

UPSC MONTHLY MAGAZINE

JUNE - 2018



Liberalized Remittance Scheme (LRS)

RBI tightens reporting norms and alters 'relative' definition

Dam Safety Bill, 2018

Surveillance, Inspection, Operation and Maintenance of dams

SCO Qingdao Summit

Support for Globalization and fight against Protectionism

Organ Donation

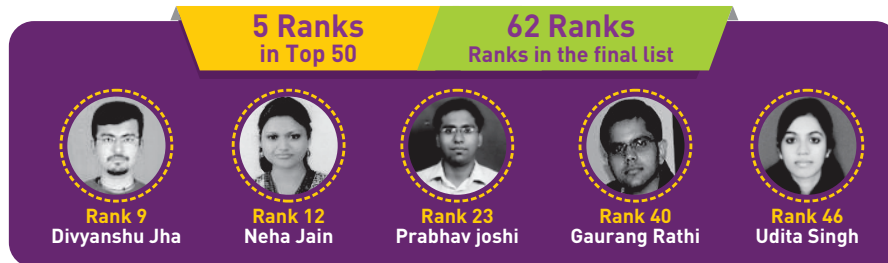
Laws, Flaws and Changes

Government Opens Doors to Lateral Entry

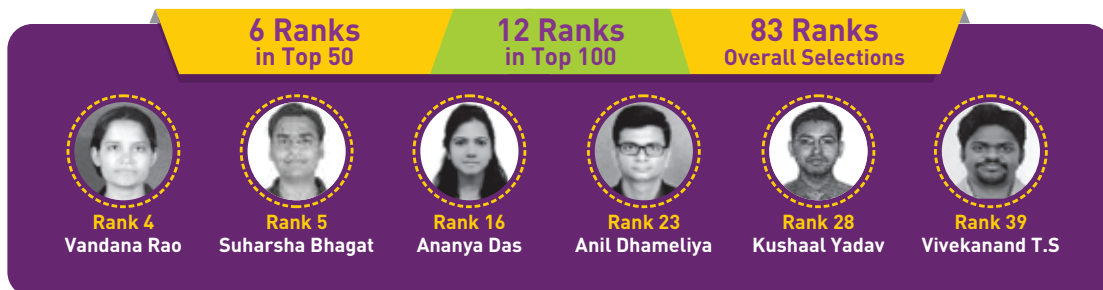
Promotion of Specialists or Encouragement to Spoils System?

RESULTS

Incredible results in IAS 2013



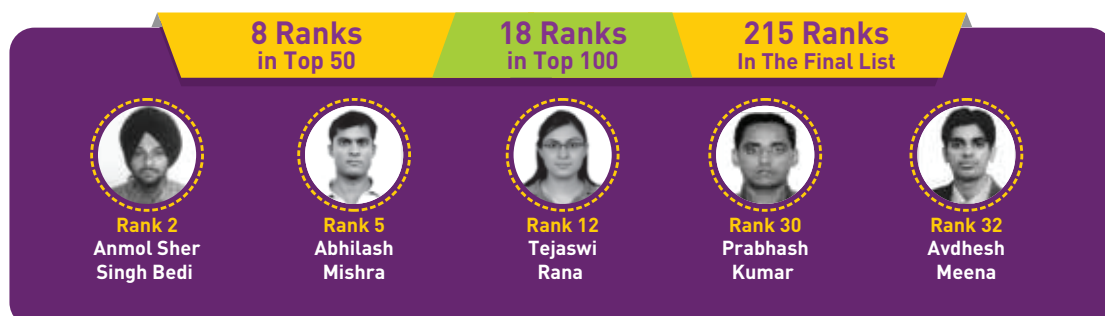
We broke our past record in IAS 2014



We did it again in IAS 2015



And we've done it yet again in IAS 2016



And we've done it yet again in IAS 2017

**5 Ranks
in Top 10**

**34 Ranks
in Top 100**

**236 Ranks
In The Final List**



Rank 3
Sachin
Gupta



Rank 6
Koya sree
Harsha



Rank 8
Anubhav
Singh



Rank 9
Saumya
Sharma



Rank 10
Abhishek
Surana



Ashima
Mittal
Rank-12



Abhijeet
Sinha
Rank-19



Varjeet
Walia
Rank-21



Keerthi
Vasan V
Rank-29



Utsav
Gautam
Rank-33



Gaurav
Kumar
Rank-34



Abhilash
Baranwal
Rank-44



Vikramaditya
Singh Malik
Rank-48



Vishal
Mishra
Rank-49



Sambit
Mishra
Rank-51



Bodke
Digvijay Govind
Rank-54



Akshat
Kaushal
Rank-55



Jagdish
Chelani
Rank-57



Hirani
Adityavikram
Rank-60



Swapneel
Paul
Rank-64



Jyoti
Sharma
Rank-75



Pushp
Lata
Rank-80



Amol
Srivastava
Rank-83



Prateek
Jain
Rank-86



Amilineni
Bhargav Teja
Rank-88



Sangh
Priy
Rank-92



Rahul
Shinde
Rank-95



Kathawate
Mayur Ashok
Rank-96



Vaibhava
Srivastava
Rank-98



Videh
Khare
Rank-99



Plash
Bansal
Rank-112



Shilpa
Singh
Rank-116



Deepanshu
Khurana
Rank-120



Saurabh
Sabhlok
Rank-124



Abhimanyu
Manglik
Rank-128



Akash
Bansal
Rank-130



Abinash
Kumar
Rank-139



Sameer
Saurabh
Rank-142



Jyeshtha
Maitrei
Rank-156



Aaditya
Mishra
Rank-158



Ram
Prakash
Rank-162



Mainak
Ghosh
Rank-183



Archi Virendra
Chandak
Rank-184



Ankit
Yadav
Rank-191



Saurabh
Gupta
Rank-192



Kritika
Jain
Rank-197



Nahar Pranay
Prakash
Rank-199



Siddhant
Jain
Rank-201



Shubham
Agarwal
Rank-202



Nikita
Khattar
Rank-208



Kruti M
Patel
Rank-218



Smit
Lodha
Rank-219



Deepesh
Kedia
Rank-221



Ankit
Jain
Rank-222



Saurabh
Baranwal
Rank-235



Rajat R
Chaturvedi
Rank-237



Harsh
Singh
Rank-244



Ghuge Rohan
Bapurao
Rank-249



Bharat
Mittal
Rank-256



Dinesh Kumar
Yadav
Rank-257



Govind
Mohan
Rank-260



Shanu
Dimri
Rank-270



Shiv Narayan
Sharma
Rank-278



Sanjay
Kumar
Rank-279



Nikhil
Singh
Rank-280



Tuhin
Sinha
Rank-281



Vijaypal
Bishnoi
Rank-290



Shubhank
Mishra
Rank-291



Shakti Mohan
Avasthy
Rank-296



Lavanya
Gupta
Rank-298



Jagtap Gagdish
Shankar
Rank-304



Chetan
Sharma
Rank-305



Amandeep
Dhanoa
Rank-311



Budumajji Satya
Prasad
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Aman
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Mohd Nooh
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Apurv
Chauhan
Rank-328

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POLITY

1. Aadhaar data for crime probe cannot be shared- UIDAI

- The National Crime Records Bureau made a case for limited Aadhaar data access for the police to crack crimes, the UIDAI asserted that use of Aadhaar biometric data for criminal investigation is not allowed under the Aadhaar Act.
- Aadhaar data has never been shared with any crime investigating agency.
- The “very limited” exception to this, is allowed under Section 33 of the Aadhaar Act, which permits use of or access to biometric data in cases involving national security, only after pre-authorisation by an oversight committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary.

2. Democracy and why we treasure it?

Peace, Freedom, Well-Being

- The attractiveness of democracy lies in its ability to give us a peaceful transfer of power.
 - * It frees us from the bloody battles and gory coup d'états through which wealthy and powerful super elites conventionally settled their conflicts.
 - * It is a non-violent substitute for the marauding warrior ethic.
- Second, it eliminates the most basic fears and anxieties to which social and political life is prone — the fear of being killed, beaten or humiliated for doing or saying what we want or for challenging the powerful.
 - * It promotes the maximum possible openness in our lives — in how and what we think, speak, behave.
- Third, no other system — a monarchy, dictatorship or an empire — takes seriously a people's own view of its needs, wants and goals, giving the best possible shot at satisfying them.

Difficulties of democracy

- A culture of equality is believed to be crucial to democracy but India inherited a social structure replete with hardened gender and caste inequalities.
- A democracy's success depends on fairly high levels of growth, but India's rate of growth in 1947 was virtually zero, with 65-70% of its population trapped in extreme poverty.
- Successful democracies need a fair degree of cultural, linguistic and religious homogeneity but India has deep cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.
- Most Western democracies have high levels of literacy and education but a substantial section of the Indian population was illiterate, with virtually no formal education.

How democracy has to be transformed?

- The colonial state apparatus inherited by us was insensitive to the needs of the people, working almost entirely for the British Empire.
 - * A number of colonial laws were repressive and excessively regulatory. Their primary objective was the creation of a 'nuisance-free' public order, controlling a defiant population and exploiting them for the benefit of the empire.
 - * The colonial state was built to resist democracy, not facilitate it. This repressive apparatus, a permanent threat to our democracy, always comes in handy for authoritarian officials/leaders, as it did during the Emergency.
 - * So, democracy needs a competent state, but one that is tamed to work for it.
- Second, to be democratic, the state must be relatively independent of classes and ethnic groups in society. No class or ethnic group (religious or linguistic community) must completely control state power or use it to push its own agenda in its entirety.
 - * Therefore, each class and ethnic group must learn to live with this fact — that all its objectives cannot be met.
 - * This realization occurs either when each class or ethnic group has enough power to prevent inter-group domination or when, for the sake of a more inclusive moral vision, every group forsakes part of its interests and achieves a principled compromise.
 - * By curbing the inclination to impose our agenda on others, and instead arriving at negotiated settlements, we produce stable democracies. This precisely is achieved in the Indian Constitution.

Conclusion

- Any attempt to subordinate the state to the whims of a powerful individual or to use it disproportionately in favour of one group disturbs this delicate consensus, destabilises Indian democracy and wrecks the collective future of its citizens.
- The nasty experience of our own Emergency and the unsavoury condition of societies plagued with attempts at domination (by the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka or Sunnis in Pakistan) teach us to treasure democracy.
- Forgetting this lesson is disastrous.

3. Government opens doors to lateral entry

Context

- NDA government has invited “outstanding individuals” to join the government at the joint secretary level at the Centre to bring in expertise from the private sector individuals and infuse talent into the country's bureaucracy,

Details

- As per the notification, the eligibility criteria includes "Individuals working at comparable levels in Private Sector Companies, Consultancy Organisations, International/Multinational Organisations with a minimum of 15 years' experience" besides those working in central public sector undertakings, autonomous bodies, statutory organisations, research bodies and universities.
- The recruitment will be on contract basis for three to five years.
- The intake will be made in 10 departments initially but will expand to other categories in the second phase.
- The departments for which applicants are sought include Revenue, Financial Services, Economic Affairs, Commerce and Civil Aviation, Agriculture and Cooperation, Highways and Shipping and Environment and Climate Change.
- The notification specifies a minimum age of 40 years and minimum qualification of graduation from a recognised university or institute while higher qualification will be an added advantage.

Examples from the Past

- former PM of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh; even noted personalities like Mr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia was inducted as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce.

Why do we need lateral entry?

- It is important to note that administration is becoming more and more complex now. Gone are the days when it was a very simple and general administration-essentially maintenance of peace and order. Now, the Government is involved in the development of all sectors of economy, society, and polity. Therefore, new knowledge, new talent is required.
- Further, depending on the convenience of the political masters, he/she gets transferred. Whereas, a specialist, is either useful to the job relating to that specialization or he/she is not useful at all. Thus, to transfer him/her is difficult.
- the ministries chosen have no doubt been carefully selected. This is because in some of these ministries, the complexities today within the country and within the international system are becoming so many and so intricate that it does require domain knowledge. Thus, it would be a good thing to get domain knowledge within the workings of government.

Lateral entry brings in expertise and efficiency

- It is believed that this will bring in talent, customer focus, and that this will bring in subject matter experts.
- It is believed that this step will enthuse a number of people who are aspiring to work in the public sector, to get a hands-on chance to do so

- These people could have worked in large businesses, or an NGO, and that this step would give such people a chance to work in the areas of public policy and will bring a customer focus which is so direly needed in the Government.

Issue Area

- UPSC is a constitutional body meant for this purpose. Thus, if UPSC does the selection, it will carry conviction.
- This proposal is a contract for 3-5 years. (i.e. 3 years which is extendable to 5 years). A better proposal would have been a minimum tenure of 5 years that is extendable by another 5 years.
- It would be better if people coming in from the private sector, come in as an advisor. Even Montek Singh Ahluwalia and Dr. Manmohan Singh came in as advisors initially. A Joint Secretary's work is mainly secretarial in nature; thus people who have not had a background in the Government (which spans right down from the village panchayat level till the Rashtrapati Bhavan), not being aware of the various wings of the Government and how they collaborate and cooperate, then he/she would naturally get bogged down.
- Thus, it would be more useful if he/she comes in as an advisor and stays for 5 years- 10 years. This would be a better way of utilizing someone who has domain knowledge.
- The selection process has to be manifestly politically neutral. This is because, if the suspicion arises that it is not politically neutral, then the entire process will be stigmatized.
- Anyone who is taken in will have to be given a course or some kind of a training capsule to make him/her aware of the different functions of government and how a government functions.
- When the Joint Secretary prepares a note, he/she consults all the concerned ministries of the government of India; further, he consults all the state governments who might be affected by the issue which is being discussed, and then he/she has to pursue those matters. Whereas, a private sector executive is used to a different milieu altogether. Therefore, he/she may even get frustrated in the government sector, and then after three years, he/she may want to go back.

What would be the biggest challenge towards lateral entry, and how do we ensure transparency?

- Whoever comes into the public sector from the private sector would need to have public sector values. Certain private sector firms have a very strict anti-corruption, transparent and good risk-assessment programmes and learnings. In some cases, one has to compulsorily complete almost 40 hours of learning.
- Thus a capsulated training program for entrants into the public sector from the private world would help them understand the nature of work in Government.

Way Ahead:

- Therefore, it should be that the person must think of this lateral entry as a career. This can happen if the person concerned comes into the government for a minimum period of 10 years. It is then that he would understand the government, he/she would be able to contribute to the workings of the government and towards policy making.
- Even a possible introduction of a system of reservations that may arise in this scheme would have to be skillfully managed. But one remains hopeful that one can find enough people from the private sector from all sections of society who would fit the bill.
- In conclusion, we are now perhaps exploring a new bureaucratic structure.

4. Legal Information Management and Briefing System

- It is a Ministry of Law and Justice initiative.
- The idea is to reduce government litigation and Make government litigation more efficient
- At the moment, this is about civil cases not criminal cases and applicable to Union government and not state Governments

Advantages

- LIMBS helps in monitoring court cases in a transparent manner
- LIMBS is very user-friendly and capable of producing various sets of customized MIS reports which are required for effective monitoring. It also provides timely reminder alerts through SMS.
- LIMBS provides a low cost web technology access to all the stakeholders involved in a court case in a coordinated way whereby it provides inputs which are available seamlessly on 24x7 basis as per the defined access rules.
- LIMBS will help in organizing otherwise scattered Information at one single database and also create a professional base available for expert advice
- LIMBS aims to reduce financial burden, save time and bring efficiency in the working of various Departments of a Ministry. Hence those Ministries, which are yet to adopt LIMBS model into their system, should also take the initiative in adopting the same to bring more coordinated approach in working of the Government.

5. Failure of States to implement the provisions of the 74th Amendment

- The "implementation failure" tends to focus on how local governments are financially constrained and do not have the administrative capacity to carry out its functions. These institutions of urban local governments are actively disempowered and depoliticized as an institution.

Issue Area in Local Govt

- First, elected representatives at the city-level are rendered powerless by making them subservient to the State government.
 - * In most municipal corporations, while the mayor is the ceremonial head, the executive powers of the corporation are vested with the State government-appointed commissioner.
 - * This disjuncture in municipal governance has been exploited by State governments to ensure that no city-level politician challenges their control over a city.
- Municipal corporations are further denied their political role by the continued operation of various parastatal agencies created by the State government.
 - * These may take the form of urban development authorities (which build infrastructure) and public corporations (which provide services such as water, electricity and transportation).
 - * These agencies, which function with a certain autonomy, are accountable only to the State government, not the local government.
 - * Even urban planning and land-use regulation (globally a quintessential local government function) is with State government-controlled development authorities.
- Central government programmes such as the Smart Cities Mission seek to ring fence projects from local government..
 - * This programme mandates the creation of special purpose vehicles (SPVs) for Smart Cities which will have "operational independence and autonomy in decision making and mission implementation".
 - * It further "encourages" a State government to delegate "the decision-making powers available to the ULB (urban local body) under the municipal act/government rules to the Chief Executive Officer of the SPV".
- The creation of parallel institutions that disempower the elected local government shows how higher levels of government distrust local politics and craftily retain control of a city's reins..
 - * Even for performing functions that are within its purview (such as levying local taxes or undertaking civic projects above a certain budget) the local government requires State government permissions.
 - * Hence, municipalities are not yet autonomous units that can be genuinely called as the "third tier" of government in India's federal system. Even after the 73rd and 74th Amendments, India has effectively only two levels of government — Union and State.

What has the govt done to keep them weak?

- The functions listed under the 12th Schedule — which a State government is expected to devolve to the local government — do not include essential civic issues such as urban transportation, housing or urban commons.
- The 74th Amendment also contains an industrial township exception whereby a municipality need not be constituted in areas which are declared as industrial townships.
- These provisions have been employed by State governments to keep local governments weak.

Way forward

- Unlike the 73rd Amendment which provides for three levels of panchayats (village, taluk, and district levels), power in urban areas is concentrated in a single municipal body (whether it is a municipal corporation, municipal council or town panchayat).
- Now with Indian cities growing exponentially over the last 25 years, with some crossing the 10 million population mark, we must rethink the present model of urban governance that vests power in a singular municipality.
- So, apart from the urban governance reforms taking multiple shapes, they must be foregrounded in the political empowerment of local government that furthers local democratic accountability.

6. Elections of Deputy Chairman of the Upper House (Rajya Sabha)

(1) The election of a Deputy Chairman shall be held on such date as the Chairman may fix and the Secretary-General shall send to every member notice of this date

(2) At any time before noon on the day- preceding the date so fixed, any member may give notice in writing addressed to the Secretary-General of a motion that another member be chosen as the Deputy Chairman of the Council, and the notice shall be seconded by a third member and shall be accompanied by a statement by the member whose name is proposed in the notice that he is willing to serve as Deputy Chairman if elected:

(3) Provided that a member shall not propose or second more than one motion

(4) The motions which have been moved and duly seconded shall be put one by one in the order in which they have been moved and decided if necessary by division. If any motion is carried, the person presiding shall, without putting later motions, declare that the member proposed in the motion which has been carried, has been chosen as the Deputy Chairman of the Council.

Panel of Vice-Chairmen

- 1) The Chairman shall, from time to time, nominate from amongst the members of the Council a panel of not more than six Vice-Chairmen, any one of whom may preside over the Council in the absence of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman when so requested by the Chairman, or in his absence, by the Deputy Chairman.
- 2) A Vice-Chairman nominated under sub-rule (1) shall hold office until a new panel of Vice-Chairmen is nominated.

7. Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir**Difference between Jammu and other states of India**

- In all states of India, the government's failure results in President's rule. The process is slightly more nuanced in Jammu and Kashmir where not the President's but governor's rule is imposed.
- Under the governor's rule, the state assembly is either kept in suspended animation or dissolved.
 - * If it is not possible to restore the state machinery before the expiry of the six-month period, the provision is extended.

Details

- The Constitution of Jammu & Kashmir (Sixth Amendment) Act 1965 amended the State Constitution and replaced 'Sadri Riyasat' by Governor.
- The Governor shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal
- Under the provision of Section 92 of the Jammu and Kashmir constitution, governor's rule is imposed for six months, but only after the consent of the President of India.

Suspended Animation

- The assembly in suspended animation means that MLAs don't lose their seats. What they lose is the legislative power to make laws. So they are entitled to their salary and allowances since suspended animation means the assembly is suspended, not the MLAs.
- An assembly is kept in suspended animation only if the governor feels that there is possibility of government formation in the near future. If that doesn't happen, he can recommend dissolution of assembly, in which case MLAs cease to be MLAs.

Incidents from the past

- The governor's rule was imposed on the state for the first time in March 1977, when the Congress withdrew support to National Conference (NC) government led by the late Sheikh Abdullah.

8. Tihar jail to get recording studio

- Inmates of Tihar jail will now have their own recording studio and the inmates will become radio jockeys

- The jail will have lot of dignitaries visiting for various events. At the studio, the inmates can record a short interview with them and then it can be broadcast in other jails

Others

- J's is a unique brand with a wide range of products which are manufactured by the prison inmates in Tihar Jail Factory
- 'Wah-O' a perfume brand was launched by Tihar jail
- Tihar apparel to be worn by movie stars
- Aashayein (Rajasthan): The Jail Shop-> departmental store selling handicrafts and paintings

9. Agnihotri committee- Rules for the Rajya Sabha Members

Context

- Vice President Venkaiah Naidu appointed a two-member committee to make recommendations for revising the rules of the Upper House.
- V K Agnihotri, former secretary general of the House, is heading the committee

What was the Necessity?

- Both Houses of Parliament have their own rules of procedure. These rules govern every detail of how the Houses function on a daily basis.
- They determine MPs' participation in parliamentary proceedings while making laws, passing budgets, questioning the government and representing us.
- These rules are the bulwark of our parliamentary democracy. For Parliament to be effective in its role, these rules require regular updating and strengthening.

Constitutional Mandate

- The Constitution, through Article 118(1), gives the two Houses of Parliament the power to make rules to regulate their functioning.
- It was not until 1964 that the Rajya Sabha made its own rules under Article 118(1). And it is the 1964 rules that have been amended over the years and currently govern the functioning of the Upper House.
 - * However, these rules were not made from the ground up. The old framework of 1952 was used as a base and supplemented.
 - * In some cases, the provisions were merely carried forward and continue to exist even today.

What should be the focus of Committee while formulating rules?

- Parliament is more complex and technical than ever. With increase in complexity the committee's suggestions for strengthening deliberations in the House would be crucial

- The two Houses of Parliament meet mostly for transacting government business. The committee will have to balance completion of government business with discussions raised by other political parties.
- The existing mechanisms (like Question Hour) for securing the government's accountability to Parliament have lost their edge. The committee will have to suggest measures for completely overhauling these mechanisms.
- Disruptions of parliamentary proceedings has become a routine affair. The committee will have the difficult task of suggesting solutions for protecting the sanctity of parliamentary proceedings.
- There should be a periodic review of the rules of procedure of both Houses.

10. Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS)

- It is developed by Election Commission of India with the help of C-DAC, for the use of service voters. It is a fully secured system.

Current practice

- Currently, physical ballot papers are sent to the service voters and the casted votes are received back through post. This, at times is proving time consuming and causing delay.
- Keeping this limitation in mind, the ECI has entrusted Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), a government undertaking working under the aegis of MeitY, Government of India to undertake development of one-way postal ballot delivery through electronic medium system.

Details

- The service voters will be receiving the downloadable postal ballot through two-layer secure electronic medium i.e.
 - * secured 'One Time Password (OTP)' for downloading the encrypted files sent through mobile/e-mail and
 - * The system generated unique "Personal Identification Number" (PIN) for decrypting and printing each and every single postal ballot to the individual service voter/ authorized person.
- After marking his vote in the blank postal ballot, the same would be returned to the concerned Returning Officer by post as in the present system of postal ballot.
- Service voters consist of armed police forces of the central government, other forces subject to the provisions of the Army Act, armed forces of a state serving outside that state, and those employed under the Government of India in a post outside India.

Significance

- ECI is always committed to conduct all-inclusive elections and "No voter to be left behind"

- It ensures higher level of participation and inclusiveness of the voters
- It would considerably cut short the delay in receipt of the marked postal ballot by the Returning Officers on or before the date fixed for the counting of votes.

11. IAS officers to be judged on integrity

Context

- Top IAS officers at the level of secretary and additional secretary will soon be assessed on their attitude towards weaker sections of the society, among other qualities, according to draft appraisal forms finalised by the Personnel Ministry.

Details

- Besides this, their annual performance appraisal report will carry details on their ability to take timely and effective decision, especially in complex, ambiguous and critical situations.
- They will be asked to comment in not more than 50 words on their attributes like 'ownership of responsibilities with courage to stand up for what is right, innovativeness, track record of delivery and ability to lead a team with coordination and collaboration'
- The Personnel Ministry has written to chief secretaries of all the state governments and the Union territories suggesting changes in the annual performance appraisal forms for the officers of Indian Administrative Service (IAS).
- All the IAS officers, except at the level of secretary and additional secretary, will be appraised on their "integrity" in general.
- Those at the secretary and additional secretary level will be assessed on both "financial integrity" and "moral integrity",
- All bureaucrats will have to indicate at least four domain assignments like social development, internal affairs and defence, industry and trade, public finance and financial management, natural resource management and personnel and general administration, governance reforms and regulatory system, among others.
- Barring those at the top levels, all other IAS officers will have to send an updated CV, including details of additional qualifications acquired/training programmes attended/ publications/special assignments undertaken, in a prescribed proforma, to the cadre controlling authority once in five years so that the records remain updated.

The changes have been proposed in two forms --

- form one, which is meant for all the IAS officers except those at the level of secretary and additional secretary
- Form two, which will be for secretary and additional secretary or equivalent officers.

12. Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)

- It is an international comparative study of the state of development and the governance of political and economic change processes in 129 developing and transition countries.
- The BTI has been presented every two years since 2006 by the Bertelsmann Stiftung .
- The index measures and compares the quality of governmental action internationally with self-collected data and analyzes successes and regressions on the way to constitutional democracy and socially flanked market economy

Status and Management Index

- The status index is composed of the research dimensions Political and Economic Transformation.
 - * Political transformation includes essential features of a democratic state order
 - * Economic transformation considered in addition to the classic market characteristics such as economic performance, market - and competition rules ,Monetary and price stability
- The Management Index assesses the extent to which policy makers can steer and promote the transformation process. It is composed of the criteria controllability, resource efficiency, consensus building and international cooperation.

Significance

- The Bertelsmann Transformation Index is used by governments around the world to assess partner countries
- It is used by international organizations to compile their own analyzes

Transformation Index 2018

- It has rated 58 out of 129 developing nations as autocracies.
- On Bangladesh, the report says, "Due to the worsened quality of elections, the formerly fifth largest democracy is classified as an autocracy again.
- These developments are worrying for citizens because corruption, social exclusion, and barriers to fair economic competition continue to be more prevalent in autocracies."

ECONOMY

1. Asian Premium

- Asian Premium is the extra charge being collected by OPEC countries from Asian countries when selling oil
- The system penalized Asian countries while subsidizing the rich Western countries – the US and European nations.

2. Compact2025

- Compact2025 is an initiative for ending hunger and undernutrition by 2025. It brings stakeholders together to set priorities, innovate and learn, fine-tune actions, build on successes, and share lessons to accelerate progress.
- The Compact2025 objective of ending hunger and undernutrition is fully consistent with and supportive of SDG 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture) and cuts across many others (e.g. Goals 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere, and Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages).
- Compact2025 will contribute towards the tracking of the SDG hunger and poverty goals by designing robust SDG Monitoring & Evaluation systems

3. Consumer Confidence Survey

- It is released by RBI
- The survey aims at capturing subjective assessments of around 5,400 respondents across 6 metropolitan cities viz., Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai and New Delhi.
- The results of this Survey are being used by Reserve Bank as one of the important inputs for monetary policy formulation.
- The survey seeks responses on questions pertaining to economic conditions, household circumstances, income & spending, perceptions on prices, employment prospects, outlays for major purchases such as motor vehicle, house, durable goods etc

4. Cess collected for construction workers too low for their welfare

Context

- National Campaign Committee for Central Legislation on Construction Labour (NCC-CL) which is fighting for workers' rights warns that the cess collected from construction companies, which is meant to pay for such workers' welfare, is abysmally low.
- It says that the average amount being collected per worker per year is only ₹477.10.

What does the law say?

- According to the Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Cess Act, 1996, a 1% cess is to be levied and collected on all types of construction activities, whether by government, PSUs or private players.

Details

- According to calculations by the NCC-CL using data from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) as well as affidavits filed by the Centre and States
- only four States have collected more than ₹2,000 per worker per year.
- More than 20 States have collected less than ₹1,000.

Rankings

- Among major States, only Karnataka, Maharashtra and Haryana collected cess more than ₹1,000 for each worker per year
- The worst performers are Manipur (₹113.86), Jharkhand (₹134.82) and Tamil Nadu (₹135.84).
- States with the largest number of construction workers according to the NCC-CL are: Uttar Pradesh with 1.21 crore, Rajasthan with more than 73 lakh and Tamil Nadu with 59 lakh.
- Large states with low levels of registration include Himachal Pradesh (4%), Assam (10%) and Maharashtra (14%).

Model welfare scheme

- Labour Ministry's model welfare scheme includes pension, health and maternity benefits, life and disability insurance, education scholarships, skill development and housing benefits.
- It will come into reality after feedback from all stakeholders, currently it is in drafting stage.

5. Fortified rice will be distributed through PDS

- The government will provide fortified rice (enriched with essential vitamins and minerals) to all the poor under National Food Security Act (NFSA) across the country, which would cost about Rs 12,000 to Rs 14,000 crore annually.
- To begin with the scheme is likely to cover the 115 'aspirational' districts across the country.
- Providing fortified rice is being seen as a move in that direction considering that majority of these districts are primarily rice consuming ones.

Fortification

- It is the practice of deliberately increasing the content of an essential micronutrient, i.e. vitamins and minerals (including trace elements) in a food, so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health.
- Rice can be fortified by adding a micronutrient powder to the rice that adheres to the grains or spraying of the surface of ordinary rice grains in several layers with a vitamin and mineral mix to form a protective coating

WHO recommendations

- Fortification of rice with iron is recommended as a public health strategy to improve the iron status of populations, in settings where rice is a staple food

6. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programme

- The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), instituted in 1971 under the aegis of UNCTAD, has contributed over the years to creating an enabling trading environment for developing countries.
- The objective of UNCTAD's support on GSP and other preferential arrangements is to help developing countries - particularly LDCs - to increase utilization of GSP and other trade preferences and in turn promote productive capacity development and increased trade.
- Such support includes raising awareness and enhancing understanding among exporters and government officials in beneficiary countries of the trading opportunities available under the schemes; strengthening understanding of technical and administrative regulations and laws governing preferential market access, particularly rules of origin; and disseminating relevant information for users of GSP and other preferential schemes.

Context

- India to defend GSP benefits at USTR
- India is expected to challenge charges levelled against it by the U.S dairy and medical devices industries at a hearing before the United States Trade Representative (USTR) office and defend its eligibility for benefits under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programme.

USA's Point of View

- A self-initiated review by the USTR focuses on whether India is meeting the US criteria for a GSP beneficiary country and particularly if India provides equitable and reasonable market access to products from the US.
- A predominant share of GSP beneficiary items exported from India are intermediaries and semi-manufactured goods, he said provision of GSP benefits to these intermediary products enables availability of cost effective and price competitive inputs to the US downstream industry.

- So, USTR has accepted two petitions related to the same criterion. The petitions filed by the US dairy industry and the US medical device industry requested a review of India's GSP benefits, given India's alleged trade barriers affecting US exports in these sectors

India's Point of View

- In respect of export of dairy products from the US to India, India has explained that its position on dairy products sourced from animals which have consumed feeds containing internal organs, blood meat etc., is based on religious, cultural and moral grounds

Issues

- A withdrawal of the GSP benefits to India would be discriminatory and detrimental to the development, finance and trade needs of India

7. Liberalized Remittance Scheme (LRS)

LRS is a facility provided by the RBI for all resident individuals including minors to freely remit upto a certain amount in terms of US Dollar for current and capital account purposes or a combination of both.

- The remittance limit is set for a financial year.
- Regulations for the scheme are provided under the FEMA Act 1999.
- Under LRS, remittances can be made for overseas education, travel, medical treatment, apart from maintenance of relatives living abroad, gifting and donations
- The money can be remitted for the purchase of shares and property as well.

What is the limit of money availed for making private visit abroad?

- For private visits abroad, other than to Nepal and Bhutan, any resident can avail foreign exchange up to an aggregate amount of USD 2,50,000, from an Authorised Dealer or FFMC (Full Fledged Money Changer), during a financial year.
- This is irrespective of the number of visits undertaken during the year.

How it operates?

The LRS was launched in 2004 and is updated with increasing or decreasing the limit for remittances as well as the purposes for which remittances is to be made.

- When the country has sufficient foreign exchange reserve and the rupee is stable, the RBI allows higher remittances.
- On the other hand, when the country is facing capital outflows, RBI is coming out with restricted or reduced remittance amount.

LRS rules specify certain restrictions

- Remittances can't be used for trading on the foreign exchange markets, margin or margin calls to overseas exchanges and counterparties and the purchase of Foreign Currency Convertible Bonds issued by Indian companies abroad.
- Similarly, sending money to certain countries and entities is also barred. Individuals are not allowed to send money to countries identified as 'non cooperative jurisdictions' by the Financial Action Task Force.
- Remittances are also prohibited to entities identified as posing terrorist risks.

