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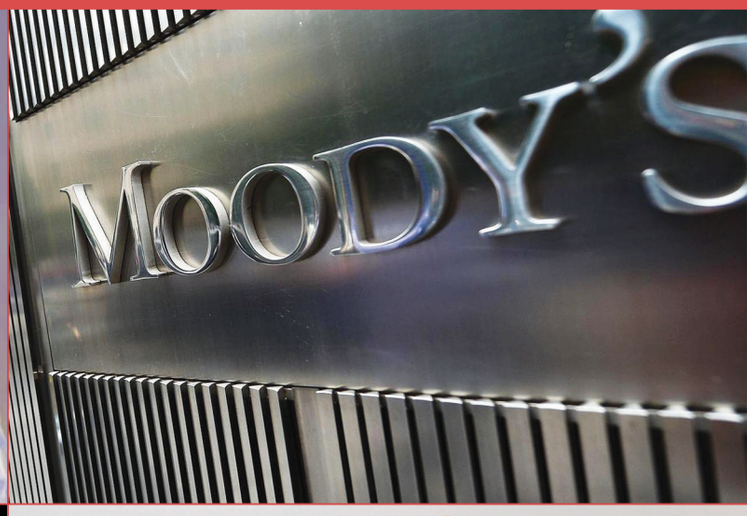
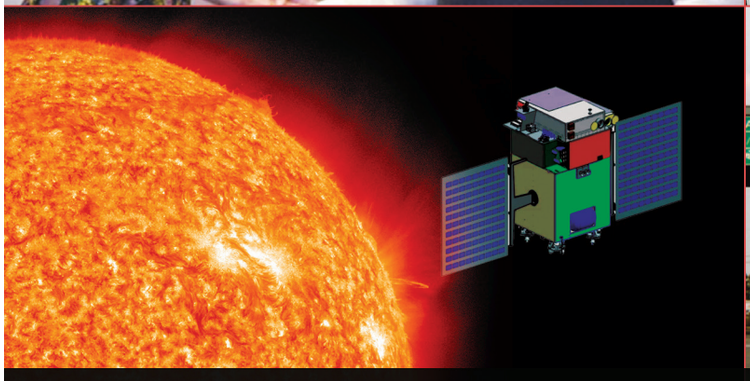
UPSC MONTHLY MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER- 2017





