier, then Israeli President, Ezer Weizman, visited India in January 1997 and this was followed by a visit by the then Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, in September 2003.

### **4. Moving beyond security ties**

#### **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel.

#### **In news:**

- The leaders to focus on a "non-security" strategic partnership involving agriculture, water, tourism, science technology and space.

### **5. India, Israel to set up \$40 mn research fund**

#### **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel.

#### **In news:**

- India and Israel announced a strategic partnership between the two countries after a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu.



- Signed seven agreements in the fields of water, agriculture, space, including a \$40 million joint fund for research and development in innovation.
- Agreed to cooperate to combat the growing radicalisation and terrorism, including in cyberspace.
- The two sides also agreed to increase air linkages between the two countries, with Air India expected to commence flights to Tel Aviv, as well as a "Cultural Centre" at a location yet to be identified.
- Possibility in the near future of "joint development of defence products, including the transfer of technology from Israel."

#### Water conservation:

- The two agreements in the field of water deal with the "increasing awareness" of the need for water conservation.

#### Memorandum of understanding signed:

- MoU between the Israeli Water Ministry and the Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam Board.
- Three MoUs on space cooperation included one for Electric Propulsion for Small Satellites, and for the development of an optical link as well as cooperation on atomic clocks.

#### \$40 million joint fund for research and development:

- The fund of research and development, called the "IIF" or India Israel Industrial Innovation Fund, will see both governments contribute \$20 million to help research scholars manufacture their inventions easily.

## 6. Indian, Israeli defence firms join hands

**Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel.

#### In news:

- Indian and Israeli companies entered into agreements to bid jointly for defence contracts for the Indian military and locally build the systems under "Make in India".
- MoU between Bharat Forge and Israel Aircraft Industries.
- To expand the joint venture that the companies are establishing as part of a February 2017 agreement meant to develop, build, market and manufacture selected air defence systems and light weight special purpose munitions.
- The new MoU covers the establishment of a maintenance centre for selected advanced air defence systems in Hyderabad in Telangana in India
- Dynamic Technologies, IAI and Elcom signed a strategic teaming agreement for industrial cooperation and local production of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) in India.

## 7. BITs and pieces of trade with Israel

### Trade Potential between India and Israel:

- There is enormous potential for Israeli investment in fields such as renewable energy and water management (drip irrigation and desalination).
- Defence production is an area with significant potential for Israeli investment through 'make in India' route.
- This can help India save billions of dollars it currently spends on importing weapons from Israel.

### Bilateral investment treaty (BIT) between the two countries

- In 1996, India and Israel signed a BIT.
- However, this was reportedly terminated by India when it unilaterally discontinued 58 BITs recently
- Negotiations for a new bilateral investment treaty (BIT)
- There are some challenges

### **(1). ISDS**

- **ISDS:** The first challenge is on the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS)
- ISDS allows foreign investors to bring claims against a host state for alleged treaty breaches at international arbitral forums
- **Israel trade model on ISDS:** The Israeli model gives an investor the choice to submit any investment dispute with a state to international arbitration if not resolved within six months through negotiations
- **India's stand on ISDS:** The Indian model imposes many procedural and jurisdictional restrictions on an investor's right to bring an ISDS claim
- These include a foreign investor having to litigate in domestic courts for five years before pursuing a claim under international law
- These requirements make it very difficult for a foreign investor to make efficient use of the ISDS provision.

### **(2). FDI and portfolio investment issues**

- Israel's model provides a broad asset-based definition of foreign investment that covers both FDI and portfolio investment
- The Indian model of 2016 defines investment as an enterprise (with its assets) that has to possess certain characteristics of investment including the investment having 'significance for the development'

### **(3). Most favoured nation (MFN) provision**

- The Israeli model contains a broad most favoured nation (MFN) provision
- MFN is a cornerstone of non-discrimination in international economic relations, which is missing in the Indian model

### **(4). Taxation issue**

- The Indian model excludes taxation altogether from the purview of the BIT
- Thus, the foreign investor cannot bring an ISDS claim even if taxes imposed are confiscatory, discriminatory or unfair
- Israeli investors will not be comfortable if taxation is completely outside BIT's purview.

#### The Way forward

- The Indian position on BITs is very pro-state, offering limited rights and protection to foreign investors.
- An India-Israel BIT looks difficult till both sides move away from their stated positions.
- Both sides should work towards having a BIT that reconciles investment protection.

## INDIA-PAKISTAN

### Pakistan denies consular access to Jadhav yet again Says equating him with other prisoners is 'travesty of logic'

#### In News:

- Pakistan on Sunday again rejected India's request for consular access to Kulbhushan Jadhav, a former Indian naval officer who was sentenced to death for espionage and terrorism by a Pakistani military court in April this year.
- His mercy petition is pending with Pakistani Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa. India denied the charges made out against Jadhav, and moved the International Court of Justice against the conviction and got a stay on the execution. Pakistan insists that the reprieve is temporary.

## INDIA - SRI LANKA

### India offers help to Sri Lanka's Northern province

#### In News:

- India has expressed willingness to further partner Sri Lanka's Northern Provincial administration in development initiatives.

#### Infrastructure projects:

- India has been involved in key infrastructure projects in the north in the post-war years, building 46,000 homes in the island's north and east and helping restore the railway line from Olanthai to Pallai, with a \$800 million line of credit.
- Currently, the Indian side appears keen on working with the Northern Provincial Council, on economic development, skills training and job creation.

## INDIA - U.S

### 1. U.S. may tighten rules for foreign students

#### In News:

#### Present System:

- International students can stay in the U.S. as long as they are enrolled for a programme.
- Students who enter the U.S on F-1 visas are issued an entry document with an end date that states "duration of stay", which is theoretically open-ended. They can stay as long as they have a valid I-20 document, which is issued by the university, with all details regarding the student's programme of study, financing, etc. They can also move from one programme to another and from one institution to another, by a notification, based on a new I-20 document that the institution issues.

#### Key fact:

- Indians are the fastest growing group among the international student population in the U.S.
- There are 1,66,000 students from India pursuing higher education in the U.S. now, up from about 1,00,000 two years earlier. A large majority of them pursue science, technology, engineering and math courses.
- Around 1.4 million international students are currently present in the U.S.

#### New proposed Changes:

- Foreign students in the United States may be required to reapply every year for permission to stay in the country.

#### Impacts:

- The proposed measures could increase costs and paper work for students and universities.

#### Why such a move?

- The proposal is part of an ongoing review of the immigration policy to ensure that it "promotes the national interest, enhances national security and public safety and ensures the integrity of our immigration system."

### 2. U.S. Senate Committee for bigger Indian role in Afghanistan

#### In News:

#### The U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Forces observation:

- India has a "critical role" to play in breaking the stalemate in Afghanistan.
- It also pitched for enhancing trilateral cooperation among Afghanistan, India and the U.S.

- In a report accompanying the National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) 2018, the committee also called for enhancing the overall defence cooperation between the U.S. and India, and eventually joint naval patrol of the Indian Ocean.
- The Senate Committee also pulled up the Department of Defence for not making faster progress in improving cooperation between India and the U.S.

#### **Afghanistan and regional stability:**

- The committee is concerned by the current stalemate in Afghanistan, and believes that the United States should leverage the capabilities of allies and partners to more effectively secure regional stability and security.
- The committee believes that the United States needs to recommit to the fight in Afghanistan and that India, as a major defence partner of the United States and a contributor to regional security, has a critical role to play in this effort.

### **3. US lawmakers seek increased role for India in Afghanistan**

#### **In News:**

- American senators have sought enhanced cooperation with India in Afghanistan, including increasing New Delhi's role in helping the Afghan security forces
- This move could annoy Pakistan as it opposes any Indian role in neighbouring Afghanistan.
- India is one of the biggest providers of developmental assistance to war-torn Afghanistan.

#### **National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) - 2018**

- The lawmakers have introduced a legislative amendment to the National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) - 2018 in the Senate to support their demand.
- The amendment seeks increasing India's role in assisting the Afghan security forces through logistics support, threat analysis, intelligence, materiel, and maintenance support.

#### **Amendment seeks for:**

- The Pentagon and the State Department to find ways in which India can support "targeted infrastructure development" and economic investment in Afghanistan.
- Improve the provision by India of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance to Afghanistan, including through the provision of logistics support by India, joint training between Afghanistan and India, and combined military planning by Afghanistan and India for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions in Afghanistan.
- A tri-lateral security and civilian co-operation between India, Afghanistan and the US,

- Establishment of priorities for investments to promote security and stability in Afghanistan that align with the "mutual interests" of Afghanistan, India, and the US.

### **4. Donald Trump administration urges NSG members to support India's application**

#### **In News:**

- The US has reaffirmed its support to India's membership bid to the Nuclear Suppliers Group and said it has called on other members of the elite grouping to back New Delhi's application.
- India has applied for the membership of the 48-member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) which controls international nuclear trade.
- The Department of Defence and Department of State in its report submitted to Congress as required under National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) 2017 also re-affirmed its support for India's membership in the Australia Group and Wassenaar Arrangement as soon as India meets each group's membership criteria.

#### **Highlights of the report:**

- The US and India share a commitment to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.
- Since 2010, the US has supported India's membership in the four multilateral export control regimes -- Wassenaar Arrangement, NSG, Australia Group, and the Missile Technology Control Regime -- as India prepared to take the steps required for membership in each one
- The US, the report said, welcomed India as a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime and its subscription to the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation in June 2016.
- The report notes that the future leadership of Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) will consist of an individual with experience in defence acquisition and technology to reinforce and ensure the success of the US-India Defence Relationship.

#### **Defence Partnership:**

- Since 2008, the US and India have concluded more than USD 15 billion in defence trade, including the transfer from the US to India of C-130J and C-17 transport aircraft, P-8I maritime patrol aircraft, Harpoon missiles, Apache and Chinook helicopters, and M777 light-weight Howitzers.
- India operates the second largest C-17 and P-8 fleets in the world, recently using its C-17s to deliver humanitarian assistance to Nepal and evacuate civilians from Yemen.
- The US had designated India a "Major Defence Partner" in June 2016 intending to elevate defence trade and technology sharing with India to a level commensurate

with that of its closest allies and partners.

- In 2012, the US Department of Defence and India's Ministry of Defence established the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) as a means of strengthening industrial cooperation and moving away from the traditional "buyer-seller" approach.

## AROUND THE WORLD

### 1. German Parliament Approves Same-Sex Marriage

#### In News:

- German lawmakers voted to legalise same-sex marriage after a short but emotional debate, bringing the country in line with many of its Western peers.
- Germany has allowed same-sex couples to enter civil partnerships since 2001, but has not granted them full marital rights, which include the possibility to jointly adopt children.

### 2. Xi draws 'red line' in Hong Kong

#### In News:

- China's President Xi Jinping warned that any challenge to Beijing's control over Hong Kong crossed a "red line".
- **Background:** tens of thousands calling for more democracy marched through the city 20 years after it was handed back by Britain.

#### Situation in Hong Kong:

- Many are angry at Beijing's tightening grip on the freedoms.
- Young activists have emerged calling for self-determination or even full independence for Hong Kong

#### Beijing's warning:

- Any threat to China's sovereignty and security or to the power of the central government "crosses the red line and is absolutely impermissible."
- Warned against anyone endangering Hong Kong's Constitution or using the city "to carry out infiltration and sabotage activities against the mainland."

#### Basic Information:

#### Hong Kong:

- Hong Kong, officially the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, is an autonomous territory on the Pearl River Delta of China.
- Hong Kong ranks as the world's fourth most densely populated sovereign state or territory.

#### Hong Kong and China:

- After the First Opium War (1839-42), Hong Kong became a British colony.

- Hong Kong was later occupied by Japan during World War II until British control resumed in 1945.
- In the early 1980s, negotiations between the United Kingdom and China resulted in the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, which paved way for the transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong in 1997, when it became a special administrative region (SAR) of the Peoples Republic of China with a high degree of autonomy.
- Under the principle of "one country, two systems", Hong Kong maintains a separate political and economic system from China. Except in military defence and foreign affairs, Hong Kong maintains its independent executive, legislative and judiciary powers. In addition, Hong Kong develops relations directly with foreign states and international organisations in a broad range of "appropriate fields".

### 3. North Korea claims it tested intercontinental missile

#### In News:

- North Korea claimed it successfully test-launched its first intercontinental ballistic missile.
- North Korea's Academy of Defence Science said the test of an ICBM the Hwasong-14 marked the "final step" in creating a "confident and powerful nuclear state that can strike anywhere on Earth."
- Test a direct rebuke to U.S. President Donald Trump's earlier declaration that such a test "won't happen!"

#### Capability:

- A U.S. scientist examining the height and distance said the missile could potentially be powerful enough to reach Alaska.

### 4. Pak successfully test fires short-range ballistic missile Nasr

#### In News:

- Pakistan successfully test fired short-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile 'Nasr'.
- 'Nasr' is a high-precision weapon system with the ability to be deployed quickly and with enhanced range from 60-70 kilometres and flight maneuverability.
- Pakistan army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa response after the test fire: the successful test has put "cold water" on Indian military's "Cold Start" doctrine.

### 5. PMO, NSA tracking impact of Chinese FDI in South Asia

#### Context: India's tense border stand-off in Sikkim with China

- The Union Government of India has begun its first ever in-depth assessment of Chinese investments in India's neighbouring countries.
- The move has been initiated by the Prime Minister's Office and the National Security Adviser.



- Chinese FDI in the Indian subcontinent:
- Trends show that there have been an increasing influence of China in the Indian sub-continent and South Asia
- Pakistan government data shows that FDI from China jumped from \$256.8 million in 2014-15 to \$878.8 million in 2016-17 (July-May).
- Chinese investments and threats to India's national security:
- The study will analyse the impact of these Chinese investments — including those being made as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also known as One Belt One Road or OBOR) — on India's national security.
- In addition to assessing the nature and impact of Chinese FDI in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the study will track Chinese investments in Afghanistan and Maldives too.
- The major challenge in the study will be the lack of detailed, country-wise data on overall FDI (year-wise) and Chinese FDI, in particular.
- Economic market threats:
- Chinese investments in countries like Pakistan could, in turn, set the stage for Pakistan to make inroads into markets in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal and challenge the presence of Indian firms in these markets, where India is currently the major player.
- The CPEC(China – Pakistan Economic Corridor)/OBOR projects can also better link Pakistan with the Central Asian Republics (CAR) and help the country establish a footprint in those markets.

#### **6. 122 nations adopt first treaty banning nuclear weapons**

- More than 120 countries approved the first-ever treaty to ban nuclear weapons at a UN meeting boycotted by all nuclear-armed nations.
- None of the nine countries known or believed to possess nuclear weapons - the United States, Russia, Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel - is supporting the treaty. Many of their allies also did not attend the meeting.

#### **7. China sends PLA unit to man overseas base**

##### **In News:**

- China has dispatched People's Liberation Army (PLA) personnel to man its first overseas military base at Djibouti in the strategic Indian Ocean region, a move likely to spark concerns in the U.S.
- It is the first such base being set up by China. The second base is coming up in Gwadar, Pakistan, which links up with China through the \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.
- The base will ensure China's performance of missions,

such as escorting, peace-keeping and humanitarian aid in Africa and West Asia, the report said.

- The base will also conduct overseas tasks, including military cooperation, joint exercises, evacuating and protecting overseas Chinese and emergency rescue, as well as jointly maintaining security of international strategic seaways.

#### **8. US asks countries in East and South China Sea to exercise restraint**

##### **In News:**

- The Pentagon has asked countries in East and South China Sea to exercise restraint and avoid indulging in provocative behaviour.
- It asked not do things that are provocative and to respect each other's sovereignty in their operations.

##### **Background:**

- This was due to Chinese H-6 bombers flying over the Bashi Channel and the Miyako Strait several times over the past week.
- Japan scrambled fighters in response.
- Chinese Defense Ministry has told Japan that it should get used to it.

##### **Protest by China:**

- China had protested when a US Air Force Bomber flew over the South China Sea before G-20 summit in Hamburg, Germany.

#### **9. Pakistan Supreme Court removes Sharif from office**

##### **In News:**

- Pakistan's Supreme Court disqualified Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from office over undeclared assets and ordered registration of corruption cases against him and his children, plunging the country into a political turmoil.
- Attorney-General said the disqualification is for life, ending any hope for the three-time Prime Minister to return to active politics.

## INDIA-ASEAN

### Vietnam for greater Indian role in SE Asia

#### In News:

#### Delhi Dialogue IX:

- A platform for discussion between ASEAN and India.
- The Delhi Dialogue IX marks the beginning of the celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of India-ASEAN diplomatic ties.

#### Vietnam on asked:

- India to play a greater role in ASEAN's strategic and security affairs.
- India should support freedom of navigation in the South China Sea on the basis of international law and conventions.
- India and ASEAN: India's tie with ASEAN is at the centre of India's Act East Policy.

## G20 SUMMIT

### 1. Modi targets Pakistan at G20

#### Context:

- G20 Summit, City of Hamburg, Germany

#### In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi speech highlights:
- Some countries were using terror as a tool to achieve political objectives and pressed for "deterrent" action collectively by the G20 members against such nations.
- He equated the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohamamd, as also the Haqqani network to the Islamic State and al-Qaeda, saying their names may be different but their ideology is the same.
- He regretted that the international response to terrorism was weak, and said more cooperation was needed to fight the menace.
- Pitched in for a 11-point 'Action Agenda': for exchange of lists of terrorists among G20 nations, easing and expediting of legal processes like extradition and concrete steps to choke funds and weapon supply to the terrorists.
- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and other mechanisms to choke sources of funds to terrorists should be strengthened.
- Explosives Action Task Force (EATF): On the pattern of FATF, an Explosives Action Task Force (EATF) should be constituted- to choke the sources of deadly arms reaching the terrorists can be ended.

#### Basic Information:

#### G20:

- The G20 (or G-20 or Group of Twenty) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 20 major economies.
- Founded in 1999, the G20 aims to discuss policy issues pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability.
- It seeks to address issues that go beyond the responsibilities of any one organization.
- The G20 heads of government or heads of state have periodically conferred at summits since their initial meeting in 2008, and the group also hosts separate meetings of finance ministers and foreign ministers due to the expansion of its agenda in recent years.
- Membership of the G20 consists of 19 individual countries plus the European Union (EU).

#### FATF:

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was established in July 1989 by a Group of Seven (G-7) Summit in Paris, initially to examine and develop measures to combat money laundering.
- In October 2001, the FATF expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to combat terrorist financing, in addition to money laundering.
- The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- The FATF is therefore a "policy-making body" which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.
- The FATF monitors the progress of its members in implementing necessary measures, reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and counter-measures, and promotes the adoption and implementation of appropriate measures globally.

### 2. G20 hails India's labour reforms, start-up policy Hamburg Action Plan praises efforts to boost innovation

#### In News:

- Acknowledging the steps being taken by India for sustainable and inclusive growth as well as support to global economy, the G20 has praised the initiatives in the country for promoting ease of doing business, start-up funding and labour reforms.
- Areas where improvement need for ease of doing business :

- The areas where India ranks poorly as per the World Bank ranking include starting a business, dealing with construction permits, registering property, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency.

#### **Reforms taken :**

- The country has implemented a spate of reforms in the recent months in areas like insolvency, taxation and starting a business and expects the rankings to improve substantially.
- In the financial sector, India is popularising a number of derivative instruments in exchanges or electronic trading platforms as part of the measures to enhance resilience of its economy.
- India is facilitating external commercial borrowings (ECBs) by start-ups to encourage innovation and promote ease of doing business, as part of the efforts being taken by the G20 members this year for maintaining momentum on structural reforms and sustainable growth.

#### **Partners to the G20:**

- Global institutions like the World Bank, IMF, WTO, OECD, ILO, WHO and the Financial Stability Board (FSB) are among the partners to the G20.

#### **G20 Hamburg Action Plan**

- The G20 Hamburg Action Plan, which sets out the group's strategy for achieving strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth, also said the closer partnership and action by G20 members will boost confidence and contribute to shared prosperity.
- In the action plan, the G20 members resolved that they would continue to use all policy tools — monetary, fiscal and structural — individually and collectively to achieve the goal of strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth, while enhancing economic and financial resilience.

#### **Challenges to global growth:**

- Weak productivity growth, income inequality and ageing populations represent challenges to growth in the longer term.

### **3. India rejects OIC move on vigilantism**

#### **In News:**

#### **Strong Rejection**

- India on has strongly rejected the resolutions of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)
- The resolution had expressed concern about the recent attacks on people by cow-vigilante groups
- Government Response:

- Government has stated that the resolutions adopted at the Organisation's latest foreign ministers' meeting were "factually incorrect"

#### **Basic Information:**

- Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.
- Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is an international organization founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states, with a collective population of over 1.6 billion as of 2008.
- The organisation states that it is "the collective voice of the Muslim world" and works to "safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony".
- The OIC has permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union.
- The official languages of the OIC are Arabic, English, and French.

# GEOGRAPHY

## Antarctica's ice-free islands set to grow

### Australia and India: Partners in Regional Security and Prosperity

#### Context:

- Climate change and impact on biodiversity.

#### Antarctica's ice-free islands:

- Within the Antarctica's continent one can find isolated ice-free nooks — nunataks (exposed mountain tops), scree slopes, cliffs, valleys and coastal oases — which cover less than 1% of the area.
- These ice-free areas support almost all of the continent's biodiversity.
- A paper published in Nature indicates the possibility of expansion of these ice-free islands over 17,000 sq.km (a 25% increase) due to climate change
- Much of the life thrives in Antarctica's ice-free pockets: small invertebrates (nematodes, springtails, and tardigrades) vascular plants, lichen, fungi, mosses and algae. They also serve as breeding ground for sea birds (including the Adelie penguins) and elephant seals.

#### Possible impacts:

##### Positive:

- Good news for Antarctica's biodiversity that is likely to find larger habitats.

##### Negative:

- Biggest threats from an increase in ice-free area appears to be the spread of invasive species.
- As ice-free islands expand and coalesce, biodiversity could homogenise, less competitive species could go extinct and ecosystems destabilise from the spread of invasive species.
- The species that will lose will most likely be those that are not very competitive and can't cope with the invasive species.

#### Climate change:

- The greatest change in climate is projected for the Antarctic Peninsula by the end of the century, and more than 85% of the new ice-free area is believed to occur in the north Antarctic Peninsula.

#### Basic Information:

- Invasive species: An invasive species is a plant, fungus, or animal species that is not native to a specific location (an introduced species), and which has a tendency to spread to a degree believed to cause damage to the environment, human economy or human health.

## Sunderbans mangrove cover at risk

### Highlights of study by Jadavpur University

#### Context:

- **Study:** Mangrove Forest Cover Changes in Indian Sundarban (1986-2012) Using Remote Sensing and GIS, a publication by the School of Oceanographic Studies, Jadavpur University
- Depleting Mangrove forest cover in the Sunderbans at an alarming rate over the past few decades.
- From 1986 to 2012, 124.418 sq. km., or about 5.5% of the mangrove cover, was lost.
- Climate change and sea level rise has contributed to the phenomenon of losing land, including mangrove forests in the Sundarbans, in the last part of the 21st century. Mean sea level rise can be considered a driving factor for coastal erosion, coastal flooding, and an increase in the number of tidal creeks.
- Sunderbans has lost 3.71% of its mangrove and other forest cover, while losing 9,990 hectares of its landmass to erosion in one decade.

#### Threats associated with mangrove damage:

- The continuation of this process (damage to mangroves) in response to climate change and sea level rise poses a serious threat to the carbon sequestration potential and other ecosystem services of this mangrove forest in future.
- A critical minimal inflow of freshwater is necessary for the luxuriant growth of mangroves. When freshwater inflow is missing, there is a change in mangrove succession, and freshwater loving species of mangroves are replaced by salt-water loving ones. Immediate impact of salinity will be on the fishing community, where commercially sought after fish species will be replaced by fish that does not have as much market value.



**Basic information:****Carbon sequestration**

- Carbon sequestration is the process involved in carbon capture and the long-term storage of atmospheric carbon dioxide.
- Carbon sequestration involves long-term storage of carbon dioxide or other forms of carbon to mitigate or defer global warming. It has been proposed as a way to slow the atmospheric and marine accumulation of greenhouse gases, which are released by burning fossil fuels.
- Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is naturally captured from the atmosphere through biological, chemical, and physical processes. Artificial processes have been devised to produce similar effects, including large-scale, artificial capture and sequestration of industrially produced CO<sub>2</sub> using subsurface saline aquifers, reservoirs, ocean water, aging oil fields, or other carbon sinks.

**Govt launches two apps to send alerts on earthquake parameters and oceanic disturbances**

**Highlights of study by Jadavpur University****In News:**

- The government launched two Mobile apps –
- **'India Quake'** for dissemination of earthquake parameters.
- **'Sagar Vani'** to disseminate ocean related information and alerts (like high waves and Tsunami early warnings) to the user community in timely manner for their safety.
- Developed by the National Centre for Seismology (NCS), the 'India Quake' will automatically disseminate relevant parameter (location, time and magnitude) after the occurrence of earthquakes.
- Other than scientific and administrative benefits of the App, it will help in reducing panic amongst people during an earthquake.

# ART AND CULTURE

## 1. Thirsty Vijayapura reaches into ancient bawadis 21 huge open wells, built around 500 years ago, are filling up after desilting and providing a vital source of water for the arid city

### Context:

- Climate change and impact on biodiversity.