RBI tightens reporting norms for Liberalised Remittance Scheme

- RBI will now put in place a system whereby banks will have to report individual transactions under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) on a daily basis to ensure that the individual remitter does not breach the limit of remitting \$250,000 a year through transactions with multiple banks.
- With the objective of improved monitoring and ensuring compliance with the LRS ceilings, it has been decided to put in place a system for daily reporting of individual transactions by banks

Current status

- Currently, transactions under LRS are being permitted by banks based on the declaration made by the remitter.
- As such, it is difficult for banks to monitor that a remitter has not breached the limit by approaching multiple banks
- Although the rules stipulate that the remittance be done through only one bank, there is a tendency to use multiple banks to use this facility and a possible breach of rules catches the regulator's attention after a long lag and makes it difficult for them to penalize any breach of the LRS limit

RBI alters 'relative' definition to check outward remittances**Context**

- Concerned over funds sent abroad under the 'maintenance of close relative' category of the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has narrowed the definition of relatives to check the flow of funds.

New Rules

- Funds under the 'maintenance of close relative' category can be sent only to immediate relatives such as parents, spouses, children and their spouses.
- This has brought about by defining 'relatives' under the Companies Act, 2013 instead of the same act of 1956

Relatively stricter

Funds under the 'close relatives' category can now be sent only to kin such as parents, spouses, children and their spouses. Earlier, the term had multifarious interpretations

Year	Outward remittances*	Maintenance of close relatives
FY14	1,093.9	173.9
FY15	1,325.8	174.4
FY16	4,642.6	1,372.1
FY17	8,170.7	2,169.5
FY18	11,333.6	2,937.4

All figures in \$million

* Under LRS



Source: RBI

Issue Area

- The facility [maintenance of relatives] under the Liberalised Remittances Scheme is used for commercial purposes which is not its objective

So, this move Aims to prevent misuse of facility

8. Matthew Effect

- Also known as accumulated advantage, this refers to a social phenomenon wherein people who already possess high economic or social status are likely to continue maintaining their high status over time.
- By the same logic, people with low economic or social status struggle to improve their condition over time.
- It is explained by the fact that people's current status endows them either with an advantage that helps them progress or a disadvantage that impedes their progress.
- The Matthew effect is often summarized using the adage "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer".
- It was proposed by American sociologist Robert K. Merton in 1968.

9. Rail MADAD (Mobile Application for Desired Assistance During travel)

- It is an App to expedite & streamline passenger grievance redressal
- It relays real time feedback to passengers on the status of redressal of their complaints- the passenger gets an instant ID through SMS on registration of complaint followed by a customized SMS communicating the action taken thereon by Railway.
- RPGRAMS integrates all the passenger complaints received from multiple modes (14 offline/online modes currently) on a single platform, analyzes them holistically and generates various types of management reports which enable the top management to continuously monitor the pace of grievance redressal as well as evaluate the performance of field units/ trains/ stations on various parameters viz cleanliness, catering, amenities etc.

- It also identifies weak/deficient areas and laggard trains/stations for undertaking focussed corrective actions.

10. **RBI hikes repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25%**

- The six-member monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) increased the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25%.
- The MPC arrived at the unanimous decision as the outlook for inflation had become 'uncertain' following a surge in international crude oil prices.

Impact

- The central bank has increased the inflation projection, it has maintained the 'neutral' stance for monetary policy, meaning interest rates can move either way

11. **Unorganized Workers Identification Number (UWIN)**

Context

- The Union Ministry of Labour has called for tenders to design, develop and run the new UWIN — Unorganised Workers Identification Number — Platform.

What was the need?

- There is no centralized national database of unorganized workers in India.
- Accordingly, it has been decided to create a national platform for unorganized workers.
- A proposal to issue a Unique ID UWIN and allotment of an Aadhaar seeded Identification number to them without issuing any smart card
 - * Through the UWIN card, government wants to provide social security to all those people who are not covered either by Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) or Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC).

Features

- According to the notice, the "single unified sanitized database" will assign a ten-digit UWIN to every worker and include details of both nuclear and extended families of unorganized workers.
- While the Centre — through the service provider — will create and maintain the platform, it is up to the states to identify and register unorganized workers.
- The Socio-Economic and Caste Census 2011 will be used as the base for the platform, and other worker databases — from the states as well as other Central ministries such as Textiles and Health — will also be incorporated into UWIN.
- It is envisioned to have backend Aadhaar linkage to the UWIN number for the purpose of having an authenticated database

Definition

- Section 10 of the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008 provides that every unorganised worker shall be eligible for registration subject to the fulfilment of the conditions that he or she shall have completed fourteen years of age; and a self-declaration by him or her confirming that he or she is an unorganised worker. The application for registration is to be made to the District Administration.
- The Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008 had first mandated that every worker be registered and issued a smart ID card.

Government has taken steps to cover workers in the Unorganised Sector under the Social Security which includes the following: -

- Converged Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana/ Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana in which premium is shared between Centre and the States in 50:50 ratio.
- National Health Projection Scheme
- National Family Benefit Scheme
- Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme

12. **Water Productivity Mapping of Major Indian Crops Report**

Context

- Indian agriculture needs to stop being "obsessed" with the land productivity and instead start worrying about water productivity, says a report released by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)
 - * Productivity is a ratio between a unit of output and a unit of input.
 - * The Water Productivity in modern agriculture aims to increase yield production per unit of water used, both under rainfed and irrigated conditions.

Why is the need for change in the method?

- The Indian agriculture uses almost 80% of all the country's water resources, which are increasingly under stress, changing the objective of agriculture development to increasing productivity per unit of water, especially irrigation water, is crucial

Details

- This report is part of a research project with ICRIER, mapping a water atlas for ten major crops — rice, wheat, maize, red gram or tur, chickpea or channa, sugarcane, cotton, groundnut, rapeseed-mustard and potato. These together occupy more than 60% of the country's gross cropped area.
- The most stark differences between land and water productivity are seen in rice and sugarcane cultivation

- * Punjab reports the highest land productivity for rice, producing four tonnes per hectare. However, it only produces 0.22 kg of rice for every meter cube of irrigation water.
- * Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, on the other hand, produce 0.75 and 0.68 kg for the same amount of water.
- * However, low irrigation coverage results in low land productivity in these States. Jharkhand has only 3% of its land under irrigation.

Sugarcane

- Tamil Nadu reports the highest land productivity, producing 105 tonnes per hectare. Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh also have high rates of land productivity.
- However, all four States in the water-stressed sub-tropical belt have an irrigation water productivity of less than 5 kg/m³. In fact, an average of 40 rounds of irrigation are needed in Tamil Nadu.
- In the Gangetic Plain States of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, on the other hand, need five and eight rounds of irrigation respectively.

Recommendations

- The report recommends that cropping patterns be re-aligned to water availability, using both demand and supply side interventions.
- With water and power subsidies skewing cropping patterns, it also recommends reform in these areas, with a shift from the price policy approach of heavily subsidizing inputs to an income policy approach of directly giving money farmers on per hectare basis.
- Prices will then be determined by market forces.

13. Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF)- The seeds of sustainability

Context

- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu announced that the State would fully embrace Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF), a chemical-free method that would cover all farmers by 2024.

Natural farming

- Natural farming is “do nothing farming”, no-till, no chemical use farming
- It is use of locally available materials: seeds treated with cow dung and urine; soil rejuvenated with cow dung, cow urine and other local materials to increase microbes; cover crops, straw and other organic matter to retain soil moisture and build humus; and soil aeration for favorable soil conditions.
- These methods along with combined use of natural insect management methods when required.
- The word Zero Budget refers to the zero net cost of production of all crops (inter crops, border crops, multi crops).

How would it help?

- ZBNF, yields of various cash and food crops have been found to be significantly higher when compared with chemical farming
- Model ZBNF farms were able to withstand drought and flooding, which are big concerns with regard to climate change.
- There is reduced use of water and electricity, improved health of farmers, flourishing of local ecosystems and biodiversity and no toxic chemical residues in the environment.
- So overall it has help improve the welfare of farmers, reduce the cost of farm inputs, cut toxins in food and improve soils.

What should be done to sustain the Program?

- Farmer-to-farmer connections are vital to its success.
- The role of the Agriculture Department is to listen to farmers and motivate and assist them in different ways
- Farmer's collectives such as Farmer Producer Organisations need to be established and these would be critical to sustaining the programme.
- The Government of India also provides funding through the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana. Additional resources should be made available through various philanthropic organisations.

Model for other States

- Changes at this scale require many different elements to come together, but open-minded enlightened political leaders and administrators are fundamental.
- Andhra Pradesh has supported and learned from its many effective civil society organisations. So, a step-by-step increase in the area covered is another notable aspect. The scaling up relies primarily on farmers and local groups — all in all, very much a bottom-up process.
- With its combination of delta regions, arid and hilly tribal areas, districts in Andhra Pradesh are similar to those in other parts of the country and could therefore serve as a model for replication.
- Resilient food systems are the need of the day given the variability of the monsoons due to global warming and declining groundwater in large parts of India. More encouraging is that the programme can have a positive effect on many of the sustainable development goals through improvements in soil, biodiversity, livelihoods, water, reduction in chemicals, climate resilience, health, women's empowerment and nutrition.

Way forward

- Agricultural scientists in India have to rework their entire strategy so that farming is in consonance with nature. The dominant paradigm of chemical-based agriculture has failed and regenerative agriculture is the emerging new science.

14. Gas trading hub may come up by year-end: petroleum board

- The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) and the Centre are moving ahead to make gas trading hub a reality by the end of this year.
- The move would ensure that a market-based pricing mechanism is in place for the commodity, as India aims to increase the share of natural gas in its energy mix.

The gas trading hub

- It will function on the lines of the power exchange, has been conceived as part of measures to boost the consumption of natural gas in the country.
- The hub would serve as an electronic platform, facilitating trade in natural gas.
- The most important feature would be its role in arriving at the price of the commodity by a market-based mechanism as against the existing multiple formula driven prices.
- The hub could be a physical or virtual facility.

Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board

- Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) was established under The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board Act, 2006 to regulate downstream activities in the petroleum and natural gas sector.
- It has been constituted to protect the interests of consumers and entities engaged in specified activities relating to petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas and to promote competitive markets and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- The board has also been mandated to regulate the refining, processing, storage, transportation, distribution, marketing and sale of petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas excluding production of crude oil and natural gas so as and to ensure uninterrupted and adequate supply of petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas in all parts of the country.

15. Impact of US-China trade war on India

Context

- China's Shanghai Composite Index fell 3.8%, hit by escalating trade tensions with the US. Benchmark emerging markets such as Hong Kong (down 2.8%), Taiwan (down 1.7%) and South Korea (down 1.5%) too felt the heat. India was no exception. The Nifty fell 0.83%.

Positive

- India can become more competitive in segments such as textile, garments and gems and jewellery since India already has an edge and can substitute china's exports to USA
- Diminished US-China trade engagement could have positive results for countries such as Brazil and India from a trade perspective, at least in the short run

- The bulk of China's annual soybean import of around 100 million tonnes is for domestic consumption; the rest is used in the manufacture of soybean oil and meal for export.
 - * If the levy hits China's import, exports could be dented, a space that India could potentially fill to meet the demands from other countries.

Negative

- Within the US domestic economy, higher tariffs on a range of imported products escalate the threat of higher consumer prices, caused by importers passing on their increased costs of raw material.
- An increase in interest rates in the US has implications for emerging economies such as India, both for the equity and debt markets.
 - * Even a minor disruption in US financial markets can have major implications for India. The three external risk factors — higher tariffs, rising interest rates, and elevated bond sales — come at a time when the domestic banking system is grappling with a renewed stress of bad loans. The Indian economy, especially financial markets, will need to brace for significant volatility and stress from the combined effects of global and domestic challenges.
 - * The Indian government securities market has been falling on cues of rising US yields and projections of increased local inflation.
 - * Rising interest rates in the US could mean a potentially rough ride for the India's equity market. Higher US rates will lead to outflows from emerging market bonds and equities as American investors will look to chase higher returns in their home

How will it impact China?

- US companies that rely heavily on imports from China, such as electronics brands and retailers, would be forced to redesign their supply chains around tariffs.
- Multinationals and their suppliers would look for alternative facilities outside China; some would probably decamp from the mainland altogether for cheaper climes.

How will it impact USA?

- What happens to US crude oil if China does not buy it?
 - * China could secure crude oil from alternative sources such as West Africa which has similar quality as US crude, the US would find it hard to find an alternative market as big as China.

16. Upgrade software at ATMs by June 2019 or face penalty, RBI tells banks

- With banks failing to upgrade software in automated teller machines (ATM) despite repeated reminders, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has now directed the banks to complete the process in a phased manner latest by June 2019.

- The banking regulator pointed out that many ATMs were still running on Windows XP and other unsupported software.
- According to banking industry sources, there could be 30% of the present 2.2 lakh ATMs that still use old software.
- RBI said the vulnerability arising from the ATMs operating on unsupported version of operating system and non-implementation of other security measures, could potentially affect the interests of customers and the banks' image.
- RBI warned banks of penalty if they failed to adhere to the deadline.

17. Cabotage law

- The word has its roots in Spanish and French. The word per se refers to coastal trade, over a period of time cabotage acquired the meaning of right to coastal trade.
- It refers to the practice of imposing restrictions for movement of domestic cargo by foreign flag vessels.
- Shipping goods within India's domestic jurisdiction, that is, from one Indian port to another, is known as "cabotage."

Laws

- There is no absolute cabotage restriction in India. The policy of cabotage is governed as per Section 407 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958
- Under Section 407 of the Act, only ships registered (or "flagged," in shipping parlance) in India, which follow Indian laws and pay taxes to the Indian government are permitted to engage in cabotage trades.
- Section 407 (2) of the Act enables, foreign-flagged ships can transport cargo within the country if they obtain a licence from the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) in the Union government.
 - * These licences are meant to be granted only in when there are no Indian ships available for moving a particular shipment from one port to another.
 - * The DGS is supposed to issue a licence in this regard to a foreign ship after it obtains a no-objection certificate (NoC) from the Indian National Shipowners' Association (INSA), a Mumbai-based trade association and lobby group of domestic shipping companies.

Why is cabotage rules important?

- Cabotage rules have to be contrasted to rules governing international shipping that apply to the movement of cargo between an Indian port and a foreign port. International shipping is open to all ships, both Indian and foreign.

- It is in fact in line with, and in complete consonance with, international practices that are in place in comparable trade-dependent countries with long coastlines, including US and China.
- The cabotage rules regime in India, as in every other country where it is in place, is intended to "protect" or "support" the domestic shipping industry, maintain optimum freight levels and also promote the maintenance of a healthy domestic fleet of commercial vessels which is supposed to be important for "national security."

Govt new Policy

- On May 21 2018, the Shipping Ministry issued a notification lifting restrictions on foreign registered vessels on transportation of loaded or empty containers between Indian ports.

Advantages

- This move created a level-playing field, reduction in freight rates and making Indian trade more competitive, the move would allow coastal movement of export, import/ empty containers by foreign vessels leading to healthy competition among shipping lines
- Indian ports can now attract cargo originating from or destined to foreign ports, leading to cargo growth in India
- It reduces the supply chain lag time and transshipment cost at a foreign port,
- The relaxation in cabotage law would also address the problem of empty containers getting accumulated at some Indian port while other ports facing a shortage of empty containers.
- This will promote trans-shipment along India's coast and lead to the development of certain Indian ports into trans-shipment hubs.

Issue Area

- Indian shipping companies will find it impossible to match the tariff rates and scale of operations of foreign companies. There will be a shift in the transportation of export-import cargo from Indian ships to foreign ships.
- Foreign shipping companies to operate services on par with Indian ships – that is, they now have the ability to call at every port in India. However, such vessels will not pay any tax to the Indian government on income earned and will not be subject to the condition (that are applicable to Indian shipping companies) of hiring Indian crew and officers and training Indian cadets.
- This could ultimately lead to a scenario where a lack of Indian ships involved in carrying export-import cargo could expose Indian clients of shipping companies to "predatory pricing" by foreign players – predatory pricing by a company is the pricing of goods or services at such a low level that it results in competing firms being forced to shut operations and leave the market.

Way forward

- Cabotage relaxation by itself, is not going to bring anything additional to any of the ports simply because the ports have to solve and deal with a number of other challenges including the price at which they are able to offer their service to the ship owners. Unless and until those challenges are dealt with effectively, all this is not going to help in the trans-shipment business

18. Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH)

- It was established under Companies Act in the year 1986-87 and is a non-profit organisation, with an object to promote, support, protect, maintain and increase the export of handicrafts.
- It is an apex body of handicrafts exporters for promotion of exports of Handicrafts from country and projected India's image abroad as a reliable supplier of high quality of handicrafts goods & services and ensured various measures keeping in view of observance of international standards and specification.

19. Financial Policy Committee (FPC)Background

- After the 2008 crisis, one major loophole that emerged was that financial regulation just looked at the risk of individual firms (microprudential) but failed to look at risks emerging collectively (macroprudential).
- So, individually, the banks might be giving a low quantum of housing loans, but collectively it could make a large number.

FPC by UK

- The mandate was to look at the financial sector in a holistic manner and assess macroprudential risks.
- It is a 12-member committee with diverse representation from the Bank of England, Financial Conduct Authority, private sector and academia.
- The committee meets four times a year and releases its flagship financial stability report twice in those meetings.
- Just like India's monetary policy committee sets interest rates, the FPC sets the countercyclical capital buffer rate, which basically tweaks the capital requirements for banks.
- If the FPC sees that risks could be high in the future, it asks banks to increase its capital ratio. Apart from this, it also analyses debt of households and firms and takes suitable measures.

How does it function in India?

India already has some institutional arrangements that require reporting on the financial sector.

- Banking Regulation Act (1949) mandates the RBI release an annual report

- The RBI also started the "Report on Currency and Finance", which was not mandatory but gave an overview of developments in the financial sector.
- It also released a financial market outlook in its annual reports and Macroeconomic and Monetary Developments (discontinued in September 2014).
- In its monetary policy decisions, the RBI also releases a document on regulation developments, which contains proposed changes in banking regulations.
- Post the 2008 crisis, further measures were taken. The government established a financial stability and development council (FSDC) to bring greater coordination among financial market regulators.
- In 2010, the RBI also started releasing its biannual "Financial Stability Report" (FSR), which has become the flagship report. From December 2014 onwards, RBI merged the "Trend And Progress Report" with the FSR.

Issue Area

- The FSDC, despite being a decent initiative, lacks diversity of opinions and is more of a bureaucratic exercise.
- The minutes of FSDC meetings are released via a press release but barely contain any information.
- The several RBI reports are scattered, though efforts have been made to streamline them.

What should be done?

- So to overcome these issues appointment of a new FPC and reallocation of the finance-related decisions, responsibilities and publications to it
- The MPC can focus on macroeconomics and interest rates.
- This means FPC would have more specialists in the domain of finance just as the MPC has in macroeconomics and monetary economics.

Conclusion

- Finance has become heavily specialized and interconnected in recent years and warrants attention from specialists. We may not be able to prevent a future financial crisis but can at least try mitigating its damaging effects. FPC could be one of the ways to achieve this.

20. No-fly list- has cut down unruly flyersContext

- Incidents involving unruly passengers have seen a dramatic drop ever since the government announced rules for a national no-fly list, according to Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha.

Air rage

- Air rage is the general term for disruptive or violent behavior perpetrated by passengers and crew of aircraft, typically during flight.

- Air rage has been defined as “aberrant, abnormal, or violent behavior exhibited during the air travel process”.

Details

- The no-fly list will be compiled by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) based on inputs from various airlines. It will maintain the record of all blacklisted passengers.
- The country is the first in the world to have a no-fly list that is based on safety and not just security.
- The no-fly list will apply only if the incident is inside an aircraft which could adversely affect the safety of the aircraft and its occupants.

Punishment is based on the severity of offence, which has been divided into three categories.

- Verbal assault: This includes “unruly physical gestures, verbal harassment and unruly inebriation” which can lead to a ban of up to three months
- Physical assault: The second level is for “physically abusive behavior (pushing, kicking, hitting, inappropriate touching, and sexual harassment)” with a flying ban of up to months.
- Life-threatening behavior: The last, and most serious, includes “physical violence such as choking, eye gouging, murderous assault, damage to aircraft systems, attempted or actual breach of the flight crew compartment” with a ban ranging from two years to a lifetime.
- In case a passenger is a repeat offender, the duration of the flying ban will be twice that of his previous ban.

How it will work:

- The pilot-in-command of an aeroplane can report an incident involving an unruly passenger and the matter will be investigated by an internal committee of the airline concerned within 30 days.
 - * If the probe is not concluded within the time-frame, the passenger will be “free to fly”.
 - * However, the airline “may” impose a ban while it is probing the matter for a period not exceeding 30 days.
- Other domestic carriers “will not be bound by the no-fly list of an airline”, implying that they are free to decide whether or not to bar a passenger already banned by one of the airlines for his/her misconduct.
- A passenger barred from flying can approach an appellate committee constituted by the ministry within a period of 60 days.
 - * The decision of this committee will be final but if the appellant is dissatisfied he or she can approach the high court.

Background

- Several Indian airlines have been demanding a no-fly list of disruptive passengers following an incident in which Shiv Sena MP Ravindra Gaikwad allegedly hit an Air India staffer with his slipper over not being given a business class seat in an all-economy plane.

21. Patratu Super Thermal Power Project

Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the 2400MW first phase of NTPC's Patratu Super Thermal Power Project in Jharkhand.

Details

- The project is a 74: 26 Joint Venture between Government of Jharkhand (GoJ) and Patratu Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Ltd. (PVUN), a subsidiary company of NTPC establishing a total capacity expansion of 4,000MW.
- The project has salient features of
 - * Dry Ash disposable system (second to NTPC Dadri)
 - * zero liquid discharge system
 - * Air-cooled condenser technology (only second to North Karanpura STPP)
 - * Rail loading facility for transportation of ash.
- The plant also complies with the new emission norms with high-efficiency electrostatic precipitator (ESP), Flue gas desulfurization (FGD) and Nox emission control systems

Significance

- This project will allocate 85 per cent of the power to Jharkhand that will benefit the state in the long run and help in the economic growth of the region.
- This project will ensure providing 24x7 power availability to the households.

22. Solar Charkha Mission

- It would be a technology revolution in cotton Industry where charkas would be operated using solar energy
- The scheme aims at linking five crore women across the country to the initiative

Objective

- To generate awareness about Khadi
- To promote clean and green energy
- To revive solar energy
- To make Khadi generation affordable and sustainable

23. Strategic Petroleum Reserve

Why?

- To insulate the country from future shortage of crude oil in global markets and be energy secure

Details

- Currently, India has underground caverns at Visakhapatnam (1.33 million tonnes), Mangalore (1.5 million tonnes) and Padur (2.5 million tonnes).
- This would mean that from 5.33 million metric tonnes (MMT) of strategic reserves, India's crude oil storage facility may zoom to above 15 MT.
- These strategic storages are in addition to the existing storages of crude oil and petroleum products with the oil companies and serve in response to external supply disruptions

Future Oil Reserves

- Plan to set up two more strategic oil reserves in Odisha and Bikaner in Rajasthan.

24. Trade War - Impact on IndiaContext

- China's Shanghai Composite Index fell 3.8%, hit by escalating trade tensions with the US. Benchmark emerging markets such as Hong Kong (down 2.8%), Taiwan (down 1.7%) and South Korea (down 1.5%) too felt the heat. India was no exception. The Nifty fell 0.83%.

Positive

- India can become more competitive in segments such as textile, garments and gems and jewellery since India already has an edge and can substitute china's exports to USA
- Diminished US-China trade engagement could have positive results for countries such as Brazil and India from a trade perspective, at least in the short run
- The bulk of China's annual soybean import of around 100 million tonnes is for domestic consumption; the rest is used in the manufacture of soybean oil and meal for export.
 - * If the levy hits China's import, exports could be dented, a space that India could potentially fill to meet the demands from other countries.

Negative

- Within the US domestic economy, higher tariffs on a range of imported products escalate the threat of higher consumer prices, caused by importers passing on their increased costs of raw material.
- An increase in interest rates in the US has implications for emerging economies such as India, both for the equity and debt markets.
 - * Even a minor disruption in US financial markets can have major implications for India. The three external risk factors — higher tariffs, rising interest rates, and elevated bond sales — come at a time when the domestic banking system is grappling with a renewed stress of bad loans. The Indian economy, especially financial markets, will need to brace for significant volatility and stress from the combined effects of global and domestic challenges.

- * The Indian government securities market has been falling on cues of rising US yields and projections of increased local inflation.
- * Rising interest rates in the US could mean a potentially rough ride for the India's equity market. Higher US rates will lead to outflows from emerging market bonds and equities as American investors will look to chase higher returns in their home

How will it impact China?

- US companies that rely heavily on imports from China, such as electronics brands and retailers, would be forced to redesign their supply chains around tariffs.
- Multinationals and their suppliers would look for alternative facilities outside China; some would probably decamp from the mainland altogether for cheaper climes.

How will it impact USA?

- What happens to US crude oil if China does not buy it?
 - * China could secure crude oil from alternative sources such as West Africa which has similar quality as US crude, the US would find it hard to find an alternative market as big as China.

25. UN MSME Day

- The Ministry of Micro Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), will organize National Conclave (UdyamSangam) on 27th June 2018 on the occasion of UN MSME Day.
- The purpose of the Conclave is to encourage dialogue and partnership among various stakeholders of the MSME ecosystem and for promoting innovation and knowledge sharing on MSME related issues.

UdyamSangam

- There is a growing need for consolidation of Different schemes of MSME under one umbrella. To give way to this consolidation Udyam sangam would be created.
- UdyamSangam will be followed by a fortnightlong MSME Pakhwada called Udyam Lehar.

26. Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)

- It is an Indian intelligence agency
- It is India's chief anti-smuggling intelligence, investigations and operations agency
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- It is India's chief anti-smuggling intelligence, investigations and operations agency
- The Directorate is run by officers from the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)
- DRI works to secure India's national and economic security by preventing the outright smuggling of contraband such as firearms, gold, narcotics, Fake Indian Currency notes, antiques, wildlife and environmental products

- It also works to prevent the proliferation of black money, commercial frauds and trade based money laundering

Context

- Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) recovers smuggled Exotic Birds into India from Bangladesh through Indo-Bangla
- Three Red and Blue Macaws, three Eclectus parrots, eight Pygmy Falcons, and seven white ducks were found badly crammed up in plastic bags and kept inside the car and also in the dicky of the vehicle.
- DRI is committed to combating Wild Life Crime including cross border crime such as trafficking in wild life art-crafts. DRI has been regularly making seizures of Wild Life articles such as Red Sanders wood which is highly valued in the markets of China and East Asia, Star Tortoises and other species of turtles, Deer antlers, Tiger & leopard skins and also ivory from elephant tusks

27. Renewable Energy Dialogue

- The Renewable Energy Dialogue was organised by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) in collaboration with Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), International Solar Alliance (ISA), International Energy Agency (IEA), Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation (SSEF), and REN21
- The Dialogue brought together several national and international stakeholders from the renewable energy community to deliberate on the drivers and challenges facing the sector, both in India and globally.
- Independent studies on scaling up rooftop solar panels, clean energy investment trends, addressing renewable energy curtailment, and risks in renewable energy markets in emerging economies were released at the Dialogue.

28. Suryashakti Kishan Yojana

- The Gujarat govt launched a pilot project for the Suryashakti Kishan Yojana (SKY) which aims to cover 33 districts by setting up 137 feeders, covering 12,400 farmers
- Gujarat farmers can now produce, sell solar power under Suryashakti Kishan Yojana
- Ahmedabad, Gujarat is poised to become the first state in the country to roll out a scheme where farmers can generate electricity using solar energy and sell the surplus to the electric grid.

Characteristics

- Suryashakti Kishan Yojana or SKY as it's called as per which farmers, besides producing electricity for farm and irrigation purposes, can also sell surplus power to the state owned power companies at Rs7 per unit for a period of seven years under this scheme

- The state government today launched a pilot project for the scheme which aims to cover 33 districts by setting up 137 feeders, covering 12,400 farmers. The cost of the pilot project is estimated to be about Rs870 crore, according to a state government statement.
- To produce 1,42,000 horse power of energy for irrigation through water pumps will require 177 megawatts of solar power generation in the pilot stage.

Steps taken by govt

- As per the new scheme, a farmer signing up for it will have to spend only 5 % amount of the total expenditure for installing the solar project (including solar panels and inverters)
- The central and state governments would pay 60 % amount as a subsidy. While remaining 35% amount would be a loan to farmer, interest on which would be paid by the state government. The duration for repayment of the loan amount has been fixed for seven years.
- Farmers in Gujarat get about 8 hours of power supply for irrigation purpose and with implementation of SKY they can avail this for up to 12 hours
- With over 300 sunny days and high solar radiation, coupled with low prices of solar panels, this new initiative by the Gujarat government offers a powerful clean energy solution to power irrigation pumps and connect them to the grid
- The extra electricity given to grid would be purchased at a rate of Rs7 per unit. Of this, Rs3.50 would be paid by Electricity Distribution Company and Rs3.50 per unit (maximum limit of 1,000 units every year) by state government as a subsidy.
- Of this amount, after deducting the loan installment, the remaining money will be deposited directly into the bank account of the farmers
- The investment by the farmers for availing the benefits of the SKY would be recovered within 8 to 18 months through selling of extra electricity generated.

Advantages

- After the pilot, if the scheme is launched successfully across the state, it can benefit the state government financially as it will save a lot of expenditure that goes in providing subsidized power to the farmers. Currently farmers in Gujarat pay about 50 paise per unit for using power for irrigation
- "The state government spends about Rs4,500- 5,000 crore every year for the subsidy given to farmers for using electricity for irrigation purpose. With SKY, this will come down immensely in due course. The government can achieve a break even in about 5-7 years for the investment it has to make in setting up the solar infrastructure," said a senior state government official on conditions of anonymity.

- The present power demand of the state is about 14,000 MW and with some of the private companies unable to keep their commitment to supply power due to a change of law by the Indonesian government from where they source coal, Gujarat government is forced to buy about 3,000 MW of costly power from other sources
- If farmers in Gujarat start generating their own power as in this case, the state government will not have to look for other sources, said a second government official in the know of the development
- A solar project developer who has been shortlisted by the state government for supplying panels and inverters for SKY is hopeful that more farmers would join the project once it is rolled out across the state.
- Also, if a farmer has to purchase electricity when it's cloudy and generating electricity using the solar energy gets difficult, he will have to buy it at market rates which is about Rs3.50 per unit currently

Challenges

- However, the going may not be that easy for the government when it launches on a larger scale. According to an industry expert, it will not be an easy task to convince a farmer to give up the subsidized power that he is getting currently and invest in a solar project.
- The farmers joining the SKY must form a committee per feeder.
- "There are challenges of making everyone in the area agree to set up solar projects. While a farmer may recover the 5% that he has paid initially in about 2 years, it will take 7 years or more to achieve a breakeven on the total cost of the project for which he has taken a loan. If a farmer has a 5 horse power motor for irrigating his field and he is required to install solar panels that can generate 4-5 KW that will keep them running, he can sell about 500 units per year to the state electricity company. Also, there is a risk that some large farmers may move away from farming and try to make money by selling solar power,"

Way forward

- The central government has been aggressively promoting clean and renewable energy initiatives with an ambitious target to install 100 giga watts (GW) of energy capacity from solar power by 2022
- "SKY would be an able element in fulfilling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pledge to double the income of farmers by year-2022,"

29. Encouraging mediation to settle disputes

Context

- The deliberations at the UN Commission on International Trade Law will facilitate legal reform to ease dispute resolution

Significance

- The India will participate in deliberations at the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) in New York on an important issue concerning resolution of commercial disputes.
- Commercial disputes are resolved not only through courts and arbitration but also through mediation.
- The deliberations will consider how these settlement agreements in disputes in international commercial transactions will be implemented by courts in different countries.

An important draft

- Several concerns make this draft important for India and its businesses. Mandatory pre-litigation mediation has been introduced in commercial disputes.
- The adoption of the convention will address a policy gap on outcomes from the mediation process involving cross-border disputes.
- With a definitive legal framework recognising and enforcing mediated settlement agreements, businesses will be encouraged to consider mediation in managing and resolving disputes that arise in their commercial transactions
- India has lost substantial earnings as a result of international disputes being taken for resolution outside the country. Strengthening the dispute resolution policies will encourage dispute resolution in India, where the commercial relationship once began.
- As is evident, international transactions involve the application of different laws, by virtue of the persons from different countries being involved, or their undertaking a business in a third country
- The draft convention that is now under consideration relates to the enforcement of settlement agreements arising from disputes in international commercial contracts. The convention will link laws adopted by countries to recognise domestic mediation and extend them beyond their boundaries.

UNCITRAL Principles

- UNCITRAL has formulated principles on which countries should recognise and enforce mediation agreements arising from cross-border disputes
- Once formalised, countries will have a consistent framework for enforcing mediation agreements made in other countries
- The draft convention defines mediation as a "process whereby parties attempt to reach an amicable settlement of their dispute with the assistance of a third person (the mediator).
- The mediator lacks the authority to impose a solution upon the parties to the dispute." Courts of a country before which a mediated settlement agreement is brought must ensure implementation of the terms of settlement.

- The courts will allow a party to a settlement agreement to rely on this agreement as a defence in cases filed on the basis of disputes already settled by the agreement.