Economy gets Moody's thumbs up

Agency upgrades sovereign rating

Global Entrepreneurship Summit

Inspiring entrepreneurs and investors

Aditya-L1

Spacecraft mission to study the Sun

FASTags

Easy to Cruise

Incheon Strategy

Make the Right Real

INCREDIBLE RESULTS

IAS 2016

8 Ranks in Top 50 | **18 Ranks** in Top 100 | **215 Ranks** In The Final List

Rank 2
Anmol Sher Singh Bedi

Rank 5
Abhilash Mishra

Rank 12
Tejaswi Rana

Rank 30
Prabhash Kumar

Rank 32
Avdhesh Meena

Ganga Singh
Rank-33

Anu S
Rank-42

Surabhi Gautam
Rank-50

Manuj Jindal
Rank-53

Tanai Sultania
Rank-63

Parikh Mirant Jatin
Rank-67

Rohit Vyas
Rank-69

Abhishek Chourasiya
Rank-72

Rajarshi Shah
Rank-81

Prateek Jain
Rank-82

Nair Prajit Prabhakaran
Rank-87

Sushil Kumar
Rank-96

Devendra Kumar
Rank-97

Swarn Prabhat
Rank-105

Hirani Adityavikram
Rank-113

Varun Singla
Rank-114

Shaurya suman
Rank-119

Nitish Agarwal
Rank-122

Ann Mary George
Rank-123

Anand Shankar
Rank-127

Rishav Kumar Jha
Rank-128

Prabhat Ranjan Pathak
Rank-137

Akanksha Rana
Rank-163

Padmini Solanki
Rank-170

Amogh Gopinath
Rank-171

Bindu Madhav Garikapati
Rank-172

Rahul Gupta
Rank-182

Sagar Bagmar
Rank-186

Abhay Soni
Rank-188

Tare Anuj Milind
Rank-189

Anurag Jain
Rank-198

Arpit Vijayvargiya
Rank-201

Deepak Shukla
Rank-202

Videh Khare
Rank-205

Akhil Mahajan
Rank-213

Nitika Pant
Rank-217

Tuhin Sinha
Rank-219

Keshav Kumar
Rank-222

Keshav Kumar
Rank-230

mohit Garg
Rank-238

Pansuria Toral Pravinbhai
Rank-239

Odke Digvijay Govind
Rank-247

Bogati jagadeeswar
Rank-249

Abhishek Surana
Rank-250

Pushkin Jain
Rank-252

Amit Verma
Rank-253

Shrey Vats
Rank-260

Suchismita Kanungoe
Rank-261

Sri Hari Prasad Gopishetty
Rank-268

Aditi Mor
Rank-277

Zade Parikshit Sanjayrao
Rank-280

Prachi Ailawadhi
Rank-290

Guru Prasad
Rank-299

Shashank Shekhar Singh
Rank-306

Aaditya Mishra
Rank-309

Amilineni Bhargav Teja
Rank-314

Aman Bishla
Rank-315

Arihant Singhi
Rank-322

Mitika Dahiya
Rank-325

Ashima Mittal
Rank-328

Aastha Suman
Rank-331

Ankur
Rank-341

Avneet Punia
Rank-356

S Chitharanjan
Rank-357

Ranjan Rajeev
Rank-358

Godhani Aksharkumar P
Rank-365

Sumit Balecha
Rank-368

Basuki Nath Jha
Rank-378

Mayank Mishra
Rank-379

Mrinal Prakash Mishra
Rank-380

Kaustuva
Rank-381

Sambit Mishra
Rank-385

OUR RESULTS IN THE PAST YEARS

IAS Result 2015

5 Ranks in Top 50 | **14 Ranks** in Top 100 | **162 Ranks** In The Final List

Rank 20
Vipin Garg

Rank 24
Khumanthem Diana Devi

Rank 25
Chandra Mohan Garg

Rank 27
Pulkit Garg

Rank 47
Anshul Agarwal

Amit Yadav
Rank-51

Abhishek Goyal
Rank-57

Varsha Singh
Rank-66

Vishal Singh
Rank-73

Aneesh Dasgupta
Rank-74

Ankur
Rank-77

Anupam Mishra
Rank-81

Rakesh Kumar
Rank-91

Vishal Kumar
Rank-95

Bondar Siddeshwar Baliram
Rank-124

Vinit Agrawal
Rank-128

Yashika Mehta
Rank-136

Rajat Saklecha
Rank-141

Saurabh
Rank-142

Arpit Jain
Rank-144

Anjani Anjan
Rank-148

Vemuri V L Ambarish
Rank-150

Amit Tolani
Rank-151

Ravindra Goswami
Rank-152

Anubhav Bharadwaj
Rank-161

Rishav Kumar Jha
Rank-162

S Asker Ali
Rank-167

P Krishnakant
Rank-169

Mani Lal Patidar
Rank-171

Patel Ravindra Dahyabhai
Rank-176

Ankur Aggarwal
Rank-177

Hena Kumar Sukhna
Rank-182

IAS Result 2014

6 Ranks in Top 50 | **12 Ranks** in Top 100 | **83 Ranks** Overall Selections

Rank 4
Vandana Rao

Rank 5
Suharsha Bhagat

Rank 16
Ananya Das

Rank 23
Anil Dhameliya

Rank 28
Kushaal Yadav

Rank 39
Vivekanand T.S

IAS Result 2013

5 Ranks in Top 50 | **62 Ranks** Ranks in the final list

Rank 9
Divyanshu Jha

Rank 12
Neha Jain

Rank 23
Prabhav joshi

Rank 40
Gaurang Rathi

Rank 46
Udita Singh

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POLITY

1. Area Suraksha Mitras

- Community policing (CP) is an initiative of Bengaluru city police in partnership with Janaagraha.
- The objective of the program is to address neighborhood safety and security concerns through responsible participation of the citizenry in crime prevention, at the level of the local community. Here both police and citizens work in partnership to ensure a safer and secure neighbourhood.
- Community Policing focuses on community engagement to address issues of crime and social disorder through the delivery of police services, which include aspects of traditional law enforcement, prevention and solving the safety and security challenges.
- It is an approach, wherein community support and interaction helps prevent & control crime and citizens have a say in identifying and solving neighborhood safety and security concerns. CP accomplishes this through harnessing participation from active citizen volunteers, also called as Area Suraksha Mitras (ASMs).

2. National Testing Agency