### Antartica's ice-free islands:

- 21 huge, open wells, built around 500 years ago, are filling with water after desilting and providing a vital source of water for this arid city in Karnataka.
- A little over two months ago, the historic Taj bawadi (huge open wells), built during the Adil Shahi era (1490-1686) in Vijayapura in Karnataka was a filthy cesspool, with the polluted water unfit for any use.
- Today the 223 ft wide structure has potable water, with hundreds of springs injecting fresh water into it.
- Built in 1620 in the name of Taj Sultana, the queen of Ibrahim Adil Shah-II, the Taj bawadi is one of 21 such open wells being revived by the district administration in a first ever attempt at cleaning and desilting them.
- Some of the others being revived are the Chanda Bawadi, Sandal Bawadi, Ibrahimpur Bawadi, Pethi Bawadi and the Gunnapur Bawadi.
- Dr Rajendra Singh, noted water conservationist, also lauded the work on reviving the water source during his recent visit.

## 2. Ahmedabad gets world heritage tag

### In News:

- The Walled City of Ahmedabad, founded by Sultan Ahmed Shah in the 15th century, has been declared India's first World Heritage City.
- The World Heritage Committee (WHC) of UNESCO made the announcement
- The UNESCO had preferred Ahmedabad over Delhi and Mumbai.
- The 5.5 km walled city area with an approximate population of four lakh, living in century-old wooden residences is regarded as a living heritage.
- It has now joined the privileged club of heritage cities like Paris, Cairo, Edinburgh and two cities in the subcontinent, Bhaktapur in Nepal and Galle in Sri Lanka.

### Ahmedabad:

- The walled city of Ahmedabad on the eastern banks of

Sabarmati river presents a rich architectural heritage from the sultanate period, notably the Bhadra citadel, the walls and gates of the Fort city and numerous mosques and tombs, as well as important Hindu and Jain temples of later periods

## 3. India to celebrate Falun Gong

### In News:

- Falun Gong, the ancient Chinese holistic system that is banned in China, will be celebrated in India on July 15 with a parade and Human Word Formation in New Delhi

### Basic Information:

### Falun Gong:

- Falun Gong (literally, "Dharma Wheel Practice" or "Law Wheel Practice") is a Chinese spiritual practice that combines meditation and qigong exercises with a moral philosophy centered on the tenets of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance
- The practice emphasizes morality and the cultivation of virtue, and identifies as a qigong practice of the Buddhist school, though its teachings also incorporate elements drawn from Taoist traditions. Through moral rectitude and the practice of meditation, practitioners of Falun Gong aspire to eliminate attachments, and ultimately to achieve spiritual enlightenment.
- Qigong is a holistic system of coordinated body posture and movement, breathing, and meditation used for health, spirituality, and martial arts training

## 4. Demand for religion status for Lingayat gains momentum

### In News:

- The demand for independent religion status for Lingayats once again gathered new momentum.
- Lakhs of people belonging to Lingayat community took to the streets in Bidar - Karnataka.
- Their anger was not just against those who projected Lingayat community as an integral part of Hinduism but also those who argued Lingayat and Veerashaiva were one and the same.

### Lingayat and Veerashaiva:

- The heads of the different Lingayat mutts who arrived from different parts of the country to participate in the

agitation invariably asserted that Lingayats had been neither part of the Hindu religion nor were a synonym for the Veerashaiva sect.

- There are two main religious streams in Hinduism — Shaivas and Vaishnavas. Veerashaiva is one among the seven sects of Shaivas. Both Shaivas and Vaishnavas uphold Vedas, Agamas, Shastras and Puranas and follow the Vedic religious practices. However, Lingayat religion founded by Basaveshwara vehemently opposed them.
- Lingayats are spread across Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and other States. Historically, ours is an independent religion founded by Basaveshwara in the 12th century. It has never been a part of Hinduism. Contrarily, it fought Hinduism.

# SOCIAL ISSUES

## 1. Rural India starts to go nuclear, urban families grow in shrinking space

### In News:

- Data released by the central government shows decline in the proportional share of nuclear households in urban areas.
- Whereas in rural areas nuclear families are rising and joint families declining at a faster pace than in urban areas.

### Reasons:

- Lack of adequate housing in urban areas forcing people to stay together.
- Increased migration as well as lack of housing.
- Classification based on family size.
- Sub-nuclear family: It is a fragment of a nuclear family, such as a widow with unmarried children, or siblings living together.
- Supplemented nuclear families: Include a nuclear family's members plus other relations, without spouses.
- Broken extended nuclear families: Comprise a head without a spouse with other relations, of whom only one has a spouse.

## 2. Enrolment of Muslims in Bengal varsities abysmally low, says survey

### In News:

**The 6th All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) for the year 2015-16 reports:**

- The percentage of Muslim students in leading State and Central universities of West Bengal is abysmally low.
- The report, prepared by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MoHRD).
- No Muslims students in elite institutions - the Presidency University in Kolkata, Visva Bharati in Shantiniketan, the Indian Institute of Technology-Kharagpur, the West Bengal University of Teachers' Training, Education Planning and Administration in Kolkata, the Indian Institute of Information Technology in Kalyani, the Kazi Nazrul University in Asansol, the West Bengal State University in Kolkata, and the Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswa Vidyalaya in Mohanpur. Amity, a private university

- A little over 27% of Bengal's population is Muslim. In nearly all of the State's universities and institutes of higher education, the percentage of Muslims stands between 0 and 3%.

## 3. Every third child bride in the world is Indian: report

### Report:

- 'Eliminating Child Marriage in India,' released by ActionAid India highlights-
- Every third child bride in the world is an Indian.
- There had been some improvement in the age of marriage, but that India still accounted for about 33% of all child marriages in the world. Of the married female population in India, 30.2% had been child brides.
- 75% of all child marriages took place in rural areas as on 2011. The number was even higher for the period between 2007 and 2011, at 82%.
- Uttar Pradesh accounted for the highest percentage of child marriages in India, at 16.6%. U.P., Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Bihar, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh accounted for 70% of all child marriages in India as of 2011.

## 4. The boycott ban: on Maharashtra's law against social boycott

### Report:

- Maharashtra's new law prohibits the social boycott of individuals, families or any community by informal village councils.
- The progressive legislation, which received Presidential assent targets the pernicious practice of informal caste panchayats or dominant sections using ostracism as a means of enforcing social conformity.
- The Maharashtra Protection of People from Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2016
- The Act lists over a dozen types of actions that may amount to 'social boycott', and made a criminal offence punishable with imprisonment up to three years or a fine of ₹1 lakh or both.
- The law recognises the human rights dimension to issues of social boycott, as well as the varied forms which occurs in a caste-based society.

### Prohibitions:

- Preventing the performance of a social or religious custom.



- Denial of the right to perform funerals or marriages.
- Cutting off someone's social or commercial ties to prevent access to educational or medical institutions or community halls and public facilities.
- Any form of social ostracism on any ground.
- Discrimination on the basis of morality, social acceptance, political inclination, sexuality.
- Creating cultural obstacles by forcing people to wear a particular type of clothing or use a particular language.

#### **Need for a law prohibiting Social boycott?**

- Article 17 of the Constitution and the Protection of Civil Rights Act outlaw untouchability in all its forms, but these are legal protections intended for the Scheduled Castes.
- In reality, members of various castes and communities also require such protection from informal village councils and gatherings of elders who draw on their own notions of conformity, community discipline, morality and social mores to issue diktats to the village or the community to cut off ties with supposedly offending persons and families.
- Hence a special legislation is required to prohibit social discrimination, ostracism and practices repugnant to human dignity.

## **5. Cinema & Censorship**

#### **Context:**

- Supreme Court rejected a petition filed by a person claiming to be the daughter of the late Sanjay Gandhi to set aside the certificate granted to Indu Sarkar, a film directed by Madhur Bhandarkar

#### **Freedom of expression:**

- Supreme Court observation: freedom of expression cannot be curtailed without a valid reason.
- Film is nothing but artistic expression within the parameters of law and that there is no warrant or justification to curtail it.

#### **CBFC and its censorship role:**

- Recent experience suggests that the CBFC (Central Board of Film Certification) does not always see itself as a certifying authority, but rather plays the censor quite merrily. In the case of Uda Punjab last year, it was seeking to be the guardian of Punjab's honour against the depiction of the high prevalence of drug addiction in the State.
- The Bombay High Court had to remind the CBFC that certification, and not censorship, is its primary role and that its power to order changes and cuts must be exercised in accordance with constitutional principles.

- More recently, the CBFC sought to play the moral censor with regard to Lipstick Under My Burkha, a film it thought was too "lady-oriented" to be given a certificate, presumably because it depicts their fantasies.
- The Film Certification Appellate Tribunal had to intervene to secure the release of the film, with an 'A' certificate.
- These instances demonstrate that challenges to freedom come from both within the systemic framework and outside.

#### **Role of court in protecting freedom of expression:**

- Courts prefer to protect the right to free expression rather than entertain excuses such as maintenance of law and order and public tranquillity, or someone's sense of hurt or the fear of someone being portrayed in a bad light.

# ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

## 1. Aerosols 'shrinking' India's monsoon Greenhouse gases cause concern, but scientists are more worried about particulates

### In News:

- While greenhouse gases, or GHGs, are causing concern about the long-term fate of the Indian monsoon, researchers now think aerosols from vehicular exhaust, half-burnt crop residue, dust and chemical effluents may be weakening the life-giving rainy season even more than GHGs.

### Study Report :

- An Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, team led by climatologist R. Krishnan studying the likely monsoon impact of GHGs over the next century has come to this conclusion.

### Scientists have used new model:

- The scientist and his team used an upgraded forecasting model that was used this year by the India Meteorological Department for forecasts. The model will help prepare India's first home-grown forecast of climate change from global warming, and be part of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports.
- Dust clouds shield the earth from the sun's rays, depressing land and sea temperatures. The monsoon, which is produced by the difference in temperature between the two, is thus weakened.

## 2. Nine more bird, biodiversity areas in Kerala

### In News:

- The bird and biodiversity-rich areas in Kerala are drawing global attention with nine more locations being identified as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs).
- The newly identified IBAs of Kerala are Achencoil Forest Division; Anamudi Shola National Park; Camel's Hump Mountain, Wayanad; Kurinjimala Wildlife Sanctuary; Malayattoor Reserve Forest; Mankulam Forest Division; Mathikettan Shola National Park; Muthikulam-Siruvani; and Pampadum Shola National Park.

### Who release the list ?

- The new list was released by the Bombay Natural History Society, a partner of BirdLife International, in its recent publication, Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas in India Priority sites for conservation.

- The IBAs are "places of international significance for the conservation of birds and other biodiversity" and are "distinct areas amenable to practical conservation action," according to BirdLife International.

- Kerala IBAs are home to three critically endangered species — Whiterumped Vulture, Indian Vulture, and Red-headed Vulture.

## 3. Of plant species few and far between

### In News:

- Scientists have recorded a major section of Rare Endemic and Threatened plants and trees in the Western Ghats, some of which have not been assessed by international conservation bodies for nearly two decades.
- The Botanical Survey of India (BSI) project on endemic tree resources in the southern Western Ghats, including Kerala and Tamil Nadu, has now documented about 250 'RET' species.
- The assessment of some of these conducted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature for the IUCN Red List puts them under vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered categories based on literature from 1998.

### Heavily exploited

- Poorly documented, heavily exploited or habitat-deprived species such as Kingiodendron pinnatum, known in Malayalam as Chukannapayini, Cynometra travancorica, Vateria indica and Hopea parviflora now have better records.
- Evidence on medicinally important plants including Aglaia malabarica (critically endangered in the Red List), Myristica malabarica (vulnerable), Syzigium stocksii and Syzigium dhaneshiana as well as economically important ones like Humboldtia vahliana (unsustainable collection) and Hopea ponga has been gathered.

## 4. Concrete may help curb air pollution

### In News:

- Scientists found that Concrete surfaces can help tackle air pollution as it absorbs sulphur dioxide — a major pollutant.

### Importance:

- The strategy of using pollution-causing material and turning it into an environmental solution could lead to new thinking in urban design and waste management.

- Concrete buildings in urban areas can serve as a kind of sponge adsorbing sulphur dioxide to a high level.
- Waste concrete coming from building demolitions can also be used to adsorb these pollutants

#### **Air Pollution menace**

- According to the WHO, as many as seven million premature deaths of people worldwide may be linked to poor air quality and pollution
- Sulphur dioxide emissions are among the most common pollutants into the air globally, with power plants emitting the most sulphur dioxide.

#### **Basic Information:**

##### **SO<sub>2</sub>**

- It is a toxic gas with a pungent, irritating smell.
- The SO<sub>2</sub> is hygroscopic, when it is in the atmosphere it reacts with humidity and forms sulphuric and sulphurous aerosol acid that is later part of the so-called acid rain.

### **5. Sensor network to map and predict pollution, effluents in Godavari**

#### **In News:**

- A group of U.S. researchers is working on a system to map undulating pollution trends in the Godavari.

#### **New approach:**

- Using a mix of methods, including satellite-monitoring, traversing stretches of the river to collect water samples and using special sensors to measure bacterial and chemical pollution, the researchers are trying to develop a cost-effective forecast system.
- The team's long-term objective is to be able to inform State officials and citizens of a probable spike in, say, levels of dangerous microbes or effluents, similar to weather and air pollution forecasts
- It is to be able to access "raw data" that could be used to inform the efficacy of a proposed faecal sludge treatment plant and whether behavioural interventions — including incentives or punishments — to restrict activities that pollute the river could actually work.
- The project measures parameters such as total dissolved salts, nitrate, pH, temperature, turbidity and electrical conductivity. These are relayed to a website called Thoreau, a wireless sensing network maintained at the University of Chicago to map environmental parameters, for analysis. Some river attributes such as microbial levels require to be measured in laboratories, though the team hopes eventually to be able to use low-cost sensors that measure them, too, in real time.

### **6. Earth facing sixth mass extinction**

#### **Context:**

- Scientists observed the sixth mass extinction of life on Earth is unfolding more quickly than feared.

#### **In news:**

- More than 30% of animals with a backbone- fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals are declining in both range and population,
- This is the case of a biological annihilation occurring globally.
- The mammal species that were monitored have lost at least a third of their original habitat.
- Several species of mammals, were relatively safe one or two decades ago are now endangered, including cheetahs, lions and giraffes.

#### **Background Information:**

- **Mass extinction:** The extinction of a large number of species within a relatively short period of geological time, thought to be due to factors such as a catastrophic global event or widespread environmental change.

#### **How many mass extinctions have there been?**

- There have been five mass extinctions in Earth's history. Now we're facing a sixth.
  - i. Ordovician-Silurian mass extinction.
  - ii. Late Devonian mass extinction.
  - iii. Permian mass extinction.
  - iv. Triassic-Jurassic mass extinction.
  - v. Cretaceous-Tertiary mass extinction.

#### **Impact:**

- On an average, two vertebrate species disappear every year.
- Tropical regions have seen the highest number of declining species
- While fewer species are disappearing in temperate zones, the percentage is just as high or higher.

#### **Reasons for the decline:**

- i. Habitat loss.
- ii. Over consumption.
- iii. Pollution.
- iv. Invasive species.
- v. Disease.
- vi. Climate change.
- vii. Poaching of tigers, elephants, rhinos and other large animals prized for their body parts.

## 7. Four ways to shrink your carbon footprint

### Context:

- Researchers in Sweden have identified the top four things people can do to reduce their carbon footprint, but warned these steps are rarely promoted in the public sphere.

### Four Actions:

- Four actions that could result in substantial decreases in an individual's carbon footprint are: eating a plant-based diet, avoiding air travel, living car-free, and having smaller families.
- A plant-based diet - While eating plant-based diet saves 0.8 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent a year.
- **No airplanes** - Avoiding airplane travel saves about 1.6 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per trip.
- **Living car-free** - Saves about 2.4 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per year.
- **Smaller families** - One less child saves an average of 58.6 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent emission reductions per year, the report said.
- Commonly promoted government strategies included changing light bulbs and comprehensive recycling but researchers said these steps are respectively eight and four times less effective than a plant-based diet.

## 8. Fixing a major piece of the climate puzzle

### In News:

- Fixing air-conditioning would be the best and more effective solution to climate change
- New research indicates that adding improved efficiency in refrigeration and phasing out fluorinated gases used for cooling, as mandated by international agreement, could eliminate a full degree Celsius of warming by 2100

### Air-conditioners and Climate change

- Hydrofluorocarbons account for about 1 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, but it is thousands of times as potent as carbon dioxide and may account for up to 19 percent of emissions by 2050 if their manufacture continues unchecked.
- India to the Philippines to South Africa, air-conditioners are increasingly a must-have item.
- Businesses and homeowners in Asia and Africa are expected to buy about 700 million air-conditioners by 2030, and 1.6 billion by mid-century.

### Measures taken:

- Kigali amendment to the Montreal Protocol.
- The landmark 1987 pact designed to close the hole in the ozone layer by banning ozone-depleting coolants called chlorofluorocarbons/CFCs.

- The amendment reached last year in the capital of Rwanda binds nations to phase out HFCs, avoiding an estimated half degree Celsius of warming by 2100.

### Way forward:

- Nations must call for new regulatory policies on manufacturing standards and labeling.

### Basic Information:

#### Kigali agreement

- Kigali Amendment which amends the 1987 Montreal Protocol aims to phase out Hydrofluorocarbons by the late 2040s.
- Under Kigali Amendment, in all 197 countries, including India have agreed to a timeline to reduce the use of HFCs by roughly 85% of their baselines by 2045.
- The Kigali Agreement for HFCs reduction will be binding on countries from 2019.
- It also has provisions for penalties for non-compliance.

## 9. Safe haven for endangered Egyptian vultures

### In News:

- Breeding of the rare and threatened Egyptian vultures in a human habitat at the Punjabi University campus in Patiala has come as a pleasant surprise for birding enthusiasts.

### Egyptian vulture :

- The Egyptian vulture ( *Neophron percnopterus* ), one among the globally threatened vulture species found in India, is classified under the 'Endangered' (EN) red list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- The species is popularly known as safed giddh (white vulture) in Hindi.
- According to BirdLife International, a global partnership of organisations working for the conservation of birds, the present global breeding population of the Egyptian vulture is estimated to be 12,000 to 38,000 individuals.

### Habitat Niche :

- Egyptian vultures usually build their nests on the cliffs of mountains, roofs of buildings and on tree-tops.

### Food Niche of the species :

- The species rarely hunt its food — the birds mostly feed on dead carcasses of animals, birds and reptiles. They eat eggs and sometimes, in the absence of animal carcasses, switch over to household solid waste like rotten fruits and vegetables.

### Prelims Worthy Fact:

#### BirdLife International

- BirdLife International (formerly the International Council for Bird Preservation) is a global partnership



of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.

- It is the world's largest partnership of conservation organisations, with over 120 partner organisations.
- Bombay Natural History Society is India's partner.

## 10. GM mustard release faces another hurdle

### In News:

- Dissent has crept in among agricultural scientists of the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) over the possible release of genetically modified mustard.

### Background:

- In May, NAAS President wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, endorsing DMH-11, a variety of mustard developed by Deepak Pental of Delhi University, a NAAS Fellow, that employs genes from soil bacterium.
- If approved, it would be the first transgenic edible crop to be grown in Indian fields.
- The plant had gone through adequate tests and was declared "safe" and passed regulatory muster.

### A dissent note by a member:

- However, P.C. Kesavan, also a Fellow of the NAAS, wrote that he disagreed with this endorsement.
- According to him, the resolution of the NAAS is neither scientifically valid, nor ethical, and therefore not maintainable.

### Counter arguments to GM Mustard:

- DMH-11 did not perform as well as several other varieties and mustard hybrids and that the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), the Environment Ministry body that cleared DMH-11, was riddled by a "conflict of interest."
- Using genetically-modified technology to produce hybrid seed varieties was a "failed experiment" as evidenced by the experience of Bt cotton.
- Though the latter occupied 95% of India's acreage, its yields were on the decline since 2006, largely due to insect resistance, and that it nearly tripled the cost of producing cotton between 2006-2013.

### Bodies associated with this:

- DMH-11 is a hybrid variety of mustard developed by crossing a traditional variety of mustard, called Varuna, and an East European variety.
- The NAAS — a 625-member body of agricultural scientists — had about 200 scientists in its quorum when it passed a resolution endorsing the GEAC's decision to clear DMH-11 for commercial field trials.

- The GEAC, India's apex regulator for genetically modified seeds, had cleared GM mustard for environmental release and use in farmer fields on May 11 this year.

## 11. World's northernmost corals bleached

### In News:

- Bleaching has damaged the world's northernmost coral reef in Japan, the latest example of a global phenomenon scientists have attributed to high ocean temperatures.

### Coral bleaching

- About 30% of the coral reef off the coast of Tsushima island in Japan, which lies in the temperate zone some 1,000 km southwest of Tokyo, suffered bleaching
- Early in 2017, the rise in water temperature caused significant bleaching in the Great Barrier Reef in Australia for the second consecutive year.
- Since 2015, all tropical coral reefs have seen above-normal temperatures, and more than 70% experienced prolonged high temperatures that can cause bleaching.

### Coral reef advantages:

- Healthy coral reefs protect shores from storms.
- Offer habitats for fish and other marine life, including ecologically and economically important species.

### Recovery option:

- After coral dies, reefs quickly degrade and the structures that coral build erode. While coral can recover from mild bleaching, severe or long-term episodes are often lethal.
- According to U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration coral reef bleaching may be easing after the three years of high ocean temperatures, the longest such period since the 1980s.
- Satellite data showed widespread bleaching was no longer occurring in all three ocean basins — Atlantic, Pacific and Indian — "indicating a likely end to the global bleaching event".

### Basic Information:

#### Coral reefs

- Coral reefs are large underwater structures composed of the skeletons of coral, which are marine invertebrate animals.
- The coral species that build coral reefs are known as hermatypic or "hard" corals because they extract calcium carbonate from seawater to create a hard, durable exoskeleton that protects their soft, sac-like bodies.

- Each individual coral is referred to as a polyp. New coral polyps live on the calcium carbonate exoskeletons of their ancestors, adding their own exoskeleton to the existing coral structure.

## **12. A Sunderbans denizen staves off extinction**

### **In News:**

- A critically endangered- the rare Northern river terrapin (Batagur baska), resident of the Sunderbans is set to get a new home, beginning a slow journey to recovery from a disastrous decline in the wild. It is more threatened than the Bengal tiger, but far less known.
- Batagur baska, the 60-cm-long turtle that is presumed extinct in several Southeast Asian countries, is classified as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in its Red List of threatened species. The tiger, by comparison, is endangered.
- Batagur baska is described as the world's second most endangered turtle.
- The Yangtze giant soft shell turtle, Rafetus swinhoei, is considered the most endangered freshwater turtle.
- Habitat of Batagur baska: river estuarine.
- Of six large fresh water turtles of the genus Batagur, three are found in India. Batagur kachuga (Red-crowned roofed turtle) and Batagur dhongoka (Three-striped roofed turtle) are found in the tributaries of the Ganga, such as Chambal.

## **13. Petrol, diesel cars face ban in U.K.**

### **In News:**

- Britain will join other European nations in plans to ban diesel and petrol-fuelled cars in the coming decades.
- Commendable governments move to deal with high levels of air pollution and climate change.
- New diesel and petrol cars will be banned by 2040, as part of a package of measures designed to improve air quality in Britain, and meet tough EU rules on emissions, particularly around nitrogen dioxide emissions.
- Britain's high levels of air pollution, estimated to cause 40,000 deaths a year, has come under close scrutiny in recent years, with London breaching its annual air pollution limits under EU rules just 117 hours into 2017.
- The government says 4% of Britain's major roads are in breach of air pollution limits.
- Last year, Norway announced plans to phase out new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2025, via a green tax system, while France will end the sales of these vehicles by 2040. Germany's Bundesrat called for petrol vehicles to be phased out by 2030.

# SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

## 1. NASA launches Rocket to produce Colourful Artificial Clouds

### In News:

- The NASA has successfully launched Terrier-Improved Malemute sounding rocket that created colourful artificial clouds visible in the skies of the US.
- The rocket was launched from its Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia.

### Salient Facts:

- The rocket during the 8-minute flight had released 10 canisters about the size of a soft drink into space.
- The canisters deployed blue-green and red vapour that formed artificial clouds visible in the skies of the United States from New York to North Carolina.
- The artificial clouds are formed through the interaction of barium, strontium and cupric-oxide.
- The vapour tracers will help in understanding the movement of the particles in the ionosphere.
- It will help to learn more about the movement of the air currents at that altitude.

### Basic Information:

- **Ionosphere:** The ionosphere is called so because it is ionised by solar radiation. It plays an important part in atmospheric electricity and forms the inner edge of the magnetosphere. Ionosphere stretches from 50 to 1,000 km and typically overlaps both the exosphere and the thermosphere. It has practical importance because it influences, for example, radio propagation on the Earth. It is also responsible for auroras.

## 2. New material uses sunlight to detoxify water

### In News:

- Novel approach: Scientists have developed a new non-toxic material that uses solar energy to degrade harmful synthetic dye pollutants which are released at a rate of nearly 300,000 tonnes a year into the world's water.
- The novel, non-hazardous photocatalytic material removes dye pollutants from water, adsorbing more than 90% of the dye and enhancing the rate of dye breakdown by almost ten times using visible light.