Enforcement of settlement agreement

- When the settlement agreement comes up before the court for implementation or enforcement, the court will review it on the basis of certain conditions
- These include the capacity of the parties to enter into the agreement, the question whether the subject matter of the agreement is one that can be settled through mediation in terms of its domestic laws, and so on
- Once the agreement has been reviewed, the court must enforce the agreement on the terms agreed. Courts can decline enforcement only on these conditions. The importance of the draft convention is in the identification of these conditions after careful deliberation.
- Mediated settlement agreements typically don't need court assistance for enforcement since the terms of settlement have been chosen and determined by the parties.
- However, with this convention comes the certainty that settlement agreements through mediation will be acknowledged as a resolution of the dispute, and will be respected and enforced
- Further, if the court were to decline enforcement, this will be done on grounds that are known to international parties

Conclusion

- One hundred and seventy-four countries recognise mediation and conciliation as a method of resolving disputes, and as an alternative to going to courts
- International business and dispute resolution institutions such as the International Chamber of Commerce, the Singapore International Mediation Centre and the World Intellectual Property Organisation all have established rules and assist businesses in resolving disputes through mediation.
- Businesses, in turn, have turned to mediation as the first step in resolving differences that arise in their international disputes.
- The convention is opportune and will facilitate legal reform to ease dispute resolution.

30. Is the Indian economy on an upswing now?

V-shaped recovery

- The Indian economy has shown a strong V-shaped recovery driven largely by domestic growth impulses.

- A V-shaped recovery is used to describe the contour of economic measures on a chart that depicts an economic recession and recovery characterized by a dramatic tumble in economic activity followed by a similarly sharp increase back to pre-recession levels. Such recoveries are spurred by a massive shift in economic activity led by increased consumer demand and spending.

- * If one considers nine consecutive quarters since the fourth quarter of 2015-16, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth fell quarter after quarter from a peak of 9% to a trough of 5.6% in the first quarter of 2017-18.
- * These eventually subsided and for the last three quarters, growth steadily recovered to 6.3%, 7.0% and 7.7% in the second, third and fourth quarters of 2017-18, respectively

Reasons

- Sharp recovery is based entirely on domestic factors as the contribution of net export growth to GDP has been zero or negative
- From the demand side, two segments which have supported growth, are government consumption and overall investment demand

Productivity focus

- Many of the government's policy initiatives have shown a clear productivity-enhancing supply-side thrust including demonetisation and the GST.
- Key policy initiatives (Make in India, Start-up India) also aim at improving productivity.
- Two early policy successes are related to market determination of mineral and spectrum prices
- The power sector further benefitted from the Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana scheme.
- For real estate and banking, the regulatory framework was changed.
- Additional fiscal space was created by better targeting of subsidies while expansion for rail/road projects was prioritised.

Short-term drags

Two factors may create short-term drags on India's prospects for maintaining a sustained level of high growth: rising global crude prices and prospects of fiscal slippage.

- Rising crude prices may adversely affect most indicators of India's macro balance including trade and current account deficits, inflation, exchange rate and fiscal deficit
- The Centre's fiscal deficit-GDP ratio, after showing a steady improvement since 2014-15, slipped back to a level of more than 3.5% of GDP in 2017-18, exceeding the fiscal responsibility and budget management (FRBM) target of 3% and the budgeted target of 3.2%. With the general election around the corner, this situation may not improve in spite of the fact that the FRBM Act has been modified

Issue Area

- Growing farmer unrest in the rural areas against falling commodity prices. The strike in many agriculturally important States is a clear reflection of the level of distress. But it also is clear evidence of the fragility of economic growth.
- While rural demand remains subdued, export demand has also plummeted with the export-GDP ratio reaching its lowest in a decade.
- With private investment and consumer demand sluggish, the only thing that is working for the economy is lower inflation. But with inflation rising once again, even this cushion is unlikely to be available in the future
- The external environment is not exactly buoyant. Global growth had been slow till 2017, when it improved in the U.S., Europe, China and Japan. But the most recent downside, which will have widespread consequences in India, is that oil prices, after being low for at least four years, have begun rising again.
- The international trade environment, favourable until recently, has worsened with threats of a U.S.-China trade war
- Interest rates have begun to rise in the U.S., and will continue to rise, reducing the prospect of more fund flow to emerging economies, including India.
- Fiscal consolidation by the Union government has been offset by the worsening of State balance sheets, partly on account of rising farm loan waivers

Conclusion

- The main good news in recent times on revenue has been the 53% rise in the number of tax payers under the GST, and increased formalisation of the economy bringing more entities in the tax net. But given that the path of fiscal consolidation cannot be abandoned for fear, inter alia, of losing credibility with international rating agencies, the potential for India spending its way out into a high growth path quickly remains limited

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

- It is the intergovernmental organization of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.
- It was set up for the promotion of free trade and economic integration to the benefit of its four Member States
- The organization operates in parallel with the European Union (EU), and all four member states participate in the European Single Market
- They are not, however, party to the European Union Customs Union.
- Headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland.

2. Hodeidah Operation

- This operation is intentionally calibrated to help UN Special to persuade the Houthis to facilitate the peaceful and unconditional handover of Hodeidah to the legitimate Yemeni government
- The Arab coalition is also fighting to secure the strategic Yemeni port of Hodeidah

UAE envoy to India

- The operation at Hodeidah is ongoing and its main target is to fight terrorism that is a common enemy of both India and the UAE. Therefore, support from allies like India will be appreciated, especially in view of our exceptional strategic relationship with India
- UAE was not yet offering a military role to India in the ongoing operation.
- India can help by extending diplomatic support to the Hodeidah operation on the international platforms. The campaign is in accordance with the resolutions of the UN and invitation from the legitimate government of Yemen

Background

- Al-Hudaydah, also known in English as Hodeda, Hodeida, Hudaïda or Hodeidah, is the fourth-largest city in Yemen and its principal port on the Red Sea.
- Yemen's port of Hodeidah was under the control of the Houthi rebels who are believed to be drawing support from Iran.
- The Arab coalition, led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, claims that the Iranian military has used the port to supply the Houthis with weapons and ammunition.

3. Malabar Exercise

- Exercise Malabar is a bilateral naval exercise involving the United States and India.

- The annual Malabar series began in 1992, and includes diverse activities, ranging from fighter combat operations from aircraft carriers, through Maritime Interdiction Operations Exercises
- In 2015 it became a trilateral exercise to include Japan.
- It focuses on Aircraft Carrier operations, Air defense, Anti-submarine warfare (ASW), Surface warfare, Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS), Search and Rescue (SAR), joint and tactical procedures.

2018

- For the first time in a Malabar exercise, all three Navies are deploying their maritime reconnaissance (MR) aircraft to sharpen those skills.
- Indian Navy is deploying a P-8I long-range MR aircraft, the U.S. is deploying two P-8A aircraft and Japan is sending a Kawasaki P-1 MR aircraft.
- In addition, Japan and the U.S. have anti-submarine warfare helicopters on board their helicopter carrier JS Ise and aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan, respectively.
- The U.S. has one nuclear attack submarine, USS Pasadena, and Japan for the first time is deploying a Soryu class conventional submarine.

4. Nepal-Bharat Maitri Irrigation Project

Context

- India extended a financial aid of Rs 99 million to Nepal for the construction of 2,700 shallow tube well irrigation systems in 12 districts of the country's southern Terai region to boost agricultural productivity.

Details

- It was launched in January 2017 to boost growth to the Himalayan nation's agricultural sector through enhanced facilities.
- The project aimed at installing 2,700 shallow tube wells in Saptari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara, Parsa, Chitwan, Nawalparasi, Rupendehi, Kapilvastu, Dang, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts.
- The project would ensure all-season irrigation facility to about 8,115 hectares of farm land, augment productivity of wheat, rice and seasonal fruits, vegetables and other crops
- It would also uplift the socio-economic status of farming families in the 12 districts covered under the project, it added.

5. S-400

- The S-400 (SA-21 Growler), when properly operated, is a potent medium-to-long-range surface-to-air missile system

- The S-400 is a complex military system comprising several radars, command post, different types of missiles and launchers that can track several dozen incoming objects simultaneously from hundreds of kilometres away, launch counter-missiles within seconds and shoot them down with great efficiency.
- India would be the second customer after China



6. SCO Qingdao Summit

- Narendra Modi in SCO meet called for respect for sovereignty, economic growth, connectivity and unity among the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).
- Modi coined an acronym 'SECURE' which he explained: 'S' for security for citizens, 'E' for economic development, 'C' for connectivity in the region, 'U' for unity, 'R' for respect of sovereignty and integrity, 'E' for environment protection.
- Talking about the importance of linking the region with transport corridors, Modi said connectivity does not only mean geographical link but it should ensure people-to-people contact.
 - * In the past Modi has also commented "Asia and the world will have a better future when India and China work together".
- Modi has demonstrated a clear individual style of engagement, and world leaders have responded positively to his initiative. Both Modi and Xi see themselves as strong leaders of their countries and peoples, and their personal engagement is a crucial aspect of the bilateral engagement on all outstanding issues.

One Belt One Road' (OBOR)

- India welcomes any project which is inclusive, sustainable and transparent. And which respects member states sovereignty and territorial integrity
- Asserting India's continued opposition to China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, Mr. Modi said mega connectivity projects must respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries. However, New Delhi, he said, would support initiatives which ensure inclusivity.
- Referring to the "unfortunate" example of the effects of terrorism in Afghanistan, he hoped that the steps taken by its President Ashraf Ghani would be respected by all the players in the region.

Economy

- China and India are expected to be the driving force of the global economy in the years to come, along with southeast Asian countries such as Singapore and Malaysia.
- With a combined population of over 2.6 billion and a rapidly growing middle class, China and India offer enormous potential.
- The Russian economy is much smaller, and growing slowly, the country remains one of the world's biggest energy producers with powerful influence over oil and gas markets.
- Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi have stepped up to defend globalization in recent months, as the United States appears to turn inward under President Donald Trump.

Issue Area

- To be most effective, however, it needs to be integrated with other air defence systems and components — such as radars — operated by the purchasing country.
- This however, presents problems if some of these have been bought from the U.S. or potentially other Western states, where the required levels of integration will not be possible because of security concerns

- Both countries put their names to a statement issued earlier this week that criticized the “new wave of protectionism” and advocated for an “open and inclusive world economy.”

Conclusions from the Summit

- First, the central theme was that at a time when the world is facing power shifts, uncertainty and competition over geopolitical ideas and political models, India would project itself as an independent power and actor across Asia
 - * The intended signal to all major capitals was that India will not be part of a closed group of nations or aggregate Indian power in a bloc but will chart out its own course based on its own capacity and ideas.
- Second, even as China’s rise has undoubtedly increased the demand and space for India to increase its region-wide engagement, India’s role in the vast Indo-Pacific is no longer envisaged as a China-centric one.
 - * “India’s own engagement in the Indo-Pacific Region — from the shores of Africa to that of the Americas — will be inclusive... That is the foundation of our civilisational ethos — of pluralism, co-existence, open-ness and dialogue. The ideals of democracy that define us as a nation also shape the way we engage the world.
- Third, despite this policy adjustment, India’s approach to the region is not going to be a hands-off policy or one devoid of norms
 - * Mr.Modi laid emphasis on a “free, open, inclusive region” and a “common rules-based” Indo-Pacific order.
 - * Rules and norms should be based on the consent of all, not on the power of the few
- Finally, without mentioning either, Mr. Modi urged both the U.S. and China to manage their rivalry and prevent their “normal” competition from descending into conflict
 - * “Asia of rivalry will hold us all back. Asia of cooperation will shape this century. So, each nation must ask itself: Are its choices building a more united world, or forcing new divisions? It is a responsibility that both existing and rising powers have.”
 - * He made it clear that while India would pursue many partnerships “in the region and beyond”, it was not going to choose “one side of a divide or the other” but would remain wedded to its principles and values that emphasise inclusiveness, diversity and of course its own interests.

7. Joint Appeal to Youth

- India and other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) adopted a Joint Appeal to Youth under which they would organise comprehensive educational work as well as spiritual and moral education to counter attempts to involve young people in the activities of terrorist, separatist and extremist groups.
- The initiative was first announced by the Uzbek President in 2017.
- The Member States have noted the importance of combining the efforts of the international community in countering attempts to involve young people in the activities of terrorist, separatist and extremist groups

8. G7 vs SCO

- On the Western Hemisphere, seven of the world’s most industrialized countries met for the 44th Group of Seven (G7) summit in Quebec
 - * G7 nations (Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, France, UK, USA),
- on the Eastern Hemisphere, the 18th summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) happened and for first time, in its expanded form after India and Pakistan joining it as full members
- The SCO did not comprise the world’s most developed nations but had a bigger quantity - in terms of size and population and also an impressive GDP.
- The G7 was walking just to the opposite direction with a serious fault line emerging between the United States and the rest of the members over trade tariffs

Joint communique

- The joint statement takes on issues such as jobs, climate change, advancing gender equality, building a peaceful world and investing in growth “that works for everyone.”

Optimism Vs Pessimism

- when it comes to the issue of peace in Korea, China along with fellow SCO partner Russia has many more positive contributions
 - * G7 who in the case of the EU and Canada remain remote from the issue.
- The SCO has reiterated the opinion that the 21st century belongs to Asia and the convergence of some of the world’s top economies of Asia and Eurasia raises more hope about the future path of development of the international community.
 - * In case of the G7, the exact opposite scene has unfolded with the industrialized countries engaging them more in personality clashes and focusing less on global problems.

- The SCO is perhaps the most happening international grouping at the moment because its scope of functioning is outgoing and big. Be it in connection with China's Belt and Road Initiative or India's pressing problems with Pakistan or laying out a map for reconstruction of Afghanistan, the SCO offers hope for a better world order and the credit primarily goes to its members' openness to reaching out to each other.

* This mentality is clearly absent in case of G7 whose members are struggling to deal with Trump and finding no better ways than retaliating against him.

- The build-up to the SCO's biggest summit so far has generated much optimism about internationalism - be it cooperation in fields of trade and security, counter drug trafficking and overall regional cooperation.
- Particularly important has been the growth in interpersonal relations between world leaders like Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin or Narendra Modi who have met on a number of occasions in recent times and come closer to each other - the growing protectionism of the US being one gluing factor.

9. Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD)

- SLD is a "Track One" inter-governmental security forum held annually by an independent think tank, the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) which is attended by defense ministers, permanent heads of ministries and military chiefs of 28 Asia-Pacific states.
- The forum gets its name from the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore where it has been held since 2002.
- The summit serves to cultivate a sense of community among the most important policymakers in the Defence and security community in the region.
- Government delegations have made the best out of the meeting by holding bilateral meetings with other delegations on the sidelines of the conference.
- While primarily an inter-governmental meeting, the summit is also attended by legislators, academic experts, distinguished journalists and business delegates.

Modi in Shangrila

- At Shangri La, Modi called the Indo-Pacific "a natural region" that stretches from the east coast of Africa to the west coast of America.
- He called the building of a "stable, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific Region" an "important pillar" of India's partnership with the United States.
- At the same time, the PM emphasised that India's conception of Indo-Pacific is not directed against any other nation. Modi also rejected the conflation of the Indo-Pacific idea with that of the "Quad" — the forum for consultation between India, US, Japan and Australia.

- He insisted that the Indo-Pacific "stands for a free, open, inclusive region, which embraces us all in a common pursuit of progress and prosperity. It includes all nations in this geography as also others beyond who have a stake in it".
- Modi's address to the Shangri La Dialogue was an occasion to lay out India's grand strategic conception of the Indo-Pacific

Bilateral Engagements

- During Modi's talks with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, the two sides formalised the agreement on mutual logistics support between the two navies
- In Jakarta, Modi and the Indonesian president Joko Widodo unveiled a document on a shared vision for the Indo-Pacific that will facilitate exchanges between the two coast guards, maritime intelligence sharing, collaboration on disaster relief operations, and joint production of weapons.
- * The two sides also agreed on Delhi's participation in the development of port infrastructure in Sumatra and promoting greater connectivity between it and the Andaman and Nicobar Island chain.

Significance of Meet

- Securing the eastern Indian Ocean in partnership with Southeast Asian littorals like Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand could be one of the important near-term Indian contributions to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.
- Washington announced that it was changing the name of the US Pacific Command into the Indo-Pacific Command
- * This was a recognition of the changing regional reality and the critical role of India in shaping the future of this region
- India embraces the Indo-Pacific because it honors India's vital role in Asia's future.

Compare Indo-Pacific with Asia-Pacific

- The translation into nations can read Indo = India while Pacific = US.
- Indo-Pacific skips by the Asian land mass (China) and replaces it with two oceans.
- China likes Asia-Pacific because it references the land mass that China thinks it naturally dominates, plus the ocean that stretches to the US. Asia-Pacific translation: Asia = China while Pacific = US.
- The Indo-Pacific is a maritime concept while the Asia-Pacific tries to link the maritime with the continental.
- Such a reading spurs Chinese paranoia about being contained and constrained between two oceans, facing the US on one side and India on the other. And when it comes to modern confrontations with India, China's experience is on land, not sea.

10. United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

- It is a United Nations body whose mission is to promote and protect human rights around the world
- The UNHRC has 47 members elected for staggered three-year terms on a regional group basis
- The headquarters of UNHRC is in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The UNHRC investigates allegations of breaches of human rights in UN member states, and addresses important thematic human rights issues such as freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of belief and religion, women's rights, LGBT rights, and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities.

United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR)

- UNCHR was a functional commission within the overall framework of the United Nations from 1946 until it was replaced by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2006.
- On 15 March 2006, the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to replace UNCHR with the UN Human Rights Council.
- The UNCHR was established in 1946 by ECOSOC

U.S. quits UN human rights body

Context

- The United States announced its withdrawal from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) terming it "hypocritical and self-serving."

Reasons

- They blamed the UNHRC for bias against Israel and refusing to eject members who are violators of human rights.
- It said Russia, China, Cuba and Egypt was thwarting U.S. efforts to reform the Council.

11. India calls UN report on human rights abuse in Kashmir 'fallacious'

Context

- This is UN's first-ever report on the human rights situation in Kashmir on either side of the LoC

What did the Report say?

- The 49-page report focused on the human rights situation in the State between January 2016 and April 2018 during which violence escalated.
- In view of the spiraling terrorism and counter-terror operations, the report urged India to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Optional Protocol.

- The report sought repeal of the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, 1990 (AFSPA) "urgently" and also "immediately remove the requirement for prior central government permission to prosecute security forces personnel accused of human rights violations in civilian courts."

MEA Statement

- "It is a selective compilation of largely unverified information. It is overtly prejudiced and seeks to build a false narrative. The report violates India's sovereignty and integrity... it is disturbing that those behind this report have chosen to describe internationally designated and UN-proscribed terrorist entities as 'armed groups' and terrorists as 'leaders.' This undermines the UN-led consensus on zero tolerance to terrorism"
- The MEA said India does not recognise the geographical territories as defined in the report and said: "The incorrect description of Indian territory in the report is mischievous, misleading and unacceptable. There are no entities such as 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' and 'Gilgit-Baltistan'."

12. India backed Maldives for non-permanent seat in United Nations Security Council'

Context

- United Nations General Assembly voted for five non-permanent seats in the Security Council
- One of these seats is in the Asia-Pacific group, with two candidates — Maldives and Indonesia.
 - * Indonesia has been a non-permanent member thrice before, Maldives never.

Results

- The Maldives lost the vote for the Asia-Pacific seat to Indonesia by a large margin, winning only 46 of the 190 votes cast at the U.N. General Assembly for the two-year stint.
- Maldives said after the result that India supported its candidature.

Elections

- In accordance with Article 23 of the Charter, which came into force on 31 August 1965, the General Assembly increased the number of non-permanent members of the Security Council from 6 to 10.
- There are 15 members on the UN Security Council, including the five permanent ones -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States -- and 10 non-permanent members
- Under rule 83 of the rules of procedure, the non-permanent members of the Security Council are elected by a two-thirds majority.
 - * These elections always begin in October of the year
- In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election is held by secret ballot and there are no nominations.

- In accordance with rule 142 of the rules of procedure, the General Assembly elects each year five non-permanent members of the Security Council for a two-year term.
- As stipulated in rule 144 of the rules of procedure, a retiring member is not eligible for immediate re-election.

Regional Groups

- African Group: 3 members
- Asia-Pacific Group: 2 members
- Eastern European Group (CEIT, or Countries with Economies in Transition): 1 member
- Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC): 2 members
- Western European and Others Group (WEOG): 2 members; at least one of these must be from Western Europe



India's Support to Maldives

From at least 2008, India has promised Maldives its support

- A joint statement in December 2008 "...India expressed appreciation to the Maldives side for its support to India's candidature for a permanent seat in the expanded Security Council and for its candidature to the non-permanent member seat of the UN Security Council for the year 2011-2012. Maldives also thanked India for its support for its candidature to the non-permanent seat of UN Security Council for the year 2019-20."

- In a joint statement during President Abdulla Yameen's 2014 visit, "India reiterated its support for Maldives' candidature for non-permanent seat of the UN Security Council for... 2019-2020.
- Maldives also assured India of its support for India's candidature for the non-permanent seat... for 2021-2022."

India's Concern

- Maldives and India have drifted apart on several issues, mainly on Yameen's proximity to China.
- In May, the Election Commission declared candidates convicted of criminal charges ineligible, effectively knocking out Nasheed and three other main opposition leaders. The Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) has endorsed Nasheed's candidature but, as of now, he remains ineligible to contest.
- As for India's vote, officials believe that after taking a firm line against Yameen when he declared the Emergency, voting for Maldives would send out wrong signals.

Advantage Indonesia

- Indonesia, by contrast, is the flavor of the season, especially after visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during which India gained a firmer footing in a region China dominates.
- It was Modi's first visit to the biggest ASEAN country, in terms of both population and economy, and came four months after the ASEAN special summit in Delhi.
- Modi's meetings with President Joko Widodo covered the expanse from defence cooperation to shared cultural links, and led to the signing of several agreements, including the joint development of Sabang Port
- The two countries upgraded their strategic partnership to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and adopted a document called the "Shared Vision on Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific between India and Indonesia".

Countries Selected

- The UN General Assembly has elected Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Indonesia and South Africa to serve as non-permanent members
- Belgium and Germany; the Dominican Republic, and South Africa, ran unopposed from their respective regional groups

13. Remove copters by June-end: Maldives

Context

- Maldives has asked India to withdraw its helicopters gifted to the island nation

Details

- India has two helicopters in two different strategically important locations in Laamu and Addu atolls

- India had gifted two Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) to Maldives in 2013, of which one was operated by the Indian Coast Guard and the other by the Indian Navy, which were manned by six pilots and a number of maintenance ground staff.

14. U.K. not to ease rules for Indian students

Context

- UK Home Office announced a relaxation of the Tier 4 visa category for overseas students from around 25 countries, excluding India.

Objective

- The main aim is to make it easier for international students to come to study in the UK.

Details

- On a list already covering countries like the US, Canada and New Zealand, the Home Office has added on the likes of China, Bahrain and Serbia as countries from where students would face reduced checks on educational, financial and English language skill requirements to study at British universities.

Issue Area

- India has been left out of this new expanded list, which means Indian students applying for similar courses will continue to face rigorous checks and documentary requirements.
- the move as an insult to India and another example of Britain's economically illiterate and hostile attitude to immigration.

Stats

- According to latest Office of National Statistics (ONS) data, India is among the top three countries from where overseas students come in to study at UK universities, after China and the US.
- While Indian students registered a hike of 30 per cent to hit 15,171 Tier 4 visas last year, the numbers remain a far cry from around 30,000 six years ago

British View

- British government has drawn a direct link between the exclusion of Indian students from a relaxation of visa rules and India's decision to pull out of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the return of illegal migrants.
 - * It wants India to address concerns on those staying illegally
- The reason India had been excluded from a newly-expanded list of countries from where overseas students can benefit from a more streamlined UK university application process was because the issue of Indian "overstayers" remained unresolved.

India's withdrawal from signing MoU

- The Indian Cabinet had approved the so-called MoU on returns to facilitate the deportation of alleged illegal Indian immigrants in the UK to India and vice-versa days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Britain to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)
- The agreement was touted as the centrepiece of the nearly 25 MoUs to be signed between the two countries during the Indian PM's UK visit.
- However, India reportedly backed out of signing the pact at the last-minute due to reservations expressed by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) about Indian agencies being given only 15 days to verify the background of an undocumented migrant.

Impact

- Britain post-Brexit wanted to engage in free trade agreement (FTA) with India. If this is the way they treat India, the FTA with India cannot be fruitful
- This could damage the special relationship between countries
- It makes no change to the process of application for Indian students, but the perception of this message among Indian students that worries
- There has been a steep drop in Indian student numbers, Indian students are now going in much greater numbers to the US, Australia even France and Germany

15. River and rice deals put India-China ties on an upswing

- Beijing agrees to provide India hydrological data of the Brahmaputra in flood season, months after it stopped the practice following the Doklam standoff
 - * The agreement enables China to provide hydrological data in flood season from May 15 to October 15 every year.
 - * It also enables the Chinese side to provide hydrological data if water level exceeds the mutually agreed level during non-flood season.
 - * China, an upstream country, shares the scientific study of the movement, distribution and quality of water data for the river.
- The two countries also signed an agreement under which China has agreed to import non-Basmati rice from India which is likely to bridge the ballooning trade deficit to a certain extent
 - * The 2006 Protocol on Phytosanitary Requirements for Exporting Rice from India to China has been amended to include the export of non-Basmati varieties of rice from India.
 - * At present, India can only export Basmati rice to China.
- Trade deficit with China stood at \$ 36.73 billion during April-October this fiscal. India's trade deficit with China has marginally dipped to \$51 billion in 2016-17 from \$52.69 billion in the previous fiscal.

16. Maldives visa row

Context

- Maldives has declined visas to those who have been offered work in the Maldives

Details

- According to the normal visa procedures, work permits for Indians to the Maldives, where about 29,000 Indians now work, take about 15 days.
- But with downturn in relations between the countries estimated "2,000" job-seekers are in the lurch
- The strain in ties is not restricted to work permits alone. Even job advertisements are putting out the disclaimer that Indians can't apply. Public advertisements from companies that are hiring clearly say "Indians need not apply", as they would not be given work permits.

Indian Govt Response

- The Ministry of External Affairs has taken up the matter strongly at various levels and has urged the Maldivian government to abide by the terms of the bilateral visa regime in place since 1979

17. Pakistan's economy currency crisis

Context

- Pakistan has for third time devalued its currency in nearly seven months

Details

- There is worsening fiscal and balance of payments deficits which warrants urgent corrective action
- The economic outlook has been hurt by the fast depletion of foreign currency reserves, which now stand at just over \$10 billion.
- The nation's foreign-exchange reserves have dropped to the lowest in more than three years, the current-account deficit has widened, and external debt and liabilities as a percentage of gross domestic product climbed to the highest in almost six years in the first quarter.

Falling Exports

- The country has been struggling to grow its exports. With ever-increasing imports.
- The move may help the nation curb a rising deficit and boost falling exports

Steps taken

- Pakistan has once again turned to its all-weather friend China for help in averting a foreign currency crisis
- Pakistani officials also hope that borrowing from Chinese banks will also save Pakistan from seeking help from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

18. National asylum policy: The imperative to offer refuge

Why there is a need for National Asylum policy?

- India urgently needs a national asylum policy.

- Today, India is host to over 200,000 refugees like her who have been forced to flee conflict and persecution in their home countries.

Importance

- On World Refugee Day (June 20), there is a need to reassess India's approach to refugee protection, particularly in light of the regional refugee crisis after the mass exodus of the Rohingya from Myanmar.
- Traditionally, India has hosted several persecuted groups such as Tibetans and Sri Lankans. While it is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and has no domestic asylum law, it has reiterated its commitment towards the protection of refugees at various international fora, including the UN General Assembly.

Significant affirmations

- One of the most significant affirmations of this commitment was demonstrated by India becoming a signatory to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which was adopted by 193 countries in September 2016.
- In doing so, India has expressed its solidarity with those forced to flee and agreed that protecting refugees and supporting the countries that shelter them are shared international responsibilities that must be borne more equitably.

Global compact on Refugees (GCR)

- The Declaration sets the stage for a new framework for refugee protection — the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).
- The Compact is a coordinated effort to strengthen international response to protracted refugee situations and comprehensively addresses all stages of refugee protection, from reception to long-term solutions.

Objectives

- Two of its key objectives are to ease pressures on host countries and enhance refugee self-reliance. The GCR recognizes that certain refugee situations can last for decades and acknowledges that the burden is borne largely by developing countries, that now host over 80% of the refugee population in the world.
- In light of this, it calls for support from the international community in the form of resources. It also seeks to establish forums to enable expertise-sharing to promote economic opportunities, decent work and job creation not just for refugees but also for the host community.
- Since the Declaration was adopted, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been engaging with member states, UN bodies, and non-governmental organisations to develop a plan for its practical implementation; this will be finalized by the end of 2018.

Indian context

- Although India has hosted refugees of varying nationalities for decades, the country has done little beyond providing asylum. There have been some attempts to introduce a refugee law in the country, the latest being the Asylum Bill 2015, introduced as a private member's bill by Shashi Tharoor.
- However, none has gone the distance and the government continues to adopt an ad hoc approach towards this group. Given that most refugees have been unable to return to their countries, leading to protracted refugee situations, there is an urgent need for the government to develop a uniform framework for their management during their stay in India.
- For instance, due to their unclear legal status and lack of uniform documentation, refugees have limited access to essential services and almost no avenues for livelihood.
- While some refugees have been able to generate income by working in the informal sector, many of them, especially vulnerable women like Nargis, are at the mercy of touts and traffickers even within their own community. At best, they are forced to rely on income from odd jobs which is an unsustainable livelihood option that often leaves them exposed to exploitation.

Way forward

- The solution to this may lie within the GCR, which calls for States to identify gaps and opportunities for employment and income generation for refugees in a bid to enhance their self-reliance.
- Moreover, it specifies the need to include the host community in enabling mapping skills, vocational training and capacity-building among refugee populations, thereby fostering understanding and cooperation among the communities and paving the way for a socially cohesive approach.
- India's commitment to refugee protection under the GCR is evident in its active participation in ongoing GCR consultations, where it has emphasised the need for a clear mechanism for the refugee response regime. Therefore this is an opportune time for India to reassess the need for a national asylum policy which is compliant with the principles laid down in the GCR. This will not only re-establish India's place as a democratic regional power committed to core humanitarian principles but will also provide refugees a chance to give back to the country that has adopted them.

19. India, Italy agree to revitalise bilateral ties**Context**

- Sushma holds discussions with new PM Giuseppe Conte

Details

- India and Italy agreed to boost cooperation in counter-terrorism and cybersecurity

- To augment collaboration in areas of mutual benefit, the Ministers agreed to hold the next meeting of the Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation (JCEC) in India

20. 2+1 format**What is it?**

- Under the Chinese proposal, China and India can jointly conduct a dialogue with a third regional country
- The Chinese initiative is not Nepal-specific. The two-plus one formulation is flexible and can be applied to any other country in South Asia

Background

- This was proposed by the Chinese when Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Oli visited Beijing
- During Mr. Oli's visit, China was inclined to fulfill its ambitious agenda with Nepal gradually, after ensuring that such steps were in sync with India's interests.
- The Nepali side has understood the "big picture", appreciating that China is keen to build bridges with India, as Beijing's friction with the U.S. under the Trump administration begins to mount.
- Besides, bringing India on board it is essential for enhanced regional connectivity, including a trans-Himalayan corridor through Nepal

21. mPassportSeva Mobile App

- It allows the user to apply for a passport, pay and schedule appointments for passport services on mobile phones.
- This "citizen-centric" initiative would help applicants who are unable to apply at a Passport Seva Kendra near their residence.
- The police verification, if required for a specific passport, would be conducted at the address specified in the application form

The mPassport Seva App will now support enhanced set of passport services such as:

- New User Registration
- Sign In to Registered User Account
- Application form filing to apply for Passport and Police Clearance Certificate
- Pay for Passport Services v. Appointment Scheduling
- Application Availability Status vii. Document Advisor
- Fee Calculator

22. Mongolia's Third Neighbor Policy Blooms**Context**

- India appreciates the 'Third Neighbour' policy of land-locked Mongolia

What is it?

- The 'Third Neighbour' policy of Mongolia, a landlocked nation between Russia and China, refers to its building ties with countries other than these two.
- With this Ulaanbaatar to boost bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations with countries around the world.
- The strategic policy framework intends to use a soft-power approach to international relations as a modus operandi to tackle developing vital sectors such as education, science and technology, mining, and energy infrastructure.

Details

- Rajnath Singh was on a three-day official visit to further strengthen bilateral relations and security cooperation as part of sustained high-level exchanges between Mongolia and India.
- Singh visited the Gandantsegchinlen Monastery
- The relationship between India and Mongolia was upgraded to a 'Strategic Partnership' in 2015 during Modi's visit, which coincided with the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries

Agreements

- Mongolia broke ground for the construction of the landlocked country's first oil refinery with the help of a \$1 billion loan from India which Singh described as an important milestone in the bilateral ties.

Other economic Activities of Mongolia

- The most important goal of Mongolia's foreign and domestic policy is to become a major energy source in the Far East. These agreements show significant progress in Mongolia's influence in the region, demonstrating the strategic significance of the third neighbor policy. Landlocked Mongolia's foreign policy now stretches out to many sectors, including oil and energy in the Persian Gulf.
- Mongolia's third neighbor policy will play its part in the exploitation of crude oil resources, within the legal framework approved by parliament.
- The third neighbor policy is also creating transit transportation arrangements so products can be exported to or imported from third neighbors, changing Mongolia's energy landscape.

Mongolia's political stability, economic developments, non-traditional national security environment, and far-sighted foreign policy strategies are crucial for continuing its democratic transition and keeping up with new developments in the Asia-Pacific.