- The Union Cabinet approved the creation of a National Testing Agency (NTA) to conduct entrance examinations for higher educational institutions.

Structure

- NTA will be created as a Society registered under the Indian Society Registration Act, 1860, and as an autonomous and self-sustained premier testing organization to conduct entrance examinations for higher educational institutions
- The entrance examinations will be conducted in online mode at least twice a year, thereby giving adequate opportunity to candidates to bring out their best
- The NTA will be chaired by an eminent educationist appointed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. There will be a Board of Governors comprising members from user institutions.

Significance

- Its creation will relieve the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) – which conducts exams like the National Eligibilty-cum-Entrance Test – and the All India Council for Technical Education of the burden of conducting entrance tests.

Finance

- The Centre will give an initial grant of Rs. 25-crore to the NTA to start its operations in the first year. Thereafter, it will be self-sustaining

3. UMANG App

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a new mobile app — UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance) which will allow citizens to access government services on a single platform.
- It aims to bring 162 government services on a single mobile app, with a larger goal to make the government accessible on the mobile phone of our citizens.
- The services live on the app include Aadhaar, DigiLocker, Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS) among others.
- According to official documents, the UMANG app will provide access to over 1,200 services of various government organisations in states and at the Centre as well as utility payments.
- Using the app, citizens will be able to access Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) services, apply for a new permanent account number (PAN), and those looking for jobs can register themselves under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana.
- It supports 13 Indian languages and caters to on-demand scalability. It will also soon support feature phones without internet through USSD.

4. Bihar approves reservation for contractual postings

- Bihar approved reservation in outsourced contractual appointments made by the State government.
- The reservation policy to be implemented while hiring outsourced employees, including computer executives, IT assistants, drivers, peons and others.
- For all categories: SCs (Scheduled Caste), STs (Scheduled Tribe), OBCs (Other Backward Class), EBCs (Economically Backward Class), physically challenged people, women and all other categories entitled to reservation would be given the benefit of reservation as per rules.
- Besides, there will also be reservation in appointments of doctors, engineers, teachers and other posts on a contractual basis by the State government.

5. Collegium and transparency

Context:

- Recently, the Supreme Court decided to make public, on the court's website, its various decisions, including its verdicts on persons nominated for elevation as judges to the high courts, its choices of candidates for elevation to the Supreme Court, and its decisions on transfer of judges between different high courts.

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Case Histories:

- In the cases of A. Zakir Hussain and Dr. K. Arul(candidates nominated for elevation to the Madras High Court) the collegium has said: "keeping in view the material on record, including the report of Intelligence Bureau [IB] he is not found suitable for elevation to the HC Bench".
- The reasons offered for rebuffing the nomination of Vasudevan V.N., a judicial member of the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, are particularly perplexing. The report said: "While one of the two consultee-colleagues has offered no views about his suitability, the other colleague has not found him suitable for elevation".

Issues related to Vasudevan VN

- The collegium, ever since its inception, following the Supreme Court's judgment in what is known as the Second Judges Case (1993). The present revelations, much opposed to their perceived objective, scarcely make the system more transparent.
- In Mr. Vasudevan's case, for example, we don't know which of the "consultee-judges objected to his elevation, and why the judge interviewed found him unsuitable.
- Also the collegium's express noting that Mr. Vasudevan had previously been recommended by two different high court collegia.
- These issues concerning the system employed to appoint judges to the Supreme Court and the high courts are of particular salience.