### Technical details: (not required)

- **Catalyst synthesis:** By heating the reaction mixture at high pressures inside a sealed container, the composite is synthesised by growing ultrathin "nanowires" of tungsten oxide on the surface of tiny particles of tantalum nitride.
- The composite provides a huge surface area for dye capture (incredibly small size of the two material components- typically less than 40 billionths of a metre in diameter).
- The material then proceeds to break the dye down into smaller, harmless molecules using the energy provided by sunlight, in a process known as "photocatalytic degradation."
- Having removed the harmful dyes, the catalyst may simply be filtered from the cleaned water and reused.

## 3. Should we grow GM crops?

### Context:

- A PIL has been filed against GM crops in the Supreme Court of India.

### Issues associated with GMO

- GMOs carry risks of 'unintended' effects and toxicity and long term, health impacts such as cancer.
- GMOs are self-replicating organisms and genetic contamination of the environment, of non-GM crops and wild species through gene flow
- It cannot be contained, reversed, remedied or quantified.
- Our seed stock will be contaminated at the molecular level.
- The traits for disease, saline and drought resistance, yield, etc. are found in nature, not biotech labs.
- California reaffirmed glyphosate, included in a list of chemicals labelled as "cancer-causing".

### What is Glyphosate?

- Glyphosate is one of the most widely used herbicides in the United States and considered the safest herbicide.

### Issues associated with Glyphosate:

- Glyphosate is an endocrine (hormone) disruptor.
- But no regulatory agency regulates for endocrine disruption despite evidences from Argentina that it causes birth defects because of glyphosate used

herbicide-tolerant (HT) soybeans.

#### **Concerns with GMOs in India?**

- Bayer's glufosinate, the herbicide linked with Indian HT mustard, is an acknowledged neurotoxin banned in the EU.
- The Supreme Court-appointed technical expert committee recommended a ban on any HT crop in India.
- The myths with GM crop technology that it "will feed the world" — are fast dissolving.
- The current GMOs, Bt cotton and HT on empirical evidence are proven unsustainable technologies.
- There are promises of GMOs with traits for disease, drought etc, but these are complex, multi-gene traits and remain futuristic.

#### **Where India lacks?**

- Serious lack of expertise in risk assessment, and we are sitting on an agri-biosecurity danger situation.
- We have moved from dismal regulation in Bt cotton in 2002 to outright delinquency in commercialising HT mustard.
- The regulation is subterranean, unconstitutional and also in contempt of Supreme Court orders pertaining to Bt brinjal/mustard.

#### **4. Cocoa: A tonic for cognition and memory retention**

##### **In News:**

##### **Cocoa and health benefits:**

- Cocoa and chocolates are good for cognition. Of particular interest is a paper
- The family of flavonoids (catechins, quercetin, anthocyanidins) present in cocoa not only act as antioxidants and cell protectants just as tea does, but they protect human cognition, counteract cognitive decline and memory loss as well.
- Cocoa and cognition: they may protect neurons against damage, reduce inflammation, promote and even generate new connections between nerve cells.

#### **5. Cloud seeding: expensive, but no guarantees**

##### **In News:**

- The Karnataka State government's proposal for cloud seeding is gathering steam even as many meteorologists warn that the costly 'experiment' may end up yielding little.

##### **Basic Information:**

##### **Cloud seeding:**

- Cloud seeding is a form of weather modification, a way of changing the amount or type of precipitation that falls from clouds, by dispersing substances into the air that serve as cloud condensation or ice nuclei, which

alter the microphysical processes within the cloud.

- The usual intent is to increase precipitation (rain or snow), but hail and fog suppression are also widely practiced in airports.
- The most common chemicals used for cloud seeding include silver iodide, potassium iodide and dry ice (solid carbon dioxide). Liquid propane, which expands into a gas, has also been used.
- This can produce ice crystals at higher temperatures than silver iodide. After promising research, the use of hygroscopic materials, such as table salt, is becoming more popular.

#### **6. Using AI to achieve development goals**

##### **In News:**

- How AI can provide solutions to human and social development challenges?

##### **Health and nutrition:**

- High level of malnutrition and stunted growth in pre-school children in India is alarming
- AI-based systems can be used to improve delivery of child nutrition programmes

##### **How AI can help?**

- AI-based systems collect and examine data about children and track the progress of an individual child in terms of their cognitive development and health.
- Image-recognition techniques can help in early identification of stunted growth, epidemics and other health issues.
- It assist in diagnosis of problems being faced—from drought to poor sanitation and inadequate supplies

##### **Agriculture:**

- US have used AI to develop "precision farming" practices, which lead to a more efficient use of inputs and higher yields.

##### **How it works?**

- Sensors gather information about the condition and colour of foliage and soil moisture content.
- This information is fed to the system, which determines the amount of water, and fertilizer to be provided.
- It also specifies which part of the plant needs to be provided with these inputs.
- These systems have reported higher yields and reduction in agricultural inputs.

##### **Education:**

- Learning outcomes of young minds are notoriously poor in our current education system.



**AI-based systems can assist students with their learning experience.How?**

- Changing the form and nature of content to suit the student.
- “Smart content” is generated with text summaries, supported with related videos and simulations.
- Intelligent tutor systems are an example of the same (see Carnegielearning.com).
- MIT’s Media Labs has also developed “personal robots” which work and interact with humans as peers.
- Some of them are even capable of identifying and correcting misconceptions of a student as they learn the material.
- Provides timely feedback to students and teachers.

**Concerns about AI:**

- Expensive today.
- Ethical issues of privacy of data, equity and liability of actions.

## **7. Curcumin nanoparticles found to shorten TB treatment time**

**In News:**

- Researchers have found that the basic ingredient of turmeric, when administered in a nanoparticle formulation has several favourable properties in the treatment of tuberculosis in mice.
- Name of the basic ingredient: Curcumin.
- The results were published in the journal Frontiers in Immunology.

**Results of the Research**

- During the research, regular curcumin was able to drastically reduce liver toxicity induced by TB drug isoniazid.
- Also, the treatment of TB with isoniazid along with 200 nanometre curcumin nanoparticles led to “dramatically reduced” risk of disease reactivation and reinfection.
- Because of the increased bioavailability of curcumin, the duration of treatment to achieve complete eradication of the bacteria is reduced significantly.

**Other positive effects of using ‘Curcumin’**

- Quite often, patients stop taking anti-TB drugs for a few days due to liver toxicity.
- Since the addition of curcumin reduces liver toxicity there can be better treatment and lesser risk of drug resistance emerging.

## **8. Saraswati, a supercluster of galaxies**

**In News:**

- Saraswati-a massive supercluster of galaxies discovered by a group of Indian astronomers.
- The supercluster is about 4 billion light years away and spreads over a “great wall” about 600 million light years across. This makes it one of the largest superclusters to be discovered and also the furthest.

**Galaxies discovered till now:**

- The first supercluster of galaxies, the Shapley Supercluster, was discovered in 1989.
- The second, the Sloan Great Wall in 2003.
- The Milky Way galaxy is part of the Laniakea Supercluster, which was discovered in 2014.

**Clumpy universe:**

- The structure of the universe is not a homogeneous distribution of matter.
- It is clumpy with galaxies forming clusters and these in turn forming superclusters.
- There are thin “filaments” that connect galaxies, forming a cosmic web, and there are large voids in between. The current belief is that infant galaxies form in these filaments and then drift to the intersections of the filaments where they grow.
- Dark matter and dark energy are invoked to explain the structure of the universe. Dark matter, being massive, binds together the universe while dark energy, exciting the surrounding space, drives it apart; the balance of the two effects helps in maintaining the universe in its present form.
- **Light year:** A light year is the distance travelled by light in one year.

**What are galaxy clusters? How big are they?**

- Galaxies are like the building blocks of the universe, they contain a huge number of stars, something like 100 billion at a count. Galaxy groups can have three to 20 galaxies, the richest systems are called clusters (like the Virgo cluster) which can have several hundred galaxies.
- Superclusters are clusters of clusters. They can have as few as two clusters, and superclusters with two to four clusters are common. Saraswati has 42.
- Within superclusters, clusters are connected by filaments and sheets of dark matter with galaxies embedded in them.
- It is supposed that the galaxies are born in the filaments and then migrate towards the intersection of the filaments where they are assimilated into clusters.

**What are superclusters?**

- These are the largest coherent structures seen in the universe. Firstly there are clusters of galaxies together with associated gas and dark matter. Large groups of such clusters, linked by filaments, separated by voids together form the superclusters. Though initially a supercluster was used to describe groups of two-four clusters, now it is understood that much larger superclusters, comprising clusters that number an order of magnitude higher, exist. The first such large supercluster to be discovered was the Shapley supercluster.

**How does the Saraswati supercluster compare with the Milky Way?**

- The newly discovered Saraswati supercluster is 600 million light years across. The Milky Way is 150,000 light years across.

**Where does the supercluster Saraswati lie in the sky?**

- The supercluster Saraswati lies in the Stripe 82 of the Sloan Digital Sky Survey. It is about 4000 million light years away from us. It is in the constellation of Pisces.

**What is "Stripe 82 region of SDSS"?**

- SDSS stands for the Sloan Digital Sky Survey. This is an ambitious plan to make a digital 3D map of the universe. Started in 2000, it has, over eight years, mapped more than a quarter of the sky. It has mapped nearly 930,000 galaxies. The SDSS has found nearly 50 million galaxies so far.

**What is the significance of this discovery? Is there a puzzle posed by the discovery of Saraswati?**

- Spotting a supercluster which is 4000 million light years away means that you are looking at light that has come in from four billion years ago. This is because a light year is the distance travelled by light in one year. Since the universe is believed to be 13.8 billion years old, this means we are looking at light from when the universe was about 10 billion years old, just about 70% of its present age.
- This poses a puzzle. According to present theories, it is difficult for such a huge galaxy to have formed so early in the universe's lifetime.

**9. When DNA is the new hard drive****In News:**

- Scientists store film clip in hereditary unit, where it can be retrieved at will and multiplied indefinitely
- It is now the first movie ever to be encoded in the DNA of a living cell.
- Astonishing example of the genome's potential as a vast storage device.

**Gene editing technique:**

- The vast chains of DNA in each cell are made of just four molecules — adenine, guanine, thymine and cytosine — arranged in enormously varied configurations.
- The geneticists ended up with a sequence of DNA molecules that represented the entirety of the film.
- Then they used a powerful new gene editing technique, Crispr, to slip this sequence into the genome of a common gut bacteria, coli.
- Despite the modification, the bacteria thrived and multiplied.
- The film stored in the genome was preserved intact with each new generation of progeny

**Basic Information:****CRISPR/CAS9:**

- It is a new gene-editing technology that promises to revolutionize the genetics field.
- Using this technology, genes of any living organism can be edited at a faster and cheaper rate than the present technologies.

**10. Super-flexible and strong artificial silk developed****In News:**

- Scientists from the University of Cambridge have developed super-stretchy and strong artificial silk, composed almost entirely of water, which may be used to make eco-friendly textiles and sensors.
- The fibres, which resemble miniature bungee cords as they can absorb large amounts of energy, are sustainable, non-toxic and can be made at room temperature.
- The fibres are spun from a soupy material called a hydrogel, which is 98% water.
- The remaining 2% of the hydrogel is made of silica and cellulose, both naturally available materials, held together in a network by barrel-shaped molecular "handcuffs" known as cucurbiturils. The chemical interactions between the different components enable long fibres to be pulled from the gel, said the researchers.

**These fibres are Non-toxic :**

- Although these fibres are not as strong as the strongest spider silks, they can support stresses in the range of 100 to 150 megapascals, which is similar to other synthetic and natural silks. However, these fibres are non-toxic and far less energy-intensive to make

**11. 3D-printed, functional heart made****In News:**

- Scientists have developed a 3D-printed soft silicone heart that closely resembles and functions like the human organ, and could help save lives of people who

suffer from cardiac failure.

- About 26 million people worldwide suffer from heart failure. The soft artificial heart weighs 390 grams and has a volume of 679 cubic centimetres.
- It is a silicone monoblock with complex inner structure.

## 12. Govt. panel to study cow derivatives

### In News:

- The government has set up a 19-member panel to carry out scientifically validated research on cow derivatives including its urine, and their benefits.
- The panel has been named as National Steering Committee.

### About project:

- The government has given the project the acronym SVAROP, which stands for Scientific Validation and Research on Panchagavya.
- The committee will select projects that can help scientifically validate the benefits of panchgavya — the concoction of cow dung, cow urine, milk, curd and ghee — in various spheres such as nutrition, health and agriculture.
- It is being conducted by the Department of Science and Technology, Department of Biotechnology, and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) of the Ministry of Science and Technology in collaboration with IIT-Delhi.
- It will cover five thematic areas including scientific validation of uniqueness of indigenous cows.

## 13. Human waste can fuel farming

### In News:

- A faecal sludge treatment plant (FSTP), started in Devanahalli in 2015 and now handles waste from 20,000 residences, could be a model for similar small-scale treatment plants across the country.
- The treated waste from the plant is being used to make manure for farmers in the neighbourhood.
- Many parts of India had phosphorous-deficient soil.
- Direct use of the waste could lead to contamination of crops, but if the sludge is treated and reused in poor peri-urban regions, it will help solve the waste management problem as well as provide nutrients to the soil.

## 14. Humans First Arrived in Australia 65,000 Years Ago, Study Suggests

### In News:

- Researchers have found evidence that suggests the ancestors of Aboriginal Australians landed in the northern part of Australia at least 65,000 years ago.
- The finding, which was published in the journal Nature,

pushes back the timing of when people first came to the continent by about 5,000 to 18,000 years.

- It also suggests that humans coexisted with colossal Australian animals like giant wombats and wallabies long before the megafauna went extinct.
- Previous archaeological digs and dating had suggested people migrated to Australia between 47,000 and 60,000 years ago.

### Madjedbebe rock shelter:

- Human relics in this shelter dates back to 65,000 years.
- **Relics found:** Ancient campfire and archaic mortars and pestles, flaked stone tools and painting material, edge-ground axes- which are stone axes that would have had handles, which were 20,000 years older than those found anywhere else in the world.

## 15. Antibiotics in poultry making humans resistant

### In News:

- Researchers from the US-based Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics and Policy (CDDEP) collected samples from 530 birds in 18 poultry farms in Punjab and tested them for resistance to a range of antibiotic medications critical to human medicine.

### Inference:

- They found high levels of antibiotic resistant pathogens in chickens being raised for eggs and meat in poultry farms in Punjab, posing serious health hazards for humans.
- Overuse of antibiotics for growth promotion in poultry is leading to development of drug resistance in humans, scientists have warned.
- Samples from the farms, which reported using antibiotic factors, were three times more likely to be multidrug resistant than samples from farms that did not use antibiotics to promote growth, researchers found.
- The team found reservoirs of resistance across both types of farms, but meat farms had twice the rates of antimicrobial resistance than egg-producing farms, as well as higher rates of multidrug resistance.

## 16. 50% of HIV-infected get treatment now: UNAIDS

### In News:

- Highlights of UNAIDS report:
- For the first time since the global onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the scales have tipped in favour of patients.
- More than half of all People Living with HIV (PLHIV) now have access to HIV treatment.
- Globally AIDS-related deaths have almost halved since 2005.
- New infections in India: India is the country where most new HIV infections are occurring in the Asia-Pacific

region.

- The bad news is that the majority of the cases — nearly 95 per cent of the cases in 2016 — were concentrated in just 10 countries, India being one of them.
- India has 2.1 million people living with HIV, with 80,000 new infections annually, as of 2016. In 2005, the annual incidence was 1,50,000 people.
- **Hurdles in India:** access to medicines- insufficient availability and poor affordability of essential medicines.

#### India plays a special role:

- While the world seems to be on track to reach the global target of 30 million people on treatment by 2020, remains a major barrier and India plays a special role.
- Indian industries supplied nearly 90% of antiretroviral medicines in low- and middle-income countries in 2015.

#### 90-90-90 target:

- The idea behind the 90-90-90 target is to diagnose 90% of people who are HIV positive; get 90% of the diagnosed HIV+ people on antiretroviral treatment, and 90% of those on antiretrovirals should be virally suppressed.

### **17. Building block of life found on Saturn's moon Titan**

#### In News:

- An important building block of life has been discovered in the hazy upper atmosphere of Saturn's largest moon, Titan.
- Using data from the Cassini mission, scientists identified negatively charged molecules called 'carbon chain anions' in the atmosphere of Titan.
- **Inference:** These linear molecules are understood to be building blocks towards more complex molecules, and may have acted as the basis for the earliest forms of life on Earth.

### **18. China produces gas from 'flammable ice' under South China Sea**

#### In News:

- China has successfully produced natural gas from methane hydrate, also known as "flammable ice", in an experimental project in the South China Sea. The government has promised to "actively develop" natural gas hydrate over the 2016-2020 five-year plan period.

#### Flammable ice:

- Flammable ice consists of methane trapped within water crystals, and has been identified as a potential new gas source for China, with the South China Sea thought to contain some of the world's most promising deposits.

- Officially known as methane clathrates or hydrates, they are formed at very low temperatures and under high pressure. They can be found in sediments under the ocean floor as well as underneath permafrost on land. Despite the low temperature, these hydrates are flammable.
- By lowering the pressure or raising the temperature, the hydrates break down into water and methane – a lot of methane. One cubic metre of the compound releases about 160 cubic metres of gas, making it a highly energy-intensive fuel.
- Many countries including the US and Japan are working on how to tap those reserves, but mining and extracting are extremely difficult.

#### Importance:

- Methane hydrates are thought to have the potential to be a revolutionary energy source that could be key to future energy needs – likely the world's last great source of carbon-based fuel. Vast deposits exist basically underneath all oceans around the globe, especially on the edge of continental shelves. Countries are scrambling for a way to make the extraction safe and profitable.

#### Accessing the power of this flammable ice has been difficult, for two reasons.

- First, these reserves are often distributed over a large area rather than concentrated in one spot as oil or natural gas reserves often are.
- The bigger problem, however, is that, true to their moniker as flammable ice, methane hydrates are unstable and potentially explosive. Drilling into the seafloor could destabilize the methane ice crystals and cause explosions, spewing vast troves of methane into the atmosphere, where it is a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).

#### Future prospects:

- Any exploitation of the reserves must be done with the utmost care because of environmental concerns. The potential threat is that methane can escape, which would have serious consequences for global warming. It is a gas that has a much higher potential to impact climate change than carbon dioxide.

# HEALTH ISSUES

## 1. The pursuit of app-iness

### iBobbly app:

- Developed by researchers at Black Dog Institute, a mental health organisation in Australia, and launched in the country in 2014.
- The world's first suicide prevention app
- **Target group:** The app is specially targeted at young people from the indigenous communities, who are at four times the risk of suicide compared to the rest.
- iBobbly doesn't need the Internet to be accessed once downloaded.

### How does it operate?

- It allows a person to keep a 'mood diary' after self-assessment, and teaches the user to manage thoughts — especially suicidal thoughts — and feelings and create a personalised action plan with tools to monitor progress.
- The programme maintains patient confidentiality and is password-protected.
- **Results:** Participants from the Kimberley region in Western Australia who used the app over a six-week period reported a 42% reduction in symptoms of depression, 30% reduction in suicidal ideation and 28% reduction in distress.

### iBobbly app and Lessons for India:

#### Key fact:

- As per World Health Organization's (WHO) latest suicide data, nearly 1,00,000 people commit suicide.
- The country's suicide mortality rate is 20.9 per 1,00,000 people, among the highest in the world, with majority of the vulnerable groups not able to get the help they need.
- The use of technology has increased among youth and the app allows mental experts to reach them anonymously

### 'Atmiyata':

- Similar project like iBobbly in India
- **Meaning:** Compassion in Sanskrit.
- This project involves using short films loaded on a basic Android app as a training tool to enable a bunch of villagers to identify mental health disorders.
- The project was rolled out in the Peth block of Nashik district, Maharashtra, in December 2013, making

mental health care accessible to many in this part for the first time.

## 2. Cheaper, indigenous TB test enters final validation phase

### Context:

- Truenat MTB is being tested in 100 microscopy centres in 10 States.
- It's validation and operational feasibility testing is being done by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

### What is Truenat MTB?

- Truenat MTB, a chip-based nucleic acid amplification test which uses sputum samples for diagnosing Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB).

### What is its speciality?

- It's a cheaper and indigenously developed molecular diagnostic test for TB.
- The samples were also tested for resistance to the drug rifampicin which is an antibiotic used chiefly to treat tuberculosis and leprosy.
- It is a battery-operated, hand-held machine allows detection of TB in approximately one hour.
- In Truenat MTB only about 0.5 ml sample is required compared to its counterpart GeneXpert in the US which requires 1ml sample.

### Truenat MTB V/S GeneXpert:

- Truenat MTB is 50% cheaper than GeneXpert.
- Truenat MTB is chip-based and will be more environment-friendly compared to GeneXpert which is cartilage-based.
- Truenat MTB can be expanded to primary health centre level, which cannot be done using GeneXpert which needs uninterrupted power supply and air conditioning

## 3. SC allows abortion of ailing fetus

### Context:

- Kolkata woman has moved court after she discovered that the foetus suffered from severe cardiac impairment

### Supreme Court decision:

- The Supreme Court allowed a woman to abort her over 20-week-old foetus with severe abnormalities.

### Supreme Court:

- Confirmed her right to choose.



- The right of a woman to have a reproductive choice was part of personal liberty. .
- The court said every woman had a sacrosanct right to bodily integrity

**Key fact highlighted by the petitioner:**

- Of the 26 million births that occur in India every year, approximately 2-3 per cent of the foetuses had severe congenital or chromosomal abnormality. Many suffered Intrauterine Foetal Death (IUFD).
- It was possible to detect certain abnormalities before 20 weeks, but some could be detected only after that period.

**Basic Information:**

**What is MTP Act, 1971?**

- Abortion in India is legal only up to twenty weeks of pregnancy under specific conditions and situations.
- One, the continuance of the pregnancy would involve a risk to the life of the pregnant woman or of grave injury of physical or mental health, or
- Two, there is a substantial risk that if the child were born, it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

**What the draft MTP bill 2014 provides?**

- The draft MTP increased the legal limit for abortion from 20 weeks to 24 weeks.
- It provides for abortion beyond 24 weeks under defined conditions.
- The Bill amends Section 3 of the 1971 Act to provide that "the length of pregnancy shall not apply" in a decision to abort a foetus diagnosed with "substantial foetal abnormalities" or if it is "alleged by the pregnant woman to have been caused by rape".
- Under the 1971 Act, even pregnant rape victims cannot abort after 20 weeks, compelling them to move court.
- It allows a woman to take an independent decision in consultation with a registered health-care provider.
- It also takes into account the reality of a massive shortage of both doctors and trained midwives, and seeks to allow Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha practitioners to carry out abortions.

**Why is it essential to change the MTP law?**

- Foetal abnormalities show up only by 18 weeks, so just a two-week window after that is too small for the would-be parents to take the difficult call on whether to keep their baby.
- Even for the medical practitioner, this window is too small to exhaust all possible options before advising the patient.
- There is an urgent need to empower women with sexual rights, legal protection against sex crimes and

sex choices both in their own interest and for the sake of reducing the fertility rate as a whole.

- The lack of legal approval moves abortion to underground and they are done in unhygienic conditions by untrained, thus, putting thousands of women at risk.

**4. Drug-resistant TB higher among children than expected: report**

**In News:**

- Multi-Drug Resistant (MDR) TB is higher among children than expected.
- This trend has been described as a "worrying trend" by the Union Health Ministry.

**Who conducted the tests?**

- Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND) conducted the tests in collaboration with the Central TB Division under the Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP).

**Key fact:**

- Detection of tuberculosis (TB) in children remains a challenge.
- 5,500 of over 76,000 children tested in nine cities have been diagnosed with TB.
- Nine per cent of these paediatric TB cases have been diagnosed to have MDR TB

**Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND)**

- FIND initially started a unique initiative for diagnosing paediatric TB in four cities of Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kolkata from April 2014 with funding from the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)**.
- The aim of the project is to provide rapid access to quality TB diagnosis for all presumptive paediatric TB patients in the project intervention areas.

**Challenges associated with paediatric TB case detection**

- Absence of appropriate samples coupled with decentralised capacity to get good samples from children to test for TB remains a challenge in paediatric TB case detection.
- Poor sensitivity of tests like the Acid fast bacilli (AFB) smear
- Children were more prone to primary MDR infection as they were in close contact with their parents and grandparents

**Basic Information:**

- The Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND)
- The Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND) is a global health non-profit based in Geneva, Switzerland. FIND functions as a product development

partnership, engaging in active collaboration with over 150 partners to facilitate the development, evaluation, and implementation of diagnostic tests for poverty-related diseases. The organisation's Geneva headquarters are in Campus Biotech. Country offices are located in New Delhi, India; Cape Town, South Africa; and Hanoi, Viet Nam.

- **Priorities:** The organization focuses on improving diagnosis in several disease areas, including hepatitis C, HIV, malaria, neglected tropical diseases (sleeping sickness, Chagas disease, leishmaniasis, buruli ulcer), and tuberculosis. Alongside this, FIND works on diagnostic connectivity, antimicrobial resistance, acute febrile illness, and outbreak preparedness.