23. Operation Flowers are Blooming

- It was the name of an operation by the Indian Navy to help avert a threatened coup against the government of President France-Albert René in the Seychelles in 1986

- Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi instructed then Indian Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Tahiliani, to dispatch the frigate INS Vindhyagiri to avert a coup.
- The young country won independence from the UK in 1976 and adopted a presidential form of government. It has a unicameral National Assembly with 25 elected and nine nominated members.

Background

- Seychelles consists of 115 island
- Vasco da Gama sighted the inhabited island grouping called the Seven Sisters in 1502 when he was crossing from India to East Africa.
- Seychelles was a French territory till the beginning of the 19th century, before falling to the British in 1811. In the early 19th century, Chinese and Indian tradesmen and former slaves settled on these islands.

24. Operation Lal Dora

- It was conceived in 1983, with the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi's approval and called for the secret landing of Indian troops in Mauritius.

What was the mission?

- Mauritius, with a large Hindu community and geographic proximity to India, is a close partner for New Delhi. The country has long been seen from New Delhi as a "little India" in the Indian Ocean
- So, in the early 1980s, though, New Delhi sensed that its special relationship with Mauritius could be threatened by the emergence of a new government that could subvert the interests of the island's Hindu population in favor of minorities.
- Troops were to be launched from the 54th division and the purpose of doing this was to help the Mauritian Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth fight off a challenge from his rival Paul Berenger which Government of India feared might take the form of an attempted coup.
- Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's final decision not to deploy these forces was influenced by a fundamental clash of advice between the navy – which was reportedly in favor of the operation – and the army, which warned that India didn't possess the necessary capabilities.

25. UN report on human rights abuse in Kashmir 'fallacious' says India**Context**

- This is UN's report on the human rights situation in Kashmir on either side of the LoC

United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council Membership

- Pakistan, along with 11 other countries, was elected as a member state of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council by the body's General Assembly, securing more than two-thirds of the vote in 2017.

- Other countries elected by the UN General Assembly include Australia, Afghanistan, Nepal, Qatar, Congo, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine, Chile, Mexico and Peru.
- They will serve on the 47-member council from January 2018 through the end of 2020.
- Pakistan is in the Council and in the Working Group on Situations of the Council. India is not in the Council till 2020. Therefore, India cannot vote or influence any proposal to take action on the HCHR report in the Council or its working group

What did the Report say?

- The 49-page report focused on the human rights situation in the State between January 2016 and April 2018 during which violence escalated.
- In view of the spiraling terrorism and counter-terror operations, the report urged India to ratify the
 - * International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance
 - * Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Optional Protocol.
- The report sought repeal of the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, 1990 (AFSPA) "urgently" and also "immediately remove the requirement for prior central government permission to prosecute security forces personnel accused of human rights violations in civilian courts."

MEA Statement

- "It is a selective compilation of largely unverified information. It is overtly prejudiced and seeks to build a false narrative. The report violates India's sovereignty and integrity"
- The MEA said India does not recognize the geographical territories as defined in the report: "The incorrect description of Indian territory in the report is mischievous, misleading and unacceptable. There are no entities such as 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' and 'Gilgit-Baltistan'."
- The terminology used by the report – describing Burhan Wani as a "leader" of the Hizbul Mujahideen. Similarly, groups like HuM and Lashkar-e-Tayyaba were described as "armed groups".
 - * To which India said it is disturbing that those behind this report have chosen to describe internationally designated and UN-proscribed terrorist entities as "armed groups" and terrorists as "leaders". This undermines the UN led consensus on zero tolerance to terrorism

Issue Area

- The report is a biased one as the council did not ask the commission to prepare the report
- It was drafted on using remote monitoring, without any rigorous cross-verification on the ground, with no interviews from people who matter, amounting to biases of individuals and media reports creeping into the report. So it is a prejudice Perception.

- There is no mention of PoK as the report feels PoK is structurally different. So it means in case there is a commission enquiry the enquiry commission would not visit PoK or just brush over and focus entirely on Kashmir.
- The report does not speak about terrorism on ground and grave human rights violations are not considered. So there was a personalized agenda.
- India is a vibrant Democracy with elections conducted in a free and a fair way. So any trouble in the region is due to terror funding from Pakistan which is sourced through ISI which the report fails to understand.
- The report looks at violations for only a restricted period. It has failed to consider the past, the issues and source. If the report had to be taken seriously it should have considered the reality from year 1947 and how things have evolved.

So is the report a violation of High commissioner's mandate?

- Not any time before has the report been produced Suo moto, only on the description of high commissioner
 - * Even if it was to be conducted it needs recommendation from council, or General assembly or by Security Council
- So by producing a report of this nature the institution's credibility has been undermined

Self-determination

- Self-determination is to be exercised in colonial context but when the country is free self-determination cannot be used to break the country as mentioned in Vienna Declaration
- So principle of Self-determination is not absolute and must not be used as a pretext to interfere with the territorial integrity of existing States.

Support for India

- During the 'General debate on the overall update of the High Commissioner on the situation of Human Rights worldwide and on the activities of his office' at the Human Rights Council, the Kashmir report was discussed, and six nations rejected the report authored by Zeid Raad Al Hussein.
- This includes Bhutan, Afghanistan, Mauritius, Belarus, Cuba and Venezuela.
 - * The Mauritian representative, questioned the assessment on Kashmir and stood with India rejecting any third party intervention.
- Not a single country came out in support of either Pakistan or the OHCHR report on Kashmir, while many questioned the timing and the veracity of the report itself.

Way forward

- The remote monitoring procedure performed by UN has a procedural flaw. Amnesty International when it is looking into violations of human rights also adds a copy of the respective state's reaction in appendix but this has not been met by UN report.
- So with Pakistan credibility at all time low and India's reputation on the world stage not questionable, this report can be ignored as there are other cases of importance world over including the children issue on Mexico- USA border.
- At the same time India should also make use of its goodwill, so that countries come in strong support of India openly.

26. India cuts export quotas for Maldives**Context**

- India has lowered the limits on the export of certain essential commodities such as potatoes, onions, and eggs to the Maldives

Details

- According to a bilateral pact that came into effect in 1981, India exports essential commodities by and large in line with the requirement as communicated by the government of Maldives.
- The Directorate General of Foreign Trade reduced these limits. Government sources said the calculations for 2018-19 were arrived at using a new methodology.
- Maldives usually sends the request for commodities but with no request an average of last three years has been decided

27. India, Bangladesh Navies to join hands**Context**

- India and Bangladesh have agreed to institute a Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) as an annual feature between the two Navies.

Details

- The commencement of CORPAT is major step towards enhanced operational interaction between both Navies.
- It includes operational interactions through port calls, passage exercises along with capacity building, capability enhancement and training initiatives

Widening cooperation

- Navy has expanded its assistance to countries in the region through "material support, training, EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone) surveillance, provisioning of platforms, hydrographic assistance, joint exercises and offering slots in professional training courses."
- The Navy regularly conducts CORPATs with Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand.
- It also conducts EEZ surveillance of Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles on their request.

28. India, Seychelles talk of 'mutual welfare'**Context**

- India and Seychelles will ensure mutually beneficial steps regarding stalled plans for a military base at the island of Assumption

Details

- Mr. Modi announced several initiatives for the strategically located country that included the grant of a major Line of Credit (LoC) for purchase of defence hardware.
 - * \$100 million Line of Credit was provided to Seychelles to buy military hardware from India for building its maritime capacity
- Both sides would intensify cooperation to carry out hydrographical studies of the maritime region and have declared exchange of necessary oceanic maps between two sides.
- India also gifted a Dornier aircraft to Seychelles.
- India also declared that India will remain committed to Seychelles' development.
- Seychelles President gifted two large Aldabra turtles that are unique and are known to live for centuries

Aldabra giant tortoise

- They are from the islands of the Aldabra Atoll in the Seychelles, is one of the largest tortoises in the world
- IUCN: Vulnerable
- Females are generally smaller than males

29. Dornier maritime patrol aircraft Gifted to Seychelles

- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) built Do-228 aircraft which was formally handed over by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj who presented its airworthiness certificate to the President of Seychelle
- This is the second Dornier to be gifted by India to Seychelles after the first one in January 2013.
- The Dornier is equipped with 360 degree surveillance radar, forward looking Infra-red system, satellite communication, traffic collision and avoidance system, enhanced ground proximity warning system and other sensor as requested by the operator.

Significance

- It reflects the firm commitment and continued engagement of the Government of India in further developing, consolidating and expanding the comprehensive multifaceted cooperation between India and Seychelles
- It would bolster the coastal surveillance of Seychelles and provide strategic depth to policing its extensive Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

- The Do-228 can be used for multiple purposes like EEZ monitoring, maritime surveillance, pollution monitoring and control, search and rescue and commuter service

SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Elder Abuse Study

- It was released by HelpAge India

Details

- The study found that sons were the foremost perpetrators of elder abuse.
- Daughters-in-law came second on the list with 34% of senior citizens reporting abuse in their hands.
- The report stated that the most common form of abuse elders experience is disrespect (56%) while 49% said they faced verbal abuse, and 33% neglect.
- The main reason for abuse was related to the abuser wanting to live independently (26%). Property (22%), lack of resources to meet the needs of elders (22%) and dislike for the senior's way of living (23%) were also cited as reasons for the abuse.

Reporting low

- Though there is greater understanding among seniors about abuse, reporting remains dismally low.
- The report also studied the impact of technology and social media on elders. Of those interviewed, 73% felt that their adult children are too busy on the phone even when at home with them, and 78% claimed that social media had decreased the time spent by their family with them.

City Ranking

- At the city level, the study found that Mangaluru had the highest percentage of elder abuse (47% of the respondents reported some form of abuse), followed by Ahmedabad (46%), Bhopal (39%), Amritsar (35%) and Delhi (33%).
- Chennai (27%) and Bengaluru (26%) stood in the 9th and 10th places, respectively.

Way forward

- Laws cannot stop elder abuse. The children should be sensitized from a young age to respect their elders, and this should be made a part of the school curriculum.

2. Indecent Representation of Women Act (IRW), 1986

Context

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development has proposed to ban obscene depiction of women on the Internet and on SMS/MMS by amending the Indecent Representation of Women Act (IRW), 1986.

IRW Act

- It prohibits "indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner".

- It provides for punishment of up to two years in jail for an offence committed for the first time and imprisonment of six months to five years for a second conviction.

- Sections 67 and 67A of the IT Act lay down a punishment of three to five years for circulating obscene material and five to seven years for circulating sexually explicit material

What was the necessity?

- Since the enactment of the Act, technological revolution has resulted in the development of new forms of communication, such as internet, multi-media messaging, cable television, over-the-top (OTT) services and applications e.g. Skype, Viber, WhatsApp, Chat On, Snapchat, Instagram etc. Keeping in mind these technological advancements, it has been decided to widen the scope of the law,

Details

- Bringing the Act in tune with the Information Technology Act, 2000, it expands the existing Section 4 of the Act which prohibits publication or sending by post books and pamphlets with such indecent representation.
- It will now include 'any material' that is published or cause to be distributed. This would bring into the purview of the legislation social media platforms and digital means communication such as WhatsApp, Skype, Viber, Snapchat, Instagram.
- Moreover, the ministry has proposed to expand the meaning of the word 'advertisement' to include its various 'digital and electronic forms or SMS, MMS'.
- The Ministry has suggested that stricter punishments be awarded for such crimes on par with those recommended under the IT Act, 2008.

Central authority

- It has also proposed setting up a central authority under the National Commission of Women, which will include representatives from Advertising Standards Council of India, Press Council of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and one member with experience of working on women's issues.

3. India's maternal mortality rate down by 22%

Context The Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), according to the Sample Registration System (SRS) data released by the office of Registrar General of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs declined to 130 in 2014-16 from 167 in 2011-13

MMR

- It is defined as the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

States Progress

- The SRS segments States into three groups:
 - * "Empowered Action Group" (EAG) — Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh/Uttarakhand and Assam;
 - * "Southern States" — Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu; and
 - * "Others" — the remaining States and union territories.
- The highest reduction from the last SRS is with the EAG States at 23%, a drop from 246 (2011-2013) to 188,
- Other States have dropped by 19%, taking the MMR down from 115 in 2011-2013, to 93 now.
- Southern States, which are at a better average of 77, dropped 17%. Truly encouraging is the massive drop of 29% in Uttar Pradesh/Uttarakhand where the MMR has dropped from 285 to 201.
- Kerala remains at the top with an MMR of 46 (down from 61).
- Maharashtra retains its second position with 61, but the pace of fall has been much lower, dropping from 68 during 2011-13.
- Tamil Nadu with 66 (79) is in the third position.

Details

- There is 22% reduction in MMR since 2013 means nearly one thousand fewer women now die of pregnancy-related complications each month in India.
- The Union health ministry is attributing this improvement mainly to rise in institutional deliveries across the country.
 - * The facilities in public hospitals and health centres have also improved and we are providing free drugs and diagnostics among other incentives to pregnant women that has led to increase in admissions for delivery over the years

What are the Problems women face?

In developing countries such as India, maternal mortality is a huge public health issue.

- Causes range from excessive blood loss (post-partum haemorrhage) to infections, primarily because women do not give birth in a hospital or health centre.
- The major cause, post-partum haemorrhage is usually defined as the loss of more than 500-1,000 ml of blood within the first 24 hours following childbirth.
- Excessive internal bleeding, infections and anaemia are major causes of death during child birth, especially among rural women

Measures taken

- In India, the transport to and from the health facility is also free for pregnant women coming to government health facilities, ensuring no out of pocket expenditure for the women and their families.
- Even sick newborns are treated free without any expense (including for diagnostics, drugs, consumables, diet, transport).
- other factors include involving private doctors to provide free health check-ups to pregnant women at government hospitals, decline in child marriages, a reduction in teenage pregnancies by 50%, and more women being treated for anaemia

4. PM's maternity scheme benefits 23.6 lakh

- After initial hiccups in implementing the maternity benefit programme Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), the government has finally made some headway and provided cash incentives to nearly 23.6 lakh beneficiaries out of an estimated 51.6 lakh a year.
- The scheme was approved by the Union Cabinet in May 2017 and was expected to be rolled out in September.
- However, until January 2018, the government programme had covered only 90,000 women — a mere 2% of the target.
- Under the scheme, pregnant women and lactating mothers are offered a cash incentive of Rs.6,000 on the birth of their first child as partial compensation for wage loss, to reduce maternal mortality and malnutrition levels among children.
- Many States like Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Odisha and West Bengal have not yet come on board to implement the scheme. These States account for nearly 25% of the total beneficiaries.
- But these states are bound to comply because the scheme is a by-product of the National Food Security Act.

Huge backlog

- However, due to a huge backlog from last year, the government needed to provide cash benefits to over 100 lakh estimated beneficiaries by the end of the financial year 2018-19.
- An amount of Rs.673 crore has been transferred to the accounts of the beneficiaries out of the total budget of Rs.2,594 crore set aside for the scheme last year, and another Rs.2,400 crore allocated for the current fiscal.
- The scheme is being implemented on a 60:40 cost-sharing basis with the State governments.

5. 'Women Wizards Rule Tech' programme

Context

- In an effort to increase the number of women in senior levels in the Information Technology (IT) industry, Nasscom unveiled its 'Women Wizards Rule Tech' programme for women techies

Details

- The initiative will aid women techies in core technologies like IT-Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES), Business Process Management (BPM), product and research and development (R&D) sectors by equipping them with the skills required for an edge in their career
- The Women Wizards Rule Tech was announced at the Nasscom Diversity and Inclusion Summit in Chennai as a joint initiative by the Nasscom Sector Skills Council and the Data Security Council of India.

6. Global poll says India most dangerous country for women

Context

- India has been ranked as the most dangerous country out of the world's 10 worst countries for women, behind Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia, according to a poll conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Ranking

- The same poll conducted in 2011 had placed India at the fourth place.
- India was followed by Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, Nigeria and U.S.A — in that order.

Details

- The question on cultural practices targeting women included offences such as infanticide, acid attacks, female genital mutilation, child marriage, forced marriage, physical abuse or mutilation as a form of punishment.
- The other category in which India ranked the worst was sexual violence which comprised rape as a weapon of war, domestic rape, rape by a stranger, lack of access to justice in rape cases, sexual harassment and coercion into sex as a form of corruption.

It ranked as the most dangerous on three of the topic questions

- The risk of sexual violence and harassment against women,
- The danger women face from cultural, tribal and traditional practices,
- The country where women are most in danger of human trafficking including forced labour, sex slavery and domestic servitude

Methodology

- The Organisation surveyed nearly 550 experts focused on women issues, asking them to rank countries based on a number of key issues.
- Respondents were asked to name the five most dangerous countries for women and then asked to name the worst country under six different categories.
- Respondents included academics, aid and development professionals, health workers, policy makers, NGO workers, journalists and social commentators.

7. National Buildings Construction Corporation

- It is a Navratna organisation under category I, is a Central Public-Sector undertaking under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- It engages in the Real Estate Development & Construction business and also provides Project Management Consultancy with areas of operations are categorized into three main segments, i.e. (i) Project Management Consultancy (PMC) (ii) Real Estate Development (iii) EPC Contracting
- NBCC is also designated as the implementing agency for executing projects under Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY), Solid Waste Management (SWM) and developmental work in North Eastern Region.
- It trades publicly in the market and is largely owned by Government of India.
- NBCC's real estate development segment focuses principally on two types of projects, (i) residential projects, such as apartments and townships and (ii) commercial projects, such as corporate office buildings and shopping malls
- Due to vast experience and quality of services rendered by NBCC, a number of Central Government Ministries and various State Governments are utilizing the services of NBCC as their extended engineering arm.
- NBCC has also undertaken overseas projects in countries like Iraq, Libya, Nepal, Mauritius, Turkey, Botswana, Republic of Maldives, Republic of Yemen et al.

8. State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report

- The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World is an annual flagship report jointly prepared by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to inform on progress towards ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition and to provide in-depth analysis on key challenges for achieving this goal in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The report targets a wide audience, including policy-makers, international organizations, academic institutions and the general public.

For the first time, the report provides two measures of food insecurity.

- FAO's traditional indicator of the extent of hunger, the prevalence of undernourishment, is complemented by the prevalence of severe food insecurity, which is estimated based on data collected from adult individuals worldwide using the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES).
 - * The FIES is a new tool to measure people's ability to access food, based on direct interviews.
- In addition, the report assesses the trends for six nutrition indicators: anaemia in women of reproductive age, stunting, wasting, overweight, obesity and levels of exclusive breastfeeding.

India - Status of food security and nutrition

- India's efforts at improving access to food and good nutrition are led by the National Food Security Act. There are special nutritional schemes for women and children operated through the States.
- In spite of such interventions, 14.5% of the population suffers from undernourishment, going by the UN's assessment for 2014-16. At the national level, 53% of women are anaemic
- In India, cereal production recovered markedly after two consecutive bad seasons.
- Country level prevalence rates for stunting among children under five years of age for India is 38.4%
- As with most developmental outcomes, stunting prevalence varies markedly between poor and rich households. The stunting rates for the poorest, middle and richest quintiles are 50, 38 and 30 respectively.
- India is on course and registered good progress towards achieving the target on reducing overweight in children under five years of age

Global Trend

- In 2016 the number of chronically undernourished people in the world is estimated to have increased to 815 million, up from 777 million in 2015 although still down from about 900 million in 2000.
- The food security situation has worsened in particular in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, South-Eastern Asia and Western Asia, and deteriorations have been observed most notably in situations of conflict and conflict combined with droughts or floods.
- Globally, the prevalence of stunting fell from 29.5 percent to 22.9 percent between 2005 and 2016, although 155 million children under five years of age across the world still suffer from stunted growth.
- The number of conflicts is also on the rise. Exacerbated by climate-related shocks, conflicts seriously affect food security and are a cause of much of the recent increase in food insecurity.
- Conflict is a key driver of situations of severe food crisis and recently re-emerged famines, while hunger and undernutrition are significantly worse where conflicts are prolonged and institutional capacities weak.
- Addressing food insecurity and malnutrition in conflict-affected situations cannot be "business as usual". It requires a conflict-sensitive approach that aligns actions for immediate humanitarian assistance, long-term development and sustaining peace.
- The 2017 report sends a clear warning signal that the ambition of a world without hunger and malnutrition by 2030 will be challenging – achieving it will require renewed efforts through new ways of working.

Challenges

- The Centre and State governments are woefully short on the commitment to end undernourishment.
- Institutions such as the State Food Commissions have not made a big difference either.
- Distributing nutritious food as a public health measure is still not a political imperative, while ill-conceived policies are making it difficult for many to do this.

Way Forward

- The report on nutritional deficiency should serve as an opportunity to evaluate the role played by the PDS in bringing about dietary diversity for those relying on subsidised food.
- In a report issued two years ago on the role played by rations in shaping household and nutritional security, the NITI Aayog found that families below the poverty line consumed more cereals and less milk compared to the affluent.
- Complementing rice and wheat with more nutritious food items should be the goal.

9. Malnutrition Crisis

Background

- Development is about expanding the capabilities of the disadvantaged, thereby improving their overall quality of life.
- Based on this understanding, Maharashtra, one of India's richest States, is a classic case of a lack of development which is seen in its unacceptably high level of malnutrition among children in the tribal belts.
- While the State's per capita income has doubled since 2004 (the result of sustained high economic growth), its nutritional status has not made commensurate progress.

Comparison of nutrition indicators for children under five years

- The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2015–2016 and 2005–06, shows this:
 - * Stunting (low height for age) has declined from 46.3% to 34.4%,
 - * Wasting (low weight for height) rates have increased from 16.5% to 25.6%.
- Further, the underweight rate (36%) has remained static in the last 10 years.
 - * This is worse than in some of the world's poorest countries — Bangladesh (33%), Afghanistan (25%) or Mozambique (15%).

According to NFHS 2015-16, every second tribal child suffers from growth restricting malnutrition due to chronic hunger. In 2005, child malnutrition claimed as many as 718 lives in Maharashtra's Palghar district alone. Even after a decade of double digit economic growth (2004-05 to 2014-15), Palghar's malnutrition status has barely improved

Results from a survey

- In September 2016, the National Human Rights Commission issued notice to the Maharashtra government over reports of 600 children dying due to malnutrition in Palghar.
- The government responded, promising to properly implement schemes such as Jaccha Baccha and Integrated Child Development Services to check malnutrition.
- Even after the intervention by the Govt the progress has been very little

Reasons for under Nutrition

- Stunting is caused by an insufficient intake of macro- and micro-nutrients. It is generally accepted that recovery from growth retardation after two years is only possible if the affected child is put on a diet that is adequate in nutrient requirements

- In most households it was rice and dal which was cooked most often and eaten thrice a day. These were even served at teatime to the children if they felt hungry. There was no milk, milk product or fruit in their daily diets.
 - * Even the adults drank black tea as milk was unaffordable.
 - * This low dietary diversity is a proxy indicator for the household's food security too as the children ate the same food cooked for adult members.
- weakening of public nutrition programmes
- loss of their traditional dependence on forest livelihood
- State's Budget shows that the nutrition expenditure as a percentage of the State Budget has drastically declined from 1.68% in 2012-13 to 0.94% in 2018-19, a pointer to the government's falling commitment to nutrition

Way forward

- Government should look at the root cause of the issue and find a sustainable solution for tackling malnutrition.
- It is possible only when the state focusses on inclusive development by creating employment opportunities for the marginalized which would improve their purchasing power and, in turn, reduce malnutrition.

10. Women in Prisons

- It was launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- It aims to build an understanding of the various entitlements of women in prisons, the various issues faced by them and possible methods for resolution of the same.
- It contains recommendations for improving the lives of women under incarceration, addressing a wide range of issues pertaining to pregnancy and childbirth in prison, mental health, legal aid, reintegration in society and their caregiving responsibilities among others.

Stats

- As per most recent data available from the end of 2015, there are 4,19,623 persons in jail in India, of which, 17,834 (about 4.3%) are women. Of these, 11,916 (66.8%) are undertrial prisoners
- In India, an analysis of prison statistics at five-year intervals reveals an increasing trend in the number of women prisoners – from 3.3% of all prisoners in 2000 to 4.3% in 2015.

Recommendation

- The report proposes that bail should be granted to those under-trial women who have spent one-third of their maximum possible sentence in detention, by making necessary changes in Section 436A of the CrPC which provides for release after half of the maximum sentence has been served.

- Considering the needs of women in their post-natal stages, the report recommends a separate accommodation for mothers in post-natal stage to maintain hygiene and protect the infant from contagion, for at least a year after childbirth. Apart from the needs of pregnant and lactating women, the report has also suggested that special provisions relating to health and nutrition be made for women who have recently given birth outside prison, or who have undergone abortion or miscarriage.
- To make legal aid more effective, the report suggests that legal consultations must be conducted in confidentiality and without censorship.
- The report proposes a comprehensive after-care programme to be put in place, covering employment, financial support, regaining of child custody, shelter, counselling, continuity of health care services etc. Counselling should also be provided to family members and employers to adequately receive the woman after release.
- The report also recommends that prison authorities should coordinate with local police to ensure released prisoners are not harassed by them due to the attached stigma. At least one voluntary organisation should be designated in each district to help with integration of released prisoners

11. **ReUnite App**

- Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu launched a mobile application — ReUnite — to trace missing and abandoned children in India
- The app is multiuser where parents and citizens can upload pictures of children, and provide detailed description like name, birth mark, address, report to the police station, search and identify missing kids.
- Non-government organisation Bachpan Bachao Andolan and Capgemini has developed this app.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Karlsruhe Tritium Neutrino experiment, or KATRIN

- Neutrinos are sometimes called “ghost particles” because they’re so difficult to detect.
- So, to detect them Katrin is designed
- It is a massive detector based in the town of Karlsruhe, Germany, that has been designed to measure a neutrino’s mass with far greater precision than existing experiments.
- Some 200 people from 20 institutions in seven countries are part of the project.

2. National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence

- Niti Aayog to reap benefits of artificial intelligence will suggest ways to promote adoption of machine learning in key areas of the economy guided by rules on ethics, privacy and intellectual property protection that are to be evolved by new institutions.
- It was aimed at leveraging artificial intelligence for economic growth, social development and inclusive growth and to make the

NITI Aayog has decided to focus on five sectors that are envisioned to benefit the most from AI in solving societal needs:

- Healthcare: increased access and affordability of quality healthcare,
- Agriculture: enhanced farmers’ income, increased farm productivity and reduction of wastage,
- Education: improved access and quality of education,
- Smart Cities and Infrastructure: efficient and connectivity for the burgeoning urban population, and
- Smart Mobility and Transportation: smarter and safer modes of transportation and better traffic and congestion problems.

Opportunity: the economic impact of Artificial Intelligence for India

AI is emerging as a new factor of production, augmenting the traditional factors of production viz. labor, capital and innovation and technological changes captured in total factor productivity. AI has the potential to overcome the physical limitations of capital and labour and open up new sources of value and growth. From an economic impact perspective, AI has the potential to drive growth through enabling:

- Intelligent automation i.e. ability to automate complex physical world tasks that require adaptability and agility across industries,
- Labour and capital augmentation: enabling humans to focus on parts of their role that add the most value, complementing human capabilities and improving capital efficiency, and

- Innovation diffusion i.e. propelling innovations as it diffuses through the economy

innovations in one sector will have positive consequences in another, as industry sectors are interdependent based on value chain. Economic value is expected to be created from the new goods, services and innovations that AI will enable.

analyzing across the focus sectors, the challenges are concentrated across common themes of:

- Lack of enabling data ecosystems
- Low intensity of AI research
 - * Core research in fundamental technologies
 - * Transforming core research into market applications
- Inadequate availability of AI expertise, manpower and skilling opportunities
- High resource cost and low awareness for adopting AI in business processes
- Unclear privacy, security and ethical regulations
- Unattractive Intellectual Property regime to incentivise research and adoption of AI

What should be done?

- Incentivizing Core and Applied research in AI
- The education sector needs to be re-aligned in order to effectively harness the potential of AI in a sustainable manner. In primary and secondary schools, there is a need for transition to skill based education in subjects relevant to AI.
- Skilling for the AI age
 - * Re-skilling of the current workforce will require integration with relevant existing skilling initiatives, building of new platforms that can enable improved learning, and novel methods of allowing large scale employment generation through promotion of AI.
- Accelerating Adoption
 - * Adoption of AI globally is still in its nascent stages, but growing rapidly. A 2017 survey by Statista finds that 78% of firms globally are either using AI extensively, or have plans for use in near future. Firms in China and the US especially, are proactively engaging with their research communities to enable early adoption and position themselves competitively.
- Country a model for emerging and developing economies.

3. **Norman**

- It is also known as the first psychopathic Artificial Intelligence, unveiled by U.S. researchers.
- The goal is to explain in layman's terms how algorithms are made, and to make people aware of AI's potential dangers.
- It is named after the psychopathic killer Norman Bates in the 1960 Alfred Hitchcock film Psycho.

4. **Unispace+50**

Context

- 2018 marks the 50th anniversary of the first UN Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE), held in Vienna in 1968

Details

- UNISPACE+50 will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.
- It will also be an opportunity for the international community to gather and consider the future course of global space cooperation for the benefit of humankind.

UNISPACE+50 aims to:

- Define its outputs, taking into account the evolving and complex Space agenda. Broader concept of space security. Expanding commercial space sector. Space exploration.
- Engage all key stakeholders in the space arena, including governmental and non-governmental actors, commercial sector, civil society, young generation and public at large
- Build synergies with the outcomes of the key UN Summits in 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the outcomes of the 2015 Paris Climate Summit (COP21)

5. **Enceladus- Saturn's Moon**

- It is the sixth-largest moon of Saturn.
- It is about a tenth of that of Saturn's largest moon, Titan.
- Enceladus is mostly covered by fresh, clean ice, making it one of the most reflective bodies of the Solar System.

Context

- Complex organic molecules have been discovered originating from one of Saturn's moon, Enceladus, adding to its potential to support life

Details

- In 2005, NASA's Cassini spacecraft detected plumes of water vapor and icy particles erupting from Enceladus, revealing the existence of a giant ocean hidden under the moon's frozen shell. Because there is life virtually wherever there is water on Earth, these findings suggested that life might also exist on Enceladus.
- Previously, scientists had detected only simple organic (carbon-based) compounds, each less than about five carbon atoms in size, in the plumes of Enceladus. Now, researchers have detected complex organic molecules from the moon, including some at least 15 carbon atoms in size.
- The researchers cautioned that these new findings are not solid evidence for life, as biological reactions are not the only potential sources of complex organic molecules.

6. **Hayabusa2- Japanese spacecraft**

- It is an asteroid sample return mission operated by the Japanese space agency, JAXA. It follows on from Hayabusa and addresses weak points identified in that mission
- The target is asteroid 162173 Ryugu
- Launched by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, JAXA, in 2014, the probe will poke, prod and even impact the asteroid, deploying a small lander and three rovers.
- The lander on Hayabusa2, called MASCOT (short for Mobile Asteroid Surface Scout), was built by the German Aerospace Center (DLR) as part of a joint German-French contribution to the mission.
- The successful mission came just days before the UN's International Asteroid Day on June 30, an event to raise awareness about the hazards of an asteroid impact and on how to counter such a threat.

Significance

- It will collect information about the birth of the solar system and the origin of life after a more than three year voyage through deep space.
- Scientists hope to glean clues about what gave rise to life on the earth from samples taken from Ryugu, which is thought to contain relatively large amounts of organic matter and water.

7. **James Webb Space Telescope**

- It is a space telescope developed in collaboration between NASA, the European Space Agency, and the Canadian Space Agency
- The JWST will offer unprecedented resolution and sensitivity from long-wavelength (orange-red) visible light, through near-infrared to the mid-infrared (0.6 to 27 micrometers), and is a successor instrument to the Hubble Space Telescope and the Spitzer Space Telescope.

- * It will enable a broad range of investigations across the fields of astronomy and cosmology
- * One of its major goals is observing some of the most distant events and objects in the universe, such as the formation of the first galaxies.
- Other goals include understanding the formation of stars and planets, and direct imaging of exoplanets and novae.
- When the James Webb Space Telescope finally flies, it will be the largest space observatory ever launched.

Comparison with Hubble Telescope

- The JWST's primary mirror is composed of 18 hexagonal mirror segments made of gold-coated beryllium that combine to create a mirror with a diameter of 6.5 meters (21 ft 4 in) –
 - * A large increase over the Hubble's 2.4-meter (7.9 ft) mirror.
- JWST will observe in the long-wavelength (orange to red) visible light through the mid-infrared (0.6 to 27 μm) range.
 - * Unlike the Hubble—which observes in the near ultraviolet, visible, and near infrared spectra
- This will allow the JWST to observe high redshift objects that are too old and too distant for the Hubble and other earlier instruments to observe
- The observatory has seven times the light-collecting power of Hubble.

8. Meteorite 'Black Beauty'

- the stone has been given the formal name Northwest Africa (NWA) 7034
- Black Beauty contains the rare mineral zircon, in which researchers have found a high concentration of hafnium.
- Zircon is a very robust mineral that is ideally suited to provide absolute ages. In this context, the zircons can be used to establish a temporal framework to understand the formation history of the Martian crust
- Zircon also acts as a small time capsule as it preserves information about the environment where and when it was created.

What does it signify?