Constitution of India and appointments of High Court judges:

- The President, who would act on the advice of the council of ministers is required to compulsorily consult certain authorities, including the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- And when making appointments to a high court, the chief justice of that court.

'Consultation':

- In 1977, in Sankalchand Sheth's case, when interpreting the word "consultation," the Supreme Court ruled that the term can never mean "concurrence". Hence, the CJI's opinion, the court ruled, was not binding on the executive
- And in 1981, in the First Judges Case, the court once again endorsed this interpretation, partly
- But twelve years later, in the Second Judges Case, the court overruled its earlier decisions. It now held that "consultation" really meant "concurrence". And that the CJI's view enjoys primacy, since he is "best equipped to know and assess the worth" of candidates
- In 1998, in the Third Judges Case, the court clarified its position further. The collegium, it said, will comprise, in the case of appointments to the SC, the CJI and his four senior-most colleagues. And, in the case of appointments to the high courts, the CJI and his two senior-most colleagues.

Collegium is a part of the basic structure of the constitution

- When the Constitution was altered, through the 99th constitutional amendment and when the collegium was sought to be replaced by the National Judicial Appointments Commission, the court swiftly struck it down.
- It ruled, in what we might now call the Fourth Judges Case (2015), that the primacy of the collegium was a part of the Constitution's basic structure and this power could not, therefore, be removed even through a constitutional amendment.

6. EC for life ban on the convicted

- The Election Commission (EC) took a definitive stand in the Supreme Court that convicted persons should be banned from contesting elections for life.
- EC is of the opinion that such a move would be a firm step against criminalization of politics and uniform ban would be in the spirit of the fundamental rights of the Constitution, including the right to equality.
- As of now, a person, on conviction, is debarred from contesting any elections for the period of his or her prison sentence and six years thereafter.
- The Election Commission's proposals:

Key Fact:

- An analysis by the Association of Democratic Reforms and National Election Watch has revealed that 61 of the 338 candidates in the Himachal Pradesh Assembly elections have criminal records against them.
- Of the 338 candidates analysed, 158 are 'crorepatis'.
- The Himachal Pradesh Election Watch and ADR have analysed the affidavits of 60 MLAs re-contesting in this election. Their average assets in 2012 were worth Rs 5.23 crore, while this year their average assets are worth Rs 9.44 crore, which is an average increase of 80% in five years.
- Of the total candidates, 120 have declared their educational qualification to be between Classes V and XII pass, while 214 are graduates or above.

7. Delhi LG cannot simply sit on files and stultify governance: Justice Chandrachud

Context:

- Five-judge Constitution Bench hearing a batch of nine appeals filed by the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party government against an August 4, 2016 judgment of the Delhi High Court.

- **Controversy :** provision to Article 239AA (4), which mandates that in case of a difference of opinion between the LG and the Council of Ministers, the former has to refer the issue to the President. In the meanwhile, while that decision is pending before the President, the LG, if the matter is urgent, can use his discretion to take immediate action.

High Court order:

- It declared the LG to have "complete control of all matters regarding National Capital Territory of Delhi, and nothing will happen without the concurrence of the LG."
- LG has special powers greater than the President, greater than other Governors of States.

What the government is expecting?

- The Kejriwal government wants the Supreme Court to lay down the law on whether the LG can unilaterally administer the National Capital without being bound by the "aid and advice" of the elected government.

8. Justice D.Y. Chandrachud oral observations regarding the role of The Lieutenant Governor:

In news:

- The Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Delhi cannot stultify proposals or schemes forwarded by the Council of Ministers to him by simply sitting on them.
- The LG is bound to pass the difference of opinions [between the LG and the Delhi Council of Ministers] to the President for early resolution.

Various opinions:

- The Constitution Bench, led by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, prima facie said that the Delhi government's ability to "aid and advice" the LG is limited to subjects other than public order, police and land in the National Capital. It said that the proviso to Article 239AA (4), on plain reading, seems to give primacy to the LG.
- Justice Ashok Bhushan remarked that the LG is entitled to take a different view and is not bound by the aid and advice of the Delhi Cabinet.