#### GeneXpert MTB/RIF

- The Xpert MTB/RIF is a cartridge based nucleic acid amplification test, automated diagnostic test that can identify Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB) DNA and resistance to rifampicin (RIF) by nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT)
- **NA nucleic acid test (NAT) or nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT)** is a molecular technique used to detect a particular pathogen (virus or bacterium) in a specimen of blood or other tissue or body fluid. It does so by detecting and amplifying the RNA or DNA of the pathogen, that is, making extra copies of its nucleic acids.

### **5. Central labs moot 'human first' approach to test malaria vaccine**

#### In News:

- What if a potential vaccine for malaria was to be first tested in humans before mice and animals?
- This November, experts at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and labs affiliated to the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), will have a first-of-its kind "ethics meeting" here to discuss the feasibility of conducting these so-called 'human challenge' trials in India.
- Meeting also to discuss testing two vaccine-candidates — one that causes falciparum malaria and the milder-but-more-prevalent vivax — developed at the New Delhi-based International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology.

### **6. Easier access to H1N1 medicines raises fears of drug resistance Doctors feel misuse will lead to a situation of anti-viral medications turning ineffective**

#### In News:

- Concerns regarding a build-up of resistance to antiviral drugs used to treat swine flu are surfacing, after two such drugs — Oseltamivir and Zanamivir — were taken off the restrictive Schedule X of the Drugs and Comestics Rules.

- Now under Schedule H1, the drugs can be stocked by all chemists.
- Central health authorities have also advised doctors to prescribe the drugs based on strong symptoms, without opting for the swab test. Medical experts say these decisions could lead to misuse and eventually, severe drug resistance.

#### Drugs for H1N1:

- Oseltamivir and Zanamivir are antiviral drugs that block the actions of influenza virus types A and B in the body. While Oseltamivir is available as tablets, Zanamivir comes in powder form.

#### Concern:

- We are already witnessing antibiotic resistance and related hazards.
- Resistance built up only because antibiotics were easily available and even sold over the counter.
- Now, it seems to be going the same way with antiviral drugs.

#### Mixed Reaction:

- It is good, because when H1N1 cases are on the rise, the drug will be available to patients easily.
- However, it could backfire because in India, we don't use caution.
- The doctors will prescribe these drugs so widely that eventually it will stop working.

#### Restrictions in place

- Drugs under Schedule X require three copies of prescription for the doctor, patient and chemist, and can be sold by a chemist who holds a special Schedule X licence.
- Also, the chemist has to preserve the prescription copy for up to three years.
- In Schedule H1, only one copy of the prescription is required, and drugs in this category can be sold by all chemists.

#### Way forward:

- Chemists will still need a prescription to sell the drug. The only difference is, the drug will be widely available. It all depends on doctors now. If they prescribe the drug with caution, there won't be misuse.

### **7. US panel endorses new gene-altering cancer treatment**

#### In News:

- A US Food and Drug Administration panel opened a new era in medicine on, unanimously recommending that the agency approve the first-ever treatment that genetically alters a patient's own cells to fight cancer, transforming them into what scientists call "a living drug" that powerfully bolsters the immune system to

shut down the disease.

- Severe possible side effects — raging fever, crashing blood pressure, lung congestion.

## 8. A looming threat: on the TB crisis

### In News:

- About 5,500 of over 76,000 children tested in nine Indian cities have been diagnosed with tuberculosis, 9% of them with multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB), highlighting the silent spread of the disease.
- About 5,500 of over 76,000 children tested in nine Indian cities have been diagnosed with tuberculosis, 9% of them with multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB), highlighting the silent spread of the disease.
- Though the actual prevalence of MDR-TB among children in India is not known, the results from a limited number of children tested in this sample, under the Revised National TB Control Programme, is worrying.

### Statistics :

- According to a 2015 study, of the over 600 children who had tested positive for TB in four cities, about 10% showed resistance to Rifampicin, a first-line drug.

### WHO Guidelines :

- In line with World Health Organisation guidelines, the RNTCP requires all household contacts, particularly children, of a newly diagnosed pulmonary TB patient to be tested and started on treatment if needed.
- Children below six years of age in the household of a newly diagnosed patient are required to be given the drug Isoniazid as a prophylactic even when they do not have the disease.

### Measures to be taken :

- A proactive approach to testing helps in early and correct diagnosis of all contacts and in cutting the transmission chain.
- Unfortunately, as several studies have shown, the RNTCP guidelines on contact screening are heeded mostly in the breach.
- The results from this limited study should now compel the government to take up contact screening more urgently.
- In 2010, WHO had revised the dosage of certain TB drugs for children. Fixed-dose combination (FDC) drugs that take into account the revised dosages for children were finally made available in late 2015.
- The FDCs are meant for treating children with drug-susceptible TB and cannot be used to treat children who require second-line drugs or who have MDR-TB. After more than a year's delay, a few months ago India finally introduced FDCs in six States.
- The remaining States will be covered by the end of this year. Adherence to treatment will improve, and

correct dosage for children weighing less than 25 kg will become easier when child-friendly FDCs become available throughout the country.

- Using the Xpert molecular diagnostic test to screen children with TB is a positive step and should be welcomed, but all the diagnosed children should be guaranteed paediatric FDCs. It would be unethical to deny them this lifeline.

## 9. An uphill fight

### In News:

- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's plan to eliminate malaria by 2027.
- It aims to eradicate the mosquito-borne disease from India three years ahead of the global deadline set by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

### New plan approach:

- It is the country's first time-bound malaria elimination programme since the National Malaria Eradication Programme was aborted in the late 1960s.
- Since the 1970s, the thrust of India's anti-malaria programme has been on controlling the disease.
- The National Vector and Disease Control Programme, 2004, the plan's predecessor, too aimed at "controlling" malaria.
- There are time-bound targets for all districts, based on their vulnerability to malaria.
- The plan lays emphasis on awareness programmes, entomological surveillance and outbreak warning systems — methods that have contributed to eradicating malaria in several parts of the world, including Sri Lanka.

### Challenges:

- Manpower shortage which has virtually crippled a large number of the country's primary health centres.
- This shortage not only jeopardises early detection and treatment of the disease, but is also a cause for a large number of cases going unreported.
- Under-reporting of malaria makes it difficult to accurately estimate the burden of the disease.

### India's Vulnerability to malaria

- Malaria parasite has been particularly resilient for centuries.
- Plasmodium vivax parasite responsible for almost 50 per cent of India's malaria burden has adapted to anti-malarial drugs.

### Way forward

- Compared to several other communicable diseases, malaria is not a particularly complex disease. What we need to do is to stop mosquitoes from transmitting the parasite or make the parasite ineffective.

- Beefing up indigenous research on the disease.

## 10. Policy boosts care for blood disorders

### In News:

- People living with Thalassaemia, sickle cell anaemia and other variant haemoglobins can now look forward to better screening and treatment, based on the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry's new policy.
- Ministry released a policy on the Prevention and Control of haemoglobinopathies in India.

### What is Thalassaemia, sickle cell anaemia?

- Sickle cell disease and thalassemia are genetic disorders caused by errors in the genes. Sickle cell\_01 for hemoglobin, a substance composed of a protein (globin) plus an iron molecule (heme) that is responsible for carrying oxygen within the red blood cell. These disorders can cause fatigue, jaundice, and episodes of pain ranging from mild to very severe. They are inherited, and usually both parents must pass on an abnormal gene in order for a child to have the disease. When this happens, the resulting diseases are serious and, at times, fatal.
- **Thalassaemia** : Is the name for a group of inherited conditions that affect a substance in the blood called haemoglobin. People with the condition produce either no or too little haemoglobin, which is used by red blood cells to carry oxygen around the body. This can make them very anaemic (tired, short of breath and pale).

### About the policy

- The policy aims at creating treatment protocol benchmarks, to improve the quality of life of patients.
- It is also a guide on prevention and control, which includes antenatal and prenatal testing to reduce the incidence of live haemoglobin disorder births (currently pegged at 10,000-15,000 live births a year).
- Supported by the National Health Mission, Blood Cell and the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram, the guidelines provide for screening of pregnant women during antenatal check-up, pre-marital counselling at college level and one-time screening for variant anaemia in children.
- Using public health awareness programmes and education, it highlights various haemoglobinopathies.
- The guidelines include the creation of a national registry to plan future patient services.
- The registry will also collect useful data, such as the location of patients to identify areas of high concentration, ethnicity or other characteristics, age distribution, records of deaths and their cause.
- 20% of patients can afford treatment, the government should ensure that all patients get it free.

- Such free treatment is given in States such as Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha and Karnataka besides Delhi, and others should follow suit.
- All chelation drugs should be made available free because one drug does not suit all.

### Policy fails to address:

- The policy makes no reference to carrier testing for relatives of patients. In Pakistan, a law making carrier testing compulsory for relatives of Thalassaemia patients was passed in February. A similar system is in place in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia.

## 11. A grievous lag

### In News:

- A 10-year old rape victim is seeking the mercy of the court to get permission for abortion.
- But the court is fettered by Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971 in allowing abortion of a pregnancy caused by sexual assault.
- Supreme Court was constrained to seek the opinion of a panel of doctors to "affirm" if the health of a 10-year old, in Chandigarh, will be "adversely affected if her pregnancy is allowed to be full term".

### MTP Act and constraints:

- The MTP Act allows abortions of more than 20-week pregnancies only when "it is immediately necessary to save the life of the pregnant woman".
- It also requires the judiciary's sanction for such abortions.

### Recent issues

- In many occasions, the court has rejected abortion petitions on the ground that its hands are tied by the MTP Act
- In January, it did allow a rape victim to abort a 24-week old foetus that had severe abnormalities, but only after a panel of doctors ruled that the pregnancy could put her life in danger.
- A month later, the same court cited the constraints imposed by the MTP Act while refusing permission to a woman to abort her 26-week old foetus that would be born with Down's Syndrome

### Why the act should be amended?

- There is near unanimity among medico-legal experts that the MTP act has failed to keep up with changes in science.
- They argue that foetal abnormalities show up after 18 weeks and a two-week window after that is too small for the parents to take the difficult call on keeping their baby.



- The growing number of sexual crimes against women and the need to empower them with sexual rights have also made it imperative that the MTP Act be changed.

#### **Draft Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2014**

- It do away with the need for the court's sanction for aborting a more than 20-week old pregnancy
- It vest that decision on the healthcare provider if the pregnancy involves substantial risks to the mother or child, or if it is "alleged by the pregnant woman to have been caused by rape".
- Significantly, the draft recognises that "rape may be presumed to constitute a grave injury to the mental health of the pregnant woman, and that such an injury could be a ground for allowing abortion".
- It has been three years since these progressive changes to the MTP Act were drafted.

## **12. Expert panel to review dengue clinical norms**

#### **In News:**

- **Kerala:** The Health Department has set up an expert committee to review the clinical management guidelines of dengue fever, after doctors from all government medical college hospitals in the State reported unusual symptomatic manifestations of dengue, rapid deterioration and death in many cases.

#### **Drastic change in Symptom:**

- The classic symptoms of dengue seem to have undergone a change, with doctors now reporting sudden hepatic failure, renal shut down, neurological involvement (encephalopathy) with stroke-like paralysis and myocarditis.
- Paediatric casualties too seemed unusually high this season.
- Senior virologists have ruled out any mutations in the dengue viruses which may have contributed to the aggravation in symptoms and complications.

#### **Key figures:**

- The State has been going through one of the worst dengue epidemics ever, chalking up over 13,000 confirmed dengue cases and 23 deaths.
- An additional 48,000 cases have been reported as "probable dengue" cases and 163 deaths as "probable dengue deaths".

## **13. Address this blockage**

#### **In News:**

- In February, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority slashed prices of stents by up to 85 per cent
- Thousands of patients who couldn't afford stents can now afford the devices at a fraction of the cost.

#### **What are Stents?**

- Stents are tiny metal tubes coated with medication, which are inserted into clogged arteries to keep them flowing well.

#### **When it is used?**

- Emergency angioplasty is the treatment of choice during an acute heart attack, wherein the clot is crushed with a balloon and a stent is placed.
- It improves the chance of the patient surviving by almost 30 per cent when compared to clot dissolving medication (thrombolysis).
- However, in India, emergency angioplasty was carried out in less than 10 per cent of patients because of the cost involved in the procedure and the lack of access to stents.
- Capping the prices- unintended ramifications on different sectors

#### **Health sector**

- Preference for stenting even in cases when it is not the best treatment and disturbing increase in multi-vessel stenting.
- With cheaper stents and a fall in procedure costs, many more patients are opting for angioplasty.
- Patients with multiple blocks in all three vessels, open heart surgery is a better than the use of multiple stents. However, with lower stent prices, patients often choose multi-vessel angioplasty as it is cheaper than open heart surgery
- Even the latest drug-eluting stents get clogged in about 5 per cent of cases.
- With the increasing use of the tiny metal tubes, the chances of a stent blocking with consequent damage to the heart muscle will only increase.

#### **Indigenous development of stents:**

- Stent manufacturers typically spend millions of dollars on research before they can make the device and commercialise it.
- Abruptly reducing stent prices will have adverse effects on the development of improved stents.
- International companies may be able to offset their losses with profits in other markets, and from profits from other products
- Even before the price control move was instituted, only 40 per cent of the stents used in the country were indigenously manufactured; the rest were imported.
- With prices of imported stents and Indian stents now being the same, doctors and patients could prefer the imported devices
- All these will have a bearing on their capacity to do quality research.



- Lack of government funding for clinical research in India only aggravates the issue.

**Internationally:**

- Lack of indigenous research and development will make the country dependent on imported stents
- Multinational companies may choose not to release their latest products in India because of the country's price control regime
- Such an alarming scenario might pertain not only to stent technology but also to research and marketing of other implantable devices.
- It end up with a situation where hospitals in the country would have older generation stents.
- Patients hoping to have advanced stents may have to travel abroad

**Medical tourism sector:**

- It will become apparent that Indian hospitals do not have the latest generation stents.
- With time, paradoxically, patients who were the intended benefactors of this price control measure may actually turn out to be losers.

**Way forward:**

- Encourage and support Indian stent manufacturers and medical device research so that we do not need to depend on imported stents.
- All aspects involving medical device development (clinical research, animal testing, and human trials) must be fast-tracked and should be as transparent as possible.
- There must be a system to make sure that the latest medical devices, including stents, are priced differently.
- Once such a level of competency is achieved, India could actually export stents, making "Make in India" viable for medical devices.

# INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE RELATED

## 1. We can strike Indian targets anywhere, any time: Hizb chief Syed Salahuddin

### Context:

- Hizb-ul Mujahideen Syed Salahuddin- designated a global terrorist on June 26 by the U.S.

### In news:

- Chief of militant group Hizb-ul Mujahideen Syed Salahuddin has claimed that Kashmiri militants have launched many operations against Indian forces in the State and have the ability to hit targets anywhere in India at any time.
- The militant leader said both Pakistan and China morally and diplomatically supported the Kashmiris in their struggle for freedom from India.

### Salahuddin hide-outs:

- Salahuddin is based in Pakistani-Occupied Kashmir and divides his time between Rawalpindi and Muzaffarabad.
- He also heads the alliance of 13 militant organizations, the so-called United Jihad Council.

### India's stand:

- Salahuddin is a terrorist and he was "instrumental" in providing funds to terrorists and separatists.

## 2. Malabar drills aim at giving regional security, says Japan

### In News:

### Trilateral Naval exercise, Malabar 2017

- The trilateral Naval exercise, Malabar 2017, involving India, the U.S. and Japan, is strategically very important and meant to maintain the rule of law and maritime security in the region.
- It is for safeguarding peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region" and there could be more exchanges involving ground and air forces and an exchange of personnel in various areas.

### Asia-Africa Growth Corridor project

- Envisaging an India-Japan collaboration in Africa.
- For a free and open Indo-Pacific region and to make this region more inter-connected and prosperous.
- It is not particularly counter-balancing to some initiative such as China's Belt and Road project,
- This initiative is important for prosperity and security of this region

- India has vast experience, network in eastern part of Africa and Japan have good technology and financing to support African development.

- Japan has been working with Indian officials and businessmen for "a concrete development plan" in Africa.

### Recent takeaways:

- Civil nuclear agreement, signed between the two countries last year, given the Diet's approval.
- Japanese investors in India were "very happy" with roll out of the GST.

## 3. Army in for the long haul in Doklam

### In News:

- Soldiers pitch tents, and a steady line of supplies is being maintained for them.
- The Army is ready for the long haul in holding onto its position in the Doklam area near the Bhutan tri-junction, notwithstanding China ratcheting up rhetoric against India, demanding pulling back of its troops.

### Security implications

- Both the countries had agreed to a mechanism in 2012 to resolve border flare-ups through consultations at various levels.
- The mechanism has not worked so far in the current case as the standoff near the Bhutan trijunction, triggered by China's attempt to build a road in the strategically important area, has dragged on for over three weeks.
- New Delhi has already conveyed to Beijing that such an action would represent a significant change of status quo with "serious" security implications for India. The road link could give China a major military advantage over India.

### Doka La:

- Doka La is the Indian name for the region which Bhutan recognises as Doklam, while China claims it as part of its Donglang region.
- China and Bhutan are engaged in talks. India argues that since it is a tri-junction involving the three countries, it also has a say in the issue.

#### 4. Cyberattack link to glitches in RJio, NSE under probe

##### Context:

- **Last week's attack:**
  - a. Outage of Airtel network in Delhi.
  - b. Data breach of users of Reliance Jio Infocomm
  - c. Technical glitch at the National Stock Exchange (NSE)

##### In news:

- India is investigating on a "possible cyber attack."
- The Home Ministry is preparing an internal cybersecurity policy as it is required under the national plan.
- 2016 data breach: In 2016, security codes of around 32 lakh debit cards were breached and several users reported unauthorised transactions from locations in China.

##### Worrisome dependence on Chinese equipments:

- Two years ago various telecom giants had been sensitised by the Government, about the vulnerability of equipment and products imported from China.
- Both Airtel and Jio use Chinese equipment.

#### 5. Ships and planes arrive, it's days of war games

##### In News:

- The Malabar Exercise 2017.
- Participants: naval forces of India, Japan and the United States.

##### Exercise not aimed at China

- Malabar is not to send a message to any specific country.
- The underlying theme of Malabar is to understand each other's standard operating procedures and each other's ways of working better, to enhance camaraderie and bonhomie.
- U.S. Navy officer: U.S. participation in the exercises indicated the country's interests in maritime security in the Indo-Asia Pacific region.

##### Focus Areas:

- The thrust of the exercise at sea this year would be on aircraft carrier operations, air defence, anti-submarine warfare (ASW), surface warfare, visit board search and seizure (VBBS), joint manoeuvres and tactical procedures.

#### 6. Incentivising financial sector cybersecurity

##### In News:

- Government made public a report by the working group to set up the Computer Emergency Response Team in the Financial Sector (Cert-Fin)
- RBI released guidelines on customer liability in case of unauthorized electronic banking transactions.

##### Significance:

- They represent different aspects of the cybersecurity problem—the technical and the economic framework
- Push for a less-cash economy is increasing the digital density of India's financial services space.
- The cyberattacks getting audacious

##### Current issues:

- New Delhi's response thus far has focused only on the technical aspects of the problem
- There is a risk that Cert-Fin will become deadwood given that sectoral regulators RBI, SEBI and IRDA are already working on cybersecurity issues.
- So proper coordination across the sector is necessary.
- Companies and institutions will rarely expend the resources necessary for the collective security needed to protect the sector, until the right economic incentives are found.

##### No cybersecurity architecture can be foolproof. Why?

- In case of a complex system, attackers will always have the edge over defenders. The number of potential bugs and vulnerable points in any system mean that the mathematical odds favour the attackers.
- No code can be perfect enough to compensate for human error.
- **Example:** A bank might have robust cybersecurity architecture, but it will still be vulnerable if the systems of other networks that carry pertinent information are not secure.
- In software industry, the more people use a particular software, the more valuable it becomes- has led to a "release first, patch later" approach

##### Guideline on Burden of proof. What it is?

- In case of ATM frauds, in US, burden of proof lay with the banks, fared much better than Britain, Norway and the Netherlands, where burden of proof lay with the customer.
- The RBI's guidelines on customer liability are welcome in this context.

##### Way forward

- Data breach disclosure norms, with penalties for failing to do so, are important;

- Incentivise financial institutions to swiftly report cyberattacks instead of keeping mum to avoid reputation loss, regulatory intervention and liability. Many countries have such norms, but India does not.
- Address the issues such as regulatory burden and the negative effects of heavy-handed liability laws.

## 7. **Once hero, now 'white elephant'**

### **In News:**

- Decommissioned submarine Vagli lies idle in Chennai port after plan to convert it into a museum fails.
- She served the Indian Navy and the nation for over 36 years and could have become only the second submarine museum of the country. But since her decommissioning in 2010, the Russia-designed submarine INS Vagli has taken a tedious and uncertain course. She currently lies idle at the Chennai port.
- The submarine, which was to be the centrepiece of the maritime heritage museum planned by the Tamil Nadu government in the tourist town of Mamallapuram, was expected to be displayed on a 30-acre stretch of land near the Shore Temple of the UNESCO-declared World Heritage group of monuments.
- However, the inability of a contractor to mount the submarine on the intended site at Mamallapuram has forced the vessel to lie idle at the Chennai port.

### **'Wasteful expenditure'**

- A 2016 report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India questioned the process adopted by the government to move the submarine to Mamallapuram in one piece and observed that an "infructuous expenditure of Rs. 4.41 crore" was incurred due to a lack of proper planning.
- In December 2016, the submarine was almost damaged when Cyclone Vardah hit the Chennai coast.

### **INS Vagli**

- INS Vagli was commissioned into the Indian Navy at Riga in Latvia, which was part of the erstwhile Soviet Union in 1974, and was decommissioned at Visakhapatnam in December 2010.

## 8. **CAG spots weaknesses in missile defence system**

### **In News:**

- Highlights of the report tabled by CAG in Parliament:
- Deficient in quality - The strategic missile system, a medium range supersonic surface to air missile system to counter aerial threats were "deficient in quality,"
- Over 70 % of the under vehicle scanners (UVS) installed at Indian Air Force (IAF) bases were non-functional
- The IL series of aircraft, which provide vital transport support to IAF during contingencies, "has not been upgraded, and continue to fly with 1985 vintage

avionics." Air to air refuelling is a crucial capability both during combat as well as peace time operations. IL-78 aircraft are dedicated for this purpose. However, due to inadequate infrastructure and support facilities the air to air refuelling capability was hampered.

- Importance of Strategic missile system:
- Strategic missile system is vital for the country's air defence and deterrence capability.
- Audit found that the system delivered by Bharat Electricals Limited (BEL) was deficient in quality.
- Out of 80 missiles received up to November 2014, 20 were test fired during April-November 2014. Six of these missiles i.e., 30 % failed the test.
- Preliminary failure analysis report revealed that the missiles fell short of the target, had lower than the required velocity, and also there was malfunctioning of critical units like Servo Control Unit and Connector. T
- Two missiles had failed to take off because the booster nozzle had failed. These deficiencies posed an operational risk during hostilities.

## 9. **Muntra, country's first unmanned tank, rolls out from the Chennai lab**

### **In News:**

- India's first unmanned tank developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has been rolled out of the Chennai lab.

### **Key facts:**

- Muntra, the unmanned tank, has three variants – surveillance, mine detection and reconnaissance in areas with nuclear and bio threats. It is likely to be used in Naxal-hit areas.
- Muntra-S has been developed for unmanned surveillance missions, whereas Muntra-M is built for detecting mines. Muntra-N, on the other hand, will be deployed in areas where nuclear radiation or bio weapon risk is high.
- The vehicle has been tested. It's surveillance radar, which has an integrated camera can be used to spy on ground target 15km away.

# MISCELLANEOUS

## 1. Lost and found: the tale of two cities

### In News:

- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) is looking to send robotic vehicles into the sea near Dwaraka, Gujarat, and Puhar, Tamil Nadu, to look for submerged structures that may point to evidence on the ancient cities.
- The programme, still a preliminary proposal, is expected to involve organisations such as the National Institute of Ocean Technology, Chennai, and the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Goa.
- NIO, Chennai has indigenously built vehicles capable of plumbing 5,000 metres underwater and the NIO has previous experience in marine archaeology.
- New technology to be tested: Along with historical interest, this is also to test several technologies such as sophisticated imaging technology, being able to map the ocean floor with sonar and being able to date old stones and recoverable implements using the latest techniques.

### Previous excavations findings:

- Nearly a decade ago, the Underwater Archaeology Wing of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) found copper coins and segments of granite structures.
- Mentioned in the Mahabharata as 'Dwaraka' or 'Dwaravati,' it is also linked to the god Krishna.
- Dwaraka, a port city, finds mention in ancient Greek texts from the 1st millennium and, according to legend, was a rich city that sank into the sea.
- Last year, divers, geologists and archaeologists with the NIO, working off the coast of Tamil Nadu, reportedly found stone remains suggestive of an ancient port and temples, which were reportedly buried about 30 feet into the sea.
- Tamil and Buddhist literature have references to Poompuhar, or Puhar, as being the port capital of the Chola dynasty.

### Evidence of the course of the Saraswati:

- An expert committee of geologists, archaeologists and hydrologists said it had found evidence of the course of the Saraswati, a river mentioned in the Rig Veda and in Hindu mythology.
- A study commissioned by the Water Resources Ministry and led by Professor K.S. Valdiya of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research.