- The crust that encases rocky planets and makes possible the emergence of life took shape on Mars earlier than thought and at least 100 million years sooner than on Earth

SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED

1. AlBadr

- It is an Islamic militant group operating in the Jammu Kashmir region.
- The group was allegedly formed by the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in June 1998
- Al-Badr was banned by India under The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 2004
- Al-Badr is currently on the U.S. State Department list of Designated Foreign Terrorist Organisations

2. Cantonment Roads

Context

- The defence Ministry has opened the cantonment roads to civilian population. This has raised a serious issue where the army feels the move could be a security threat.

Details

- This is applicable only for cantonments where the civilian population and military lived together.
- It doesn't apply to military bases and military stations. It is only for cantonments
- This effectively means the MoD will be the final authority on deciding "road closure" while the Army will have a "recommendatory" role

The reason for keeping the civilians away from Cantonment

- Army's training and mobilization should not be revealed to the public as our adversaries may benefit from it.
- In law and order situations, army is the last resort and some amount of deterrence needs to be maintained about its capabilities.
- When the security of the armed forces gets breached, it is not only an embarrassment for the forces but for the whole nation.
- There have been attacks on families residing in cantonments, which have stressed the need to maintain security in these areas.
- It may be argued that sentries may check the identity of commuters and allow entry. Such a measure is likely to result in altercations and impose a further administrative burden on the already stretched resources of the armed forces.
- Defence is a sensitive factor; it has to be given priority. Army roads are maintained by the armed forces, and when the situation calls for it they have to be cordoned off.
- There is also fear that the land mafia might try to encroach on defence land in the cantonments.

Civilian Concern

- In a democracy, we need to keep facilities available for public use. Civilians must have access to these roads once the scenario has been assessed.
- With growth in urbanization closure of these roads will create a havoc in traffic laid roads as the commuters will have to travel a long way to reach destination.
- There is discomfort that is caused to all those who undergo repeated security checks when entering a Cantonment.
- Section 258 of the Cantonments Act, 2006 specifically mentions that no such street shall be closed for reasons other than the security reasons and obviously any proposal of the indenting authority to close a road will mention about the security reasons which has to be examined appropriately by the cantonment board.

Cantonment

- Cantonments were established as townships, beginning with Danapur Cantonment in 1765.
- These townships also have bazaars, civilian zones and other municipal infrastructure.
- As the population grew, so did the demand for thoroughfare.

Structure

- The president of the cantonment board is the station commander, known as the local military authority.
- Cantonments are governed by an elected body under the Cantonment Act, which alone can legislate and approve closure of public roads.
 - * However, the real executive authority is with the CEO, who is appointed from the defence estates department, which is directly under the ministry of defence.
 - * He is not in the military chain of command.
 - * For efficient functioning, the CEO must be placed under the direct command of the local military authority as was the case a decade and a half ago.

Way Forward

- One cannot have a blanket ruling either way – unrestricted access to civilians or a complete ban over security issues.
- Wherever there is a likely threat, army should use modern means of Artificial Intelligence, drones, CCTV and well-equipped Quick Reaction Team commandos.
- In places where there is a need, create military bases that have only the military and their families living and working there.

3. Card Cloning or Card Skimming

- It is an identity theft tactic that allows hackers to create a fake credit card by stealing the information off an individual's actual card
- They use a Card Skimming device to fraudulently copy bank customer details
 - * credit card holder's full name.
 - * credit card number
 - * expiration date
- Stored on the magnetic strip (brown/black strip at the back) on a debit or credit card.
- Thieves use the stolen data to make fraudulent charges either online or with a counterfeit credit card.

How does credit card cloning occur?

- A hacker places a device known as a skimmer on a popular card reading location, such as on an ATM or on the credit card reader at a retail store or gas station
- The magnetic strip of a person's credit card is then read by the skimmer as it's swiped, and the information held on that magnetic strip is then sent to the hacker's computer.
- Although the text is a jumbled mess of letters, numbers and symbols, it's the right information needed to create a clone of the real card.
- This information can then be transferred to another card with a magnetic strip, such as a hotel key, gift card or old credit or debit card. When this card is now swiped, it will act like the credit card of the victim.

Issue Area

- The information skimmed from these machines is sold by the skimmers internationally. Overseas fraudsters then use the card information in e-commerce transactions.

RBI Rules

- RBI has asked banks to install anti-skimming devices and 'white-listing' solutions in the cash machines
 - * Anti-skimming devices send out signals that prevent the skimmer from functioning ie they jam skimmers from skimming
 - * White-listing solutions allow only trusted applications to work on the ATM and block any other application.
- Once a bank discovers that a machine has been compromised, it has to inform all banks whose customers have used cards in the machines.
 - * The card-issuing banks then have to replace the skimmed cards with new ones.
- By June 2019, no ATM is allowed to operate on a Windows XP operating system.
- The Reserve Bank of India has ordered banks to migrate all ATM cards from the ones with magnetic stripes to those that use EMV chips and PINs.

- * The central bank says cards which use magnetic stripes for identification are easier to defraud than those with chips and pins.

- The SMS alerts shall mandatorily be sent to the customers, while email alerts may be sent, wherever registered

4. Pakistan in Grey List in FATF

- The FATF is an inter-governmental body, which maintains "grey" lists and "black" lists to
 - * Grey Lists identify countries with weak measures to combat money laundering and terror financing.
 - * Blacklisted countries are those that are unwilling to fight money laundering and terrorist financing.
- Other countries, apart from Pakistan, included in the list are; Ethiopia, Iraq, Yemen, Serbia, Syria, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, and Vanuatu.

Why is Pakistan in Grey list?

- Pakistan has failed to comply with the anti-money laundering and terror funding guidelines despite repeated attempts.
- The case against Pakistan is its inaction against UN-banned terror groups like the Taliban and Haqqani Network, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jamaat-ud Dawa and its affiliate Falah-i-Insaaniyat Foundation, besides terrorists like Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar.
- Inclusion in the grey list can lead to sanctions.

Implications

- Inclusion in this list is not good for any country especially a country like Pakistan whose global reputation continues to suffer.
 - * Pakistan's inclusion in the terror financing list portrays a negative image to the world.
- No company wants to be doing business with a country that has possible ties with terrorist funding activities or lacks a process that prevents such activities.
 - * The cost of doing business in the country would have increased manifold, besides drying up the foreign investment.
- It will be difficult for Pakistan to get foreign loans from IMF, World Bank or Asian Development Bank
- It would worsen the country's macroeconomic position
 - * Pakistan is already under pressure due to a widening trade deficit and falling foreign exchange reserves.
 - * Pakistan also devalued its currency.
- They have also argued that the grey-listing could lead to a downgrade in Pakistan's debt ratings, making it more difficult to tap into the international bond markets.

- Direct monitoring and intense scrutiny by the International Co-operation Review Group on terror financing
- If Pakistan fails to satisfy FATF with their devised strategy, then Pakistan will be placed on the blacklist.

Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism Regulations- 2018

- Pakistan has notified this act to be fully compliant with the global watchdog FATF guidelines

5. Global Peace Index (GPI)

- It measures the relative position of nations' and regions' peacefulness
- The GPI is a report produced by the Australia-based Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) and developed in consultation with an international panel of peace experts from peace institutes and think tanks with data collected and collated by the Economist Intelligence Unit.
- The Index was first launched in May 2007, with subsequent reports being released annually

Method of accessing Peace

- The GPI gauges global peace using three broad themes:
 - * The level of societal safety and security,
 - * The extent of ongoing domestic and international conflict and
 - * The degree of militarization
- Factors are both internal such as levels of violence and crime within the country and external such as military expenditure and wars

2018 June

- India's rank has marginally improved in "global peacefulness", at a time when there is an overall decline of global peace owing to escalation of violence in West Asia and North Africa.
- India's GPI rank was 137 out of 163 countries in 2017, when the year 2016 was assessed.
- In 2018, when the year 2017 is assessed, India's rank moved up to 136.

Other countries

- Iceland continues to remain the most peaceful country in the world, a position it has held since 2008.
- Syria remained the least peaceful country in the world, a position that it had held for the past five years.

South Asian countries

- The best performer of South Asia, Bhutan, has slipped from 13 to 19
- Bangladesh' peace index deteriorated sharply. Bangladesh moved from 84 to 93.
- Nepal moved up from 93 to 84, while

- Sri Lanka moved up too, from position 80 to 67.
- Pakistan moved from 152 to 151.

South Asia experienced the largest regional improvement in peacefulness

6. Hot Pursuit

Hot pursuit owes its origin to the law of the seas against vessels that are involved in piracy or smuggling. The coastal country would take action in spite of the principle of freedom of the high seas — the rights of vessels of all nations to navigate freely on the high seas.

High Seas

The term "high seas" means all parts of the sea that are not included in the territorial sea or in the internal waters of a State.

- The high seas are open to all States, whether coastal or land-locked.
- The high seas shall be reserved for peaceful purposes.
- No State may validly purport to subject any part of the high seas to its sovereignty.

Internal waters

- Internal Waters refers to the all water and waterways on the landward side of the baseline of a country. In the internal waters a country is free to set laws, regulate its use and use of its resources.
- Rivers and canals, and sometimes the water within small bays.
- There is no interference of the foreign countries.

Territorial waters

- Territorial waters refer to 12 Nautical Miles (22.2 km) from the baseline. In this area the countries are free to set laws, regulate use and also use its resources.
- However, the foreign vessels are NOT given all rights to passage through except "Innocent Passage".
 - * The innocent passage refers to the passing through the waters which is not prejudicial to peace and security. However, the nations have right to suspend the innocent passage.
- The submarine while passing through other country's territorial waters has to navigate on the surface and show their flags.

Contiguous Zone

- The contiguous zone refers to the area 12 Nautical Miles beyond the Territorial waters. This means that it is 24 Nautical Miles from the baseline limit.
- In this zone the country can enforce laws only in 4 areas viz. pollution, taxation, customs, and immigration.

Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)

- Exclusive Economic Zones refers to the area from the edge of the territorial sea out to 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) from the baseline.

- In this area, the country has sole exploitation rights over all-natural resources.
- Exclusive Economic Zones give countries the exclusive right to develop resources within them and can be used for anything, including offshore wind farms, natural gas and oil extraction and/or access to finishing grounds
- In case of overlap the border has to be split (usually down the middle).
 - * The most important reason to introduce EEZ was to halt the clashes over the Fishing Rights and Oil Rights.
 - * When countries can't agree on how to split these exclusive economic zones it can lead to competing claims as can be seen in places such as the Sea of Japan and South China Sea.
- In the EEZ, the foreign vessels have freedom of navigation and over flight, subject to the regulation of the coastal states. Foreign states are allowed to lay submarine pipes and cables

Geneva Convention

The Geneva Convention on the High Seas was eventually folded into the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Article 111 of the latter treaty grants a coastal state the right to pursue and arrest ships escaping to international waters, as long as:

- The pursuers are competent authorities of the state;
- They have good reason to believe that the pursued ship has violated the state's laws or regulations;
- The pursuit begins while the pursuing ship is in the State's internal waters or territorial waters; and
- The pursuit is continuous.

Exceptions to Hot Pursuit

- The right of hot pursuit ceases as soon as the ship pursued enters the territorial sea of a foreign state.
- Where a coastal state, stopping or arresting a foreign ship outside the territorial sea on the basis of its right of hot pursuit, fails to justify the exercise, it shall be liable to compensate the ship for any loss or damage caused to it due to the exercise of this right.

Adaptation to land

There is no international law governing 'hot pursuit' over land. Over the years, this doctrine has been expanded on land, to justify the breaches of territorial sovereignty of foreign states as part of the ongoing pursuit of offenders. So, nations have time and again used the argument of self Defence to enter the territory of another country in pursuit of a terrorist, terrorist Organisation, criminals or anyone that is threat to the Defence of the pursuing country.

- Also, article 51 of the UN charter defines self-defense. It is the action necessary to preserve a country's territorial integrity and political independence.

- It is considered a better and a less consequential alternative to a full-blown war. However, critics argue that hot pursuit can escalate tensions between nations which can eventually result in a war.

* The phrase hot pursuit has been used as a 'threat' by nations when a country does not act against elements of threat in its own territory or is incapable of handling it.

- Because of terror camps in Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, India has gone inside these countries and taken action against armed groups.

7. Rani Rashmoni FPV

- It is a Fast patrol vessel, built by HSL, which will be based in Visakhapatnam
- It was the last of the five Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV) project of Indian Coast Guard
- So far four such ships such as ICGS Rani Abbakka, ICGS Rani Avanti Bai, ICGS Rani Durgavati and ICGS Rani Gaidinliu, have been commissioned and are in active service at various locations on the eastern seaboard.

Features

- The FPVs are equipped with advanced sensors and state-of-the-art equipment and are designed to perform multifarious tasks such as surveillance, interdiction, search and rescue, anti-smuggling and anti-poaching, operations. The 51 mtr ship is propelled by three MTU 4000 series diesel engines of 2720 capacity each, coupled with Rolls Royce Kamewa jets.
- The patrol vessel is fitted with an advanced Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), to carry out search and rescue operations
- Other features include Integrated Bridge System (IBS), Machinery Control System, Infra-red Communication System and the armament includes one CRN 91 Naval Gun along with its fire control system. The FPV was indigenously built by Hindustan Shipyard.

8. Shaheen-III

- It is a land-based surface-to-surface medium range ballistic missile
- Development began in secrecy in the early 2000s in response to India's Agni-III,
- It can reach all corners of India and reach deep into the Middle East parts of North Africa
- The Shaheen program is composed of the solid-fuel system in a contrast to Ghauri program that is primarily based on liquid-fuel system.

9. Why did riots erupt in Shillong?

- Shillong - a hilly terrain in the northeastern state of Meghalaya
- The hill town, once named 'The Scotland of the East' by the British

- It has been a theatre of communal conflicts between the dominant Khasi tribe and 'dkhars,' a derogatory term for non-tribal outsiders.
- violence broke out on May 31st following a fight between Dalit Sikhs and the local Khasi people

Background

- The 'Mazhabi' or Dalit Sikhs are one of the earliest non-tribal settlers in Shillong. The British, who had set up a base in the city — then a village around the Hima (kingdom or traditional state) of Myllem — in the 1950s, had brought them for manual scavenging, a job the locals would not do.
- The incident occurred in Punjabi Lane, locally known as the 'Sweepers' Colony,' an area largely inhabited by Sikh migrants from Punjab most of whom work as sanitation workers in the city.

Stereotyping

- Locals have for long considered Punjabi Lane an eyesore, whose residents are stereotyped as trouble-makers.
 - * Few locals want shifting the colony to the outskirts of the city
- The Sikhs refuse to budge, claiming that the Syiem (king) of Myllem had given the land for permanent settlement through a December 10, 1863, agreement with the British.
- But members of Sikh organisations and the National Commission for Minorities, who visited Shillong during the violence, said relocating people living in a place for more than 150 years would not be possible.

Homogenous vs Cosmopolitan

- Unlike other urban spaces in the northeastern India that began as homogenized habitations, Shillong was born as a cosmopolitan town because the British needed occupation-specific communities to run the administration.
- Shillong remained pluralistic after 1947.
- Meghalaya's statehood reduced Shillong's administrative reach, but it gained popularity as India's western music hub that celebrates birthdays of Bob Dylan and Bob Marley with annual gigs.
- But several waves of ethnic cleansing between 1979 and 1992 —
 - * first against the Bengalis, who formed the clerical cadre of the British,
 - * followed by Nepalis and Biharis — dented Shillong's image as a quiet hill town that Rabindranath Tagore eulogised in some of his poems and plays.
 - * Scores of non-tribal people were killed and thousands left. The numerically weaker Sikhs are perhaps the last 'dkhar' group to be targeted.

Way Forward

- Shillong has its eyes on becoming a major tourist destination. So, Shillong needs to repair the dent in its tourist-friendly image

10. Area Domination

- At a more micro level, it is aimed towards establishing the writ and authority of the state wherever the government feels there is erosion in the civil administration's authority.
- In other words, area domination is a strategy used by the army as well as paramilitary forces, to deprive ground to anti-state elements and instill a sense of security in the local population.

11. National Security Guard (NSG)

- It was raised in 1984, following Operation Blue Star and the assassination of Indira Gandhi, "for combating terrorist activities with a view to protect States against internal disturbances". It is a 100% deputation force.
- NSG is under the authority of Ministry of Home Affairs, However it is not categorized under the uniform nomenclature of Central Armed Police Forces.
- NSG is headed by a DGP from the Indian Police Service
- It has a Special Forces mandate and its core operational capability is provided by Special Action Group (SAG) which is drawn from the Indian Army.
 - * Two SAGs - 51 Special Action Group (Counter Terror) and 52 Special Action Group (Counter Hijack)
- The Special Rangers Group (SRG), the police component of NSG, which also handles VIP security, is composed of personnel on deputation from other Central Armed Police Forces and State Police Forces
- The NSG personnel are often referred to in the media as Black Cat Commandos because of the black dress and black cat insignia worn on their uniform
- NSG smallest combat unit is 'Hit' having five members

Significance

- The NSG snipers, with their pin-point accuracy and the use of sophisticated equipment like through-the-wall radars, sniper rifles and corner shot assault weapons will help reduce casualty figures during the ops
- There are high casualties when the security forces take on terrorists who are holed up inside buildings. The army avoids these high-risk operations due to the human costs involved and tries to neutralize the terrorists by bringing down the building itself.
- The NSG, along with their house intervention team commandos, will also have demolition experts for handling such situations.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Centre to start measuring 'green GDP' of States

Context

- the government is planning to implement a five-year exercise to compute district-level data of the country's environmental wealth.
- The numbers will eventually be used to calculate every State's 'green' Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- The metric will help with a range of policy decisions, such as compensation to be paid during land acquisition, calculation of funds required for climate mitigation, and so on.

Mode of operation

- Land will be demarcated into "grids" with about 15-20 grids per district.
- These will capture the diversity in the State's geography, farmland, wildlife, and emissions pattern, and will be used to compute a value
- Much of the data required for the inventory would be sourced from datasets that already exist with other government ministries.

Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP)

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has taken this initiative for skill development in the environment and forest sector to enable India's youth to get gainful employment and/or self-employment.
- The objective of GSDP is skilling the youth of India, especially dropouts and in increasing the availability of skilled workforce.
- The government has identified 35 courses including pollution monitoring (air/water/noise/soil), effluent treatment plant operation, waste management, forest management, water budgeting and auditing, conservation of river dolphins, wildlife management, marine taxonomy and coastal biodiversity, mangroves conservation, bamboo management and livelihood generation.
- The programme will include expanding the monitoring network, conducting air pollution health impact studies, setting up air information systems, certification of monitoring institutions, air quality forecasting systems, carrying out source apportionment studies, support for strict implementation of actions for tackling air pollution, and increased international cooperation.

Significance

- It will help in the attainment of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), National Biodiversity Targets (NBTs), as well as Waste Management Rules (2016).
- This initiative has been drawn up to tackle climate change challenges.
- GSDP aims to get 80,000 people imparted green skills and in filling the skill gaps in the environment sector.

2. Chrysilla volupes

Context

- Scientists rediscovered after 150 years a rare species of spider, which was believed have become extinct, from the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS) located in the Western Ghats region of Kerala.

Details

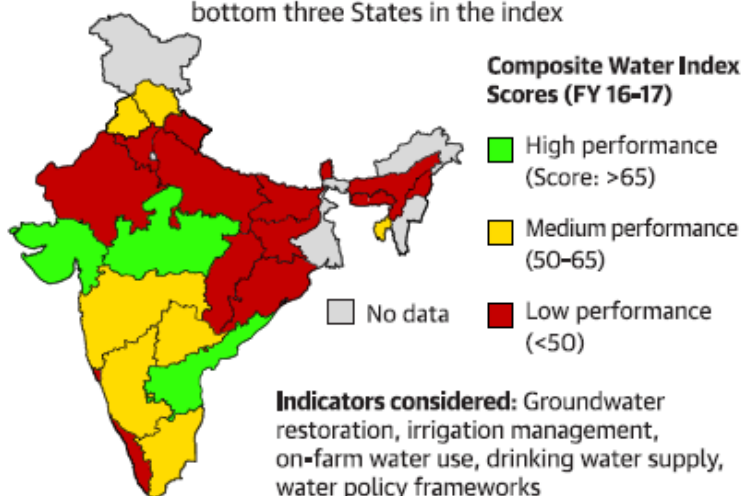
- It is a species of spider of the genus Chrysilla.
- It is found from Sri Lanka, India to Bhutan
- The spider belonged to the family of jumping spiders (Salticidae)

3. Composite Water Management Index (CWMI)

- Envisioned as an annual exercise the CWMI, to evaluate States, has been developed by the NITI Aayog and comprises 9 broad sectors with 28 different indicators covering various aspects of groundwater, restoration of water bodies, irrigation, farm practices, drinking water, policy and governance.
- It is a useful tool to assess and improve the performance in efficient management of water resources.
- The index is an attempt to inspire states and UTs towards efficient and optimal utilisation of water and recycling thereof with a sense of urgency.
- the index can be utilised to formulate and implement suitable strategies for better management of water resources.
- It has been finalised after an elaborate exercise including seeking feedback from the states and consultation with reputed experts

Mixed bag

Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh manage water resources effectively, according to NITI Aayog's Composite Water Index Scores. Meghalaya, Uttarakhand and Nagaland are the bottom three States in the index



Facts

- Nearly 600 million Indians faced high to extreme water stress and about 2,00,000 people died every year due to inadequate access to safe water.
- Twenty-one cities, including Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad will run out of groundwater by 2020, affecting 100 million people, the study noted.
- If matters are to continue, there will be a 6% loss in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2050

4. Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018

The new draft aims to "conserve and protect the unique environment of coastal stretches and marine areas, besides livelihood security to the fisher communities and other local communities in the coastal areas and to promote sustainable development based on scientific principles taking into account the dangers of natural hazards, sea level rise due to global warming..."

- CRZ limits on land along the tidal influenced water bodies has been proposed to be reduced from 100 meters or the width of the creek, whichever is less, to 50 meters or the width of the creek, whichever is less.

- A No Development Zone (NDZ) of 20 meters has been proposed to be stipulated for all Islands close to the main land coast and for all Backwater Islands in the main land.

Mapping of high tide and hazard lines

- The draft makes the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) the final authority to lay down standards for High Tide Line (HTL). Earlier the demarcation was carried out by one of the agencies authorised by MoEF, on recommendations of the NCSCM.
- The hazard line, which was demarcated by the Survey of India (SOI), has been delinked from the CRZ regulatory regime, and will now be used as a "tool" for disaster management and planning of "adaptive and mitigation measures."
- The 2018 notification takes away the protection that the hazard line could provide; instead, it merely states that the hazard line should be used as a tool for disaster management.
- This means that one can build in these areas after preparing an environment assessment report stating that certain precautions have been considered

Projects that require MoEF's approval

- Only those projects located in CRZ-I (environmentally most critical) and CRZ-IV (water and seabed areas) shall require MoEF clearance. All other projects shall be considered by Coastal Zone Management Authorities (CZMAs) in the states and union territories.
- The draft also allows for construction of roads and roads on stilts, "by way of reclamation in CRZ-1 areas", only in exceptional cases for "defence, strategic purposes and public utilities," to be recommended by the CZMA and approved by the Ministry. However, it does not explicitly state what strategic projects are.
- Interestingly, it notes that in cases where roads are constructed through mangroves or are likely to damage the latter, "a minimum three times the mangrove area affected/ destroyed/ cut during the construction... shall be taken up for compensatory plantation..."

Bifurcation of CRZ-III areas

CRZ-III areas — land that is relatively undisturbed such as in rural areas, and do not fall in areas considered close to shoreline within existing municipal limits — have been divided into two categories:

- CRZ-III A refers to rural areas with a population density of 2,161 people per square kilometre or more as per the 2011 Census.
 - * Such areas shall have a "No Development Zone" (NDZ) of 50m from the HTL, the draft notes.
- CRZ-III B refers to rural areas with a population density lesser than 2,161 people per square kilometre.
 - * Such areas shall continue to have an NDZ of 200m from the HTL.

Floor Space Index (FSI) for CRZ-II

- While the 2011 notification had frozen the floor space index or floor area ratio for CRZ-II areas at 1991 Development Control Regulation (DCR) levels,
- The new draft proposes to de-freeze the same and permit FSI for construction projects as prevailing on the date of the new notification.

5. Dam Safety Bill, 2018**Details:**

- The Bill provides for proper surveillance, inspection, operation and maintenance of all specified dams in the country to ensure their safe functioning.
- The Bill provides for constitution of a National Committee on Dam Safety which shall evolve dam safety policies and recommend necessary regulations as may be required for the purpose.
- The Bill provides for establishment of National Dam Safety Authority as a regulatory body which shall discharge functions to implement the policy, guidelines and standards for dam safety in the country.
- The Bill provides for constitution of a State Committee on Dam Safety by State Government.

National Dam Safety Authority

- It shall maintain liaison with the State Dam Safety Organisations and the owners of dams for standardisation of dam safety related data and practices;
- It shall provide the technical and managerial assistance to the States and State Dam Safety Organisations;
- It shall maintain a national level data-base of all dams in the country and the records of major dam failures;
- It shall examine the cause of any major dam failure;
- It shall publish and update the standard guidelines and check-lists for the routine inspection and detailed investigations of dams and appurtenances;
- It shall accord recognition or accreditations to the organisations that can be entrusted with the works of investigation, design or construction of new dams;
- It will also look into unresolved points of issue between the State Dam Safety Organisation of two states, or between the State Dam Safety Organisation of a State and the owner of a dam in that State, for proper solution;
- Further, in certain cases, such as dams of one State falling under the territory of another State, the National Authority shall also perform the role of State Dam Safety Organization thereby eliminating potential causes for inter-state conflicts.

Benefits:

- It will help all the States and Union Territories of India to adopt uniform dam safety procedures which shall ensure safety of dams and safeguard benefits from such dams. This shall also help in safeguarding human life, livestock and property.
- The draft Bill has been finalised after wide consultation with leading Indian experts and international experts.

6. Dudhwa National Park

- The Dudhwa National Park is a national park in the Terai of Uttar Pradesh
- It is located on the Indo-Nepal border in the Lakhimpur Kheri District

7. Emammal Citizen Science Project

- The project is aimed at grass-roots conservation through collection of scientific information by children, is implemented by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), in collaboration with Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra (SNM).

Camera Trapping and its importance

Camera trapping is the use of remotely activated cameras (a.k.a trail cameras or camera trap) to document wild animals for research, hunting, wildlife viewing, , and security.

- The technique has been used since the beginning of the 20th century and is gaining popularity, primarily because these tools provide scientists with the ability to address ecologically-difficult questions about 'when' and 'where' most terrestrial species are found across space and time.
- The data collected through these efforts are vouchers of species presence or absence at a given time and location and are available for review by multiple scientists and stored in digital libraries which are curated much like a museum.
- For the individual user, a camera trap can simply be an exciting way to view and document the wildlife using the habitat you provide.
- Trail cameras are also a great tool to inspire conservation awareness and facilitate environmental education.

8. Half-Earth Project

- To protect life on earth, the famous American biologist E.O. Wilson has described an ambitious project he calls "Half-Earth".
- He calls for formally protecting 50% of the earth's land surface in order to conserve our rapidly disappearing natural heritage

The Half-Earth Project will

- Drive the research needed to better understand and care for our world,

- Provide leadership to guide conservation efforts, and
- Engage people to participate broadly in the transcendent goal to conserve Half-Earth.

9. **Ice Sheet Mass Balance Inter-comparison Exercise (IMBIE)**

- IMBIE is an international scientific collaboration attempting to improve estimates of the amounts of ice contained in ice sheets around the world and of their contribution to sea level rise and to publish data and analyses concerning these subjects.
- IMBIE was founded in 2011 and is a collaboration between the European Space Agency (ESA) and NASA
- It contributes to assessment reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

10. **Indian Nitrogen Assessment**

- The Indian Nitrogen Assessment assesses the sources, impacts, trends and future scenarios of reactive nitrogen in the Indian environment

Context

- Nitrogen particles make up the largest fraction of PM_{2.5} says the first-ever quantitative assessment of nitrogen pollution in India.

Major cause

- The burning of crop residue is said to be a key contributor to winter smog in many parts of North India, it contributes over 240 million kg of nitrogen oxides (NO_x: a generic term for the nitrogen oxides that are most relevant for air pollution, namely nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide) and about 7 million kg of nitrous oxide (N₂O) per year.
- Agriculture remains the largest contributor to nitrogen emissions,
 - * As fertilizer, nitrogen is one of the main inputs for agriculture, but inefficiencies along the food chain mean about 80% of nitrogen is wasted, contributing to air and water pollution plus greenhouse gas emissions, thereby causing threats for human health, ecosystems and livelihoods
- The non-agricultural emissions of nitrogen oxides and nitrous oxide are growing rapidly, with sewage and fossil-fuel burning — for power, transport and industry — leading the trend.
 - * Annual NO_x emissions from coal, diesel and other fuel combustion sources are growing at 6.5% a year currently

Break up

- Agricultural soils contributed to over 70% of N₂O emissions from India in 2010, followed by waste water (12%) and residential and commercial activities (6%).
- Since 2002, N₂O has replaced methane as the second largest Greenhouse Gas (GHG) from Indian agriculture.

- Chemical fertilizers (over 82% of it is urea) account for over 77% of all agricultural N₂O emissions in India, while manure, compost and so on make up the rest.
- Most of the fertilizers consumed (over 70%) go into the production of cereals, especially rice and wheat, which accounts for the bulk of N₂O emissions from India.

Cattle emissions

- Cattle account for 80% of the ammonia production, though their annual growth rate is 1%, due to a stable population.
- India is globally the biggest source of ammonia emission, nearly double that of NO_x emissions.
- The poultry industry, on the other hand, with an annual growth rate of 6%, recorded an excretion of reactive nitrogen compounds of 0.415 tonnes in 2016.
- That is anticipated to increase to 1.089 tonnes by 2030.

Percentage Rise

- Indian NO_x emissions grew at 52% from 1991 to 2001 and 69% from 2001 to 2011.

How to reduce?

- Reduced use of nitrogen-based fertilizers across the world
- There should be more effective recycling of existing nitrogen sources such as excrement and improvement in methods to recapture nitrogen oxides and turn them into nitrates, which could be used by the chemical industry for applications like production of fertilizer.

Challenges

- Addressing nitrogen challenge requires pooling technical expertise.
- Given the trans-boundary nature of nitrogen pollution, international co-operation is also essential if we are to make substantial progress

International Nitrogen Management System (INMS)

- It is an UN-backed global coalition promoting better management of the nitrogen cycle
- INMS was launched in December 2016 as a USD 60 million initiative, spearheaded by UN Environment, to support development of international policy to improve global nitrogen management

11. **Ivory Game- Asian Elephant/ Indian Elephant**

Hashtadantha

- It was rumored to be ancient Ayurvedic medicine that is said to aid hair growth.
- It is a hair loss remedy, an oil which contained ground wild elephant teeth

Issue Area

- Along with ivory, their teeth were also now in demand.

- Animal trappers in Idukki Wild Life Sanctuary had elephant teeth to sell.
- Elephants are vulnerable to poaching especially during monsoon. The areas also include forests contiguous to Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Operation Shikkar

- It was an operation to arrest poachers who were involved in ivory trade
- The probe that unfolded across the country revealed how poachers shot elephants dead on order, hacked their tusks with camp axes and delivered the ivory to Thiruvananthapuram
- Thiruvananthapuram is the hub of ivory trade in South India because of its vast pool of traditional artisans who are adept at carving wood, animal bone and also ivory. Traffickers offer them higher wages than what they get for working on wood or camel bone.

Importance

- Dung of elephants helps to disperse germinating seeds.
- Elephants are not only a cultural icon in India and throughout Asia, they also help to maintain the integrity of their forest and grassland habitats.

Laws for Protection of Elephant

- IUCN: Endangered
- The elephant has been accorded the highest possible protection under the Indian wildlife law through its listing under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 of India.
 - * This means that hunting/trading this species can attract rigorous imprisonment of up to seven years and a minimum fine of 25000 INR.
- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has listed the Asian Elephant in Appendix I which prohibits all commercial international trade of the species.

12. MARPOL 73/78

- MARPOL is short for marine pollution and 73/78 short for the years 1973 and 1978
- It was developed by the International Maritime Organization in an effort to minimize pollution of the oceans and seas, including dumping, oil and air pollution.
- The objective of this convention is to preserve the marine environment in an attempt to completely eliminate pollution by oil and other harmful substances and to minimize accidental spillage of such substances.

13. Nasikabatrachus Bhupathi

- The soiled-dwelling species, discovered by scientists from the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad, has been named after the Indian herpetologist S. Bhupathy, who died in a freak accident in 2014.

- Indian scientists have discovered a new species of frog that has a snout-shaped nose, just like a pig's, evoking comparisons with the Purple frog that took the world by storm when it was first discovered in 2003.
- Bhupathy's purple frog inhabits the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats, near the Srivilliputhur Grizzled Giant Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu.
- The discovery is significant as it constitutes additional evidence in favour of the theory of continental drift.
- The Purple frog is an inhabitant of Seychelles, and the discovery of Bhupathy's purple frog in India suggests that the Indian subcontinent was part of the ancient landmass of Gondwana before splitting from Seychelles 65 million years ago.

14. Silent Valley National Park

- It is located in the Nilgiri hills, within the palakkad District of Kerala,
- The Silent Valley region is locally known as "Sairandhrivanam", which in Malayalam means Sairandhri's Forest.
- Silent Valley is home to the largest population of lion-tailed macaques, an endangered species of primate.

15. Shringasaurus Indicus

- Shringasaurus belongs to a group of reptiles (Allokotosauria) that appeared in the Early or Middle Triassic and became completely extinct close to the end of the Triassic period (approximately 200 million years ago).
- The name Shringasaurus indicus is derived from ancient Sanskrit and Greek roots and refers to the horns present on its skull ('Shringa' for horn and 'sauros' for reptile), while indicus refers to India, the country of discovery.