Counter arguments:

- Mr. Subramanium alleged that the LG has misused the discretion in this proviso to block governance to such an extent that decisions from appointment of teachers in municipal schools to opening of mohalla clinics have been pending for over a year.
- The Chief Secretary and other officers, without applying their minds to the various welfare proposals and schemes, simply forward the files to the LG, where it remains indeterminately.
- The "extraordinary discretion" of the LG is confined to special circumstances and not in everything.

Constitutional Status:

- The 69th Amendment of the Constitution in 1992 gave the National Capital of Delhi special status with its own democratically elected government and legislative assembly.
- Sub-section (4) of Article 239AA mandates that a Council of Ministers shall aid and advice the LG in his functions regarding laws made by the Legislative Assembly.

9. Finance Commission's changing roles, challenges over the years

Context:

- The government will soon constitute the Fifteenth Finance Commission, as per normal practice, a couple of years before the end of the five-year period during which the Commission's recommendations are valid.

Constitutions provisions:

- Article 280 of the Constitution requires that a Finance Commission be constituted to recommend the distribution of the net proceeds of taxes between the Centre and states, and among the states.
- The framers of the Constitution were seeking to address the vertical imbalance between the taxation powers and expenditure and responsibilities of the federal government and the states, and the horizontal imbalance, or inequality, between states that were at different stages of development.
- Ensuring inclusiveness is, therefore, a key mandate of the Finance Commission.
- That means assigning weights to things like population, the fiscal distance between the top ranked states and the others, etc. It is not that the best-performing state will be allocated the highest share – even if delivery execution and governance are better – rather, the effort will be to narrow the development gap between states.
- The Finance Commission Rules, 1951, lay down the criteria for being members of the constitutional body: those having special knowledge of finance and accounts of government with wide knowledge and experience in financial matters and in administration, or with special knowledge of economics, and those who have been qualified to be appointed as a judge of a High Court.

Challenges ahead:

- As the Fifteenth Commission is set to be appointed, the criteria for distribution will be reviewed.
- The question is whether the commission will take into account the level of collections by each state after the roll out of the GST or not?
- The challenge this time will be the fact that unlike in the past, the share of net tax proceeds between the central government and states is almost equal.
- After the last Commission's recommendation to distribute 42%, raising the bar on higher transfer of resources will have a much bigger impact on the federal government.
- The twelfth Finance Commission had suggested that it was time now to perhaps look at a Constitutional amendment to fix a ceiling on the distribution of the net tax proceeds, with the Finance Commission arbitrating on distributing tax proceeds among states.

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- The Commission itself reckons that its biggest role has been to uphold the country's federal structure, and to be an architect of fiscal restructuring – from being mainly an arbitrator between the Centre and states.

10. Aadhaar relief for NRIs, PIOs & OCIs

- Bringing relief to millions of Non Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs), the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has said that Aadhaar as an identity document should be sought only from those who are eligible for the unique ID as per the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016.
- This means that government agencies can now exempt those belonging to these categories from furnishing Aadhaar identity for availing services as they are not eligible for enrolling for the unique ID.
- The circular stated that the Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules, 2017 and the Income Tax Act, 1961 clearly stipulate that the linking of Bank Accounts and PAN respectively is for those persons who are eligible to enrol for Aadhaar as per the Aadhaar Act, 2016.
- And individuals who were not assigned Aadhaar numbers shall be offered alternate and viable means of delivery of subsidy, benefit or service.

Need:

- What made the situation tricky for NRIs, PIOs and OCIs is that the Act as it stands today, allows only "residents" of India to enroll for the unique identity.
- The circular said the UIDAI had received several representations from these sections, informing about difficulties faced by them as various authorities demanded Aadhaar from them in respect of various services/benefits etc like maintaining existing NRE and NRO bank accounts and appearance by students in different exams in India.

The Aadhar Act, 2016

- The Act says every resident shall be entitled to obtain an Aadhaar number by submitting his demographic information and biometric information by undergoing the process of enrolment.
- Who is a resident is further defined as an individual who has resided in India for a period or periods amounting in all to one hundred and eighty-two days or more in the twelve months immediately preceding the date of application for enrolment.