- Report concluded that evidence from palaeochannels — remnants of defunct rivers — suggested that the Sarsuti-Markanda rivulets in Haryana were the water courses of the "eastern branch of a Himalayan river" and the Ghaggar-Patiali channels were the western branches.

## 2. Mysore Lancers' tryst with Haifa

### Context:

- A long forgotten slice of martial history related to Mysuru will be revisited when Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays tribute to fallen Indian soldiers at the Haifa cemetery in Israel.

### The Mysore Imperial Service and the liberation of Haifa:

- The Mysore Imperial Service played a big role in the liberation of Haifa on September 23, 1918, from Ottoman Turks and Germans, by allied forces.
- This is seen as one of the fiercest battles in the west Asian theatre of World War I in which India, as a British colony, fought German and the Ottoman troops.
- The Mysore Lancers were in the 15th Imperial Service as the forces sent by the princely states of Mysore, Jodhpur and Hyderabad.
- The then Mysuru Maharaja Nalwudi Krishnaraja Wadiyar sent his troops to defend the empire and even gave nearly ₹50 lakh to the India War Fund.



# SCHEMES IN NEWS

## 1. Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY)

### In News:

- Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) is the financial turnaround and revival package for electricity distribution companies of India (DISCOMs) initiated by the Government of India with the intent to find a permanent solution to the financial mess that the power distribution is in.
- It allows state governments, which own the discoms, to take over 75 percent of their debt as of September 30, 2015, and pay back lenders by selling bonds. Discoms are expected to issue bonds for the remaining 25 percent of their debt.
- **The scheme envisages:**
  - i. Financial Turnaround.
  - ii. Operational improvement.
  - iii. Reduction of cost of generation of power.
  - iv. Development of Renewable Energy.
  - v. Energy efficiency & conservation.

## 2. Mission Parivar Vikas

### In News:

- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is going to launch Mission Parivar Vikas for improved family planning services in 145 High Focus districts in seven states.
- The objective of mission is to accelerate access to high quality family planning choices based on information, reliable services and supplies within a rights-based framework.
- Family Planning Logistics Management Information System (FP-LMIS) is designed to provide robust information on the demand and distribution of contraceptives to health facilities and ASHAs to strengthen supply chain management

### **Key features of Mission Parivar Vikas:**

- These districts are located in the seven high focus states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Assam.
- They are having the highest total fertility rates and constitute 44% of the country's population.
- They also have a substantial impact on maternal and child health indicators. As about 25 to 30% of maternal deaths and 50% of infant deaths occur in these districts.

- The key strategic focus of this initiative will be on improving access to contraceptives through delivering assured services, dovetailing with new promotional schemes.
- It will also ensure building capacity (service providers), commodity security, creating an enabling environment along with close monitoring and implementation.

## 3. Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana

### In News:

- India exclusively for the senior citizens aged 60 years and above.
- The Scheme can be purchased offline as well as online through Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India which has been given the sole privilege to operate this Scheme.

### **Components of the scheme:**

- Scheme provides an assured return of 8% p.a. payable monthly (equivalent to 8.30% p.a. effective) for 10 years
- The scheme is exempted from Service Tax/ GST.
- On survival of the pensioner to the end of the policy term of 10 years, Purchase price along with final pension installment shall be payable.
- The scheme also allows for premature exit for the treatment of any critical/ terminal illness of self or spouse. On such premature exit, 98% of the Purchase Price shall be refunded.
- On death of the pensioner during the policy term of 10 years, the Purchase Price shall be paid to the beneficiary.

## 4. Hamari Dharohar Scheme:

### In News:

- "Hamari Dharohar" scheme for preservation of rich heritage and culture of minority communities of India in 2014-15.
- **Implemented by:** Ministry of Minority Affairs.
- 100% central Sector scheme.

### **Objectives:**

- To curate rich heritage of minorities under overall concept of
- Indian Culture.
- Curating iconic exhibitions.
- Preservation of literature/ documents etc.

- Support and promotion of calligraphy etc.
- Research and Development.

**Activities to be covered under the scheme:**

- Selective intervention for preservation of heritage and may cover following kinds of projects:
- Curating exhibitions including iconic exhibitions.
- Support and promotion of calligraphy etc.
- Preservation of literature, documents, manuscripts etc.
- Documentation of oral traditions and art forms.
- Support to ethnic museums (not supported under schemes of Ministry of Culture or its bodies) for showcasing and preserving heritage of minority communities.
- Support for organizing heritage related seminars/ workshops.
- Fellowship for research in preservation of heritage and development.
- Any other support to individual/ organization in furtherance of cause of protection and promotion of rich heritage of minority communities.

# ARTICLES IN NEWS

## Article 25. Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion

1. Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion.
2. Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law
3. Regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice;
4. Providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus Explanation I The wearing and carrying of kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion Explanation II In sub clause (b) of clause reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly.

## Article 148. Comptroller and Auditor General of India

1. There shall be a Comptroller and Auditor General of India who shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal and shall only be removed from office in like manner and on the like grounds as a Judge of the Supreme Court
2. Every person appointed to be the Comptroller and Auditor General of India shall, before he enters upon his office, make and subscribe before the President, or some person appointed in that behalf by him, an oath or affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule
3. The salary and other conditions of service of the Comptroller and Auditor General shall be such as may be determined by Parliament by law and, until they are so determined, shall be as specified in the Second Schedule: Provided that neither the salary of a Comptroller and Auditor General nor his rights in respect of leave of absence, pension or age of retirement shall be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment

4. The Comptroller and Auditor General shall not be eligible for further office either under the Government of India or under the Government of any State after he has ceased to hold his office
5. Subject to the provisions of this Constitution and of any law made by Parliament, the conditions of service of persons serving in the Indian Audit and Accounts Department and the administrative powers of the Comptroller and Auditor General shall be such as may be prescribed by rules made by the President after consultation with the Comptroller and Auditor General.
6. The Administrative expenses of the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, including all salaries, allowances and pensions payable to or in respect of pensions serving in that office, shall be charged upon the Consolidated Fund of India.

## Article 149. Duties and powers of the Comptroller and Auditor General

1. The Comptroller and Auditor General shall perform such duties and exercise such powers in relation to the accounts of the Union and of the States and of any other authority or body as may be prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament and, until provision in that behalf is so made, shall perform such duties and exercise such powers in relation to the accounts of the Union and of the States as were conferred on or exercisable by the Auditor General of India immediately before the commencement of this Constitution in relation to the accounts of the Dominion of India and of the Provinces respectively

## Article 150. Form of accounts of the Union and of the States

1. The accounts of the Union and of the States shall be kept in such form as the President may, on the advice of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, prescribe

### Article 151. Audit reports

1. The reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India relating to the accounts of the Union shall be submitted to the President, who shall cause them to be laid before each House of Parliament.
2. The reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India relating to the accounts of a State shall be submitted to the Governor of the State, who shall cause them to be laid before the Legislature of the State.

### Article 75: Other provisions as to Ministers.

1. The Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.  
(1A) The total number of Ministers, including the Prime Minister, in the Council of Ministers shall not exceed fifteen per cent. of the total number of members of the House of the People.  
(1B) A member of either House of Parliament belonging to any political party who is disqualified for being a member of that House under paragraph 2 of the Tenth Schedule shall also be disqualified to be appointed as a Minister under clause (1) for duration of the period commencing from the date of his disqualification till the date on which the term of his office as such member would expire or where he contests any election to either House of Parliament before the expiry of such period, till the date on which he is declared elected, whichever is earlier.
2. The Ministers shall hold office during the pleasure of the President.
3. The Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the House of the People.
4. Before a Minister enters upon his office, the President shall administer to him the oaths of office and of secrecy according to the forms set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule.
5. A Minister who for any period of six consecutive months is not a member of either House of Parliament shall at the expiration of that period cease to be a Minister.
6. The salaries and allowances of Ministers shall be such as Parliament may from time to time by law determine and, until Parliament so determines, shall be as specified in the Second Schedule.

### Article 164: Other provisions as to Ministers.

1. The Chief Minister shall be appointed by the Governor and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister, and the Ministers shall hold office during the pleasure of the Governor:
2. Provided that in the States of [Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand], Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, there shall be a Minister in charge of tribal welfare who may in addition be in charge of the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and backward classes or any other work.
3. The total number of Ministers, including the Chief Minister, in the Council of Ministers in a State shall not exceed fifteen per cent. of the total number of members of the Legislative Assembly of that State:
4. Provided that the number of Ministers, including the Chief Minister in a State shall not be less than twelve: Provided further that where the total number of Ministers including the Chief Minister in the Council of Ministers in any State at the commencement of the Constitution (Ninety-first Amendment) Act, 2003 exceeds the said fifteen per cent. or the number specified in the first proviso, as the case may be, then the total number of Ministers in that State shall be brought in conformity with the provisions of this clause within six months from such date\* as the President may by public notification appoint.
5. A member of the Legislative Assembly of a State or either House of the Legislature of a State having Legislative Council belonging to any political party who is disqualified for being a member of that House under paragraph 2 of the Tenth Schedule shall also be disqualified to be appointed as a Minister under clause (1) for duration of the period commencing from the date of his disqualification till the date on which the term of his office as such member would expire or where he contests any election to the Legislative Assembly of a State or either House of the Legislature of a State having Legislative Council, as the case may be, before the expiry of such period, till the date on which he is declared elected, whichever is earlier.]
6. The Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly of the State.
7. Before a Minister enters upon his office, the Governor shall administer to him the oaths of office and of secrecy according to the forms set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule.
8. A Minister who for any period of six consecutive months is not a member of the Legislature of the State shall at the expiration of that period cease to be a Minister.
9. The salaries and allowances of Ministers shall be such as the Legislature of the State may from time to time by

law determine and, until the Legislature of the State so determines, shall be as specified in the Second Schedule.

### **324. Superintendence, direction and control of elections to be vested in an Election Commission**

1. The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to Parliament and to the Legislature of every State and of elections to the offices of President and Vice President held under this Constitution shall be vested in a Commission (referred to in this Constitution as the Election Commission)
2. The Election Commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the President may from time to time fix and the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners shall, subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf by Parliament, be made by the President
3. When any other Election Commissioner is so appointed the Chief Election Commissioner shall act as the Chairman of the Election Commission
4. Before each general election to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assembly of each State, and before the first general election and thereafter before each biennial election to the Legislative Council of each State having such Council, the President may also appoint after consultation with the Election Commission such Regional Commissioners as he may consider necessary to assist the Election Commission in the performance of the functions conferred on the Commission by clause ( 1 )
5. Subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, the conditions of service and tenure of office of the Election Commissioners and the Regional Commissioners shall be such as the President may by rule determine; Provided that the Chief Election Commissioner shall not be removed from his office except in like manner and on the like grounds as a Judge of the Supreme Court and the conditions of service of the Chief Election Commissioner shall not be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment: Provided further that any other Election Commissioner or a Regional Commissioner shall not be removed from office except on the recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner
6. The President, or the Governor of a State, shall, when so requested by the Election Commission, make available to the Election Commission or to a Regional Commissioner such staff as may be necessary for the discharge of the functions conferred on the Election Commission by clause ( 1 ).



# ACTS/ BILLS IN NEWS

## The Right to education Act, 2009.

1. The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine.
2. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards.
3. The title of the RTE Act incorporates the words 'free and compulsory'. 'Free education' means that no child, other than a child who has been admitted by his or her parents to a school which is not supported by the appropriate Government, shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education.
4. 'Compulsory education' casts an obligation on the appropriate Government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by all children in the 6-14 age group

### Main objectives:

5. Right of children to free and compulsory education till completion of elementary education in a neighbourhood school.
6. It clarifies that 'compulsory education' means obligation of the appropriate government to provide free elementary education and ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education to every child in the six to fourteen age group. 'Free' means that no child shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education.
7. It makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age appropriate class.
8. It specifies the duties and responsibilities of appropriate Governments, local authority and parents in providing free and compulsory education, and sharing of financial and other responsibilities between the Central and State Governments.

9. It lays down the norms and standards relating inter alia to Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs), buildings and infrastructure, school-working days, teacher-working hours.
10. It provides for rational deployment of teachers by ensuring that the specified pupil teacher ratio is maintained for each school, rather than just as an average for the State or District or Block, thus ensuring that there is no urban-rural imbalance in teacher postings. It also provides for prohibition of deployment of teachers for non-educational work, other than decennial census, elections to local authority, state legislatures and parliament, and disaster relief.
11. It provides for appointment of appropriately trained teachers, i.e. teachers with the requisite entry and academic qualifications.
12. It prohibits (a) physical punishment and mental harassment; (b) screening procedures for admission of children; (c) capitation fee; (d) private tuition by teachers and (e) running of schools without recognition,
13. It provides for development of curriculum in consonance with the values enshrined in the Constitution, and which would ensure the all-round development of the child, building on the child's knowledge, potentiality and talent and making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety through a system of child friendly and child centred learning.

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

1. The Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Thaawarchand Gehlot on April 5, 2017. It seeks to grant the National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC) constitutional status, at par with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.
2. **Role of NCSC:** Currently, under the Constitution the NCSC has the power to look into complaints and welfare measures with regard to Scheduled Castes, backward classes and Anglo-Indians. The Bill seeks to remove the power of the NCSC to examine matters related to backward classes.
3. Constitutional status to National Commission for Backward Classes: The NCBC is a body set up under the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993. It

has the power to examine complaints regarding inclusion or exclusion of groups within the list of backward classes, and advise the central government in this regard. The Bill seeks to establish the NCBC under the Constitution, and provide it the authority to examine complaints and welfare measures regarding socially and educationally backward classes.

4. Note that this Bill was introduced alongside the National Commission for Backward Classes (Repeal) Bill, 2017 that seeks to repeal the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993.
5. **Backward classes:** The Constitution Amendment Bill states that the President may specify the socially and educationally backward classes in the various states and union territories. He may do this in consultation with the Governor of the concerned state. However, a law of Parliament will be required if the list of backward classes is to be amended.
6. **Composition and service conditions:** Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the NCBC will comprise of five members appointed by the President. Their tenure and conditions of service will also be decided by the President through rules.
7. **Functions:** Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the duties of the NCBC will include: (i) investigating and monitoring how safeguards provided to the backward classes under the Constitution and other laws are being implemented, (ii) inquiring into specific complaints regarding violation of rights, and (iii) advising and making recommendations on socio-economic development of such classes. The central and state governments will be required to consult with the NCBC on all major policy matters affecting the socially and educationally backward classes.
8. The NCBC will be required to present annual reports to the President on working of the safeguards for backward classes. These reports will be tabled in Parliament, and in the state legislative assemblies of the concerned states.
9. **Powers of a civil court:** Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the NCBC will have the powers of a civil court while investigating or inquiring into any complaints. These powers include: (i) summoning people and examining them on oath, (ii) requiring production of any document or public record, and (iii) receiving evidence.

## The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016

### Highlights of the Bill

1. The Bill defines a transgender person as one who is partly female or male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male. In addition, the person's gender must not match the gender assigned at birth, and includes trans-men, trans-women, persons with intersex variations and gender-queers.
2. A transgender person must obtain a certificate of identity as proof of recognition of identity as a transgender person and to invoke rights under the Bill.
3. Such a certificate would be granted by the District Magistrate on the recommendation of a Screening Committee. The Committee would comprise a medical officer, a psychologist or psychiatrist, a district welfare officer, a government official, and a transgender person.
4. The Bill prohibits discrimination against a transgender person in areas such as education, employment, and healthcare. It directs the central and state governments to provide welfare schemes in these areas.
5. Offences like compelling a transgender person to beg, denial of access to a public place, physical and sexual abuse, etc. would attract up to two years' imprisonment and a fine.

### Key Issues and Analysis

1. The Supreme Court has held that the right to self-identification of gender is part of the right to dignity and autonomy under Article 21 of the Constitution. However, objective criteria may be required to determine one's gender in order to be eligible for entitlements.
2. The Bill states that a person recognised as 'transgender' would have the right to 'self-perceived' gender identity. However, it does not provide for the enforcement of such a right. A District Screening Committee would issue a certificate of identity to recognise transgender persons.
3. The definition of 'transgender persons' in the Bill is at variance with the definitions recognised by international bodies and experts in India.
4. The Bill includes terms like 'trans-men', 'trans-women', persons with 'intersex variations' and 'gender-queers' in its definition of transgender persons. However, these terms have not been defined.
5. Certain criminal and personal laws that are currently in force only recognise the genders of 'man' and 'woman'. It is unclear how such laws would apply to transgender persons who may not identify with either of the two genders.

### The Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Bill, 2016

1. The Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Bill, 2016 was introduced in Lok Sabha on November 21, 2016 by the Minister of State for Shipping, Mr. Mansukh Mandaviya. The Bill seeks to consolidate the existing laws on civil matters of admiralty jurisdiction of courts, admiralty proceedings on maritime claims, and arrest of ships. Admiralty laws deal with cases of accidents in navigable waters or involve contracts related to commerce on such waters. The Bill repeals laws such as the Admiralty Court Act, 1861, the Colonial Courts of Admiralty Act, 1890. Key features of the Bill include:
2. **Admiralty jurisdiction:** The jurisdiction with respect to maritime claims under the Bill will vest with the respective High Courts and will extend up to the territorial waters of their respective jurisdictions. The central government may extend the jurisdiction of these High Courts. Currently admiralty jurisdiction applies to the Bombay, Calcutta and Madras High Courts. The Bill further extend this to the High Courts of Karnataka, Gujarat, Orissa, Kerala, Hyderabad, and any other High Court notified by the central government.
3. **Maritime claims:** The High Courts may exercise jurisdiction on maritime claims arising out of conditions including: (i) disputes regarding ownership of a vessel, (ii) disputes between co-owners of a vessel regarding employment or earnings of the vessel, (iii) mortgage on a vessel, (iv) construction, repair, or conversion of the vessel, (v) disputes arising out of the sale of a vessel, (vi) environmental damage caused by the vessel, etc. The Bill defines a vessel as any ship, boat, or sailing vessel which may or may not be mechanically propelled.
4. While determining maritime claims under the specified conditions, the courts may settle any outstanding accounts between parties with regard to the vessel. They may also direct that the vessel or a share of it be sold. With regard to a sale, courts may determine the title to the proceeds of such sale.
5. **Priority of maritime claims:** Among all claims in an admiralty proceeding, highest priority will be given to maritime claims, followed by mortgages on the vessel, and all other claims. Within maritime claims, the highest priority will be given to claims for wages due with regard to employment on the vessel. This would be followed by claims with regard to loss of life or personal injury in connection with the operation of the vessel. Such claims will continue to exist even with the change of ownership of the vessel.
6. **Jurisdiction over a person:** Courts may exercise admiralty jurisdiction against a person with regard to maritime claims. However, the courts will not entertain complaints against a person in certain cases. These include: (i) damage, or loss of life, or personal injury arising out of collision between vessels that was caused in India,

or (ii) non-compliance with the collision regulations of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 by a person who does not reside or carry out business in India. Further, Courts will not entertain action against a person until any case against them with regard to the same incident in any court outside India has ended.

7. **Arrest of vessel:** The courts may order for the arrest of any vessel within their jurisdiction for providing security against a maritime claim which is the subject of a proceeding. They may do so under various reasons such as: (i) owner of the vessel is liable for the claim, (ii) the claim is based on mortgage of the vessel, and (iii) the claim relates to ownership of the vessel, etc.
8. **Appeals:** Any judgments made by a single Judge of the High Court can be appealed against to a Division Bench of the High Court. Further, the Supreme Court may, on application by any party, transfer an admiralty proceeding at any stage from one High Court to any other High Court. The latter High Court will proceed with the matter from the stage where it stood at the time of the transfer.
9. **Assessors:** The central government will appoint a list of assessors qualified and experienced in admiralty and maritime matters. The central government will also determine the duties of assessors, and their fee. Typically, assessors assist the judges in determining rates and claims in admiralty proceedings.

# PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. The tenure of every Panchayat shall be for five years from the date of
  - A. Its first meeting.
  - B. Issue of notification for the conduct of elections to the Panchayat.
  - C. Declaration of the election results.
  - D. Taking oath of office by elected members.
2. In SONAR, which particular wave is used?
  - A. Ultrasonic waves.
  - B. Infrared waves.
  - C. Radio waves.
  - D. Audible sound waves.
3. The Patola Weave was traditionally done in
  - A. Pochampally and Kanchipuram.
  - B. Surat and Patan.
  - C. Dacca and Benares.
  - D. Benares and Paithan.
4. Collision-Coalescence process of precipitation is applicable to
  - A. Clouds which extends beyond freezing level.
  - B. Clouds which do not extend beyond freezing level.
  - C. All types of clouds.
  - D. Cumulonimbus cloud.
5. Which of the following constitute Capital Account?
  - i. Foreign Loans.
  - ii. Foreign Direct Investment.
  - iii. Private Remittances.
  - iv. Portfolio Investment.Select the correct answer using the codes given below.
  - A. i, ii and iii.
  - B. i, ii and iv.
  - C. ii, iii and iv.
  - D. i, iii and iv.
6. As per the Agreement on Consular Access between India and Pakistan, lists of nationals lodged in jails are to be exchanged
  - A. Once a year.
  - B. Twice a year.
  - C. Thrice a year.
  - D. None of the above.
7. 'Atmiyata' was in news recently, it is
  - A. A basic Android app used as a training tool to enable a bunch of villagers to identify mental health disorders.
  - B. A basic Android app used as a training tool to enable a bunch of villagers to identify health disorders.
  - C. A basic Android app which provides government service at door steps.
  - D. None of the above.
8. The Registrar of Companies which deals with registration of companies, comes under which ministry
  - A. Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
  - B. Ministry of Corporate Affairs
  - C. Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise.
  - D. Ministry of Heavy industry and Public enterprise.
9. The Rashtriya e-market Services Ltd. (ReMS) is a
  - A. Joint venture created by the Government of India and the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX) in order to create a national common agricultural market.
  - B. Joint venture created by the Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Agriculture in order to create a national common agricultural market.
  - C. Unified Market Platform offering single licensing system for around 50 agricultural markets in Karnataka.
  - D. Joint venture created by the Government of Madhya Pradesh and NCDEX Spot Exchange in order to create a unified state agricultural market.

**10. Consider the following statements:**

1. In India, magnetite is the most important industrial iron ore in terms of the quantity used
2. The iron ore produced in Goa is of lower grade when compared to the other major iron ore producing states

Which of the statements above is/are correct?

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

**11. In the ancient times, 'bawadis' refers to :**

- A. water well.
- B. land given to Brahmins for education.
- C. traditional land based tax system.
- D. None.

**12. The historic Taj Bavadi is there in which state ?**

- A. Uttar Pradesh
- B. Bihar
- C. Odisha
- D. Karnataka

**13. The Himalayan pass Doka La is in which state ?**

- A. Himachal Pradesh.
- B. Uttarakhand.
- C. Sikkim.
- D. Arunachal Pradesh.

**14. Which of the below are Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) ?**

1. Anamudi Shola National Park
2. Camel's Hump Mountain, Wayanad
3. Muthikulam-Siruvani
4. Kurinjimala Wildlife Sanctuary

Choose the correct option

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

**15. Consider the statements :**

1. Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) is an initiative of UNEP.
2. Bombay Natural History Society is a partner of BirdLife International in India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

**16. The draft Medical Termination of Pregnancy bill 2014, has enhanced the legal limit for abortion**

- A. From 20weeks to 24 weeks.
- B. From 24 weeks to 26 weeks.
- C. From 18weeks to 20 weeks.
- D. None of the above.

**17. Measles is a disease caused by**

- A. Bacteria.
- B. Virus.
- C. Protozoa.
- D. Worm.

**18. India's biggest Global Skill Park will be set up in which city?**

- A. Bhopal
- B. Lucknow
- C. Guwahati
- D. Rajkot

**19. The concept of fundamental duties of Indian constitution was borrowed from which among the following?**

- A. Constitution of Australia .
- B. U N Charter.
- C. Constitution of Socialist Countries such as Russia.
- D. Constitution of UK.



**20. Consider the following statement with reference to Asian Development Bank**

1. Votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions.
2. Japan holds the largest proportion of shares in ADB

Choose the incorrect statement

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

**21. The Navegaon National Park is located in which state?**

- A. Uttar Pradesh.
- B. West Bengal.
- C. Gujarat.
- D. Maharashtra.

**22. The Supreme Court's power to hear Inter-State Water Disputes can be classified under its**

- A. Original Jurisdiction.
- B. Appellate Jurisdiction.
- C. Writ Jurisdiction.
- D. Advisory Jurisdiction.

**23. What is/are the eligibility criteria's that needs to be fulfilled, in order to be the member of a G7 group?**

- A. A very high net national wealth
- B. A very high Human Development Index
- C. Both A and B
- D. Neither A nor B

**24. The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority is a**

- A. Statutory body.
- B. Constitutional body.
- C. Body set up as per executive order.
- D. None of the above.