Features

- S. indicus is 3-4 metres in length, 1.25–1.50 metres tall at the hip, and has a relatively long neck and small head. The ribs are also bigger than other reptiles of that time.
- It has leaf-shaped teeth with small cusps, suggesting that the reptile was herbivorous.

Horns

- Most strikingly, it has a pair of large horns. The discovery of horns overthrows the earlier notion that horned species were restricted to dinosaurs of the Cretaceous period (140 million years ago).
- The discovery of adult reptile bones without horns is indicative of females and therefore of sexual dimorphism. Juveniles too have horns, though smaller in size.

- Horns would not have been effective against predators. It would have served more to attract females or to fight with other competing males to gain access to receptive females as occurs in multiple modern animals with behaviors driven by sexual selection.

Transformative Carbon Asset Facility (TCAF)

- Started by Four European countries - Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland
- They will find new ways to create incentives aimed at large scale cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in developing countries to combat climate change.
- The World Bank Group worked with the countries to develop the initiative.
- The Transformative Carbon Asset Facility will help developing countries implement their plans to cut emissions by working with them to create new classes of carbon assets associated with reduced greenhouse gas emission reductions, including those achieved through policy actions.
- The facility will measure and pay for emission cuts in large scale programs in areas like renewable energy, transport, energy efficiency, solid waste management, and low carbon cities

16. Tupistra khasiana

- It is a new species from Meghalaya
- It is named after the Khasi tribe of the Khasi hills

17. World Oceans Day

- It takes place every 8 June.
- It has been celebrated unofficially since its original proposal in 1992 by Canada's International Centre for Ocean Development (ICOD) and the Ocean Institute of Canada (OIC) at the Earth Summit – UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- World Oceans Day is an annual observation to honor, help protect, and conserve the world's oceans.

World Oceans Day provides a unique opportunity to honor, help protect, and conserve our world's shared ocean. The ocean is important because it:

- Generates most of the oxygen we breathe
- Regulates our climate
- Cleans the water
- Offers a pharmacopoeia of medicines

18. Even small dams have severe impact on river ecology

Context

- The first study on small hydropower projects in India proves that they cause as severe ecological impacts as big dams, including altering fish communities and changing river flows.

Small dams and its importance

- Hydro projects which usually generate less than 25 megawatts of power and consist of a wall that obstructs a river's flow,
- A large pipe that diverts the collected water to a turbine-driven powerhouse to generate electricity and
- A canal that releases the water back into the river, are touted to be better than large dams because they submerge fewer regions and barely impact river flow.

Such projects receive financial subsidies — even carbon credits — for being 'greener'.

what did the report Say?

- Results show that changes in water flow in the dammed sections reduced the stream's depth and width; water in these stretches was also warmer and had lower dissolved oxygen levels.
- The team found that un-dammed stretches recorded a higher diversity of fish species, including endemics (species seen only in the Western Ghats) but in dam are there was decrease in fish diversity

Issue

- Such small hydro-projects cropping up on rivers in the Ghats is a serious worry especially because they do not require environmental impact assessments.

Way forward

- Small dams are not necessarily bad they need to meet proper regulations that are set in place which involves Regulations could include limiting the number of dams in a river basin or maintaining a minimum distance between dams on the same river stretch.

19. Maharashtra government ban on plastic

- The government issued a notification banning the manufacture, use, transport, distribution, wholesale and retail sale, storage and import of plastic bags with and without handle
- The ban also covers disposable products, made from plastic and thermocol (polystyrene), such as single-use disposable dishes, cups, plates, glasses, fork, bowl, container, disposable dish/bowl used for packaging food in hotels, spoon, straw, non-woven polypropylene bags, cups/pouches to store liquid, packaging with plastic to wrap or store the products and packaging of food items and grain material.

Exceptions

- The ban is not applicable to PET bottles, irrespective of capacity.
 - * These bottles, however, should have predefined buyback price ranging from ₹1 to ₹2, depending on the size, printed on them.

- Plastic used for packaging of medicines, compostable plastic bags or material used for plant nurseries, handling of solid waste, plastic bags not less than 50-micron thickness used for packaging of milk (with the specific purpose printed on it), plastic manufactured for export in SEZs and plastic to wrap the material at the manufacturing stage are excluded from the ban.

* The ban is applicable to manufacturers and consumers as well as the chain in between, which includes shops, hawkers, vendors and offices.

What is the penalty?

- Urban and rural civic bodies, Collectors, forest officers, police authorities and Maharashtra Pollution Control Board officials have been empowered to implement the ban and take legal action.
- The penalty for violating the ban starts from ₹5,000 (first offence), ₹10,000 (second time) and ₹25,000 (third time) with three months in jail.
- In case one fails to pay the minimum penalty, the civic body can file a prosecution complaint before the court, which will decide the amount to be paid.

Implementation

- The BMC has trained 250 inspectors for levying penalties. Their list is available on its website, along with that of its 37 collection centres where people can dispose of plastic.
- While levying penalty, they will be registering the offender's Aadhaar number, PAN number or driver licence number.
- It has also started a dedicated helpline for door-to-door collection.

Why was this necessary?

- Plastics were choking of nullahs in Mumbai
- They were cause of flooding in parts of the city during monsoons

Cause of concern

- The State has 2,500 units making plastic bags, employing 56,000 people. This will lead to unemployment.
- They owe nearly ₹11,000 crore to banks as of March 31 which may lead to default by these organisations and companies to banks
- The Clothing Manufacturers' Association of India has spoken out against the ban, saying the apparel trade employs 30 lakh people in the country and depends on polypropylene for packaging.

20. Green ambitions on renewable energy targets

About Renewable Energy

- There are many forms of renewable energy. Most of these renewable energies depend in one way or another on sunlight.

- Wind and hydroelectric power are the direct result of differential heating of the Earth's surface which leads to air moving about (wind) and precipitation forming as the air is lifted.
- Solar energy is the direct conversion of sunlight using panels or collectors.
- Biomass energy is stored sunlight contained in plants. Other renewable energies that do not depend on sunlight are geothermal energy, which is a result of radioactive decay in the crust combined with the original heat of accreting the Earth, and tidal energy, which is a conversion of gravitational energy.

A brief note

- Policy tweaks and incentives are needed to meet the renewable energy targets
- In a surprising statement this month, Union Power Minister R.K. Singh said India would overshoot its target of installing 175 gigawatts of capacity from renewable energy sources by 2022.
- India was on track, he said, to hit 225 GW of renewable capacity by then.
- This is a tall claim, considering India has missed several interim milestones since it announced its 175 GW target in 2015.
- The misses happened despite renewable capacity being augmented at a blistering pace, highlighting how ambitious the initial target was.

Challenges

- Technological and financial challenges remain: both wind and solar generation could be erratic, and India's creaky electricity grid must be modernized to distribute such power efficiently.
- Meanwhile, wind and solar tariffs have hit such low levels that suppliers are working with wafer-thin margins. This means small shocks can knock these sectors off their growth trajectories.
- The obstacles have capped capacity addition to 69 GW till date, with India missing its 2016 and 2017 milestones. To hit its 2022 target of 175 GW, 106 GW will have to be added in four years, more than twice the capacity added in the last four.
- In the solar sector alone, which the government is prioritizing, policy uncertainties loom large. Manufacturers of photovoltaic (PV) cells have demanded a 70% safeguard duty on Chinese PV imports, and the Directorate General of Trade Remedies will soon take a call on this.
- But any such duty will deal a body blow to solar-power suppliers, who rely heavily on Chinese hardware, threatening the growth of the sector.
- There is also the problem of the rooftop-solar segment. Of the current goal of 100 GW from solar energy by 2022, 40 GW is to come from rooftop installations, and 60 GW from large solar parks.

- Despite being the fastest-growing renewable-energy segment so far — rooftop solar clocked a compound annual growth rate of 117% between 2013 and 2017 — India only hit 3% of its goal by the end of 2017, according to a Bloomberg New Energy Finance report.
- The reason being Homeowners aren't warming up to the idea of installing photovoltaic panels on their terraces because the economics does not work out for them.
- Compared to industries and commercial establishments, a home typically needs less power and will not use everything it generates. So, homeowners need to be able to sell electricity back to the grid, which in turn needs a nationwide "net-metering" policy

Conclusion

- As of today, only a few States have such policies, discouraging users elsewhere. Such challenges can be overcome with the right incentives, but they will take time to kick in.
- The good news is that even if India hits the 175 GW target, it stands to meet its greenhouse-gas emission goal under the Paris climate agreement. This in itself will be a worthy achievement. Overshooting this target will be a plus, but until the government tackles the policy challenges, it must hold off on implausible claims.

21. Chilika Lake

- It is a brackish water lagoon, spread over the Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts of Odisha
- It is the largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest coastal lagoon in the world
- Chilika Lake was designated the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention
- It is the largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian sub-continent. The lake is home to a number of threatened species of plants and animals

Proposed water aerodrome in Chilika Lake likely to face green hurdle

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

The project will most likely face a green hurdle

- Chilika turns into a temporary habitat for lakhs of migratory and residential birds. If an aircraft flies at low height, there is every chance of the birds getting hit. While the bird population will be in danger, safety of passengers of amphibious aircraft will also be jeopardised

- Noise pollution generated by close to 10,000 boats has already taken a toll on the endangered Irrawaddy dolphins in the lake. The amphibious aircraft operation would add to the woes.
- As many as 155 endangered Irrawaddy dolphins were spotted in Chilika, which is the single largest habitat of this species in the world. After clearing the lake of illegal man-made enclosures, dolphins have now started moving freely in all sectors.

22. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) hindering biodiversity research

Context

- Professors and scientists national and international say that the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), of which India is signatory too, is hindering biodiversity research and preventing international collaborations due to regulations that have risen due to its implementation.

Details

- The CBD is aimed at conserving biological diversity, sustainably using biological components and fair and equitable sharing of benefits (with local or indigenous communities) that may arise out of the utilisation of genetic resources.
- But this has generated "unintended consequences" for research; due to national-level legislations instituted by countries under the CBD, obtaining field permits for access to specimens for non-commercial research has become increasingly difficult

Recommendation

- They suggest that the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture or the "Seed Treaty", which ensures worldwide public accessibility of genetic resources of essential food and fodder, could be used as a model for exchange of biological materials for non-commercial research.
- Another solution may be to add an explicit treaty or annex in the CBD to promote and facilitate biodiversity research, conservation, and international collaboration

23. Dixie Valley Toad

Context

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said that conservationists presented substantial scientific information suggesting the Dixie Valley toad could be at risk of extinction.

Habitat

- The 2-inch-long (5-centimeters) toad with flecks of gold on its olive-colored body was discovered in 2007 in thick underbrush of a spring-fed marsh in the Dixie Valley

- It's only found in an area covering less than 3 square miles (7 square kilometers) in the marshy remnant of the lakebed east of Reno, Nevada..

24. International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

- It is popularly known as the International Seed Treaty
- It was adopted by the Thirty-First Session of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on 3 November 2001.
- It is a comprehensive international agreement in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, which aims at guaranteeing food security through the conservation, exchange and sustainable use of the world's plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), as well as the fair and equitable benefit sharing arising from its use.

The Treaty aims at:

- Recognizing the enormous contribution of farmers to the diversity of crops that feed the world;
- Establishing a global system to provide farmers, plant breeders and scientists with access to plant genetic materials;
- Ensuring that recipients share benefits they derive from the use of these genetic materials with the countries where they have been originated.

25. Mission Innovation

- It is a global initiative of 23 countries and the European Commission to reinvigorate and accelerate clean energy innovation with the objective of making clean energy more widely affordable
- As part of the initiative, participating countries have committed to seek to double their governments' clean energy research and development (R&D) investments over five years, while encouraging greater levels of private sector investment in transformative clean energy technologies.
- These additional resources will dramatically accelerate the availability of the advanced technologies that will define a future global energy mix that is clean, affordable, and reliable.

The eight Innovation Challenges are the following:

- Smart Grids Innovation Challenge – to enable future grids that are powered by affordable, reliable, decentralised renewable electricity systems
- Off-Grid Access to Electricity Innovation Challenge – to develop systems that enable off-grid households and communities to access affordable and reliable renewable electricity
- Carbon Capture Innovation Challenge – to enable near-zero CO₂ emissions from power plants and carbon intensive industries
- Sustainable Biofuels Innovation Challenge – to develop ways to produce, at scale, widely affordable, advanced biofuels for transportation and industrial applications

- Converting Sunlight Innovation Challenge – to discover affordable ways to convert sunlight into storable solar fuels
- Clean Energy Materials Innovation Challenge – to accelerate the exploration, discovery, and use of new high-performance, low-cost clean energy materials
- Affordable Heating and Cooling of Buildings Innovation Challenge – to make low-carbon heating and cooling affordable for everyone
- Renewable and Clean Hydrogen Innovation Challenge

India's Commitments

- India announced setting up of First International Incubator for clean energy in public-private partnership at a total investment of around US \$ 5 million in Delhi.
 - * This incubator will foster entrepreneurship and promote innovations in the area of clean energy and provide opportunities to innovators across the MI countries to test their technologies in the local market.
- India also announced participation in global cooling innovation challenge to design a more efficient cooling solution catering to the typical housing unit in a highly populous city in India.
- India announced research programmes emanating out of MI centric funding opportunities in smart grids and off-grid access at a total investment of US \$ 10 million which has participation of large number of Indian institutions and foreign entities.

26. Musi River

- It is a tributary of the Krishna River
- Himayat Sagar and Osman Sagar are dams built on it which used to act as source of water for Hyderabad.
- The river was known as Nerva during Qutub Shahi period.

Polluted Musi water used for irrigation affecting aquifers

- The continuous irrigation of agricultural and horticultural crops along the banks of the highly polluted Musi river is leading to the contamination of the city's aquifers.
- The highly polluted river water seeps into the ground and contaminates the underground aquifers that sustain the state's water table.
- The problem is only compounded during the monsoon season, as percolation is higher. Chemicals present in the polluted river water also seep into the water table, changing its texture.



27. Rajaji Tiger Reserve

- 2nd Tiger Reserve (1st is Jim Corbett) of Uttarakhand State
- #Rajaji #Sanctuary was named after C. Rajagopalachari lovingly known as Rajaji, the first Governor General of independent India, as it was on his behest that the sanctuary was created. It is said that when Rajaji, the newly appointed Governor General, was invited for a hunt he was so impressed by the biological diversity and plethora of wild animals in the area that instead of hunting, he suggested the creation of a wildlife sanctuary in the area.

28. Transformative Carbon Asset Facility (TCAF)

- Started by Four European countries - Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland
- They will find new ways to create incentives aimed at large scale cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in developing countries to combat climate change.
- The World Bank Group worked with the countries to develop the initiative.
- The Transformative Carbon Asset Facility will help developing countries implement their plans to cut emissions by working with them to create new classes of carbon assets associated with reduced greenhouse gas emission reductions, including those achieved through policy actions.
- The facility will measure and pay for emission cuts in large scale programs in areas like renewable energy, transport, energy efficiency, solid waste management, and low carbon cities

29. Belize's reef, an underwater wonder, may be out of risk

- The Mesoamerican Reef, an underwater wonder world whose survival was considered to be at risk for years, may now be removed from UNESCO's list of threatened World Heritage Sites, thanks to bold steps to save it by activists and the Belizean government.
- It came just in time for this week's UNESCO meeting in Manama, Bahrain, where the UN body is due to consider removing the reef from its list of endangered heritage sites.

The Mesoamerican Reef

- The Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System (MBRS), also popularly known as the Great Mayan Reef or Great Maya Reef, is a marine region that stretches over 1,000 kilometres (620 mi) from Isla Contoy at the tip of the Yucatán Peninsula down to Belize, Guatemala and the Bay Islands of Honduras.
- The reef system includes various protected areas and parks including the Belize Barrier Reef, Arrecifes de Cozumel National Park, Hol Chan Marine Reserve (Belize), Sian Ka'an biosphere reserve, and the Cayos Cochinos Marine Park.

Biodiversity

- The reef system is home to more than 65 species of stony coral, 350 species of mollusk and more than 500 species of fish.
- There are numerous species that live in or around the reef system that are endangered or under some degree of protection, including the following: sea turtles (green sea turtle, loggerhead sea turtle, leatherback turtle, and the hawksbill turtle), the queen conch, the West Indian manatee, the splendid toadfish, the American crocodile, the Morelet's Crocodile, the Nassau grouper, elkhorn coral, and black coral.

- The reef system is home to one of the world's largest populations of manatees, with an estimated 1,000 to 1,500 of them.
- Some northern areas of the reef system near Isla Contoy are home to the largest fish on the planet, the whale shark.

Belize Reef

- Belize's coastline, comprising the Belize Barrier Reef, is home to approximately 80% of MBRS.
- The Belize Barrier Reef is the largest barrier reef in the northern hemisphere and the second largest barrier reef in the world.
- The Belize Barrier Reef and Belize's three offshore atolls, several hundred sand cays, mangrove forests, coastal lagoons and estuaries are collectively termed, the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System.

Protection measures

- The Caribbean reef was named to the prestigious World Heritage List in 1996 but placed on endangered status in 2009 because of Belize's plans to allow oil exploration nearby.
- The warning also encompassed the mangroves that help protect the reef and serve as a breeding ground for many of the hundreds of fish species that inhabit the area.
- That spurred activists into action. They organised an informal referendum in 2012, in which 96% of Belizeans voted against offshore oil exploration, choosing the reef over the potential economic gains for the country.
- As the threat to one of its top tourist attractions began to sink in, the Belizean government adopted a series of laws to protect the reef.

HEALTH ISSUES

1. Accelerated Plan for Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (APELF)

- Lymphatic Filariasis (LF) a mosquito-borne parasitic disease

Facts

- till 2016, 8.7 million cases of LF were reported, with 29.4 million recorded as suffering from disability associated with the disease
- In addition, 650 million people across 256 districts in 21 States and Union Territories still face a risk.
- Therefore, India needs to up its game if it is to meet the global LF elimination target of 2020.

Schemes in the past

- In 1955, the government launched the National Filaria Control Programme to eliminate LF. Of the 256 districts in the country where it is endemic, 99 have successfully tackled filariasis

Mass Drug Administration (MDA) strategy

- MDA is a strategy used to administer medicines to the entire at-risk population of an area, most commonly a district.
- This strategy takes different forms in different countries, but usually consists of a campaign-style approach to deliver medications to all eligible people in at-risk communities, usually once or twice per year depending on the specifics

Srilanka Example

- Sri Lanka — which was certified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as having eliminated LF as a public health problem in 2016 — has shown that coverage and compliance of services during the MDA campaign is boosted if there is strong commitment to the social and communication sciences, including substantial investments in evidence-based social-mobilization campaigns.
- A rapid scale-up of MDA that has focus on coverage and compliance is essential to decrease the number of rounds required to attain LF elimination.
- In future rounds of MDA, high community demand and compliance will be the critical indicators of success.

WHO recommendation

- The WHO's recent recommendation of adopting the triple drug therapy or IDA (a combination of Ivermectin along with Diethylcarbamazine citrate and Albendazole) has shown encouraging results in clinical trials across the globe and in India.

- IDA has the potential to rapidly shorten the number of rounds of MDA required in the community, which can be particularly promising for high-burden countries such as India where compliance to treatment has been a challenge.

How to address the issue?

- Like any other vector-borne disease, management of the environment is an important aspect of prevention.
 - * While the use of insecticide-treated bed nets or larval control to check the breeding of vectors or mosquitoes that spread the disease can be valuable tools, an integrated approach could be particularly beneficial.
- Collaborating across government departments to build cross-linkages with other national programmes such as the Swachh Bharat Mission or malaria prevention efforts could help rein in disease transmission.
- The re-emergence of infection in non-endemic areas due to migration of people from areas with ongoing transmission needs to be tackled.
 - * For example, in Surat city (Gujarat), a high microfilaria rate was noticed in the north zone of the city where the migrant population influx is high.
- Roping in the Indian Medical Association, which has a vast network of private practitioners, to help support awareness drives and participate in MMDP activities in endemic districts has the potential to rapidly increase access to services to those who still cannot access the public health system.

Way Forward

- Elimination efforts do not end with achieving the desired results in MDA. The most traumatic impact of the disease is the suffering caused by the full-blown manifestation of filariasis in those who are infected.
- Morbidity management and disability prevention (MMDP) of lymphedema and hydrocele must assume greater importance so that the quality of life of affected individuals can be improved.

2. Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI)

- It is the National Nodal agency for Health Intelligence in the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- CBHI also functions as Collaborating Centre for World Health Organization, Family of International Classification (WHO FIC) in India & South East Asia Region (SEAR) countries.

- CBHI is committed to build an integrated health informatics platform which can provide reliable, accurate, and relevant national health information and enable evidence based policy formulation and decision making.

National Health Profile

- It is prepared by the CBHI.
- The National Health Profile covers demographic, socio-economic, health status and health finance indicators, along with comprehensive information on health infrastructure and human resources in health.

3. Huntington's disease (HD)

- It is an autosomal dominant genetic disorder, which means that even if one parent carries the defective Huntington's gene, their offspring has a 50:50 chance of inheriting the disease
- There is no treatment or cure for Huntington's at present.
- It has a broad impact on a person's functional abilities and usually results in movement, thinking (cognitive) and psychiatric disorders. This disease begins between ages 30 and 45

Movement disorders

- Muscle problems, such as rigidity or muscle contracture (dystonia)
- Slow or abnormal eye movement

Cognitive disorders

- Difficulty organizing, prioritizing or focusing on tasks
- Lack of flexibility or the tendency to get stuck on a thought, behavior or action (perseveration)
- Lack of impulse control that can result in outbursts, acting without thinking and sexual promiscuity
- Lack of awareness of one's own behaviors and abilities
- Slowness in processing thoughts or "finding" words
- Difficulty in learning new information

Psychiatric disorders

- Feelings of irritability, sadness or apathy
- Social withdrawal
- Insomnia
- Fatigue and loss of energy
- Frequent thoughts of death, dying or suicide

Insulin signalling could slow the disease's progression

- Increasing the level of insulin signalling enriches the cellular pool of proteins that are essential for cellular functioning and survival. This in turn restores the cellular transcription machinery
- It appears that enhanced level of insulin signalling rejuvenates the neuronal cells which are otherwise stressed during disease condition

4. Influenza or flu

- It is a respiratory illness caused by a virus.
- Flu is highly contagious and is normally spread by the coughs and sneezes of an infected person.
- The different types of influenza include A, B and C.
- The serotypes of influenza A virus like the H1N1, H5N1, H3N2, etc., have caused pandemics in humans.

Symptoms

- The most common symptoms include: a high fever, runny nose, sore throat, muscle pains, headache, coughing, and feeling tired
- There may also be gastrointestinal symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea; these are much more common among children than adults.

Issue Area

- The infection passes from person to person through coughing, sneezing etc. In a country like ours which is so overcrowded, control is difficult

Background

- A 100 years ago, history's worst known infectious disease outbreak of the Spanish flu occurred in 1918.
- The influenza virus H1N1 killed more than 50 million people and infected over 500 million people globally. In India, the death toll had touched nearly 17 million.

5. International Classification of Diseases (ICD 11)

What is it?

- The ICD is the foundation for identifying health trends and statistics worldwide, and contains around 55 000 unique codes for injuries, diseases and causes of death.
- It provides a common language that allows health professionals to share health information across the globe.

Key Facts

- The ICD is the global health information standard for mortality and morbidity statistics.
- ICD is increasingly used in clinical care and research to define diseases and study disease patterns, as well as manage health care, monitor outcomes and allocate resources.

6. National Health Resource Repository (NHRR)

- It is Country's first ever national healthcare facility registry of authentic, standardized and updated geo-spatial data of all public and private healthcare establishments.
- The vision of the NHRR Project is to strengthen evidence-based decision making and develop a platform for citizen and provider-centric services by creating a robust, standardized and secured IT-enabled repository of India's healthcare resources.

- NHRR will be the ultimate platform for comprehensive information of both, Private and Public healthcare establishments including Railways, ESIC, Defense and Petroleum healthcare establishments.
- Under the Collection of Statistics Act 2008, over 20 lakh healthcare establishments like hospitals, doctors, clinics, diagnostic labs, pharmacies and nursing homes would be enumerated under this census capturing data on over 1,400 variables.

Outcomes

- The key expected outcomes of the NHRR project are to provide comprehensive data on all health resources including private doctors, health facilities, chemists, and diagnostics labs, establish a National Health Resource Repository for evidence based decision making – aligned with Digital India mission.
- It shall also enhance the coordination between central and state government for optimization of health resources, making 'live' and realistic state Project Implementation Plans (PIPs) and improving accessibility of data at all levels, including State Head of Departments, thus, decentralize the decision making at district and state level.

Benefits

- Some key benefits of the NHRR Project are to create a reliable, unified registry of Country's healthcare resources showing the distribution pattern of health facilities and services between cities and rural areas.
- Additionally, it shall generate real-world intelligence to identify gaps in health and service ratios, and ensure judicious health resource allocation and management.
- It shall identify key areas of improvement by upgrading existing health facilities or establishing new health facilities keeping in view the population density, geographic nature, health condition, distance, etc..

7. Toothpastes contribute to antibiotic resistance

Context

- A study conducted by University of Queensland in Australia has said that common ingredient found in toothpastes and hand washes could be contributing to the rise of antibiotic resistant bacteria

Details

- Triclosan is an antibacterial and antifungal agent. It is used in over 2,000 products
- Overuse and misuse of antibiotics could create 'superbugs',
- These chemicals are used in much larger quantities at an everyday level, so one ends up with high residual levels in the wider environment, which can induce

multi-drug resistance

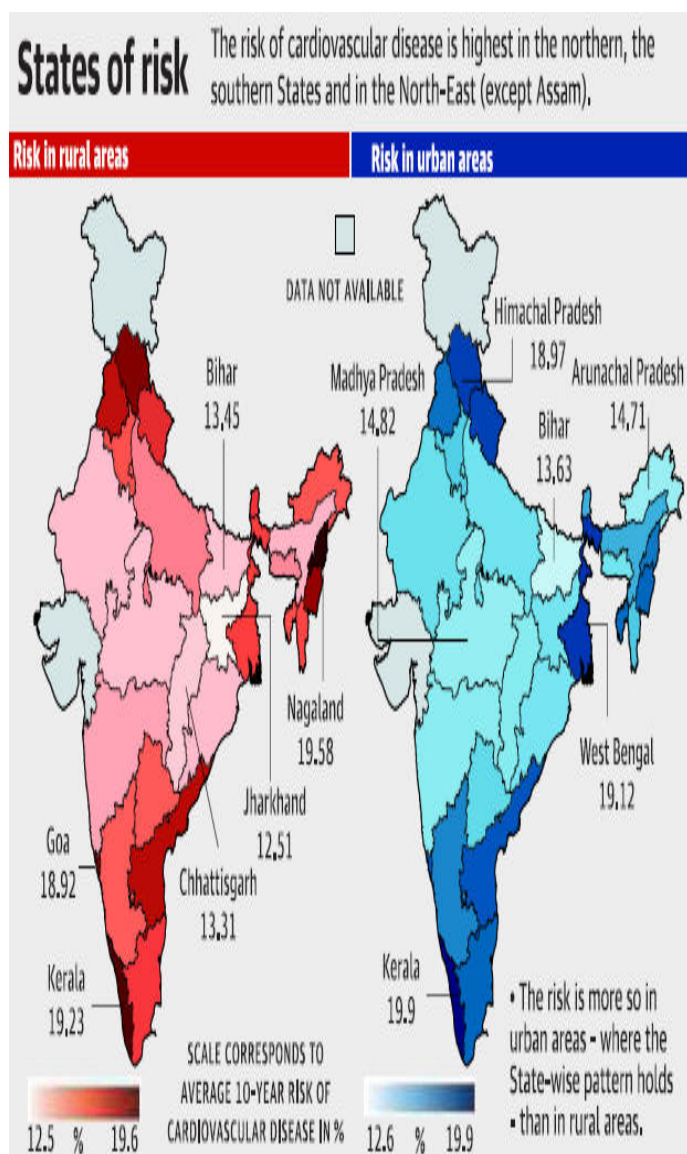
8. Keralites face highest risk of cardiovascular disease, finds study

The study was led by researchers at Public Health Foundation of India and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

- A study based on two recent national surveys of nearly 8,00,000 adults between 34 and 70 years, has found that people of Kerala — across sexes — were most at risk of cardiovascular diseases while those in Jharkhand were least likely to have the condition.
- A gender break down, however, puts the women of Goa at highest mean cardiovascular risk at 16.73% while men in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland were most vulnerable with mean cardiovascular risk of 24.23%.

Urban and Rural divide

- Adults in urban areas, as well as those with a higher household wealth, tended to have a greater cardiovascular risk.
- With 19.90%, adults living in urban areas in Kerala had the highest mean risk, followed by West Bengal (19.12%) and Himachal Pradesh (18.97%).
 - * In contrast, those living in urban areas of Daman and Diu had the lowest mean risk (12.60%), followed by Bihar (13.63%) and Arunachal Pradesh (14.71%).
- In general, the cardiovascular risk is lower in rural areas compared with urban areas. But Goa has bucked this trend with the rural areas showing a higher mean value (18.92%) than the urban areas (18.79%).
- While smoking was more prevalent in poorer households and rural areas, wealthy households and urban locations faced risks from high body mass index, high blood glucose and high systolic blood pressure.



9. Health care Dilemmas

Bhore Committee

- Bhore Committee was set up by Government of India in 1940's. It was a health survey taken by a development committee to assess health condition of India.
- The development committee worked under Sir Joseph William Bhore, who acted as the chairman of committee.
 - * It laid out the proposal for a national program of health services in India and also stressed the importance of preventive care in addition to curative treatment
 - * Here, health care was envisaged as comprehensive, universal and free at the point of delivery, based on a government-led service, and to be paid from tax-funded revenues.

Adaptations into country's Plan

- These policies, which were adopted from the National Health Service (NHS), a major social reform in the U.K. following the Second World War, have stood the test of time and remain a source of pride for the U.K.
- But for India, it is an embarrassment that this health model has declined because of chaotic, mismanaged, unregulated and discriminatory policies and the priorities of successive governments.

Private Sector

- This has created a second system (supposedly more efficient) in the form of the urban private sector, which is responsible for most health care in India.
- The private sector over-medicalizes: over-promises, over-investigates, over-treats and overcharges to meet management targets, creating needless fear and paranoia.
- There has been a paradigm shift from a 'service' to a fee-for-service model of health care.
- Medicine has changed from 'doctor-patient-treatment' to 'customer-provider-delivery'.

All this disorganization has led to a trust deficit between patient and doctor.

Changes in Treatment Pattern over Years

- The decline of a universal, social health system has led to the cost of treatment becoming astronomical.
- Health care in India is changing from a conservative, clinical, affordable, accountable, patient-centric British model
- To a more investigative, aggressive, expensive, commercial and insurance-driven American system, without the safety mechanisms of either.

Problems in India

- India still faces many communicable diseases (malaria, dengue and tuberculosis) which require a robust public health system.
- Along with non-communicable diseases (diabetes, heart disease and cancer) also on the rise, this is a double burden.
- This mismatch is further compounded with only 4% of GDP allocated to health.
- India has one of the highest (86%) out-of-pocket (private) expenditures on health care in the world.
- With little or no health insurance, this leads to approximately 40 million people falling below the poverty line every year.

Way Forward

- We need to strengthen our public health-care system based on the pillars of trust, accountability and efficiency.

- A balance needs to be made between public and private health care. This balance will only be restored by the mutual respect and belief between a doctor and patient.

10. Organ Donation

The term organ transplant refers to the transplantation of an organ from one body to another. The person who receives the organ is the recipient and one who gives is called the donor. This procedure is undertaken for the replacement of the damaged organ in the body of the recipient with the working organ from the body of the donor. The organ donor can be a deceased or alive.

- Some of the organs that are mainly donated are kidney, Liver, heart, lung, pancreas, small bowel and sometimes skin along with the other things.

What are the different types of organ donation?

- Live Related Donation: Living donation takes place when a living person donates an organ (or part of an organ) for transplantation to another person. The living donor can be a family member, such as a parent, child, brother or sister, grandparent or grandchild (living related donation).
- Live Unrelated Donation: Living donation can also come from someone who is emotionally related to the recipient, such as a good friend, a relative, a neighbor or an in-law (living unrelated donation).
- Deceased Cadaver Organ Donation: The patient has to register in a hospital that does transplants. The patient will be put on a wait list. As and when the organ from an appropriate deceased donor (brain death) is available, the patient will be intimated.

When must organs from a deceased donor be removed?

- Organs must be removed as soon as possible after the determination of brain death, while circulation is being maintained artificially.
- Tissues may be removed within 12 to 24 hours.

Who can donate?

- Every adult can be an organ donor. If parents give consent, even children can be organ donors everyone is a potential organ and tissue donors after death.
- But cancer, HIV, infection (sepsis, for example) or Intravenous (IV) drug use will rule out donation.
- Patients who have Hepatitis C may donate organs to a patient who also has Hepatitis C.
- The same is true for Hepatitis B -but this happens in very rare cases.
- Most cancer patients may donate corneas.

What does the law say?

- The Transplantation of Human Organs Act of 1994 makes it illegal to buy or sell human organs in India.