11. High Court restrains Rajasthan government from increasing quota

- The Rajasthan High Court restrained the government from implementing the provisions of a Bill passed in the State Assembly, by which it increased reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBC) from 21% to 26%.
- The Bill, passed created the "most backward" category within the OBCs for providing reservation to Gujjars and four other nomadic communities in government employment and educational institutions.
- The Backward Classes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions in the State and of Appointment and Posts in Services under the State) Bill, 2017, gave 5% reservation to the Gujjar, Banjara, Gadia-Lohar, Raika and Gadariya communities.
- With its passage, reservation in Rajasthan stood at 54%, exceeding the 50% ceiling mandated by the Supreme Court.

What does the government say about this?

- The State government has maintained that as per the Supreme Court's ruling in the Indra Sawhney case, special circumstances exist in Rajasthan for giving reservation to the OBCs beyond the 50% ceiling.
- The State OBC Commission has recommended quota to the communities classified as OBCs, which comprise 52% of the State's population.

What had SC commented in that case?

- The Supreme Court said, "the reservations contemplated in clause (4) of Article 16 should not exceed 50 per cent. While 50 per cent shall be the rule, it is necessary not to put off consideration of certain extra-ordinary situations inherent in the great diversity of this country and the people. It might happen that in far-flung and remote areas, the population inhabiting those areas might, on account of their being out of the mainstream of national life and in view of the conditions peculiar to and characteristic of them need to be treated in a different way; some relaxation in this strict rule may become imperative. In doing so, extreme caution is to be exercised and a special case made out."

12. A Neutral Internet

Background

- The struggle to keep the Internet freely accessible to all got a welcome shot in the arm.
- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) finally came out with clear guidelines in favour of Net neutrality that are consistent with its earlier stand on Facebook's Free Basics proposal.
- After consultation papers issued in May 2016 and this January, the regulator reiterated that there cannot be discriminatory treatment of websites on the Internet by service providers.

Details

- In particular, TRAI warned providers against the practice of blocking certain websites and tinkering with content speeds.
- This, in a nutshell, means that service providers such as telecom companies cannot stand in the way of a consumer's access to content that would otherwise be provided to her without any undue hindrance.

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- They cannot, for instance, charge consumers for access to certain content, or receive payment from websites promising greater promotion of their product over the rest.
- Quite notably, TRAI's decision comes in the wake of international focus on the U.S. Federal Communications Commission's decision to scrap regulations on service providers imposed during the Obama administration.
- While batting for the right to an open Internet, however, TRAI has been careful to allow some exceptions that allow companies to discriminate between content if it helps them regulate the flow of traffic or offer "specialised services".
- While TRAI's new guidelines will help the cause of building the Internet as a public platform with open access to all, the concerns of service providers should not be dismissed altogether.
- The Internet has spread all over the world, so widely that many believe it is now an essential good. But the infrastructure that serves as the backbone of the Internet has not come without huge investments by private service providers.
- So any regulation that severely restricts the ability of companies to earn sufficient returns on investment will only come at the cost of the welfare of the public.
- In this connection, TRAI has been open to adopting a nuanced view that differentiates between various forms of content instead of imposing a blanket ban on all forms of price differentiation.
- The new policy, for instance, will still allow companies to justify the costs incurred in providing niche content to consumers.
- At the same time, TRAI's measured response is likely to effectively address the problem of anti-competitive practices adopted by certain providers.
- Interestingly, it has left it, with important caveats, to the government to decide on services that count as "specialised" and deserve exceptional treatment by regulators.
- To this end, a proper mechanism needs to be instituted to make sure that the exceptions are not used as loopholes by the big Internet players.
- Policymakers will also need to think hard about creating an appropriate legal framework to prevent the capture of regulation by special interests.