**25. VAJRA (Visiting Advanced Joint Research) Faculty scheme is being implemented by which agency?**

- A. The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB)
- B. Council of Scientific & Industrial Research
- C. Indian Institute of Science
- D. None of the above

**26. Consider the following statement with reference to UDAY scheme**

1. UDAY is the financial turnaround and revival package for electricity distribution companies of India.
2. Discoms are expected to issue bonds to the tune of 75 percent of their debt

Choose the incorrect statement

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

**27. Which state government has launched 'Elevate 100' scheme to identify and nurture innovative start-ups?**

- A. Karnataka
- B. Assam
- C. Kerala
- D. Tamil Nadu

**28. After returning from South Africa, which among the following was the first successful satyagraha of Mahatma Gandhi?**

- A. Chauri-Chaura
- B. Dandi
- C. Champaran
- D. Bardoli

**29. What is the current age of retirement of judges from supreme courts and high courts respectively in India?**

- A. 65 & 62.
- B. 65 & 60.
- C. 65 for both.
- D. 65 and 63.

**30. Which among the following is known as "Sairandhri Vanam"?**

- A. Silent Valley National Park
- B. Mudumalai National Park
- C. Periyar National Park
- D. Guindy National Park

**31. The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Third Amendment) Bill seeks to grant**

- A. Constitutional status to National Commission on Backward Classes.
- B. Constitutional status to National Commission for Scheduled Castes.
- C. Constitutional status to National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.
- D. None of the above.

**32. The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Third Amendment) Bill National Commission on Backward Classes would comprises of**

- A. Five members appointed by the President.
- B. Five members appointed by the Prime Minister.
- C. Three members appointed by the Parliament.
- D. Four members appointed by the President.

**33. Consider the following statements with reference to Right to education Act**

- 1. RTE makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age appropriate class.
- 2. RTE provides for development of curriculum in consonance with the values enshrined in the Constitution

Choose the correct statement

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

**34. Ramman is a religious festival and ritual theatre of \_\_\_\_?**

- A. Uttarkhand.
- B. Uttar Pradesh.
- C. West Bengal.
- D. Madhya Pradesh.

**35. The Coriolis force is maximum at \_\_\_\_?**

- A. Poles.
- B. Equator.
- C. Tropics.
- D. Mountain peaks.

**36. Consider the following statements**

- 1. Hepatitis B has vaccine where as there is no vaccine for Hepatitis C.
- 2. Hepatitis C has vaccine where as there is no vaccine for Hepatitis B.
- 3. Hepatitis types B and C can trigger liver cirrhosis and cancer if untreated.

Choose the correct options

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

**37. Who is the current chair of G20?**

- A. U.S.
- B. U.K.
- C. Germany.
- D. Japan.

**38. Which one of the following countries does not border Caspian sea?**

- A. Armenia.
- B. Azerbaijan.
- C. Kazakhstan.
- D. Turkmenistan.

**39. Consider the following statements.**

- 1. Neem coating of urea leads to more gradual release of urea, helping plants gain more nutrient and resulting in higher yields.
- 2. Neen coated urea lowers underground water contamination due to leaching of urea.

Choose the correct statement

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

**40. Consider the following statement with reference to Mission Kakatiya , which was in news recently.**

1. It is a flagship programme of Andhra Pradesh State government.
2. It is a poverty eradication programme .

Choose the correct statement

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

**41. Consider the following statements**

1. The Moolam boat race commemorates an episode associated with the installation of the idol of Lord Krishna .
2. The annual Moolam boat race falls on Moolam star in the month of Mithunam in the Malayalam calendar.

Choose the correct Answer

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

**42. Consider the following statements with reference to Swayam Prabha**

1. It is a project for telecasting "high-quality educational programmes" through 32 DTH channels.
2. The project also has teacher training modules in it.

Choose the correct Answer

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

**43. Consider the following statements Chemicals**

1. Silver Iodide.
2. Potassium nitrite.
3. Potassium nitrate.
4. Solid carbon dioxide.
5. Liquid Carbon dioxide.
6. Liquid propane.

The most common chemicals used for cloud seeding is/ are?

- A. 1 only
- B. 1,2,4 and 6
- C. 1,4 and 6
- D. 1,2,3,4,5 and 6

**44. Which among the following ministry implements a program called 'Swayam Prabha'?**

- A. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- B. Ministry of Human Resource and development.
- C. Ministry of Communications.
- D. Ministry of Skill development and Entrepreneurship.

**45. The Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane is approved by the**

- A. Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs
- B. Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices.
- C. Agricultural Produce Market Committee.
- D. Directorate of Marketing and Inspection, Ministry of Agriculture.

**46. Hamburg Action Plan, recently in news, is related to which of the following ?**

- A. Paris Climate summit
- B. G20
- C. TPP
- D. APEC

**47. Which of the following are considered while calculating ease of doing business by World Bank ?**

1. Starting a business.
2. Getting electricity.
3. Resolving insolvency.

Choose the correct answer

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

48. The drugs, Oseltamivir and Zanamivir, are used for the treatment of which disease ?

- A. Zika
- B. H1N1
- C. Malaria
- D. Ebola

49. Which among the following is/are the partners to the G20 ?

- 1. World Bank
- 2. IMF
- 3. WTO
- 4. ILO

Choose the correct options

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

50. Recently, Mosul city was in news. It is in which country?

- A. Syria.
- B. Iraq.
- C. Afghanistan.
- D. Lebanon.

51. Recently, World Heritage Committee (WHC) of UNESCO declared \_\_\_\_\_ city to be the India's first World Heritage City.

- A. Ahmedabad
- B. Allahabad
- C. Bangalore
- D. Delhi

52. Concrete surface helps in tackling air pollution by absorbing

- A. Sulphur dioxide
- B. Suphur oxides
- C. Nitrous oxide
- D. Nitrogen dioxide

53. The Malabar Exercise 2017 is a trilateral naval exercise between

- A. India, U.S and Australia
- B. India, U.S and Japan
- C. India, U.S and Sri Lanka
- D. India, U.S and China

54. 'AlphaGo' is often seen in news. It refers to

- A. An artificial intelligence program by DeepMind
- B. The European Space Agency's test rover that recently crash-landed on the Martian surface
- C. The mascot for FIFA U-17 2017 World Cup India 2017
- D. A Birdlife project to save certain critically endangered seabirds from going extinct

55. Combustible ice consists of which gas?

- A. Methane hydrate
- B. Methyl hydrate
- C. Methyl hydride
- D. Methane hydride

56. What do you mean by Masala Bond?

- A. Masala bonds are bonds issued outside India but denominated in Indian Rupees.
- B. Masala bonds are bonds issued outside India but denominated in US dollars.
- C. Masala bonds are bonds issued outside India but denominated in UK dollars.
- D. None of the above.

57. Consider the statements about Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development(OECD) :

- 1. It is UN agency.
- 2. It's head quarter is at New York.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

58. Sometimes Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS ) in news. What are they ?

- A. Resolving NPA crisis in banking sector
- B. Tax avoidance strategy
- C. Free movement of skilled professional across countries
- D. Free movement of goods across countries

59. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana is implemented by

- A. Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation.
- B. Ministry of Rural Development.
- C. Ministry of Panchayath Raj Insitution.
- D. None of the above.

60. Deen dayal Antyodaya Yojana is implemented by

- A. Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation.
- B. Ministry of Rural Development .
- C. Ministry of Panchayath Raj Insitution.
- D. None of the above.

61. The Great Red spot is associated with which planet?

- A. Mars
- B. Jupiter
- C. Venus
- D. Uranus

62. The "Tsongmo or Changu" lake is located in \_\_\_\_?

- A. Jammu and Kashmir
- B. Sikkim
- C. Himachal Pradesh
- D. Uttarkhand

63. Santhara is a religious ritual related to \_\_\_\_?

- A. Jain
- B. Saiva
- C. Sakta
- D. Vaishnava

64. Which of the following two countries currently occupy / control the Golan heights?

- A. Egypt & Syria
- B. Turkey & Israel
- C. Israel & Syria
- D. Syria & Turkey

65. The power to vote money for public expenditure rests in India with \_\_\_\_:

- 1. Lok Sabha
- 2. Rajya Sabha
- 3. Legislative Assembly
- 4. Legislative Council

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

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

66. Consider the following statements:

- 1. Deputy Speaker and Speaker may resign by writing to each other
- 2. Attorney General and Solicitor General may resign by writing to each other

Which among the above statements is / are correct?

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

67. Sargasso Sea is characterized by

- A. Very cold water
- B. Very warm water
- C. Highly saline water
- D. Typical marine vegetation

68. Which among the following depicts the correct meaning of the term Jins-i-kamil concerning crops in Mughal India?

- A. Paddy Crop
- B. Cash Crop
- C. Coarse Crop
- D. Crop grown in Arid region



69. Arsenic present in groundwater can be partially removed

- A. Along with removal of iron by precipitation/coagulation method if iron is also present in the water.
- B. On boiling even if iron is absent in the water.
- C. On UV-treatment.
- D. On filtration even if iron is absent in the water.

70. Akbar's Ibadat Khana was the place where

- A. Military strategy was decided
- B. Inter-faith debates and discussion were held
- C. Akbar preached his principles of Sulh-i-kul
- D. Fine arts were practiced

71. 'Mission Raftaar' is

- A. The Indian Railways' Mission Mode activity to increase speeds of freight train and super-fast mail/express trains
- B. A component of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways' 'Avataran' or seven mission mode activities, under which all national highways will be made pothole-free by 2019
- C. A complementary programme to the Sagarmala initiative in order to provide efficient road and rail connectivity from ports to the hinterland
- D. A blueprint for making optimum use of the massive renewable energy generation capacity that will be created by 2022

72. Which one of the following countries of South-West Asia does not open out to the Mediterranean Sea?

- A. Syria
- B. Jordan
- C. Lebanon
- D. Israel

73. Identify the correct statement with reference to the Great Indian Bustard

- A. It has been classified as critically Endangered species under the IUCN's Red data book
- B. It has been classified as critically Endangered species under the wildlife Act of 1972.
- C. Recently Great Indian Breeding center was setup in Kota, Rajasthan
- D. All are correct

74. The "Preservation, protection and improvement of stock and prevention of animal diseases, veterinary training and practice" comes under which list of Constitution of India?

- A. State list
- B. Union List
- C. Concurrent List
- D. None of the above

75. The State shall endeavour to organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle is mentioned in which part of the constitution?

- A. Fundamental duties
- B. Union list
- C. Concurrent list
- D. Directive Principles of State Policy

76. Consider the following disabilities

- 1. Muscular Dystrophy
- 2. Acid Attack Victim
- 3. Dwarfism

Which among the following has been identified as disability under The Rights Of Person With Disability Act, 2016

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

77. The strategic oil- and gas bearing region called "Yamala Peninsula" is located in which country?

- A. Russia
- B. Norway
- C. Vietnam
- D. China

78. Rajgir Mahotsav is celebrated in \_\_:

- A. Rajasthan
- B. Bihar
- C. Uttar Pradesh
- D. Madhya Pradesh

79. Sangai Festival is celebrated in which among the following states of India?

- A. Assam.
- B. Manipur.
- C. Bihar.
- D. Karnataka.

80. The "Aichi Targets" are related to \_\_\_\_\_?

- A. Conservation of Biodiversity.
- B. Conservation of Wetlands.
- C. Conservation of Coral reefs.
- D. Prevention of Plastic use.

81. Consider the statements about DMH-11, a hybrid variety of mustard:

1. If approved, it would be the first transgenic edible crop to be grown in Indian fields.
2. DMH-11 is a hybrid variety of mustard developed by crossing a traditional variety of mustard, called Varuna, and an East European variety.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

82. Xpert molecular diagnostic test is associated with which one of the following diseases?

- A. Dengue
- B. Chickengunya
- C. Ebola
- D. Tuberculosis

83. Consider the statements about Egyptian vultures :

1. Egyptian vultures usually build their nests on the cliffs of mountains, roofs of buildings and on tree-tops.
2. The species rarely hunt its food — the birds mostly feed on dead carcasses of animals, birds and reptiles.
3. The vultures, in the absence of animal carcasses, switch over to household solid waste like rotten fruits and vegetables.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

84. Consider the statements about BirdLife International:

1. It is a global partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.
2. It is the world's second largest partnership of conservation organisations, with over 120 partner organisations.
3. Bombay Natural History Society is India's partner of BirdLife International.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

85. Consider the statements about National Human Rights Commission of India.

1. It is a constitutional body.
2. Its chairperson should be retired Chief Justice of India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

86. The Sakewa Festival has recently celebrated in which state?

- A. Jharkhand.
- B. Arunachal Pradesh.
- C. Sikkim.
- D. Manipur.

**87. Consider the following statement with reference to The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority**

1. It is a statutory body
2. It controls the prices of Pharmaceutical drugs in India.

Choose the correct answer

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

**88. 'UDAN', recently seen in the news, is a scheme launched by the Government of India. This scheme is**

- A. scholarship instituted to award meritorious students belonging to Economically Weaker Sections among the upper castes in the state of Gujarat.
- B. The Railway Ministry's efforts to increase the average train speed along the existing tracks.
- C. The Civil Aviation Ministry's Regional Connectivity Scheme.
- D. A collaboration of the Railways Ministry and the Environment Ministry aimed at reducing road transport's share in freight traffic and its concomitant increase in railway's share.

**89. Consider the following statements with respect to Global Fissile Material Report**

1. International Panel on Fissile Material's (IPFM) releases the report.
2. Report estimates the global stockpile of nuclear fissile material

Select the correct options

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

**90. Recently Government of India launched DigiYatra Plan, Identify the correct statement with reference to the plan,**

- A. Plan aimed at paperless travel for air passengers, including digital boarding passes at airports.
- B. It is a plan aimed at subsidizing the air travel expenses of Hajj pilgrimages.
- C. It is a plan aimed at subsidizing the air travel expenses of those flying to foreign country for medical services.

- D. None of the above

**91. Who has the exclusive right to legislate with respect to matter pertaining to "The preservation of cattle"?**

- A. Parliament
- B. State legislature
- C. Both A and B
- D. Either A or B

**92. Miyako Strait is connects**

- A. East China sea to Pacific Ocean
- B. South China sea to Pacific ocean
- C. Pacific ocean to Arctic sea
- D. Sea of Japan to Pacific Ocean

**93. Consider the following statements:**

1. The objective of the National Food Security Mission is to increase production of rice, wheat and pulses only
2. Production of horticulture crops have outpaced the production of food-grains consistently since 2012-13.

Which of the statements above is/are correct?

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

**94. Recently Lok Sabha passed the Motor Vehicles Amendment bill, the power to make such laws by Parliament, is under which list of constitution of India**

- A. Union List.
- B. State List.
- C. Concurrent List.
- D. None of the Above.

**95. India Water Stewardship Network and Alliance for Water Stewardship is a network created by**

- A. U.N
- B. W.H.O
- C. WWF
- D. IMF

**96. Recently government announced Industry-Academia Collaborative Mission, the main focus area of this mission is**

- A. Accelerate discovery research to early development for biopharmaceuticals
- B. Accelerate discovery research to early development for GM food crops.
- C. Accelerate discovery research to early development for biopesticides.
- D. None of the above.

**97. A Stem cell is having a property to make cells from all three basic body layers, so they can potentially produce any cell or tissue the body needs to repair itself. Which Stem cell is having this property?**

- A. Pluripotent stem cell
- B. Multipotent Stem cell
- C. Totipotent stem cell
- D. None of the above

**98. Global Burden of Disease report is published by**

- A. U.N.H.R.C
- B. U.N.D.P
- C. W.H.O
- D. None of the above

**99. Consider the following statement regarding National Investment Infrastructure Fund(NIIF)**

- A. It is a company registered under Companies Act 2013
- B. It is a trust registered under Indian Trust Act 1882
- C. It is a cooperative established under Multi-State Cooperative Society Act 2002
- D. None of the above.

**100. Consider the following statements with reference to North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited (NERAMCL)**

- 1. It facilitates processing of horticulture produce.
- 2. It assists processing units to market their products.
- 3. It helps in developing linkages of farmers with the market.

Choose the correct statement

- A. 1 only
- B. 1 and 3 only

- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. All are correct

**101. Consider the following statements with reference to Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme**

- 1. It is a major credit-linked subsidy programme.
- 2. Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is the nodal implementing agency at the national level

Choose the correct statement

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

**102. Consider the following statements with reference to Biotech Kisan and Cattle Genomics Schemes**

- 1. Biotech Kisan Hub's will understand problems of farmers related to water, soil, seed and marketing and provide solutions with validated technologies
- 2. The main objective of Cattle Genomics Schemes is to predict breeding values of animal, using DNA level information with performance record, more accurately and identify genetic worth of animal (elite animal) at an early age

Choose the correct statement

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

**103. Consider the following statements**

- 1. In plants, Phosphorus (P) is considered second to nitrogen as the most essential nutrient to ensure health and function
- 2. Phosphorus deficiency can be controlled by applying sources of phosphorus such as bone meal
- 3. Many parts of India had phosphorous-deficient soil.

Choose the correct answer

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

**104. Consider the following statements**

1. Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction summit is being held at Mexico.
2. Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is global forum for reviewing of progress in the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Choose the correct option

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

**105. The Nahar Wildlife Sanctuary (NWS) is located in which state?**

- A. Rajasthan
- B. Assam
- C. Haryana
- D. Kerala

**106. The most important source of information about the agrarian conditions during Mughals is\_\_?**

- A. Ain-i-Akbari
- B. Akbarnama
- C. Muntakhab-ul-Lubab
- D. Tarikh-i-Ferishta

**107. Which among the following is known as the earliest example of Panchayatana style of temple?**

- A. Dashavatara temple at Deogarh
- B. Temple at Pathari
- C. Shatrughneshwara temple at Bhubaneswar
- D. Lakshmana temple at Sirpur

**108. With respect to the President of India, which among the following statements is / are correct?**

1. A person who has been president of India is eligible for immediate re-election
2. A person can not hold the office of president of India for more than two consecutive terms

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

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

**109. Which among the following in India are known for substantial coral reef formations?**

1. Gulf of Mannar
2. Gulf of Kachchh
3. Andaman and Nicobar
4. Lakshadweep Islands

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

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

**110. The rare Northern river terrapin has been classified as \_\_\_\_\_, under IUCN's Red data book**

- A. Endangered species
- B. Critically Endangered species
- C. Vulnerable species
- D. Nearly threatened species

**111. Consider the following statement with reference to Trade Facilitation Agreements**

1. The agreement includes provisions for Lowering import tariffs and agricultural subsidies
2. TFA aims to reduce red-tapism to facilitate trade by reforming customs bureaucracies and formalities

Choose the correct statement

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

**112. The Green Climate Fund has been established by the**

- A. World Bank
- B. United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
- C. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- D. Bonn Convention



113. Consider the following statements:

1. In case of any delay in conducting the election of new President by any reason, the Vice President acts as President until a new President is elected
2. When a vacancy occurs in the office of Vice President for any reason other than sickness, the Chief Justice of India acts as the Vice President until a new Vice President is elected

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

114. Which one of the following island-countries is NOT located in the Indian Ocean?

- A. Seychelles
- B. Madagascar
- C. Comoros
- D. Cyprus

115. Consider the statements about ordinance:

1. Ordinances must be approved by Parliament within six weeks of reassembling or they shall cease to operate.
2. Ordinances will also cease to operate in case resolutions disapproving the Ordinance are passed by both the Houses.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

116. Which of the following declaration that called for "liberalisation of capital for Dalits"?

- A. Bengaluru Declaration
- B. New Delhi Declaration
- C. Bhopal Declaration
- D. Kolkata Declaration

117. INS Vagli was in news. What is this ?

- A. Weapon locating radar
- B. Indigenously developed light utility helicopter
- C. Diesel-electric submarine
- D. Nuclear powered submarine

118. Consider the statements about Monetary Policy Committee :

1. Each member of the MPC has one vote and in case the numbers are equal, the governor has the casting vote.
2. All the six-member of the MPC are from the RBI.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

119. Which article of the constitution outlaws untouchability in all its forms ?

- A. Article 15
- B. Article 16
- C. Article 17
- D. Article 18

120. Consider the following statement with reference to SHe-Box, which was in news recently

1. It refers to an online complaint management system called "Sexual Harassment electronic-Box (SHe-Box)" for registering complaints related to sexual harassment at workplace.
2. It is currently applicable only for women working in or visiting central government departments

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

**121. Consider the following statement with reference to Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013**

1. The Act provided for the establishment of Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) at each and every office or branches of the organization employing 50 or more employees.
2. The Act provides for the establishment of local complaints committee (LCC) at the district level by the Government to investigate and redress complaints of sexual harassment of the unorganized sector.

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

**122. Consider the following statement with reference to Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**

1. RCEP negotiations were formally launched at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
2. RCEP is viewed as an alternative to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).
3. Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the six states with which ASEAN has existing free trade agreements.

Choose 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

**123. Caves, arch, stack and stump are landforms formed by the action of which of the following?**

- A. Glaciers
- B. Winds in deserts
- C. Waves
- D. River water

**124. 'SHAKTI', a scheme recently approved by the Union Cabinet, is**

- A. A rural women-empowerment initiative by inculcating in them a habit of savings and proper utilisation of financial resources.
- B. A special loan scheme aimed at supporting entrepreneurship among urban women by providing certain concessions.
- C. A campaign to convince state governments to devolve 'ownership' of planning and development functions in panchayat samitis and gram panchayats
- D. A new coal allocation policy for the power sector.

**125. Which of the following is not located in Ladakh?**

- A. Hemis Monastery
- B. Salt Valley
- C. Zaskar Pass
- D. Dibang Valley

**126. Keibul Lamjao, world's only floating national park is located in which state?**

- A. Assam
- B. Tripura
- C. Manipur
- D. Arunachal Pradesh

**127. Contamination of drinking water with which of the following causes Blackfoot disease (BFD)?**

- A. Nitrates
- B. Arsenic
- C. Mercury
- D. Cadmium

**128. India's Valley of Flowers is a part of which of the following Biosphere Reserves?**

- A. Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve
- B. Jim Corbett Biosphere Reserve
- C. Gangotri Biosphere Reserve
- D. None of them

129. Which among the following is the hallmark feature of the Dravida style of temple architecture?

- A. Shikhara
- B. Gopuram
- C. Vimana
- D. Mandapa

130. Consider the following statements

1. The Codex Alimentarius or "Food Code" is a collection of standards, guidelines and codes of practice adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
2. Codex Alimentarius Commission is established by FAO alone.

Identify the incorrect statements from the options given below

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

131. The Constitutional 91st Amendment Act, 2003 fixed the total strength of Council of ministers in Union and State Government-

- A. 15% of the total number of Members of the Lower House of the Parliament/State Legislature
- B. 10% of the total number of Members of the Lower House of the Parliament/State Legislature
- C. 20% of the total number of Members of the Lower House of the Parliament/State Legislature
- D. None of the above

132. Which of the following organisations assist a country with the adjustment process under its Extended Fund Facility?

- A. Asian Development Bank
- B. World Bank Group
- C. International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- D. New Development Bank (NDB)

133. India is the biggest producer, as well as the largest consumer and importer of which of the following crops?

- A. Wheat
- B. Cotton
- C. Sugarcane
- D. Pulses

134. The Buran wind blows across:

- A. Eastern Asia
- B. Western Europe
- C. Southern Africa
- D. Eastern Australia

135. Which of the following mountain ranges is not present in Europe?

- A. Apennine Mountain Range
- B. Pyrenees Mountain Range
- C. Sierra Nevada Mountain Range
- D. Alps Mountain range

136. Which of the following regions in India represents lowest altitude?

- A. Kuttanad region in Kerala
- B. Saurashtra Region in Karnataka
- C. Coromandel of Tamil Nadu
- D. Malabar region of Kerala

137. Mundaka Upanishad, the Mandukya Upanishad and the Prashna Upanishad are associated with which of the following Vedas?

- A. Atharva-Veda
- B. Rig-Veda
- C. Sama-Veda
- D. Yajur-Veda

138. Bank Rate is defined as the rate at which:

- A. RBI lends short term loans to commercial banks
- B. A commercial bank can lend to its customers
- C. RBI lends long term loans to commercial banks
- D. The commercial banks are able to borrow overnight funds from RBI

139. Consider the following statements about National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR):

1. It works for the conservation and utilization of livestock and poultry genetic resources
2. It designs methodologies for ex situ and in situ conservation of farm animals

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 Only
- B. 2 Only

- C. Both 1 & 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**140. Flammable ice consists of**

- A. Methane hydrate
- B. Methane hydrite
- C. Ethane hydrate
- D. Ethane hydrite

**141. Consider the following statements**

1. Flammable ice are formed at very low temperatures and under high pressure
2. By lowering the pressure or raising the temperature, the hydrates in flammable ice, break down into water and methane.

Choose the correct statement

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

**142. Muntra, which was in news recently is an**

- A. Unmanned aerial vehicle
- B. Unmanned submarine
- C. Unmanned tank
- D. Unmanned helicopter

**143. Who wrote the book Pancha Siddhantika?**

- A. Varahamihira
- B. Aryabhatta
- C. Brahmagupta
- D. Kalidas

**144. Which of the following is the largest brackish water lagoon in Asia?**

- A. Chilika Lake
- B. Loktak Lake
- C. Wular Lake
- D. Nal Sarovar

**145. The rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) lends money to commercial banks in the short term in the event of any shortfall of funds is called:**

- A. Repo rate
- B. Reverse repo rate
- C. Marginal standing facility
- D. Bank rate

**146. Monetary policy intervention by the RBI to withdraw excess liquidity (or money supply) by selling government securities in the economy is called:**

- A. Open market operations
- B. Liquidity Adjustment Facility
- C. Market Stabilization scheme
- D. Marginal standing facility

**147. Mustard is a**

- A. Kharif crop
- B. rabi crop
- C. Zaid crop
- D. Both Kharif and rabi crop

**148. Consider the statements about Sovereign Gold Bond scheme.**

1. Bonds can be used as collateral for loans.
2. The capital gains tax arising on redemption of SGB to an individual has been exempted.
3. The Bonds will be eligible for Statutory Liquidity Ratio purposes.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

**149. The statutory Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) is constituted under:**

- A. Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
- B. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
- C. Environment Protection Act, 1986
- D. None

150. The Kachin Hills make a boundary between India and which of the following neighbors?

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

151. 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

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

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

153. 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

154. 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

155. Consider the following statements

- 1. Hepatitis B has vaccine where as there is no vaccine for Hepatitis C.
- 2. Hepatitis C has vaccine where as there is no vaccine for Hepatitis B.
- 3. Hepatitis types B and C can trigger liver cirrhosis and cancer if untreated.