- Unlike in many western countries, where an adult is asked to make a choice if he/she wants to be a donor, in India, the choice is left to the family. After a person carrying a donor card dies, the family still needs to approve the donation of organs.
- Going by the rule book, allocation of organs to recipients on the waiting list is based on criteria that include the date of registration and the medical condition of the recipient.
- The wealth, race or gender of a person on the waiting list has no bearing on when and whether a person will receive a donated organ.

National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO)

- It is a National level organization set up under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- National Network division of NOTTO would function as apex centre for All India activities of coordination and networking for procurement and distribution of Organs and Tissues and registry of Organs and Tissues Donation and Transplantation in the country

It has following two divisions:

- "National Human Organ and Tissue Removal and Storage Network"
- "National Biomaterial Centre".

Transplantation of human organs act, 1994

- The Government passed an act in 1994 to rationalize organ donations and transplants in the country.

The main aims of the act:

- Regulating removal, storage and transplantation of human organs for therapeutic purposes.
- Accepting brain death and making it possible to use these patients as potential organ donors.
- Preventing commercial dealings of organs.

Three of four hearts harvested were given to foreigners

Context

- National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO), has flagged the organ transplant racket in Tamil Nadu

Issue Area

- Bypassing Indian patients, foreigners are provided access to organs in breach of Norms established
- organs were harvested without the consent of a brain-dead patient's family to meet the needs of foreign nationals.
- In 2017 foreigners were the recipients in 31 heart transplants, 32 lung transplants, and 32 heart and lung transplants. During the same year, Indians were the recipients in 91 heart transplants, 75 lung transplants, and 6 heart and lung transplants.

- Interestingly, while the wait list of active patients as on June 9, 2018 had 53 foreigners, it had 5,310 Indians.

What should be done?

- State governments, which have responsibility for health care provision, are expected to ensure that the organs that are altruistically donated by families of brain-dead people are given to recipients ethically, and as mandated by law.
- Every effort must be made to ensure that it retains this high reputation, and organs go to the most suitable recipients on the rule-based parameters of domicile, citizenship, Indian origin and foreign nationality, in that order.
- Any inquiry into the allocation of hearts and lungs to foreigners should, therefore, shed light on the factors that led to the decisions, including whether registered citizens were overlooked.
- Enrolling all domestic patients through State registries should be the priority for the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation
- Nothing should be done to erode the confidence of the kin of brain-dead people who donate organs with no expectation of gain. Hospitals and professionals who engage in commerce or unethical behaviour should have no place in the system.

Way Forward

- Organs should go to those who need them the most rather than to those who can pay for them. This will mean considering hard policy changes that include strengthening the capacity of the public sector, subsidising transplantation and perhaps enabling affirmative action in the allocation process in favour of public hospitals.

11. 'IPledgeFor9' Achievers Awards

- 'IPledgeFor9' Achievers Awards have been devised to celebrate individual and team achievements under the Pradhan Mantri Matritva Surakshit Abhiyan (PMSMA) across India.
- The awards identify and recognize excellence in performance in PMSMA at various levels and also commemorate exemplary public, private and voluntary sector contribution to PMSMA.

EDUCATION

1. Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)

What was the Need?

- A number of indicators, including the consistently poor performance of Indian universities at the World University Rankings, testify to the fact that the country's higher education regulator, the University Grants Commission (UGC), has not lived up to its mandate of "maintaining standards of teaching, examination and research in universities". To overcome this issue HECI would be set up

Details

- The draft Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Act, 2018, takes away funding powers from the proposed regulator and gives it powers to ensure academic quality and even close down bogus institutions.
- The new regime separates the academic and funding aspects of higher education
 - HECI will be in charge of ensuring academic quality in universities and colleges
 - Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) – or another mechanism that will be put in place later – will be responsible for funding universities and colleges
- Non-compliance could result in fines or even a jail sentence.
 - UGC had no such powers. All it could do was to release a list of bogus institutions and not recognise their degrees.
- It will develop norms for setting standards for opening and closure of institutions, provide for greater flexibility and autonomy to institutions, lay standards for appointments to critical leadership positions at the institutional level irrespective of university started under any law (including state list)

University Grants Commission (UGC)

- UGC is a statutory body set up in 1956, and is charged with coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of higher education.
- It provides recognition to universities in India, and disburses funds to such recognized universities and colleges.
 - 1946 to oversee the work of the three Central Universities of Aligarh, Banaras and, Delhi.
 - 1947, the Committee was entrusted with the responsibility of dealing with all the then existing Universities.

- 1948 under the Chairmanship of S. Radhakrishnan and it recommended that the UGC be reconstituted on the general model of the University Grants Commission of the United Kingdom.
- 1956 it was formally established by Act of Parliament as a statutory body of the GoI

Old versus new

How different is the proposed Higher Education Commission (HECI) from the present University Grants Commission (UGC)?

Financial and academic powers UGC: It disburses grants to Central institutions out of its funds Academic: UGC is mandated to promote and coordinate university education and determine and maintain standards of teaching, examination and research HECI: No power to give grants Academic: It will specify standards for grant of authorisation to a university or higher educational institution to commence its academic operations		Disputes UGC: In case of any dispute between the Centre and the UGC on policy, the Centre prevails HECI: The Centre prevails
Inspection UGC: To assess financial needs or standards of teaching in an institution, UGC conducts periodic inspections HECI: No inspections. HECI will prescribe norms on academic performance by higher educational institutions	Action on bogus institutions UGC: Affiliations of colleges to universities can be terminated for contravention of its regulations. It can withhold grants to universities for violations of its regulations. It occasionally publishes lists of bogus institutions Composition UGC: Has a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and 10 members appointed by the Central government, some ex-officio members and some from academia, industry. Chairman's retirement age is 65 years; term 5 years, two terms permitted	Regular staff UGC: The UGC appoints its own staff. The present staff will be re-trained to work on fully digital mode – without physical files – at HECI HECI: It will be empowered to penalise or even shut down sub-standard institutions without affecting students' interests. If the management of the institution does not comply with the penalties, they can land in jail for up to three years. HECI: It shall comprise a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and 12 members to be appointed by the Centre, including educationists and a member of the industry. Chairman's retirement age is 70, will hold office for five years HECI: The HECI will have its own regular staff

Stats

- There were 864 recognized universities and 40,026 colleges in the country in 2016-17
- There were only 20 universities and 500 colleges at the time of Independence.
- The gross enrolment ratio of students was only about 26%

Challenges

- Making the HRD ministry the fund dispersal agency strikes against this objective. It is true that academic institutions in the country have never been completely free from government interference. But with the HRD ministry controlling university funding directly, the dangers of political interference in the running of these institutions increase manifold.
- The proposed law empowers the Centre to remove the HECI's chairman and vice-chairman for reasons that include "moral turpitude" — the UGC act did not have such a provision — will raise questions about the government's sincerity on giving autonomy to universities

What should be done?

- The Centre should give sufficient time to academia, the teaching community and society at large to submit considered opinions on the draft proposals.
- The aim should be to set academic benchmarks for each stream, with sufficient autonomy to innovate on courses and encourage studies across disciplines.
- The future role of multiple regulatory bodies that currently exist for engineering, medicine and law; the Yash Pal Committee had recommended that they should be brought under the ambit of a single commission

Key Recommendations of Yashpal Committee

- The academic functions of all the professional bodies (such as UGC, AICTE, MCI, and BCI) should be subsumed under an apex body for higher education called the National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER), formed through Constitutional amendment.
- The professional bodies should be divested of their academic functions. They should only be looking after the fitness of the people who wish to practice in their respective fields by conducting regular qualifying examination.
- Establish a National Education Tribunal with powers to adjudicate on disputes among stake-holders within institutions and between institutions so as to reduce litigation in courts involving universities and higher education institutions.
- Curricular reform should be the top-most priority of the NCHER. It should be based on the principles of mobility within a full range of curricular areas.
- Vocational education sector should be brought within the purview of universities.
- NCHER should promote research in the university system through the creation of a National Research Foundation.
- Practice of according status of deemed university be stopped till the NCHER takes a considered view on it.
- NCHER should identify the best 1500 colleges across India and upgrade them as universities.
- A National Testing Scheme for admission to the universities on the pattern of the GRE to be evolved which would be open to all the aspirants of University education, to be held more than once a year.
- Quantum of central financial support to state-funded universities should be enhanced substantially on an incentive pattern

ART AND CULTURE

1. Akka Mahadevi

Background

- Medieval India was not exactly progressive: caste lines have hardened, Brahminism reigns, and women in public spaces are few.
- So, it took a lot of wit and conviction for a woman poet-saint to leave home and husband, discard her clothes, and walk naked in search of her god

Details

- She is one of the greatest female poets of the Kannada language and a prominent personality in the Lingayat Bhakti Movement
- She devoted her life from childhood to Shiva in the form of Chennamallikarjuna
- They opposed orthodox Hinduism and its practices, for instance, caste and the system of worship through temple and priest. Their key form of communication was through vachanas or sayings which were free verse hymns in their mother-tongue.
- At Anubhav Mandap, Akka Mahadevi became part of the discussions centered around spiritual, social and philosophical questions but her acceptance in the movement did not come easily.
 - * She was questioned for her nakedness that exemplified a deliberate rejection of womanly modesty.
 - * It was impudent for a woman to abandon her clothes even though for saints it was a natural practice.

Significance

- Akka Mahadevi makes for a story so powerful it's no wonder she occupies an iconic position in Kannada literature
- She presented values of inaccessible philosophy of self-transcendence
- In her vachanas, Akka Mahadevi expressed her radical views on women's roles, Hindu ritualism, caste, etc. and offers a testimony to the spiritual struggles faced by a female mystic in a patriarchal society.

2. Ambubachi festival

- It is a four-day fair to mark the annual menstruation of the goddess at Kamakhya temple in Guwahati
- The fair takes place in June every year
- Kamakhya Devi, the reigning deity, worshipped as the goddess of fertility.

Details

- This famous temple in Assam is set atop Nilanchal Hill and is considered as one of the prime seats for tantric rituals where it is one of 51 shaktipeeths or seat of Shakti followers, each representing a body part of the Sati, Lord Shiva's companion.
- The temple's sanctum sanctorum houses the yoni — female genital — symbolised by a rock.
- The only ones that avoid the temple are the descendants of the medieval Koch royalty, who had reconstructed the Kamakhya temple in 1565.
- This is because the goddess is believed to have cursed the royalty after the king and his brother Chilarai — one of Assam's revered generals — had secretly watched her dance.

Significance

- The ritualistic fair celebrating the goddess' period is one of the reasons why the taboo associated with menstruation is less in Assam compared with other parts of India.
- The attainment of womanhood of girls in Assam is celebrated with a ritual called 'Tuloni Biya', meaning small wedding.

3. Champakulam Moolam Boat Race

- It is the oldest Snake Boat Race (vallam kali)
- The Pampa River plays host to this race held in Champakkulam, a village in Alappuzha district.
- This happens on the day of the 'moolam', which is followed in accordance to the Malayalam month of Midhunam.
- The day is considered to be especially sacred as it is the day when the Deity at the Ambalappuzha Sree Krishna Temple was installed.

Vanchipattu

- It is the boat song sung in chorus by the rowers led by cheerleaders aboard, has become part and parcel of boat races.
- The rhythmic lines coupled with beats and splashes on water give a synchrony that energises the race.

Significance

- The Moolam boat race, though associated with religious observances, is known to present a picture of harmony as people irrespective of religion and caste take part in the event.
- It is source of attraction for Kerala Tourism
- It can help spread of culture and is an entertainment Program

- Source of income to many people

4. **Jami Masjid in Gulbarga in Karnataka**

Tughlaq and Bahmani Kingdom

- Mohammad bin Tughlaq, who ruled from 1321 to 1351 as the Delhi Sultan, captured large parts of the Deccan including Gulbarga.
- In 1347, a Tughlaq officer named Alauddin Hasan revolted against Tughlaq and declared his independence by establishing the Bahmani kingdom (1347-1527) with Gulbarga as its capital.
- Hasan built Gulbarga as a fortress city. The Bahmani Sultans ruled from here till the capital of the kingdom was shifted to Bidar in 1424.

Look out for Artisans and Architects

- Mohammad bin Tughlaq shifted his capital to Daulatabad in the Deccan, he took artisans and architects with him.
- However, the Bahmani Sultans chose to look towards Persia as a source of inspiration
- It was produced under the direction of a hereditary architect named Rafi from the distant town of Kazvin in northern Persia.

Details

- The uniqueness of the mosque is that it has no open courtyard and the entire structure is covered by a roof.
- They have interiors similar to the Great Cathedral-Mosque of Córdoba in Spain
- This was combined with existing and developing local styles and at other times the architecture of the Tughlaq style remained, as seen in the tombs of the Bahmani kings in Gulbarga.

5. **Kabir**

- He was born near Banaras to a brahmin widow. But he was brought up by a Muslim couple who were weavers by profession. He possessed an inquiring mind and while in Benares learnt much about Hinduism. Kabirdas (Kabir is an Arabic word meaning "great"),
- He became familiar with Islamic teachings also and Ramananda initiated him into the higher knowledge of Hindu and Muslim religious and philosophical ideas.
- Kabir's object was to reconcile Hindus and Muslims and establish harmony between the two sects. He denounced idolatry and rituals and laid great emphasis on the equality of man before God.
- He emphasized the essential oneness of all religions by describing Hindus and Muslims 'as pots of the same clay'. To him Rama and Allah, temple and mosque were the same.
- He regarded devotion to god as an effective means of salvation and urged that to achieve this one must have a pure heart, free from cruelty, dishonesty, hypocrisy and insincerity.

- In his view every person had the ability to reach the highest level of spiritual salvation and deep knowledge within themselves through their own experience.
- He is regarded as the greatest of the mystic saints and his followers are called Kabirpanthis.

Verses ascribed to Kabir have been compiled in three distinct but overlapping traditions.

- The Kabir Bijak is preserved by the Kabirpanth (the path or sect of Kabir) in Varanasi and elsewhere in Uttar Pradesh;
- The Kabir Granthavali is associated with the Dadupanth in Rajasthan,
- many of his compositions are found in the Adi Granth Sahib

Kabir's poems have survived in several languages and dialects; and some are composed in the special language of nirguna poets, the sant bhasha. Others, known as ulatbansi (upside-down sayings), are written in a form in which everyday meanings are inverted. Also striking is the range of traditions Kabir drew on to describe the Ultimate Reality.

- These include Islam: he described the Ultimate Reality as Allah, Khuda, Hazrat and Pir.
- He also used terms drawn from Vedantic traditions, alakh (the unseen), nirakar (formless), Brahman, Atman, etc.
- Other terms with mystical connotations such as shabda (sound) or shunya (emptiness) were drawn from yogic traditions.

Diverse and sometimes conflicting ideas are expressed in these poems. Some poems draw on Islamic ideas and use monotheism and iconoclasm to attack Hindu polytheism and idol worship; others use the sufi concept of zikr and ishq (love) to express the Hindu practice of nam-simaran (remembrance of God's name).

6. **'Mud People' festival**

- The annual tradition forms part of a joyous religious festival honouring Saint John they believed saved residents from execution by Japanese soldiers during Second World War.
- The "Mud People" festival, believed to have begun more than a century ago, became much more prominent after 1944 — during Japan's wartime occupation of the former U.S. colony

Details

- The event celebrates the feast of John the Baptist with devotees taking part in what they see as an act of humility and penance that imitates a saint who preached and lived a life of poverty in the desert.

7. **Seva Bhoj Yojna**

- It is an initiative of Ministry of Culture

- It is a Scheme which seeks to reimburse Central Share of CGST and IGST on Food/Prasad/Langar/Bhandara offered by Religious Institutions
- This is to lessen the financial burden of such Charitable Religious Institutions who provide Food/Prasad/Langar (Community Kitchen)/Bhandara free of cost without any discrimination to Public/Devotees.

Criteria

- The Charitable Religious Institutions such as Temples, Gurudwara, Mosque, Church, Dharmik Ashram, Dargah, Matth, Monasteries etc. which have been in existence for at least five years before applying for financial assistance/grant
- Serve free food to at least 5000 people in a month
- Institutions covered under Section 10(23BBA) of the Income Tax Act or Institutions registered as Society under Societies Registration Act (XXI of 1860) or as a Public Trust under any law for the time being in force of statutory religious bodies constituted under any Act or institutions registered under Section 12AA of Income Tax Act shall be eligible for grant under the scheme.

8. Sheikh Chilli's Tomb

- It is complex of structures located in Thanesar, Haryana, near Kurukshetra. It includes two tombs, a madarsa, mughal gardens and various subsequent features
- The main tomb belongs to Sufi Abd-ur-Rahim Abdul-Karim Abd-ur-Razak, popularly known by the name of Sheikh Chelli.
 - * The word 'chegli' means 40 in Persian. Sheikh Chilli could have been a saint who had done a chilla, or a 40-day solitary, spiritual retreat, and 'chilli' could be a corruption of that.
- He was Qadiriyya Sufi master of Mughal Prince Dara Shikoh.
- The architectural plan of the tomb shows considerable Persian influence.
- This beautiful tomb and attached Madrasa are associated with the Sufi Saint Abd-ur-Rahim. There is a mosque called Pather Masjid (Stone Mosque) that was built in red sandstone.

Dara Shikoh

- The eldest son of emperor Shah Jahan, was a gifted scholar
- The madarsa dates back to the mid-17th century when Dara Shukoh was powerful in the Mughal court. Fittingly, one of the rooms in the complex is a Dara Shukoh library.
- Thanesar was a well-known centre of the Sufi Chishti silsila and, according to Parihar, it is possible that Dara Shukoh built the madarsa to promote the Qadriya order.

GEOGRAPHY

1. Bharathappuzha/River Nila

- “Peraar” indicates the same river in ancient scripts and documents.
- It flows in the state Kerala
- With a length of 209 km, it is the second-longest river in Kerala, after the Periyar River.
- There are 11 reservoirs set along the course of this river and the Malampuzha dam is among the largest one

2. Borneo



- The island is politically divided among three countries: Malaysia and Brunei in the north, and Indonesia to the south
- The name Brunei possibly derives from the Sanskrit word *várua* meaning either “water” or Varuna, the Hindu god of rain.
- Indonesian natives called it Kalimantan, which was derived from the Sanskrit word *Kalamanthana*, meaning “burning weather island” (to describe its hot and humid tropical weather)

3. India's first river interlinking project caught in U.P.-

M.P. tussle

- Disagreements over water-sharing and difficulty in acquiring non-forest land impede the Rs.18,000-crore Ken- Betwa river interlink project.
- The project, which involves deforesting a portion of the Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh, was accorded clearance by the National Wildlife Board on the condition that the land lost would be made good by acquiring contiguous, revenue land.
- This is to ensure that wildlife corridors in the region aren't hit.

Water dispute

- Another hurdle is a dispute over how Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh — the two beneficiaries — will share water in the Rabi season.

The project

- Conceived as a two-part project, this is India's first river interlinking project.
- It is perceived as a model plan for similar interstate river transfer missions.
- Phase 1 involves building a 77 m-tall and a 2 km-wide dam, the Dhaudhan dam, and a 230 km canal to transfer extra water from the Ken river for irrigating 3.64 lakh hectares in the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
- Originally, this phase envisaged irrigating 6,35,661 ha annually (3,69,881 ha in M.P. and 2,65,780 ha in U.P.).
- In addition, the project was to provide 49 million cubic metres (MCM) of water for en route drinking water supply.

Concerns

- While there's a 2005 agreement between Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh on how water would be shared, Madhya Pradesh said last year that these assumptions were no longer valid and the only way to meet increased water requirements would be to include certain local water management projects — the Kotha barrage, Lower Orr and Bina complex that were envisaged in the second phase of the project — in the first phase.
- In theory, this could mean a completely fresh environmental appraisal.
- The Central Water Commission is yet to officially take a call, though government sources say the Centre is agreeable to the change.
- However, new demands by Madhya Pradesh for more water during the Rabi season are yet to be negotiated

Booster shot Key aspects of the ₹18,000 crore Ken Betwa river interlink project



MAP SOURCE: NATIONAL WATER DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

- The Ken Betwa project will transfer surplus water from the Ken river to the Betwa basin to help irrigate the drought-prone Bundelkhand region and the adjoining areas

- The 230 km concrete canal will pass through Jhansi, Banda and Mahoba districts of U.P. and Tikamgarh, Panna and Chatarpur districts of M.P.

- The project will also benefit U.P. and M.P. in terms of meeting their irrigation and drinking water needs

Hazards: The project involves deforesting a portion of the Panna Tiger reserve (approximately 10%) in M.P.

HISTORY

1. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee

- He was the composer of Vande Mataram, originally in Sanskrit stotra personifying India as a mother goddess and inspiring the activists during the Indian Independence Movement.
- When Bipin Chandra Pal decided to start a patriotic journal in August 1906, he named it Vande Mataram, after Chattopadhyay's song. Lala Lajpat Rai also published a journal of the same name.
- Anandamath is a political novel which depicts a Sannyasi (Hindu ascetic) army fighting the British soldiers
 - * The book calls for the rise of Indian nationalism. The novel was also the source of the song Vande Mataram (I worship my Motherland for she truly is my mother) which, set to music by Rabindranath Tagore, was taken up by many Indian nationalists, and is now the National Song of India.
 - * The plot of the novel is loosely set on the Sannyasi Rebellion. He imagined untrained Sannyasi soldiers fighting and beating the highly experienced British Army; ultimately however, he accepted that the British cannot be defeated.
 - * Vande Mataram became prominent during the Swadeshi movement

2. Pietermaritzburg Incident

- Pietermaritzburg is a city in the centre of South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province.
- On June 7, 1893, Mahatma Gandhi was thrown off the train's first class "whites-only" compartment at Pietermaritzburg station for refusing to give up his seat in spite of being holding ticket.
- The incident led him to develop his Satyagraha principles of peaceful resistance and mobilise people in South Africa and in India against the discriminatory rules of the British.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

1. Cop Connect

- The Telangana police have launched a mobile-based messenger application dedicated to provide real time information to over 60,000 police officers across the State.
- 'Cop Connect', the mobile-based application will support the police department in improving quality of service delivered to public.
- The app has been developed based on police's internal communication strategy, which will enable the entire workforce to pro-actively engage and pass real time information in seconds.
- The internal messaging app, developed by the department on the lines of WhatsApp, does not suffer from limitations like restricted number of users in a particular group.
- One can also share their current location in the app
- Only mobile numbers issued by the department can be added in the group after three pronged verification process

2. Gujarat gets world's 1st centre for humanitarian forensics

- The International Centre for Humanitarian Forensics (ICHF) will facilitate better management of bodies during emergencies such as disasters.
- It was inaugurated at the Gujarat Forensic Sciences University (GFSU)
- The university will run different courses, including postgraduate and graduate diploma courses in Humanitarian Forensics.
- The ICHF is a joint venture of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Regional Delegation for India, Bhutan, Nepal and the Maldives, and GFSU.

Significance

- Large numbers of people are becoming victims of natural and man-made calamities and their identification becomes a challenge. This centre will help in proper management of bodies in times of crisis

3. i-App cloud

Context

- The Andhra Pradesh police, who lead in using crime data analytics and big data applications, have now become the first in the country to complete automation of the State Crime Records Bureau (SCRB).

Details

- i-App cloud is now helping the police access the entire information of crimes under various IPC sections.
- i-App is now providing comparative analytics of gender violence, bodily offences and property offences in each unit, range, region and State using data charts.'
- The iApp cloud application can collect, store, process and retrieve data and generate reports every month. It can provide a seamless interface with the crime data flowing from the districts. The data is further integrated into the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) data banks. Data classified into 54 patterns of crime are analysed real time by senior officers.

4. ihariyali app

- Aimed at increasing the green cover and to provide fresh air in the state under mission 'Tandrust Punjab', the forest department, Ludhiana will distribute 2.5 lakh saplings through newly-launched mobile app 'ihariyali'.

Details

- The people can book saplings of their choice in the app which can be downloaded easily from play store. There are several varieties of saplings including fruit, medicinal, tree, timber, ornamentals, and shrubs
- When a person will book sapling on the app, an SMS will be sent on his mobile informing him about the government's nursery and forest guard's contact number and date on which the person can collect the plant within the given time slot.
- The person can also search nurseries according to saplings required and can book maximum 10 saplings in one go immediately available through the app and the saplings will be given free of cost

5. Operation Sagar Rani

- To ensure safety and hygiene at fish handling and distribution centres, Food Safety officials in Kerala launched an initiative named 'Operation Sagar Rani'

Context

- The State Food Safety wing officials during inspection seized 6,000 kg of fish preserved using formalin (formaldehyde) at the inter-State border check-post at Walayar in Palakkad.

6. Queen pineapple as Tripura's 'State Fruit'

- President Ram Nath Kovind declared Tripura's queen variety pineapple as state fruit

7. School started by Tilak goes co-ed once more

Context

- New English school has been made co-ed again.
- The decision to reintroduce co-education was taken to demolish gender barriers in a changing world.

New English School

- New English School was founded in 1880 by educationists and revolutionaries Vishnu Krushna Chiplunkar, Bal Gangadhar 'Lokmanya' Tilak and Gopal Ganesh Agarkar.
- The school was co-educational until 1936, when the Deccan Education Society (DES) — also founded by Chiplunkar, Tilak, and Agarkar, among others — which had taken over the management by then, moved the girls to its Ahilyadevi High School for Girls.
- Chiplunkar, who is remembered as the poet of Maharashtra's nationalist revival for his ornate literary style, quit government service in 1879 and issued a call for the creation of a school run by Indians.
- Tilak, with Mahadev Ballal Namjoshi, volunteered as charter members of the school faculty; they were joined by Agarkar, another great educationist and Tilak's close friend.

Significant event

- The establishment of the school is a significant event in the freedom movement; it was not just a beginning of the effort to break the British hold on education, but one that used the English language to imbue nationalist thought.
- The founders, all young men at that time (Chiplunkar was in his early 30s when NES started, with Tilak and the others in their mid-20s) founded the DES a few years later, with the goal of making education accessible to students by establishing schools and colleges run by Indians across what was then the Bombay Presidency.
- NES began lessons on January 2, 1880, with 19 students. Enrolment increased ten-fold within a year.
- Such was the zeal of the promoters in making the school successful, that they took far lower salaries than they could have got elsewhere.
- For some years in the beginning, these B.A.'s and M.A.'s who while Fellows of the Deccan College had enjoyed the salaries of Rs.75 or Rs.100 per month and who would have obtained more than Rs.100 anywhere and in any literary branch of the Government Service, remained content with the pittance of Rs.30 or Rs.40 per month.
- In a few short years, NES became the biggest school in the Bombay Presidency.
- And the DES expanded too. Among the institutions it founded were Fergusson College, Pune (1885), Willingdon College, Sangli (1919) Brihan Maharashtra College of Commerce (1943), Chintamanarao College of Commerce (1960).

- The move is meant to imbue the school with the advantages of a co-educational environment, thereby helping students acquire a more holistic education.

8. Neanderthals hunted in bands, speared prey up close: study

- Neanderthals were capable of sophisticated, collective hunting strategies, according to an analysis of prehistoric animal remains from Germany that contradicts the enduring image of these early humans as knuckle-dragging brutes.
- The cut marks — or hunting lesions — on the bones of two 1,20,000-year-old deer provide the earliest smoking gun evidence such weapons were used to stalk and kill prey, according to a study by the journal Nature Ecology and Evolution.

Significance

- Microscopic imaging and ballistics experiments reproducing the impact of the blows confirmed that at least one was delivered with a wooden spear at low velocity.
- This suggests that Neanderthals approached animals very closely and thrust, not threw, their spears at the animals, most likely from an underhand angle.
- Such a confrontational way of hunting required careful planning and concealment, and close cooperation between individual hunters.

Neanderthals

- Neanderthals lived in Europe from about 300,000 years ago until they died out 30,000 years ago, overtaken by our species.
- It was long thought that these evolutionary cousins — modern Europeans and Asians have about 2% of Neanderthal DNA — were not smart enough to compete, and lacked symbolic culture, a trait supposedly unique to modern humans.
- But recent findings have revealed a species with more intelligence and savoir faire than suspected.
- They buried their dead in ritual fashion, created tools, and painted animal frescos on cave walls at least 64,000 years ago, 20,000 years before Homo sapiens arrived in Europe.
- Hominins — the term used to describe early human species, as well as our own — most likely started hunting with weapons more than half-a-million years ago.
- Wooden staves found in England and Germany dating back to 3,00,000 to 4,00,000 years are the oldest known spear-like implements likely used for killing prey.
- But there was no physical evidence as to their use, leaving scientists to speculate.

Neumark-Nord area findings

- The new find from the Neumark-Nord area of Germany removes that.
- Lake shore excavations from the same site since the 1980s have yielded tens of thousands of bones from large mammals, including red and fallow deer, horses and bovids.
- They have also turned up thousands of stone artefacts, attesting to a flourishing Neanderthal presence in what was a forest environment during an interglacial period 1,35,000 and 1,15,000 years ago.
- The old deer bones examined for the study were unearthed more than 20 years ago, but new technologies helped unlock their secrets: which injuries were lethal, what kind of weapon was used, and whether the spears were thrown from a distance or thrust from close up.

9. Anti-doping measures**CWG's No Needle Policy**

- Needles must not be used except by medically qualified practitioners for treatment of injury, illness or other medical conditions (for which a valid TUE may be required) those requiring auto-injection therapy for an established medical condition with a valid TUE, e.g. for insulin dependent diabetes.
- Every Commonwealth Games Association (CGA) must ensure that needles are stored in a central secured location, access to which is restricted to authorized medical personnel of the CGA delegation
- Whenever an athlete receives an injection during the Games, the attached "Injection Declaration Form" (IDF) is duly completed and forwarded to the CGF Medical Commission no later than noon the day following such injection.
- Failure to respect the policy or IDFs could lead to disciplinary action, sanctions and testing for the CGA and the athlete

World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA) 2016 List of Offenders

- India had dropped from third to sixth place
- From 120 sportspersons in 2015, only 69 were found guilty in the subsequent year.
- India's position is unique as it's too high on this list, disproportionately to the levels of its sporting achievement.

Why doping happens?

- The reasons for the malaise are many — peer pressure, irresponsible advisers and fellow athletes, unscrupulous coaches, easy availability, poorly administered federations and, of course, human fallibility.
- Inadvertent doping which occurs due to contaminated or mislabeled supplements, misguided medical treatment and at worst, sabotage

- Harmless food supplements like proteins or vitamins used by athletes are often from unreliable sources like private shops or online purchase.

What should be done?

Indian anti-doping rules mirror the WADA code and prescribe a framework of strict liability

- A recent initiative by the Foods and Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) to test and certify supplements is still to be fully operationalised
- The government should create a source for safe permitted supplements.
- Any anti-doping initiative should aggressively focus not only on detection but also on education and awareness. Athletes, support staff, federations, sports medical personnel must be equipped with well-conceived literature, consultation and workshops. Current efforts are inadequate. NADA's efforts need to be supplemented by a cadre of indigenous anti-doping experts.
- A framework must be created to constructively counsel athletes to understand the real causes, degrees of fault and administrative lapses. Merely subjecting them to an arduous legal process before NADA is not a long-term solution.
- Athletes come from semi-urban or rural backgrounds. Literacy and language are serious impediments. They are subject to the whims and dictates of administrators. This has to be regulated.

Conclusion

- Making doping a criminal offence, as was once proposed, is an untenable idea which would subject athletes to an already crippled criminal justice system. A nation with a burgeoning young population cannot let inertia put it on a murky sporting track.

10. Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES)**Context**

- The odisha government has initiated steps to strengthen the quality and ability to predict and increase the response capacity of Orissa Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) with an 'integrated multi-hazard early warning system'.

RIMES

- RIMES, an inter-governmental body registered under the United Nations, is owned and managed by 45 collaborating countries in Asia Pacific and African Region.
- RIMES evolved from the efforts of countries in Africa and Asia, in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, to establish a regional early warning system within a multi-hazard framework for the generation and communication of early warning information, and capacity building for preparedness and response to trans-boundary hazards.

- RIMES operates from its regional early warning center located at the campus of the Asian Institute of Technology in Pathumthani, Thailand.

What will it do?

- The agency will provide technical support to OSDMA regarding analysis of data to be generated through automatic weather stations being installed in all the gram panchayats, validation of the forecast, early warning and preparedness for lightning, heat wave, flood, drought and Tsunami.
- It would also enhance the warning response capacities of the OSDMA by imparting specialised expert training. The RIMES will help to develop a one-stop risk management system for all OSDMA needs-integration of multiple data database/servers.

Advantages

- The collaboration will strengthen OSDMA for more effective management during natural disasters.
- The association would also help in transfer of best practices among different countries of the world in handling natural disasters

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Consider the following statements with respect to World Food Programme:

1. It is food assistance branch of the United Nations.
2. WFP has its headquarters in Rome.
3. Zero hunger in 2030 is one of its objectives.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

2. The following are the institutions of World Bank group. Identify the correct option of which India is not a member.

1. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)
2. International Development Association (IDA)
3. International Finance Corporation (IFC)
4. Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)
5. International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)

Choose the correct option:

- A. 4 only
- B. 5 only
- C. 4 and 5 only
- D. None of the above

3. Consider the following statements:

1. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was adopted during the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.
2. India enacted the Biological Diversity (BD) Act in 2002 to give effect to the provisions of this CBD Convention.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

4. Which of the following are fundamental for the governance of a country?

- A. Directive principles of state policy
- B. Fundamental rights
- C. Laws, policies and rules
- D. Fundamental duties and preamble

5. Consider the following statements:

1. Parliament is empowered to regulate Right of Citizenship under Article 11.
2. Parliament can make laws with respect to termination and acquisition of citizenship.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

6. Consider the following statements:

1. Fundamental duties were recommended by Sardar Swarn Singh committee.
2. Part IVA was added by the 76th amendment act.
3. Fundamental duties apply to the people of India.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

7. Consider the following statements:

1. Lord Curzon issued the order to partition Bengal on 16 October, 1905.
2. Ease in administration was cited as the reason behind this decision but actually it was meant to curb the rising nationalist sentiments in Bengal.
3. The anti-partition movement was formally initiated in August, 1905.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

8. Out of desperation, Indian youth resorted to the cult of bomb and individual heroic acts. Which of the following led to the growth of revolutionary nationalism?