Constitutional guarantee

- The concepts of equality, reasonableness and liberty which underpin the social contract which gives rise to the Indian Constitution are not mere black letters of the law.
- They are more than mere limitations on state power in favour of individuals. By themselves, they are at their very best when they are put into motion by positive actions by regulators and governments.
- To achieve these objectives, there is a necessity to popularise the constitutional doctrine in ways and methods which seem immediate and cater to the daily problems of the modern world.
- The debates around Net neutrality in India have shown how a stand-up comedy video can spark a spontaneous campaign, spur more than a million people to send e-mails to a telecom regulation consultation when the stakes are clearly explained and there is a broad coalition of civil society voices.
- The Net neutrality campaign has not been without criticism and growing public disappointment. While such sentiments may arise from legitimate concerns, they are disproportionate to the greater benefit of raising public debate.
- To restrict any public policy measure, especially something as important as Net neutrality, to a restricted group of experts without a chance of public engagement betrays elitism.
- Further, the repeated rounds of public consultation which have brought on some amount of fatigue are due to the inherent complexity of the regulatory exercise.
- This also provides us a lesson that the enjoyment of Net neutrality will require constant, hard work — no victories are permanent.
- But for a moment we can pause to celebrate how TRAI's recommendations on Net neutrality provide hope that modern technologies can refresh constitutional doctrine and also deepen participatory democracy

13. More seats for Sikkim Assembly

- The Home Ministry has proposed an increase in the number of seats in the Sikkim Assembly from 32 to 40. The expansion will be the first since the State merged with India in 1975.
- The seats are being increased to accommodate people from the Limboo and Tamang communities, notified as the Scheduled Tribes in Sikkim in January 2003.

Various provisions:

- As per constitutional provisions, the total number of seats for STs should be in proportion to the population.
- As per the Delimitation Act, 2002, the number of seats in an Assembly of any State can only be readjusted on the basis of the first census conducted after 2026.
- The final order made by the Delimitation Commission could not have been challenged by any court but the special constitutional provision to Sikkim allows them to make the changes.

14. Eliminate torture

- Enacting a law prohibiting torture is both a moral imperative and a pragmatic necessity.
- The Union government has informed the Supreme Court that it is seriously considering the 273rd Report of the Law Commission, which has recommended that India ratify the United Nations Convention

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against Torture and pass a law to prevent torture and punish its perpetrators.

- The court had also sought the Centre's response to a petition filed in public interest by former Union Law Minister Ashwani Kumar, who complained about the delay in India ratifying the UN Convention, which it had signed in 1997.
- The petition had also favored a standalone legislation to prohibit torture. The court disposed of the matter without any direction after being informed that the matter was under serious consideration.
- The Centre should now act on its own with a sense of urgency. There can be no reason to further delay legislative measures to eliminate all forms of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading forms of treatment.
- At an earlier hearing, the court had itself highlighted why a standalone law is needed.
- India has made many requests for extradition of offenders from other countries, and the absence of an anti-torture law may prevent these countries from acceding to India's requests.
- Earlier this month, extradition courts in the United Kingdom refused to send two persons to India to face trial, one of them on the ground that there was "no effective system of protection from torture in the receiving state".
- Conditions in India's prisons, especially the chronic problem of over-crowding, are a reason for the country's extradition requests failing.
- Few would disagree that ratifying the UN Convention and following it up with a domestic law against torture will not only be in the national interest but also have positive implications for the protection of human rights.
- Custodial violence continues to be prevalent in the country. The recent example of a bus conductor being forced to confess to murdering a schoolchild is a pointer to the use of torture as an investigative tool among policemen.
- The Prevention of Torture Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha in 2010 to address the problem, but it lapsed after it was referred to a Select Committee in the Rajya Sabha.
- The Law Commission, to which the question was referred in July this year, produced a report within three months. It also submitted a draft Bill for the government's consideration.
- The government should accept the recommendations without delay as it not only provides a penal framework for punishing public servants who inflict torture, but also lays down that just compensation be paid to victims.