Choose the correct options

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

156. Consider the following statements

- 1. Neem coating of urea leads to more gradual release of urea, helping plants gain more nutrient and resulting in higher yields.
- 2. Neem coated urea lowers underground water contamination due to leaching of urea.

Choose the correct statement

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

157. Consider the following statement with reference to Mission Kakatiya, which was in news recently.

- 1. It is a flagship programme of Andhra Pradesh State government.
- 2. It is a poverty eradication programme.

Choose the correct statement

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



# ANSWERS

Question Number	Explanation
1.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate.</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The tenure of every Panchayat shall be for five years from the date of its first meeting.</p>
2.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Science</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Sonar (originally an acronym for SOund Navigation And Ranging) is a technique that uses sound propagation (usually underwater, as in submarine navigation) to navigate, communicate with or detect objects on or under the surface of the water, such as other vessels.</p> <p>The acoustic frequencies used in sonar systems vary from very low (infrasonic) to extremely high (ultrasonic).</p>
3.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Art and Culture.</p> <p><b>Level :</b> Moderate.</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patola is a double ikat woven sari, usually made from silk, made in Patan, Gujarat, India.</li> <li>• The word patola is the plural form; the singular is patolu. They are very expensive, once worn only by those belonging to royal and aristocratic families.</li> <li>• These saris are popular among those who can afford the high prices.</li> <li>• Velvet patola styles are also made in Surat. Patola-weaving is a closely guarded family tradition.</li> <li>• There are three families in Patan that weave these highly prized double ikat saris. It is said that this technique is taught to no one in the family, but only to the sons.</li> <li>• It can take six months to one year to make one sari due to the long process of dying each strand separately before weaving them together.</li> <li>• Patola was woven in Surat, Ahmedabad and Patan.</li> <li>• Highly valued in Indonesia, became part of the local weaving tradition there.</li> </ul>

Question Number	Explanation
4.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> A  <b>Type:</b> Geography  <b>Level:</b> Difficult  <b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm clouds are ones whose mass lies above the freezing level while cold clouds primarily exist where the temperature is below freezing.</li> <li>• The collision-coalescence model applies to warm clouds that form in the tropics. Warm clouds are those that form at altitudes where the air temperature is above freezing. For precipitation to form under this model, there needs to be a variety of different size condensation nuclei. Large condensation nuclei will create large water droplets while smaller condensation nuclei create small ones. In order for the droplets to make their way to the surface they have to be heavy enough to overcome the resistance imposed by upwardly rising air that is fueling the development of the cloud. The smaller, lighter droplets are easily suspended in the updrafts of air, while the larger heavy collector droplets fall and collide with the smaller ones. Upon collision, the droplets coalesce into a bigger droplet. As the droplet falls, resistance by the air flattens the droplet to the point where it becomes unstable and breaks apart. With enough collisions, the droplet achieves a size sufficient to fall all the way to the surface.</li> </ul>
5.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B  <b>Type:</b> Economy  <b>Level:</b> Easy  <b>Explanation:</b> Components of Capital Account</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)</li> <li>• Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)</li> <li>• External Borrowings such as ECB</li> <li>• Reserve Account with the Central Bank</li> </ul>
6.	<p><b>Correct answer:</b> B  <b>Type:</b> Current Affair  <b>Level:</b> moderate  <b>Explanation:</b> The exchange of the list of prisoners was made according to the Agreement on Consular Access between India and Pakistan. The agreement, reached on 21 May 2008, institutionalises prisoner exchange between the two countries. Accordingly, lists of nationals lodged in jails are to be exchanged twice each year, on January 1 and July 1.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
7.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> A  <b>Type:</b> Current affair  <b>Level:</b> difficult  <b>Explanation:</b>            'Atmiyata':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar project like iBobbly in India</li> <li>• Meaning: Compassion in Sanskrit.</li> <li>• This project involves using short films loaded on a basic Android app as a training tool to enable a bunch of villagers to identify mental health disorders.</li> <li>• The project was rolled out in the Peth block of Nashik district, Maharashtra, in December 2013, making mental health care accessible to many in this part for the first time</li> </ul>
8.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> B  <b>Type:</b> Current Affair  <b>Level:</b> moderate  <b>Explanation:</b>            The Registrar of Companies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Registrar of Companies (ROC) is an office under the Indian Ministry of Corporate Affairs that deals with administration of the Companies Act 1956 and Companies Act, 2013.</li> <li>• There are currently 22 Registrars of Companies (ROC) operating from offices in all major states of India.</li> <li>• Some states, such as Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, have two ROCs each. Section 609 of the Companies Act, 1956 tasks the ROCs with the primary duty of registering companies and LLPs- limited liability partnership, floated in the respective states and the union territories under their administration.</li> </ul>
9.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C  <b>Type:</b> Current affairs  <b>Level:</b> Moderate  <b>Explanation:</b>            "In Karnataka, 51 of the 155 main market yards and 354 sub-yards have been integrated into a single licensing system. Rashtriya e-market Services Ltd. (ReMS), a joint venture created by the State government and NCDEX Spot Exchange, offers automated auction and post auction facilities (weighting, invoicing, market fee collection, accounting), assaying facilities in the markets, facilitate warehouse-based sale of produce, facilitate commodity funding, price dissemination by leveraging technology. The wider geographical scope afforded by breaking up fragmented markets has enabled private sector investment in marketing infrastructure."</p>

Question Number	Explanation
10.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Geography</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Magnetite is the finest iron ore with a very high content of iron up to 70 per cent. It has excellent magnetic qualities, especially valuable in the electrical industry. Hematite ore is the most important industrial iron ore in terms of the quantity used, but has slightly lower iron content than magnetite (50-60 per cent).</p> <p>Over 85 per cent of the iron ore produced in Goa is of low-grade. Compared to Goa, over 90 per cent of the ore produced in the other four major states producing iron ore — Chhatisgarh, Odisha, Karnataka and Jharkhand — is of a higher grade with ferrous content of more than 60 per cent.</p>
11.	<p><b>Answer :</b> A</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Ancient/ Medieval terms</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p>These are huge open wells of water with or without steps.</p>
12.	<p><b>Answer :</b> D</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Ancient/ Medieval terms</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p>A little over two months ago, the historic Taj bawadi (huge open wells), built during the Adil Shahi era (1490-1686) in Vijayapura in Karnataka was a filthy cesspool, with the polluted water unfit for any use.</p> <p>Today the 223 ft wide structure has potable water, with hundreds of springs injecting fresh water into it.</p>
13.	<p><b>Answer :</b> C</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Map based question</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p>Doka La, a pass in Sikkim, which falls in the vicinity of Chumbi Valley at the corner of India-Bhutan-Tibet tri-junction.</p> <p>Doka La is the Indian name for the region which Bhutan recognises as Dokalam, while China claims it to be part of its Donglang region.</p>
14.	<p><b>Answer :</b> D</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Environment</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p>The newly identified IBAs of Kerala are Achencoil Forest Division; Anamudi Shola National Park; Camel's Hump Mountain, Wayanad; Kurinjimala Wildlife Sanctuary; Malayattoor Reserve Forest; Mankulam Forest Division; Mathikettan Shola National Park; Muthikulam-Siruvani; and Pampadum Shola National Park.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
15.	<p><b>Answer :</b> B</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Environment</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p>An Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) is an area identified using an internationally agreed set of criteria as being globally important for the conservation of bird populations. The program was developed and sites are identified by BirdLife International.</p> <p>Bombay Natural History Society is a partner of BirdLife International in India.</p>
16.	<p><b>Correct answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> current affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> What the draft MTP bill 2014 provides?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The draft MTP increased the legal limit for abortion from 20 weeks to 24 weeks.</li> <li>• It provides for abortion beyond 24 weeks under defined conditions.</li> </ul>
17.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> general Science</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> A viral infection that's serious for small children but is easily preventable by a vaccine</p>
18.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Shivraj Singh Chouhan (the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh) and Rajeev Pratap Rudy (the Union Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship) has laid the foundation stone of the India's biggest Global Skill Park in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh on July 3, 2017. As per reports, 37 acre land has been allotted in Narela Shankari area of Bhopal for the Global Skill Park. The park will be constructed at a cost of Rs 645 crore. Training will be imparted to 1000 students every year by trainers of international standard. Trained students will be given placement in India and outside India at international level. The park will function on the spirit of 'With Industry -For Industry'.</p>
19.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Constitution of Socialist Countries such as Russia</p>



Question Number	Explanation
20.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> International Organization</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>ADB Voting System and shares: The ADB was modeled closely on the World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions. At the end of 2014, Japan holds the largest proportion of shares at 15.7%. The United States holds 15.6%, China holds 6.5%, India holds 6.4%, and Australia holds 5.8%.</p>
21.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Navegaon National Park is located in the Gondia district of Maharashtra. It is a popular forest resort in the easternmost part of Maharashtra and was built in the 18th century. It is home to number of fishes, 209 species of birds, 9 species of reptiles and 26 species of mammals which includes Tiger, Panther, Jungle cat, Small India Civet, Palm Civet, Wolf, Jackals, Bisons, Sambars, Nilgais, Chitals, Wild boars, Sloth Bears, and Nathan Lewis.</p>
22.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supreme Court land mark verdict: it had unfettered power to hear an appeal arising from a river water dispute tribunal under Article 136 of the Constitution."</li> <li>• "It has interpreted the ouster clause in the Inter-State Water Disputes Act as one that merely bars the court from entertaining an original complaint or suit on its own (no original jurisdiction), but not its power to hear appeals against a tribunal's decisions."</li> </ul>
23.	<p><b>Correct Option:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> International Organization</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>A very high net national wealth and a very high Human Development Index are the main requirements to be a member of G7 group.</p>
24.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) is a government regulatory agency {set up as per executive order and thus not a statutory body} that controls the prices of pharmaceutical drugs in India.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
25.	<p><b>Correct answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Schemes</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>VAJRA (Visiting Advanced Joint Research) Faculty scheme</p> <p>Implementing agency: The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), a Statutory body Department of Science and Technology.</p>
26.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Schemes</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) is the financial turnaround and revival package for electricity distribution companies of India (DISCOMs) initiated by the Government of India with the intent to find a permanent solution to the financial mess that the power distribution is in.</li> <li>2. It allows state governments, which own the discoms, to take over 75 percent of their debt as of September 30, 2015, and pay back lenders by selling bonds. Discoms are expected to issue bonds for the remaining 25 percent of their debt.</li> <li>3. The scheme envisages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Turnaround</li> <li>• Operational improvement</li> <li>• Reduction of cost of generation of power</li> <li>• Development of Renewable Energy</li> <li>• Energy efficiency &amp; conservation</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
27.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>The Karnataka Government has recently launched the 'Elevate 100' scheme to identify and nurture innovative start-ups. The purpose of the scheme is to identify 100 most innovative start-ups in the state to elevate them to the next level of success. The Elevate scheme is the brainchild of the start-up cell, Karnataka Biotechnology and Information Technology Services (KBITS), to help start-ups across the state succeed by providing them with access to mentors, networking opportunities, and in-depth sessions for start-ups on accounting, and emerging technologies.</p>
28.	<p><b>Correct answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> History</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Champaran</p>

Question Number	Explanation
29.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>The current age of retirement for Supreme Court judges is 65 years while High Court Judges is 62 years. There was a bill introduced to raise the age of retirement of high court judges also to 65 years but that bill was never passed.</p>
30.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Environmental Science and Ecology</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Sairandhri is a place in Kerala, southern India at about 11°5.22 N 76°27.24 E. It is the entrance point and visitors center for Silent Valley National Park. Sairandhri is the site of a controversial hydroelectric dam that was proposed in 1958 and finally rejected in 1984</p>
31.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Third Amendment) Bill seeks to grant the National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC) constitutional status, at par with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.</p>
32.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Composition and service conditions: Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the NCBC will comprise of five members appointed by the President. Their tenure and conditions of service will also be decided by the President through rules.</p>
33.	<p><b>Correct answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age appropriate class.</li> <li>• It provides for development of curriculum in consonance with the values enshrined in the Constitution, and which would ensure the all-round development of the child, building on the child's knowledge, potentiality and talent and making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety through a system of child friendly and child centred learning.</li> </ul>

Question Number	Explanation
34.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Ramman is a religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal region, Uttarkhand. It is a festival of the Hindu community in the Saloor Dungra village in the Chamoli district of Uttarkhand. The festival and the eponymous art form are conducted as an offering to the village deity, Bhumiya Devta.</p>
35.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Geography</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Coriolis effect influences the paths of moving objects on Earth and is caused by Earth's rotation. Because Earth's surface rotates at different velocities at different latitudes, objects in motion tend to veer to the right in the Northern Hemisphere and to the left in the Southern Hemisphere. The Coriolis effect is nonexistent at the equator but increases with latitude, reaching a maximum at the poles.</p>
36.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> General Science</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An effective vaccine exists for hepatitis B. Whereas hepatitis C has no vaccines</li> <li>• Hepatitis is often symptom-free, but types B and C can trigger liver cirrhosis and cancer if untreated.</li> <li>• Hepatitis B — which is spread through bodily fluids such as blood and semen</li> <li>• Hepatitis C, primarily spread through blood. Most commonly spread through unsafe injections, notably among drug users</li> </ul>
37.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> G.K</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Germany currently chairs the Group of 20.</p>
38.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> G.K.</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Armenia is a landlocked country</p>

Question Number	Explanation
39.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Environmental Science and Ecology</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Following are the advantages of neem coated urea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neem coating leads to more gradual release of urea, helping plants gain more nutrient and resulting in higher yields.</li> <li>• Lower underground water contamination due to leaching of urea.</li> <li>• Neem serves as a natural insecticide Collection of neem seeds is needed for manufacturing of neem coated urea. This would generate employments in rural areas. Neem-coating will help check heavily subsidized urea's pilferage to chemical industry and other uses such as making of adulterated milk.</li> </ul>
40.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Schemes</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Mission Kakatiya:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flagship programme of Telangana State government</li> <li>• Aim: desilting and restoration of tanks in rural areas.</li> <li>• Key improvement: Research by groundwater department found a significant rise in water table levels wherever tanks were restored.</li> </ul>
41.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Art and Culture</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Difficult</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Moolam boat race commemorates an episode associated with the installation of the idol of Lord Krishna at the Ambalappuzha Sri Krishna temple.</li> <li>• The annual race falls on Moolam star in the month of Mithunam in the Malayalam calendar.</li> </ul>
42.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Schemes</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swayam Prabha — a project for telecasting "high-quality educational programmes" through 32 DTH channels</li> <li>• School education (9-12 levels): modules for teacher's training as well as teaching and learning aids for children of India to help them understand the subjects better and also help them in preparing for competitive examinations for admissions to professional degree programmes.</li> </ul>



Question Number	Explanation
43.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C  <b>Type:</b> General Science  <b>Level:</b> Moderate  <b>Explanation:</b>            The most common chemicals used for cloud seeding include silver iodide, potassium iodide and dry ice (solid carbon dioxide). Liquid propane, which expands into a gas, has also been used.</p>
44.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B  <b>Type:</b> Schemes  <b>Level:</b> Easy  <b>Explanation:</b> Ministry of Human Resource and development</p>
45.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A  <b>Type:</b> Current Affairs.  <b>Level:</b> Moderate.  <b>Explanation:</b> Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.</p>
46.	<p><b>Correct Answer :</b> B  <b>Topic :</b> IR  <b>Type :</b> Factual            The G20 Hamburg Action Plan sets out the group's strategy for achieving strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth.</p>
47.	<p><b>Answer :</b> D  <b>Topic :</b> Economy  <b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p>A nation's ranking on the index is based on the average of 10 subindices:            Starting a business – Procedures, time, cost and minimum capital to open a new business            Dealing with construction permits – Procedures, time and cost to build a warehouse            Getting electricity – procedures, time and cost required for a business to obtain a permanent electricity connection for a newly constructed warehouse            Registering property – Procedures, time and cost to register commercial real estate            Getting credit – Strength of legal rights index, depth of credit information index            Protecting investors – Indices on the extent of disclosure, extent of director liability and ease of shareholder suits            Paying taxes – Number of taxes paid, hours per year spent preparing tax returns and total tax payable as share of gross profit            Trading across borders – Number of documents, cost and time necessary to export and import            Enforcing contracts – Procedures, time and cost to enforce a debt contract            Resolving insolvency – The time, cost and recovery rate (%) under bankruptcy proceeding</p>

Question Number	Explanation
48.	<p><b>Answer :</b> B</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Health</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p>Drugs are used to treat H1N1. Oseltamivir and Zanamivir are antiviral drugs that block the actions of influenza virus types A and B in the body. While Oseltamivir is available as tablets, Zanamivir comes in powder form.</p>
49.	<p><b>Answer :</b> D</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> IR</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p>Global institutions like the World Bank, IMF, WTO, OECD, ILO, WHO and the Financial Stability Board (FSB) are among the partners to the G20.</p>
50.	<p><b>Answer :</b> B</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> IR</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p>Mosul is in Iraq. Recently it was freed from the ISIS by the Iraqi security forces</p>
51.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> G.K</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Walled City of Ahmedabad, founded by Sultan Ahmed Shah in the 15th century, has been declared India's first World Heritage City.</p>
52.	<p><b>Correct Option:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Scientists found that Concrete surfaces can help tackle air pollution as it absorbs sulphur dioxide — a major pollutant</p>
53.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Malabar Exercise 2017 Participants: naval forces of India, Japan and the United States.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
54.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> difficult</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DeepMind is by Google. It is engaged in artificial intelligence research, "and its application for positive impact".</li> <li>• Google's DeepMind AlphaGo artificial intelligence has defeated the world's number one Go player Ke Jie. AlphaGo secured the victory after winning the second game in a three-part match.</li> <li>• "Go" is considered to be one of the world's most complex games, and is much more challenging for computers than chess.</li> <li>• AlphaGo has built up its expertise by studying older matches and playing thousands of games against itself. The company says the eventual plan is to deploy its artificial intelligence "in areas of medicine and science".</li> </ul>
55.	<p><b>Correct answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Science</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combustible ice is a frozen mixture of water and concentrated natural gas</li> <li>• Technically known as methane hydrate, it can be lit on fire in its frozen state. It is believed to comprise one of the world's most abundant fossil fuels</li> </ul>
56.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Economics</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Factual</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Masala bonds are bonds issued outside India but denominated in Indian Rupees.</p>
57.	<p><b>Correct Answer :</b> D</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Organization</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p><b>Level :</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Explanation :</b></p> <p>The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an intergovernmental economic organisation with 35 member countries, founded in 1960 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.</p> <p>So, it is not an UN agency.</p> <p>It is a forum of countries describing themselves as committed to democracy and the market economy, providing a platform to compare policy experiences, seeking answers to common problems, identify good practices and coordinate domestic and international policies of its members. Most OECD members are high-income economies with a very high Human Development Index (HDI) and are regarded as developed countries.</p> <p>It's head quarter is at Paris, France.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
58.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Economy</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Factual</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) is a tax avoidance strategy used by multinational companies, wherein profits are shifted from jurisdictions that have high taxes (such as the United States and many Western European countries) to jurisdictions that have low (or no) taxes (so-called tax havens).</p>
59.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Schemes</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana will be implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development.</p>
60.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Schemes</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana will be implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation</p>
61.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A NASA spacecraft in orbit around Jupiter began transmitting data and images on Tuesday from humanity's closest brush with the Great Red Spot, a flyby of the colossal, crimson storm that has fascinated Earth-bound observers for hundreds of years.</li> <li>• The churning cyclone ranks as the largest known storm in the solar system, measuring about 16,000 km in diameter with winds clocked at hundreds of miles (km) an hour around its outer edges. It appears as a deep, red orb surrounded by layers of pale yellow, orange and white.</li> <li>• The red spot has been continuously monitored from Earth since about 1830, though observations believed to have been of the same feature date back more than 350 years.</li> <li>• System shrinking: Once wide enough to swallow three Earth-sized planets, the famed Jovian weather system has been shrinking for the past 100 years and may eventually disappear altogether.</li> </ul>
62.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Geography</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Changu Lake is a glacial lake in the East Sikkim, located around 40 kilometres away from capital Gangtok at elevation of 3,780 m.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
63.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Art and Culture</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Difficult</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Santhara: is the Jain religious ritual of voluntary death by fasting.</p>
64.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current affairs</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Golan Heights also called the Golan or the Syrian Golan. The Golan Heights is a basaltic plateau bordered by the Yarmouk River in the south, the Sea of Galilee and Hula Valley in the west, Mount Hermon in the north, and the Raqqad Wadi in the east. The western two thirds of this region are currently occupied by Israel, whereas the eastern third is controlled by Syria.</p>
65.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>The role of rajya sabha in parliament and legislative council in state with respect to money bills is immaterial.</p>
66.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>The second statement is incorrect. Attorney General holds the office during the pleasure of the president, while solicitor general is appointed and removed by central government.</p>
67.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Geography</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Sargasso Sea is a region of the North Atlantic Ocean bounded by four currents forming an ocean gyre. Unlike all other regions called seas, it has no land boundaries. It is distinguished from other parts of the Atlantic Ocean by its characteristic brown Sargassum seaweed and often calm blue water.</li> <li>• The sea is bounded on the west by the Gulf Stream, on the north by the North Atlantic Current, on the east by the Canary Current, and on the south by the North Atlantic Equatorial Current, a clockwise-circulating system of ocean currents termed the North Atlantic Gyre.</li> <li>• It lies between 70° and 40° W, and 20° to 35° N, and is approximately 1,100 km wide by 3,200 km long (700 by 2,000 statute miles).[5][6] Bermuda is near the western fringes of the sea.</li> <li>• All the currents deposit the marine plants and refuse they carry into this sea, yet the ocean water in the Sargasso Sea is distinctive for its deep blue color and exceptional clarity, with underwater visibility of up to 61 m (200 ft). It is also a body of water that has captured the public imagination, and so is seen in a wide variety of literary and artistic works and in popular culture.</li> </ul>



Question Number	Explanation
68.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b>B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> History</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Difficult</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Cash crops like cotton and Sugarcane were known as Jins-i-Kamil or Jins-i-Ala. Cotton was produced mostly in Khandesh and Bengal.</p>
69.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> General Science</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Difficult</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>The presence of elevated levels of arsenic in groundwater has become a major concern around the world, especially in South Asia. Up to date, there is no effective treatment for curing health impacts due to the intake of high levels of arsenic. A wide range of technologies has been developed for the removal of high concentrations of arsenic from drinking water. The most common arsenic removal technologies use oxidation, coagulation, precipitation adsorption, ion exchange and membrane techniques. Other potential approaches would include phytoremediation or the use of bacteria, which can play an important role in catalysing biological arsenic removal processes. All the arsenic treatment technologies ultimately concentrate arsenic in the sorption media, the residual sludge or in a liquid media. To avoid indiscriminate disposal and environmental pollution, these wastes need to be treated or disposed of properly.</p>
70.	<p><b>Correct Option:</b>B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Art and Culture</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Ibādat Khāna was a meeting house built in 1575 CE by the Mughal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) at Fatehpur Sikri to gather spiritual leaders of different religious grounds so as to conduct a discussion on the teachings of the respective religious leaders.</p>
71.	<p><b>Correct answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affairs</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p><b>Mission Raftaar:</b> It targets doubling of average speeds of freights trains and increasing the average speed of super-fast mail/express trains by 25 kmph in the next 5 years.</p>
72.	<p><b>Correct answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Map markings</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate:</p>