1. Government repression.
2. Failure of Indian leadership to provide a positive lead to the people.
3. Influence of print media.

Options:

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

9. Consider the following statements:

1. Ramsar Convention was signed in Iran in 1971.
2. It is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
3. Ramsar Convention is the only global environment treaty dealing with a particular ecosystem.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

10. Which of the following statements related to State Legislature is/are correct

1. Parliament can abolish a Legislative Council or create it, if the Legislative Assembly of the concerned state passes a resolution to that effect.
2. Governor nominates two members from the Anglo-Indian community.
3. In Legislative Council vacant seats are filled up by fresh elections and nominations (by governor) at the beginning of every third year.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

11. Rajya Sabha is sub-par compared to Lok Sabha in many perspectives, which includes:

1. Approval of ordinances
2. Approval of money bill
3. Voting on demand for grants

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

12. Consider the following statements with respect to Gross Domestic Product (GDP):

1. It is the value added by all the firms in the economy.
2. It is the final value of goods and services produced in the economy.
3. It is the sum of final consumption and investment expenditure by the household, private and government sector and net of exports and imports.
4. It is the income received by the four factors of production.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1, 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 2 and 4 only
- D. All of the above

13. Consider the following statements:

1. Base Year prices are used to calculate the real GDP
2. Base Year prices are used to calculate the nominal GDP

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

14. Consider the following statements:

1. The Blue Flag is sought for beaches, marinas and sustainable boating tourism operators as an indication of their high environmental and quality standards.
2. The Blue Flag is a certification by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE).

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

15. Consider the following statements:

1. Nipah is virus that can infect humans as well as animals.
 2. Fruit bats are the natural hosts of the Nipah virus
- Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

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

16. Consider the following statements with respect to Gross Domestic Product (GDP):

1. Asteroids are mostly rocky with no metals inside them.
2. Asteroids represent the building blocks of planets and moons, and studying them helps us learn about the early solar system.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

17. Consider the following statements:

1. 5th June is celebrated as the World Environment Day.
2. The theme for this year's World Environment Day is 'beat air pollution'.
3. India is the global host nation for the 43rd edition of the event.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

18. Consider the following statements with respect to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB):

1. It is a statutory organisation.
2. It was constituted under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.
3. It was entrusted with the powers and functions under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.
4. It has to advise the Central Government on any matter concerning prevention and control of water and air pollution and improvement of the quality of air.

Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?

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

19. Which of the following statements is incorrect?

- A. The Department of Telecommunications is a department of the Ministry of Communications.
- B. The Department of Telecom has been formulating developmental policies.
- C. The Department is also responsible for grant of licenses for various telecom services.
- D. None of the above

20. Which of the following statements is correct with respect to The International Civil Aviation Organization?

- A. It is a specialized agency of the United Nations.
- B. Its headquarters are located in the Quartier International of Montreal, Quebec, Canada.
- C. It codifies the principles and techniques of international air navigation.
- D. All of the above

21. Sustainable agriculture comprises of farming techniques that protect the environment, public health, and animal welfare. Which of the following is/are sustainable farm techniques?

1. Shifting cultivation
2. Precision Farming
3. Organic Farming
4. Zero land tilling
5. Burning of agricultural residue for Nitrogen fixation
6. Integrated Pest control management

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. Only 1, 2 and 3
- B. Only 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6
- C. Only 2, 3, 4 and 6
- D. Only 1, 4, 5 and 6

22. Which of the following is primarily a crop of temperate zone?

- A. Wheat
- B. Cotton
- C. Sugarcane
- D. Coffee

23. Why is the freight transport by road gaining importance?

1. Road transport is the most economical for short distances.
2. The construction and maintenance cost are very low.
3. Due to increase in the size of Lorries and its power, roadways can now carry large and heavy goods.

Options:

- A. Only 1 and 2
- B. Only 2 and 3
- C. Only 1 and 3
- D. None of the above

24. Consider the following Statements regarding Janani Suraksha Yojana:

1. It aims to reduce maternal mortality among pregnant women by encouraging them to deliver in government health facilities.
2. Under the scheme, non-cash assistance is provided to eligible pregnant women for giving birth in a government health facility.

Identify the correct statements:

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

25. Consider the following statements:

1. SAKSHAM is a centrally sponsored scheme to empower adolescent girls.
2. SABLA is a centrally sponsored scheme to empower adolescent boys.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

26. Consider the following statements:

1. Development of regional languages in medieval India is attributed to the Bhakti movement and patronage by the local rulers.
2. Paintings of court and hunting scenes and mythological themes were popular during the medieval period.
3. The largest number of books on classical Indian music in Persian were written during Aurangzeb's reign.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

27. Which of the following statements with respect to the International Atomic Energy Agency is incorrect?

- A. It helps in improving food security and agriculture around the world.
- B. It was created in 1967 in response to the deep fears and expectations generated by the discoveries and diverse uses of nuclear technology.
- C. The Agency was set up as the world's "Atoms for Peace" organization within the United Nations family.
- D. Both (a) and (c)

28. Which of the following led to the resurgence of revolutionary tendencies in second and third decades of 20th century?

1. Collapse of non-cooperation movement.
2. Rise in communal violence.
3. Dissatisfaction with Gandhian/ non-violent methods.
4. Influence of Marxist ideas and Russian revolution.

Choose the correct option:

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 1, 3 and 4 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. All of the above

29. Which of the following pairs are correctly matched?

1. Seventh schedule – Union, state and concurrent lists
2. Third schedule – Provisions so as to the President and Governors of states
3. Second schedule – Oaths and affirmations
4. Tenth schedule – Provisions for disqualification on the ground of defection

Select the correct answer using the codes given:

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

30. Consider the following statements about Government's steps taken for generating employment in the country:

1. Under Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY) employers are incentivized to enhance employment.
2. Through SABLA vocational skills are provided to all uneducated women.
3. National Career Service (NCS) is a national ICT based facilities to provide information on education, employment and training.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

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

31. Which of the following is not a characteristic of the tribal revolts during the British rule?

1. Localized nature
2. Religious leadership
3. Militant struggle

Options:

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

32. Which of the following is incorrect with respect to the international dateline?

- A. It is an imaginary line that separates two consecutive calendar days.
- B. It sits on the 180° line of longitude in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.
- C. It is a perfectly straight line.
- D. It has been moved slightly over the years.

33. Which of the following statements are correct?

1. India is a 'Union of States' implies the indestructible nature of its unity.
2. Acquisition of a foreign territory falls within the purview of Article 1.
3. Exclusive Economic Zone extends up to 200 km into the sea.

Options:

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

34. Consider the following statements regarding Objectives Resolution:

1. The Objectives resolution was introduced by Jawahar Lal Nehru and B.R Ambedkar.
2. As per OR, the constituent assembly declared India as Independent Sovereign Republic.
3. OR was later adopted as the preamble of Indian constitution as it was.

Which of the following statements are incorrect?

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

35. Consider the following statements with regard to the Swadeshi movement.

1. The formal proclamation of the Swadeshi Movement was made on the 7 August 1905 and the famous Boycott Resolution was passed in that meeting.
2. Boycott and public burning of foreign cloth, picketing of shops selling foreign goods etc became common during the movement.
3. This movement was successful in persuading the government to annul the partition immediately.

Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?

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

36. Match the following important pre-Congress organizations with the leaders:

1. East India Association, London
 2. Indian Association, Calcutta
 3. Poona Sarvajanik Sabha
 4. Bombay Presidency Association
- i) Pherozshah Mehta
 - ii) Dadabhai Naoroji
 - iii) Surendranath Banerjee
 - iv) Justice Ranade
- A. 1-ii), 2-iii), 3-iv), 4-i)
 - B. 1-i), 2-ii), 3-iii), 4-iv)
 - C. 1-i), 2-iii), 3-iv), 4-ii)
 - D. 1-ii), 2-iv), 3-iii), 4-i)

37. Match List I with List II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the lists:

List I List II

I. Iqta (A) Marathas

II. Jagir (B) Delhi Sultans

III. Amaram (C) Mughals

IV. Chauth (D) Vijayanagara

A. I-C, II-B, III-A, IV-D

B. I-B, II-C, III-D, IV-A

C. I-B, II-C, III-A, IV-D

D. I-C, II-B, III-D, IV-A

38. What were the reasons of decline of Maratha power?

- i. Internal jealousies
- ii. Weak economy based on agriculture only
- iii. Religious conservatism
- iv. Autocratic administration

A. i), ii) iii) and v) only

B. i), iii) and v) only

C. i), ii), iv) and v) only

D. All of the above

39. Consider the following statements:

1. Fundamental rights under Article 14 and 19 can be diluted to give effect to certain Directive Principles.
2. If President of India reserves a bill for his own consideration and then approves, then Judicial Review would not be possible.
3. Any law, relating to Schedule 9, can be curtailed on the grounds of violation of Fundamental Rights and it cannot be challenged.

Choose the correct option.

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 3 only

C. All of the above

D. None of the above

40. Indian Constitutional Assembly was criticized because:

1. Initially it was not a Sovereign body.
2. It was not a representative body.
3. It is a bundle of borrowed material.
4. It was dominated by Congress.
5. It was dominated by Hindus.

Which of the above statements are correct?

A. 3 and 4 only

B. 1, 3 and 4 only

C. 3 and 5 only

D. All of the above

41. The main objective of Article 13 is to:

- A. To secure paramountcy of the Constitution in relation to Fundamental Rights
- B. To secure paramountcy of the Parliament in relation to Fundamental Rights
- C. To secure paramountcy of the Fundamental duties in relation to Article 368
- D. To secure paramountcy of the Parliament in relation to Constitution

42. Which of the following were a part of Sher Shah Suri's administration?

1. Measurement of the sown land was done for revenue collection.
2. Shiqdar was in charge of the general administration of a Pargana.
3. Customs duty was imposed on the goods only at two places to promote trade and commerce.

Options:

A. 1 only

B. 1 and 2 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. All of the above

43. Consider the following statements:

1. Group of Seven (G7) summit 2018 was held in France.
2. Australia is a member of G7 nations.

Which of the statements are correct?

A. 1 only

B. 2 only

C. Both 1 and 2

D. Neither 1 nor 2

44. Consider the following statements:

1. Silent Valley is located in Tamil Nadu.
2. Silent Valley is home to the largest population of lion-tailed macaques.

A. 1 only

B. 2 only

C. Both 1 and 2

D. Neither 1 nor 2

45. Consider the following statements:

1. Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency (PARA) is being setup to deal with India's twin balance sheet problem.
2. Twin Balance Sheet Problem (TBS) deals with two balance sheet problems. One with Indian companies and the other with Indian Banks.

Which of the statements are correct?

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

46. Consider the following statements regarding the OBC Bill (The Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017):

1. It seeks to grant the National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC) constitutional status.
2. The Bill seeks to remove the power of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) to examine matters related to backward classes.
3. NCBC will comprise of five members appointed by the Prime Minister.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

47. The problems of high inflation is/are

1. It reduces the purchasing power of the people
2. It increases the savings in a country
3. Interest rates go up
4. Investments increases

Choose the correct answer:

- A. All of the above
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 4 only
- D. 1, 3 and 4 only

48. Which of the following processes is Oxidation?

- A. Addition of Hydrogen
- B. Removal of oxygen
- C. Both a) and b)
- D. None of the above

49. During whose reign, the Ijarah system was introduced?

- A. Jahandar Shah
- B. Farrukh Siyar
- C. Bahadur Shah II
- D. Shah Alam II

50. Which of the following statements are correct?

1. A mixed economy refers to market economy with strong regulatory oversight and governmental provision of public goods.
2. A socialist economic system is characterized by social ownership and democratic control of the means of production.
3. Capitalism is an economic system in which capital goods are owned by private individuals.
4. Marxian economics provided a foundation for capitalism.

Correct answer code is:

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

51. Which of the following statements are correct?

1. Organized sector covers those enterprises or places of work where the terms of employment are regular.
2. Organized sectors are registered by the government and have to follow its rules and regulations such as the Factories Act and Minimum Wages Act.
3. Workers in the organized sector enjoy security of employment.

Correct answer code is:

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

52. Which of the following steps have been taken by government to attract foreign investment?

1. Establishing Special Economic Zones (SEZs)
 2. Making labour laws flexible
 3. Curbing trade barriers
 4. Granting compulsory licensing
- A. Only 1 and 2
 - B. Only 1, 2 and 3
 - C. Only 1, 3 and 4
 - D. All of the above

53. 'Basel III Accord' or simply 'Basel III', often seen in the news, seeks to

- Develop national strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity
- Improve banking sector's ability to deal with financial and economic stress and improve risk management
- Reduce the greenhouse gas emissions but places a heavier burden on developed countries
- Transfer technology from developed Countries to poor countries to enable them to replace the use of chlorofluorocarbons in refrigeration with harmless chemicals.

54. With reference to 'Bodhgaya', consider the following statements:

- The Indian Government decided to develop Bodhgaya as the site of spiritual capital to serve as a civilizational bond between India and the Buddhist world.
- Mahabodhi Temple, located in Bodhgaya, is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- It is also included in the Buddhist circuit under Swadesh Darshan scheme.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- 1 and 3 only
- 1 and 2 only
- 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

55. With reference to the Non-banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) in India, consider the following statements:

- They cannot engage in the acquisition of securities issued by the government.
- They cannot accept demand deposits like Savings Account.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

56. 'Al Nagah' is a military exercise that India and which one of the following countries participate?

- Iran
- Oman
- Bahrain
- Saudi Arabia

57. Supreme court of India was inaugurated on January 28, 1950. The following statements, except one, depict facts in functioning of the court post inauguration. Identify the incorrect statement.

- Jurisdiction of Supreme Court is greater than that of its predecessor.
- It adopted the American system of judicial system and is free of any sort of interventions from c) other organs of the government.
- Supreme court succeeded the Federal court of India and also replaced the British Privy Council.
- Federal court was established under the Government of India act 1935.

58. Consider the following statements with respect to Animal Welfare Board of India:

- The Animal Welfare Board of India is a statutory advisory body on Animal Welfare Laws.
- It was established under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.
- The Board consists of 28 members.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are incorrect?

- 1 only
- 1 and 2 only
- 3 only
- None of the above

59. Which of the following led to the resurgence of revolutionary tendencies in second and third decades of 20th century?

- Collapse of non-cooperation movement.
- Rise in communal violence.
- Dissatisfaction with Gandhian/ non-violent methods.
- Influence of Marxist ideas and Russian revolution.

Choose the correct option:

- 1, 2 and 3 only
- 1, 3 and 4 only
- 2 and 3 only
- All of the above

60. Consider the following statements regarding the Home Rule League:

- They opposed the involvement of Indian troops in World War-I.
- They were demanding significant devolution of power after World War-I.

Choose the correct option.

- 1 is correct but 2 is incorrect
- 1 is incorrect but 2 is correct
- Both 1 and 2 are incorrect
- Both 1 and 2 are correct

61. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 43 deals with Socialist as well as Gandhian philosophy.
2. Article 44 deals with intellectual, liberal and Gandhian principles.

Choose the correct answer.

- A. 1 is correct but 2 is not correct
- B. 2 is correct but 1 is not correct
- C. Both 1 and 2 are correct
- D. Both 1 and 2 are incorrect

62. Which of the following are included in the criteria for declaring a community as a schedule tribes?

1. Indication of primitive traits
2. Distinctive culture
3. Extensive contact with community at large
4. Geographic isolation and backwardness

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- A. Only 1 and 2
- B. Only 1, 3 and 4
- C. Only 1, 2 and 4
- D. All of the above

63. For eradication manual scavenging, the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act 2013 was enacted. With reference to the act, consider the following statements.

1. It prohibits engagement of persons for hazardous cleaning of septic tanks.
2. It provides for the comprehensive rehabilitation of manual scavengers in time-bound manner.
3. The monitoring mechanism has its chairman as Chief Minister at state level and Prime Minister at national level.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

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

64. The population size of a region directly depends upon-

1. Birth Rate
2. Demographic dividend
3. Immigration
4. Emigration

Select the correct answer using the codes given:

- A. Only 1 and 3
- B. Only 1 and 2
- C. Only 1, 3 and 4
- D. All of the above

65. The commodity market in India is regulated by-

- A. Forward Market Commission
- B. Ministry of consumer affairs directly regulate it
- C. SEBI
- D. RBI

66. Which of the following is not a feature of the Nehru Report, 1928?

- A. It declared Poorna Swaraj to be the objective.
- B. It rejected the principle of separate electorates.
- C. It recommended Universal Adult Suffrage.
- D. All of the above

67. Which of the following can be stated as the reasons for the peasants' and workers' movements in the 1930s?

1. Impact of the economic depression of 1929.
2. Civil Disobedience Movement.
3. Rise of the left parties.

Choose the correct option:

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

68. Consider the following statements regarding the revolutionary movements in India:

1. They contributed in the propagation of modern political ideas like federalism, democracy etc.
2. They tried to provide an alternative to mainstream politics.
3. Although in early phase they had religious influence, their approach was mostly secular in nature.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

69. Consider the following statements regarding Indian Republican Army:

1. This revolutionary Hindu group from Bengal was responsible for armory raid in Chittagong under the leadership of 'Masterda'.
2. Participation of young women was a unique feature of this group.
3. They proclaimed a Provisional Revolutionary Government after capturing the armory.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

70. Which of the following is not a feature of MIMO?

- A. It is a latest technological development in communication.
- B. It can receive and transmit multiple signals at a time.
- C. It stands for Multiple In Multiple Out.
- D. None of the above

71. Which of the following can be stated as the reasons for the advocating the holding of simultaneous elections?

1. Reduction in Expenditure.
2. Reduction in the malfunctioning of EVMs .
3. Increase in uniformity of election procedure.

Choose the correct option:

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

72. Consider the following statements regarding MCLR and Base Rate:

1. MCLR is always lesser than Base Rate.
2. MCLR is less responsive to changes in policy rates.
3. Base Rate is the minimum rate of interest charged by banks on lending loans.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

73. Which of the following features of the Constitution have been borrowed from the Government of India Act of 1935?

1. Office of governor
2. Concurrent list
3. Emergency Provisions
4. Rule of law

Mark the correct response:

- A. Only 4
- B. 1, 3 and 4 only
- C. 1, 2 and 3 only
- D. All of the above

74. Which of the following is/are the characteristics of the Federal System?

1. Division of power between Centre and States
2. Supremacy of the Constitution
3. Bicameralism
4. Separation of Power

Mark the correct response:

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

75. Which of the following bodies of India have a quasi-judicial function?

1. Comptroller and Auditor General of India
2. Finance Commission
3. Election Commission of India
4. Central Information Commission
5. National Human Rights Commission

Mark the correct response:

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
- C. 3, 4 and 5 only
- D. All the above

76. Choose the correct reasons for the decline of Portuguese power in India over time.

1. Its population was less than a million.
2. It lagged behind in the development of shipping.
3. It followed a policy of religious intolerance.

Options:

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

77. Consider the following statements related to National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF):

1. NIIF is registered with SEBI as Category II Alternative Investment Fund (AIF).
2. The Purpose of the fund is to receive disinvestment proceeds of central public sector enterprises.
3. 5% of the total funds collected in it becomes a part of Consolidated Fund of India.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

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

78. Consider the following statements related to NARI portal:

1. It is a web portal that will provide information to women like tips on good nutrition, tips for job search and interview, investment and savings advice.
2. NGOs and civil society can also provide their feedback, suggestions, put up grievances and share best practices through it.
3. It provides information about Government schemes (for women) only for the category of women in the age group of 18-70 years.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

79. Consider the following statements:

1. Indus river falls into the Arabian sea near Karachi.
2. The five major tributaries of Indus originates in India.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

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

80. Consider the following Statements regarding Official Language:

1. Article 343 (1) of the Constitution provides that Hindi in Devanagari script shall be the official language of the Union.
2. Article 343 (3) empowered the Parliament to provide by law for continued use of English for official purposes even after January 25, 1965.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

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

81. With reference to the Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It is available to all Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers.
2. It is a central sector scheme.
3. The scheme is applicable to the mothers above the age of 19 years and for the first two live births.

Select the correct code:

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

82. With reference to Konark Temple, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It was built by King Narasimhadeva I, the great ruler of Ganga dynasty.
2. The Konark is the third link of Odisha's Golden Triangle.
3. It is also known as "White Pagoda".

Select the correct code:

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

83. With reference to Kalamkari, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Kalamkari is an ancient style of mechanized painting done on cotton or silk fabric.
2. There are two identifiable styles of Kalamkari art in India – Srikalahasti style and Machilipatnam style.
3. It uses the natural dyes and is famous in the states of Rajasthan and Gujrat.

Select the correct code:

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

84. With reference to the National Highway of India, consider the following statements.

1. It is a statutory body under the Ministry of Road and Transport.
2. NHAI is mandated to implement Bharatmala Project which is India's largest ever Highways Project.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are incorrect?

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

85. Which of the following statements regarding Global Hunger Index is incorrect?

- A. It is calculated by the International Food Policy Research Institute.
- B. It highlights successes and failures in hunger reduction.
- C. It is published once in two years.
- D. The theme for 2017 report was Inequality and Hunger.

86. Consider the following statements with respect to the Great Indian Desert.

1. It lies to the North-east of Aravalli Hills.
2. It has arid climate with low vegetation cover.
3. There are evidences to show that this region was under sea during the Mesozoic era.
4. Mushroom rocks and shifting dunes are some of the desert land features present here.

Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?

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

87. Identify the type of soil in India based on the following features.

1. It covers most of the Deccan Plateau.
2. It is generally clayey, deep and impermeable.
3. It retains moisture for a long time.
4. It is rich in lime, iron, magnesia and alumina.

Options:

- A. Red soil
- B. Yellow soil
- C. Black soil
- D. Alluvial soil

88. Which of the following were the factors leading to the Decline of Mughals?

1. Jagirdari crisis
2. Intense factionalism within Mughal court
3. Socio-religious issues leading to alienation of the masses
4. Weakening might of the Mughal Army
5. Recurrent peasant revolts

Options:

- A. i), ii) and iii) only
- B. i), ii), and v) only
- C. i), ii), iii) and iv) Only
- D. All of the above

89. Which of the following is to organize the traditional industries and artisans into clusters to make them competitive and provide support for their long-term sustainability by way of enhancing the marketability of products, improving the skills of artisans, making provision for common facilities and strengthening the cluster governance systems?

- A. IMPRINT
- B. SWAYAM
- C. SFURTI
- D. ASPIRE

90. With respect to the Maternity Benefit Act 2017, which one of the following statements is incorrect?

- A. A woman with two children will be entitled to 12 weeks of maternity leave.
- B. The bill requires every establishment to provide creche facilities.
- C. The Act provides the provision for work from home with mutual agreement between the employer and the women.
- D. The benefits available under the act must be given in writing and electronically to the woman.

91. Which of the following convention(s) of UN has/have been ratified by India?

1. UN Conventions on Persons with Disability
2. UN Conventions on the Rights of the Children
3. UN High Commissioner for Refugees – UNHCR

Select the correct answer using the codes given:

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

92. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

1. The Lodi dynasty was started by Sikander Lodi, an Afghan tribal.
2. Raziya, daughter of Iltutmish, was the first and last woman ruler of medieval India.
3. Battle of Amroha was fought between Alauddin Khilji and Mongols.

Options:

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

93. Which of the following statement(s) is/ regarding the Preamble of the Indian Constitution are incorrect?

- i) It contains the basic structure of the Constitution.
- ii) It epitomizes the principles of functioning of the Government.
- iii) The constitution is based upon the basic elements mentioned in the Preamble.

- A. i) only
- B. iii) only
- C. i) and ii) only
- D. None of the above

94. Which of the following statements is incorrect?

- A. Directive principles are based on the concept of Welfare state.
- B. It is the duty of the state to apply these principles in making laws.
- C. The Judiciary can compel the Government to perform a duty under these directives.
- D. Directive principles can be termed as positive rights of the citizens

95. Consider the following statements regarding Hindustan Republican Association (HRA).

- 1. It was founded to organize an armed revolution.
- 2. Its members, including Ram Prasad Bismil and Bhagat Singh, were tried in Kakori conspiracy case.
- 3. Its name was changed to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) under the leadership of Azad.

Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?

- A. I only
- B. II only
- C. II and III only
- D. I and II only

96. The "Third Neighbour Policy", recently in news is with respect to which of the following country's foreign policy?

- A. India
- B. Mongolia
- C. Bolivia
- D. China

97. Consider the following statements about Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT)

- 1. Indian and Bangladesh recently instituted the first edition of CORPAT.
- 2. The Indian Navy regularly conducts CORPATs with Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

98. Consider the following statements about Chilika Lake:

- 1. It is a Sweet Water Lake situated in Odisha
- 2. Chilika Lake was designated the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

99. Consider the following statements about "Musi River"

- 1. It is a tributary of River Krishna
- 2. It flows through Telangana
- 3. The river was known as Nerva during the Qutub Shahi period
- 4. 3 dams are built on River Musi

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

100. Consider the following statements with respect to Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank:

- 1. It is a Chinese bank headquartered in Beijing, China.
- 2. AIIB offers sovereign and non-sovereign financing for sound and sustainable projects.
- 3. It supports projects in energy and power, transportation and telecommunications, rural infrastructure and agriculture development, water supply and sanitation, environmental protection, and urban development and logistics.

Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. None

101. In which of the following cases, the Supreme Court held Federalism to be a part of the basic structure of the Constitution?

- A. Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala
- B. S.R.Bommai v. Union of India
- C. Minerva Mills v. Union of India
- D. Golak Nath v. State of Punjab

102. Which of the following provisions makes the Indian Constitution rigid?

1. A Constitutional Amendment Bill shall be passed by a special majority as given under article 368 and not by simple majority.
2. Some of the Constitutional Amendment Bills passed by the Parliament shall have to be ratified by not less than half of the State Legislatures.
3. A Constitutional Amendment Act cannot violate the basic structure of the Constitution.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

103. Which of the following features were included in the "Cabinet Proposals"?

1. The princely states would retain all subjects other than, those ceded to the Union.
2. Setting up of Constitution making body by the Indians.
3. Formation of Executive Council and equal representation to the Muslims and Hindus in the council.
4. Elections to Constituent Assembly were to be held by a method of proportional representation by the provincial assembly.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

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

ANSWER KEYS

Question No	Answer Keys
1.	D
2.	B
3.	C
4.	A
5.	C
6.	A
7.	C
8.	D
9.	D
10.	C
11.	D
12.	D
13.	A
14.	C
15.	C
16.	B
17.	B
18.	B
19.	D
20.	D
21.	C
22.	A
23.	C
24.	A
25.	D

Question No	Answer Keys
26.	D
27.	B
28.	B
29.	D
30.	C
31.	D
32.	C
33.	A
34.	C
35.	C
36.	A
37.	B
38.	D
39.	C
40.	D
41.	A
42.	D
43.	D
44.	B
45.	C
46.	B
47.	B
48.	D
49.	A
50.	D

Question No	Answer Keys
51.	D
52.	B
53.	B
54.	D
55.	B
56.	B
57.	B
58.	D
59.	B
60.	B
61.	C
62.	C
63.	C
64.	C
65.	C
66.	A
67.	D
68.	D
69.	B
70.	D
71.	A
72.	C
73.	B
74.	C
75.	D

Question No	Answer Keys
76.	D
77.	A
78.	A
79.	A
80.	C
81.	B
82.	A
83.	B
84.	B
85.	C
86.	A
87.	C
88.	D
89.	C
90.	B
91.	B
92.	B
93.	D
94.	C
95.	B
96.	B
97.	C
98.	B
99.	C
100.	A

Question No	Answer Keys
101.	B
102.	B
103.	D

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. The socio-cultural awakening in Indian society in the 19th century was a result of interaction with the West. In light of the above statement, discuss the trends that emerged in Indian socio-cultural discourse.
2. Introduction of Goods and Services Tax has altered the Centre-State relations considerably. Discuss constitutional aspect of the changing relations.
3. What are sustainable development goals? What initiatives have been taken to promote sustainable development in the country?
4. "Naxalites and other revolutionaries tend to be impatient with democracy and its institutions, believing that they can, at a stroke, dismantle all the evils of the system-and that this alone is an adequate corrective." Examine by citing relevant cases.
5. India has made good progress in education since the introduction of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Right to Education Act. Comment
6. In the light of recent developments, discuss the significance of the office of Governor
7. Discuss significance of the theme for Environmental Day, 2018. And suggest ways to curb plastic pollution.
8. Uniformity doesn't necessarily mean equality. In light of the given statement, critically analyse the need of a uniform civil code in India.
9. Non-alignment as an instrument of foreign policy is to remain important in international politics of the day. Discuss.
10. Democracy is the panacea to all the ills of governance. Critically analyse
11. NPAs are a long-standing problem of Indian Economy. Discuss the need for a separate Asset Management Company.
12. Compare and contrast the role played by SCO and G7 in the geo-political scenario.
13. The process of globalization, primarily understood as an economic phenomenon, is responsible for changes in the social structure as well. Discuss in the Indian context.
14. The transition of Indian political system in the eighteenth century was a result of decline and disintegration of the Mughal Dynasty. Explain
15. Good governance and citizen-centric administration are inseparably associated. Discuss.
16. Regionalism and nationalism go hand in hand. Comment.
17. In the light of deteriorating air quality in cities across India, suggest ways to bring down the hazardous levels of air quality.
18. Nuclear energy is the saviour for our growing energy needs. Comment.
19. In the wake of increasing instances of Fluorosis across the states in India, throw light on the importance of water conservation and suggest measures to tackle the issue of water scarcity and related problems.
- 20 India is moving from non-alignment to multi-alignment. Illustrate with examples.
21. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is an excellent opportunity for India to secure its economic and security interests in the region. Elaborate.
22. e-governance has the potential to be the sole reformer as far as governance in India is concerned. Support the statement with examples
23. According to the World Bank, 70% of the global greenhouse gas emissions comes from infrastructure development, construction, power plants and transport system operations. In light of the above statement, discuss the challenges faced by the developing countries in modernizing the society.
24. Ideology has an important role to play in the formulation of a country's foreign policy. Discuss.

26. Outline the reasons for an insurgency in North-East India. Discuss how a political solution to the problem has not been able to contain the insurgency
27. Plastics have been responsible for the transformation of everyday life. Comment.
28. Bhakti movement contributed enormously to the battle against orthodoxy in the Indian society. Explain.
29. India's Public Healthcare Sector is grappling with challenges to provide quality service while the private sector booms with skyrocketing revenues. In light of this statement, discuss ways to improve the quality and inclusiveness of healthcare system in India.
30. Democracy, as a saviour of diversity, faces a longstanding threat to its existence as the various uniting forces wither. In this context, discuss the challenges to democracy in India.
31. Comment on India's Status of Food Security and Nutrition. Discuss this with respect to National Food Security Act and National Nutrition Mission.
32. Mongolia's "Third Neighbour Policy" is an innovation in the development of diplomatic relations which can be followed by other land locked countries. Discuss.
33. Discuss the Indochina relations in the light of growing Chinese presence in India's neighbourhood, be it economic or military.
34. In the globalized world order, domestic economic policy changes reflect the global sentiments. Explain with recent examples.
35. Democracy is essential for conflict resolution and nation building, particularly in pluralistic States. In this context, discuss the constitutional framework provided for conflict resolution in India.
36. Rising crude prices spike inflation and the trade deficit, putting pressure on the rupee and GDP growth.
37. Indian society, government and economy underwent significant changes in the decades following the Revolt of 1857. Discuss.
38. Economic development around the world is intertwined with a global phenomenon called climate change. Analyze.
39. Equal treatment to un-equals is nothing but inequality. Discuss the right to equality provided by Indian constitution in this context
40. The decision of the British government to partition Bengal boomeranged and led to public outrage of far-reaching consequences. Discuss the significance of incidents that followed partition of Bengal in 1905.
41. "Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) has traditionally been more a fiscal policy instrument than a monetary policy instrument in India." Comment.
42. Peasant movements in India today are no different from the ones in British India. Feudal exploitation still remains the primary cause for dissent. Explain.
43. Public participation is at the heart of good governance. Discuss.
44. Regionalism poses a significant threat to the federal structure of our nation. But this federal system is the one responsible for differential levels of development across the nation, which in turn has strengthened regional romanticism. Analyse.
45. The socio-cultural awakening in Indian society in the 19th century was a result of interaction with the West. In light of the above statement, discuss the trends that emerged in Indian socio-cultural discourse.
46. The issues pertaining to the status of women in India is a consequence of inadequacy of the legal system to keep pace with dynamics of the society. Discuss.
47. The Resolution of Kashmir Crisis is not guaranteed even if there is consensus among all the concerned stakeholders involved. Discuss.
48. Holding of Simultaneous Elections is a long pending reform in the democratic process of Elections in India
49. Terrorist for one is a freedom fighter for another. Bring out an analogy between the Indian National Movement and the separatist movement in Kashmir, with suitable examples.
50. The failure, inadequacy or injustice of state mechanisms have created space for Naxalite movements. In light of the above statement, discuss the complex causes of this extremist movement.

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