Question Number	Explanation
73.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Environmental science and Ecology</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GIBs, listed as critically endangered under the wildlife Act, 1972 and under IUCN's Red data book</li> <li>• Great Indian Bustard breeding centre to be set up in Kota- India's first captive breeding centre for Great Indian Bustards (GIBs) -- Rajasthan's state bird -- will be set up at Sorsan in Kota district, and a hatchery centre at Nokh in Jaisalmer.</li> </ul>
74.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>The "Preservation, protection and improvement of stock and prevention of animal diseases, veterinary training and practice" is Entry 15 of the State List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, meaning that State Legislatures have exclusive powers to legislate the prevention of slaughter and preservation of cattle.</p>
75.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>The prohibition of cow slaughter is also one of the Directive Principles of State Policy contained in Article 48 of the Constitution. It reads, "The State shall endeavour to organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle."</p>
76.	<p><b>Correct answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p>
77.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Map based</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Yamal Peninsula stretches some seven hundred kilometres into the Arctic Ocean from the Russian mainland below the Arctic Circle. It is believed that this region has one of the largest oil and gas reserves in the world.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
78.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Culture</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Rajgir, the ancient capital of the Magadhan empire in Bihar is held sacred by both Buddhists and Jains for its association with the Buddha and Mahavir. Department of Tourism, Bihar holds a colourful festival of dance and music, Rajgir Mahotsav or Dance Festival every year in Rajgir.</p>
79.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Culture</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Manipur Sangai Festival is an annual calendar mega-event of the Government of Manipur spear-headed by the Tourism Department that seeks to showcase and promote the finest of Manipur's arts &amp; culture, adventure sports, indigenous cuisines, handloom &amp; handicrafts, fine arts, indigenous games &amp; music and various other niche products to a regional, national and global audience.</p>
80.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Environmental Science and Ecology</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Aichi Targets are a set of 20, time-bound, measureable targets for the conservation of biodiversity. The targets were agreed by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010. Achievement of the targets will contribute to reducing, and eventually halting, the loss of biodiversity at a global level by the middle of the twenty-first century.</p>
81.	<p><b>Answer :</b> C</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Environment</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p>DMH-1 is a hybrid variety of mustard:</p> <p>If approved, it would be the first transgenic edible crop to be grown in Indian fields.</p> <p>DMH-11 is a hybrid variety of mustard developed by crossing a traditional variety of mustard, called Varuna, and an East European variety.</p>
82.	<p><b>Answer :</b> D</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Health</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Factual</p> <p>The Xpert molecular diagnostic test is a cartridge based nucleic acid amplification test, automated diagnostic test that can identify Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB) DNA and resistance to rifampicin (RIF) by nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT).</p>

Question Number	Explanation
83.	<p><b>Answer :</b> D</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Environment</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Factual</p> <p>Egyptian vultures usually build their nests on the cliffs of mountains, roofs of buildings and on tree-tops. The species rarely hunt its food — the birds mostly feed on dead carcasses of animals, birds and reptiles. They eat eggs and sometimes, in the absence of animal carcasses, switch over to household solid waste like rotten fruits and vegetables.</p>
84.	<p><b>Answer :</b> B</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Environment</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Factual</p> <p>BirdLife International (formerly the International Council for Bird Preservation) is a global partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.</p> <p>It is the world's largest partnership of conservation organisations, with over 120 partner organisations.</p> <p>Bombay Natural History Society is India's partner.</p>
85.	<p><b>Answer :</b> B</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Polity</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Factual</p> <p>The National Human Rights Commission of India of India is an autonomous public body constituted on 12 October 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Ordinance of 28 September 1993. It was given a statutory basis by the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.</p> <p>The NHRC is the National Human Rights Commission of India, responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights, defined by the Act as "rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants".</p> <p>Its chairperson should be retired Chief Justice of India.</p>
86.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Sakewa festival of Rai Community has recently celebrated in Sikkim as a tribute to Mother Nature. The fest is also known as Bhoomi Puja or Chandi Puja or worship of land. This festival is marked with the performing of puja where prayers are offered to the Supreme Power for Peace and Protection and for the well-being of all the living and non-living things of the universe. Apart from this, Buddha Purnima is also celebrated in Sikkim as the day marked the birth of Gautam Buddha and also the day on which he attained Nirvana under the Mahabodhi tree at Bodh Gaya. The people visited monasteries and listen sermons across the state. Most monks have spent the day reading scriptures before the statue of the Buddha.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
87.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) is a government regulatory agency {set up as per executive order and thus not a statutory body} that controls the prices of pharmaceutical drugs in India.</p>
88.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Schemes</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Ministry of Civil Aviation took a major step today towards making flying a reality for the small town common man. The Civil Aviation Minister Shri P Ashok Gajapathi Raju launched the Ministry's much awaited Regional Connectivity Scheme "UDAN" ("Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik") in New Delhi today. UDAN is an innovative scheme to develop the regional aviation market. It is a market-based mechanism in which airlines bid for seat subsidies. This first-of-its-kind scheme globally will create affordable yet economically viable and profitable flights on regional routes so that flying becomes affordable to the common man even in small towns."</p>
89.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Reports</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>The International Panel on Fissile Materials (IPFM) was founded in January 2006. It is an independent group of arms-control and nonproliferation experts from sixteen countries, including both nuclear weapon and non-nuclear weapon states. The mission of the IPFM is to analyze the technical basis for practical and achievable policy initiatives to secure, consolidate, and reduce stockpiles of highly enriched uranium and plutonium. These fissile materials are the key ingredients in nuclear weapons, and their control is critical to nuclear disarmament, halting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and ensuring that terrorists do not acquire nuclear weapons.</p> <p>The Global Fissile Material Report is released by IPFM</p>
90.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> DigiYatra plan- paperless travel for air passengers, including digital boarding passes at airports.</p>
91.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Under the distribution of legislative powers between Union of India and states under article 246(3) of the Constitution of India, the preservation of cattle is a matter on which the legislature of the states have exclusive powers to legislate.</p>



Question Number	Explanation
92.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Map based</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Miyako Strait is of global geopolitical significance, as it is one of the few international waterways for China's People's Liberation Army Navy to access the Pacific Ocean from the East China Sea</li> <li>• The Miyako Strait also known as the Kerama Gap, is a waterway which lies between Miyako Island and Okinawa Island. It is the widest strait in the Ryukyu Islands.</li> </ul>
93.	<p><b>Correct Answer :</b> C</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Schemes</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>"Despite the deficit monsoon, unseasonal rains and hailstorm in the major part of the country, the production of horticulture crops have outpaced the production of foodgrains since 2012-13..."</p> <p>NFSM includes coarse cereals as well as commercial crops.</p>
94.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p><b>Topic:</b> In a Safe Lane- theHindu</p> <p>There is some concern that the move to amend Motor vehicle Act overly emphasizes the concurrent jurisdiction of the center at the cost of State powers ,but the proposed changes comes after a long consultation exercise</p>
95.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The court also stressed the need to seek guidance of the World Wildlife Fund, which has created a network called the India Water Stewardship Network and Alliance for Water Stewardship, "to ensure sustainable water management".</p>
96.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Industry-Academia Collaborative Mission</p> <p>Aims to accelerate discovery research to early development for biopharmaceuticals</p>

Question Number	Explanation
97.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> General Science</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation</b></p> <p>They're able to make cells from all three basic body layers, so they can potentially produce any cell or tissue the body needs to repair itself. This "master" property is called pluripotency.</p>
98.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>GBD is based out of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation</p>
99.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> NIIF is a trust registered under Indian Trust Act 1882</p>
100.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affairs</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>NERAMCL objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It facilitates processing of horticulture produce.</li> <li>• It assists processing units to market their products.</li> <li>• It helps in developing linkages of farmers with the market.</li> </ul>
101.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affairs</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is a major credit-linked subsidy programme</li> <li>• Aim: Generating self-employment opportunities through establishment of micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector</li> <li>• Nodal agency: Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is the nodal implementing agency at the national level</li> <li>• Implementing agencies: KVIC, Khadi &amp; Village Industry Boards (KVIB) and District Industry Centres (DIC)</li> <li>• Financial assistance/loans: is provided through Banks, Government pays margin money subsidy to the beneficiaries through KVIC</li> </ul>

Question Number	Explanation
102.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affairs</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Biotech Kisan and Cattle Genomics Schemes</p> <p>Biotech Kisan programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biotech Kisan Hub's will understand problems of farmers related to water, soil, seed and marketing and provide solutions with validated technologies</li> <li>• The programme is expected to create strong scientists-farmers interactive platform</li> <li>• Under the programme thematic farmer fellowship as well as fellowships to women farmers (Mahila Kisan Biotech Fellowship) will be awarded</li> <li>• Cattle Genomics programme:</li> <li>• The main objective is to predict breeding values of animal, using DNA level information with performance record, more accurately and identify genetic worth of animal (elite animal) at an early age</li> <li>• The ability to select elite breeding animal at an early age will help in enhancing productivity at farmer's level in future</li> </ul>
103.	<p><b>Correct answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> General Science</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In plants, Phosphorus (P) is considered second to nitrogen as the most essential nutrient to ensure health and function. Phosphorus is used by plants in numerous processes such as photophosphorylation, genetic transfer, the transportation of nutrients, and phospholipid cell membranes.</li> <li>• Phosphorus deficiency can be controlled by applying sources of phosphorus such as bone meal, rock phosphate, manure, and phosphate-fertilizers.</li> <li>• Bone meal (or Bone manure) is a mixture of finely and coarsely ground animal bones and slaughter-house waste products. It is used as an organic fertilizer for plants and as a nutritional supplement for animals. As a slow-release fertilizer, bone meal is primarily used as a source of phosphorus and protein</li> </ul>
104.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India taking part in global disaster risk reduction meet in Mexico</li> <li>• The GPDRR is a global forum for strategic advice, coordination, partnership development and review of progress in the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015-2030 which was adopted at the 3rd UN World conference on disaster risk reduction held in March 2015 in Sendai, Japan.</li> </ul>

Question Number	Explanation
105.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Environmental Science and Ecology</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Nahar Wildlife Sanctuary (NWS) is located at Rewari district in Haryana State and spread over an area of 211.35 hectares. It is home to neelgai, geedar, langur, blue peafowl (mor), rufous treepie, greater coucal, Indian grey horn-bill, coppersmith barbet, etc.</p>
106.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Ancient History</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Ain-i-Akbari by Abul Fazal is the main source for today's historians to know about the structure of agrarian relations from the time of Akbar onwards.</p>
107.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Art and culture</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Dashavatara Temple or Vishnu Temple also called Gupta temple at Deogarh. It was built in the Gupta Period (320 to c. 600 AD). Archaeologists have inferred that it is the earliest known Panchayatana temple in North India. A Hindu temple is a Panchayatana one when the main shrine is surrounded by four subsidiary shrines.</p>
108.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The second statement is not correct because President of India can be re-elected to office for any number of terms.</p>
109.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Environmental Science and Ecology</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Occurrences of Coral Reefs in India The major reef formations in India are restricted to the Gulf of Mannar, Gulf of Kachchh, Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands. Scattered coral growth has also been reported along certain inter-tidal belts and submerged banks both on the east and west coasts of the country. The reefs at present are important to the local community only to the extent of sustenance fishing. Tourism is being developed at some places though local communities do not benefit much from the revenue generated. The health of corals, as deduced from the literature records since 60s has been on steady decline mainly due to stress from anthropogenic pressures and interference.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
110.	<p><b>Correct answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Environmental science and Ecology</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> A critically endangered- the rare Northern river terrapin (Batagur baska), resident of the Sunderbans is set to get a new home, beginning a slow journey to recovery from a disastrous decline in the wild. It is more threatened than the Bengal tiger, but far less known.</p>
111.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The TFA is the WTO's first-ever multilateral accord that aims to simplify customs regulations for the cross-border movement of goods. It was outcome of WTO's 9th Bali (Indonesia) ministerial package of 2013</li> <li>• The agreement includes provisions for Lowering import tariffs and agricultural subsidies: It will make it easier for developing countries to trade with the developed world in global markets</li> <li>• Abolish hard import quotas: Developed countries would abolish hard import quotas on agricultural products from the developing world and instead would only be allowed to charge tariffs on amount of agricultural imports exceeding specific limits</li> <li>• Reduction in red tape at international borders: It aims to reduce red-tapism to facilitate trade by reforming customs bureaucracies and formalities.</li> </ul>
112.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affairs</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At COP 16 held in Cancun, Parties established the Green Climate Fund (GCF) as an operating entity of the Financial Mechanism of the Convention.</li> <li>• The Fund is governed by the GCF Board and it is accountable to and functions under the guidance of the COP to support projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing country Parties using thematic funding windows.</li> </ul>
113.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>In case of any delay in conducting the election of new President by any reason, the outgoing President continues to hold office until his successor assumes charge.</p> <p>When a vacancy occurs in the office of Vice President by resignation, removal, death or otherwise, then election to fill the vacancy should be held as soon as possible after the occurrence of the vacancy.</p>



Question Number	Explanation
114.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Map based</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Cyprus is located in the Mediterranean Sea.</p>
115.	<p><b>Answer :</b> C</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Polity</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p><b>Explanation :</b></p> <p>Ordinances must be approved by Parliament within six weeks of reassembling or they shall cease to operate. They will also cease to operate in case resolutions disapproving the Ordinance are passed by both the Houses.</p> <p>An Ordinance may relate to any subject that the Parliament has the power to legislate on. Conversely, it has the same limitations as the Parliament to legislate, given the distribution of powers between the Union, State and Concurrent Lists.</p>
116.	<p><b>Answer :</b> C</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Current Affairs</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p><b>Explanation :</b> The Bhopal Declaration that called for “liberalisation of capital for Dalits” was adopted in 2002 during the tenure of Congress leader Digvijaya Singh in Madhya Pradesh.</p>
117.	<p><b>Answer :</b> C</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Defence</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p><b>Explanation :</b> INS Vagli was a Vela-class diesel-electric submarine of the Indian Navy.</p>
118.	<p><b>Answer :</b> A</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Economy</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p><b>Explanation :</b> The six-member MPC, constituted in September 2016, has three persons appointed by the central government while the rest, including the Governor, are from the RBI.</p> <p>Each member of the MPC has one vote and in case the numbers are equal, the governor has the casting vote.</p>
119.	<p><b>Answer :</b> C</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Polity</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p><b>Explanation :</b> Article 17 of the Constitution and the Protection of Civil Rights Act outlaw untouchability in all its forms, but these are legal protections intended for the Scheduled Castes.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
120.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> C  <b>Type:</b> Current Affair  <b>Level:</b> moderate  <b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On the lines of the POCSO e-box for children, the Central government has now launched an online complaint management system called "Sexual Harassment electronic-Box (SHe-Box)" for registering complaints related to sexual harassment at workplace.</li> <li>Currently applicable only for women working in or visiting central government departments, the ministry of women and child development plans to extend to cover private workplaces too.</li> </ul>
121.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> B  <b>Type:</b> Current Affair  <b>Level:</b> moderate  <b>Explanation:</b> Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Act provided for the establishment of Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) at each and every office or branches of the organization employing 10 or more employees, in order to provide a forum for filing complaints to facilitate fast redressal of the grievances pertaining to sexual harassment.</li> <li>It also provided for the establishment of local complaints committee (LCC) at the district level by the Government to investigate and redress complaints of sexual harassment of the unorganized sector or from those establishments where the ICC has not been constituted for the reason being, it having less than 10 employees.</li> </ul>
122.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> D  <b>Type:</b> Current Affair  <b>Level:</b> moderate  <b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and the six states with which ASEAN has existing free trade agreements (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand).</li> <li>RCEP negotiations were formally launched in November 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.</li> <li>The agreement is scheduled to be finalized by the end of 2017.</li> <li>RCEP is viewed as an alternative to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a proposed trade agreement which includes several Asian and American nations but excludes China and India.</li> </ul>
123.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> C  <b>Type:</b> Geography  <b>Level:</b> Easy  <b>Explanation:</b> Coastal landforms are created by waves and include stacks, stumps, caves, arches, bays, coves, beaches and cliffs.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
124.	<p><b>Correct option:</b>D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b>The Union Cabinet approved the “introduction of a New, More Transparent Coal Allocation Policy for Power Sector, 2017-SHAKTI (Scheme for Harnessing and Allocating Koyala (Coal) Transparently in India).</p>
125.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Geography</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Dibang Valley is in Arunachal Pradesh. Hemis Monastery is a Buddhist monastery of Drupka lineage. Salt Valley is in Rupshu region of Ladakh.</p>
126.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Geography</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Keibul Lamjao National Park is in Bishnupur district of Manipur. The Keibul Lamjao, the only floating national park in the world, is home to the last of the brow-antlered deer (<i>Rucervus eldii eldii</i>), one of the most endangered deer in the world.</p>
127.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> General Science</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Arsenicosis or Black foot is caused by exposure over a period of time to Arsenic in drinking water. It may also be due to intake of arsenic via food or air. Kindly note that Itai-itai disease is caused by Cadmium poisoning.</p>
128.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Environmental Science and Ecology</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Nanda Devi National Park is situated in three districts of Uttarakhand (Chamoli in Garhwal, Pithoragarh in Kumaon and Bageshwar). Nanda Devi National Park together with Valley of Flowers is encompassed in the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve. This reserve is part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves since 2004.</p>
129.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Art and culture</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Vimana is a term for the tower above the Garbhagriha or Sanctum sanctorum in a Hindu temple in Dravidian style.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
130.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Codex Alimentarius or "Food Code" is a collection of standards, guidelines and codes of practice adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.</li> <li>• The Commission, also known as CAC, is the central part of the joint FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations)/WHO (World Health Organisation) Food Standards Programme.</li> <li>• It was established by FAO and WHO to protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade.</li> </ul>
131.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Easy</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Constitution 91st Amendment Act:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliament had on January 1, 2004 passed the Constitution 91st Amendment Bill, 2003, to modify Articles 75 and 164 of the Constitution.</li> <li>• The Act provided that under Article 164(1A), the size of the council of ministers in a state should not exceed 15% of the total strength of the assembly.</li> </ul>
132.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Economy</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>When a country faces serious medium-term balance of payments problems, International Monetary Fund assist the country with the adjustment process under its Extended Fund Facility.</p>
133.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Agriculture</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>India is the biggest producer, as well as the largest consumer and importer of pulses, but productivity is low. However, for 2016-17, there is a massive rebound in pulse production while Rabi pulses suggests harvest of 134 lakh tons (108 lakh tons), Kharif output is estimated at 87 lakhs tons (previous year 55 lakh tons) taking the annual total to a humungous 221 lakh tons (164 lakh tons)</p>
134.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> World Geography</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Difficult</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The buran wind blows across eastern Asia, specifically Xinjiang, Siberia, and Kazakhstan. The buran takes two forms: in summer, it is a hot, dry wind, whipping up sandstorms; in winter, it is bitterly cold and often accompanied by blizzards.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
135.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C  <b>Type:</b> Map based  <b>Level:</b> moderate  <b>Explanation:</b>  Sierra is a mountain range in the Western United States, between the Central Valley of California and the Basin and Range Province. It runs 400 miles (640 km) north-to-south, and is approximately 70 miles (110 km) across east-to-west.</p>
136.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A  <b>Type:</b> Geogrpahy  <b>Level:</b> Diffiuct  <b>Explanation:</b>  Kuttanad region in Kerala covering Alappuzha and Kottayam Districts represents India's lowest altitudes.</p>
137.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A  <b>Type:</b> Culture  <b>Level:</b> Difficult  <b>Explanation:</b>  Atharvaveda text includes three primary Upanishads, influential to various schools of Hindu philosophy. These include the Mundaka Upanishad, the Mandukya Upanishad and the Prashna Upanishad.</p>
138.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C  <b>Type:</b> Economic  <b>Level:</b> Easy  <b>Explanation:</b>  Bank rate is the rate of interest which a central bank charges on the long term loans and advances that it extends to commercial banks and other financial intermediaries.</p>
139.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C  <b>Type:</b> Current Affairs  <b>Level:</b> moderate  <b>Explanation:</b>  It was established on 21st September, 1984 at Bangalore in the form of twin institutes namely National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources and National Institute of Animal Genetics and then shifted to Karnal in 1985, the two institutes were merged to function as a single entity in the form of National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR) in 1995. Its objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To conduct systematic surveys to characterise, evaluate and catalogue farm livestock and poultry genetic resources and to establish their National Data Base</li> <li>• To design methodologies for ex situ conservation and in situ management and optimal utilization of farm animal genetic resources</li> <li>• To undertake studies on genetic characterisation using modern biological techniques such as molecular cytogenetic, Immunology, DNA Fingerprinting, RFLP analysis etc</li> <li>• To conduct training programmes as related to evaluation, characterisation and utilisation of animal genetic resources</li> </ul>

Question Number	Explanation
140.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Science</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>China has successfully produced natural gas from methane hydrate, also known as “flammable ice”</p>
141.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Science</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officially known as methane clathrates or hydrates, they are formed at very low temperatures and under high pressure. They can be found in sediments under the ocean floor as well as underneath permafrost on land. Despite the low temperature, these hydrates are flammable.</li> <li>• By lowering the pressure or raising the temperature, the hydrates break down into water and methane – a lot of methane.</li> </ul>
142.	<p><b>Correct option:</b> C</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Current Affair</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Muntra, country's first unmanned tank, rolls out from the Chennai lab</p>
143.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Art and Culture</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Varahamihira was one of the only renowned Indian Astronomer, Mathematician and Astrologer. Varahamihira was born in 499 A.D. into a family of Brahmins settled at Kapittha, a village near Ujjain. He wrote the book Pancha Siddhantika.</p>
144.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Geography</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Chilika Lake is a brackish water lagoon, spread over the Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts of Odisha state of India. It is the largest brackish water lagoon in Asia and stretches.</p>



Question Number	Explanation
145.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Economy</p> <p><b>Type :</b> factual</p> <p>Repo rate is the rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) lends money to commercial banks in the event of any shortfall of funds.</p> <p>In the event of inflation, central banks increase repo rate as this acts as a disincentive for banks to borrow from the central bank. This ultimately reduces the money supply in the economy and thus helps in arresting inflation.</p>
146.	<p><b>Answer :</b> C</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Economy</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p>Market Stabilization scheme (MSS) is a monetary policy intervention by the RBI to withdraw excess liquidity (or money supply) by selling government securities in the economy. The MSS was introduced in April 2004. Main thing about MSS is that it is used to withdraw excess liquidity or money from the system by selling government bonds.</p>
147.	<p><b>Answer :</b> B</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Geography</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p>Mustard is one of India's most important winter crops, which is sown between mid-October and late November.</p>
148.	<p><b>Answer :</b> D</p> <p><b>Topic :</b> Economy</p> <p><b>Type :</b> Factual</p> <p>Bonds can be used as collateral for loans.</p> <p>The interest on Gold Bonds shall be taxable as per the provision of Income Tax Act, 1961 (43 of 1961). The capital gains tax arising on redemption of SGB to an individual has been exempted. The indexation benefits will be provided to long term capital gains arising to any person on transfer of bond.</p> <p>The Bonds will be eligible for Statutory Liquidity Ratio purposes.</p>
149.	<p><b>Answer :</b> C</p> <p>The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) is the apex body constituted in the Ministry of Environment and Forests under 'Rules for Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells 1989', under the Environment Protection Act, 1986..</p>
150.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Geography</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Kachin Hills are located at the extreme northeastern area of the Kachin State of Myanmar and they make a boundary between India and Myanmar.</p>

Question Number	Explanation
151.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Economics</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>The Commission for Agricultural Costs &amp; Prices (CACP) is an attached office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India. It came into existence in January 1965. Currently, the Commission comprises a Chairman, Member Secretary, one Member (Official) and two Members (Non-Official). It is mandated to recommend minimum support prices (MSPs).</p>
152.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> A</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Places in news</p> <p><b>Level:</b> difficult</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Umiam Lake is a reservoir located in the hills 15 km to the North of Shillong in the state of Meghalaya, India. The lake serves as a major tourist attraction for the state of Meghalaya. It is also a popular destination for water sport and adventure facilities. Tourists visit this spot for kayaking, water cycling, scooting and boating.</p>
153.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Art and Culture</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Difficult</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>"Tat Tvam Asi" is a Sanskrit phrase is one of the Mahāvākyas (Grand Pronouncements) in Vedantic Sanatana Dharma. It originally occurs in the Chandogya Upanishad, a Sanskrit text embedded in the Chandogya Brahmana of the Sama Veda of Hinduism.</p>
154.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> D</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Polity</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>The Constitution of India does not guarantee any of the above to the states.</p>
155.	<p><b>Correct Answer:</b> B</p> <p><b>Type:</b> General Science</p> <p><b>Level:</b> moderate</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An effective vaccine exists for hepatitis B. Whereas hepatitis C has no vaccines</li> <li>• Hepatitis is often symptom-free, but types B and C can trigger liver cirrhosis and cancer if untreated.</li> <li>• Hepatitis B — which is spread through bodily fluids such as blood and semen</li> <li>• Hepatitis C, primarily spread through blood. Most commonly spread through unsafe injections, notably among drug users</li> </ul>

Question Number	Explanation
156.	<p><b><u>Correct Answer:</u></b> C</p> <p><b><u>Type:</u></b> Environmental Science and Ecology</p> <p><b><u>Level:</u></b> Moderate</p> <p><b><u>Explanation:</u></b></p> <p>Following are the advantages of neem coated urea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neem coating leads to more gradual release of urea, helping plants gain more nutrient and resulting in higher yields.</li> <li>• Lower underground water contamination due to leaching of urea.</li> <li>• Neem serves as a natural insecticide Collection of neem seeds is needed for manufacturing of neem coated urea. This would generate employments in rural areas. Neem-coating will help check heavily subsidized urea's pilferage to chemical industry and other uses such as making of adulterated milk.</li> </ul>
157.	<p><b><u>Correct Answer:</u></b> D</p> <p><b><u>Type:</u></b> Schemes</p> <p><b><u>Level:</u></b> Moderate</p> <p><b><u>Explanation:</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Mission Kakatiya:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flagship programme of Telangana State government</li> <li>• <b><u>Aim:</u></b> desilting and restoration of tanks in rural areas.</li> <li>• Key improvement: Research by groundwater department found a significant rise in water table levels wherever tanks were restored.</li> </ul>

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