15. CJI Mishra asserts himself in SC amidst corruption storm

- A five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra has annulled an unprecedented order passed by the second senior-most judge, Justice J. Chelameshwar, to constitute a five-judge bench to deal with bribery allegations against a retired high court judge.
- A two-judge bench headed by Justice Chelameshwar had issued the order to set up the constitution bench to decide whether a special team should probe allegations that former Orissa High Court judge Justice I.M. Quiddusi had taken a bribe with the promise of influencing a Supreme Court case involving a private medical college.
- The Supreme Court dismissed a petition filed by advocate Kamini Jaiswal seeking a Special Investigation Team probe in the medical college bribery case as an effort to "create ripples" within the apex court by throwing scandalous allegations at Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra.

Background:

- The case, which the Central Bureau of Investigation is looking into, involves allegations that former members of the higher judiciary took bribes to manipulate court orders in favour of medical colleges that had failed to get official registrations.
- The matter concerns two petitions seeking a probe by a special investigation team (SIT) into allegations of corruption contained in a first information report registered by the CBI last September.
- The FIR alleged that a conspiracy was hatched by some persons, including a former Orissa High Court judge and a hawala dealer, to bribe Supreme Court judges hearing the case of a debarred private medical college.
- The case involves corruption in the very highest echelons of power, including the justice delivery system.

Controversy in Supreme Court:

- Jaiswal's petition was mentioned before a two-judge bench headed by Justice Chelameswar for urgent hearing. The judge decided to take up the petition.
- This bench referred the matter to a larger five-judge Constitution bench on November 13.
- The petitioners had said that the bench should exclude Chief Justice Dipak Misra, who handled cases related to the Medical Council of India earlier this year, as there would be a conflict of interest.

Progress:

- However, a Constitution bench led by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, in an unprecedented hearing, nullified Justice Chelameswar's order
- The bench had said "the chief justice is the master of the roster" and no other judges of the Supreme Court can constitute benches.

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- On November 11, the Supreme Court even issued a circular that from now on, all unassigned or unlisted cases can be mentioned only before the chief justice of India.

Progress.

- Constitution bench is the name given to the benches of the Supreme Court of India which consist of at least five judges of the court which sit to decide any case "involving a substantial question of law as to the interpretation" of the Constitution of India.
- This provision has been mandated by Article 145 (3) of the Constitution of India.
- The Chief Justice of India has the power to constitute a Constitution Bench and refer cases to it.
- Constitution benches have decided many of India's best-known and most important Supreme Court cases.

16. Quota in promotions

Context:

- A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court will examine whether its 2006 judgment on the reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in promotions needs to be revisited.
- The matter was referred to the Constitution Bench by a three-judge bench.

Issue:

- The Constitution Bench has to decide on the limited issue whether the order in M Nagaraj vs the Union of India needs to be looked at afresh.
- The Constitution Bench will not go into the merit of the matter.

The 2006 Judgment

- In 2006, a five-judge Constitution Bench had ruled that the state was not bound to provide reservation for SCs/STs in promotions.
- But in case any state wished to make such a provision, it was required to collect quantifiable data showing backwardness of the class as well as its inadequate representation in public employment.
- Additionally, the state was required to ensure that reservation does not breach the 50 percent ceiling, adversely affect the creamy layer or extend it indefinitely.

Petition:

- Acting on a 2015 petition filed by the Tripura government which challenged an order of the Tripura High Court, a two-judge bench referred the matter to a Constitution Bench under Article 145(3).
- A petition before the High Court had challenged certain provisions of The Tripura Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of vacancies in services and posts) Act, 1991, saying that under these provisions, the state had granted reservation in violation of rules laid down in M Nagaraj vs Union of India case.

CJI views:

- The CJI is examining the issue whether a two-judge judge bench directly refers a matter to Constitution Bench
- According to him a Constitution Bench will first decode if the matter needs to be reconsidered at all

17. Data Protection Law.

- The government released a white paper looking into the scope of a data protection law, and opened up for public discussion till December 31, issues pertaining to its ambit, what constitutes personal data, what is sensitive data, and the international applicability of such a law.
- The B.N. Srikrishna committee, set up under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, in the white paper recommended that the law be applicable to all processing of personal data that takes place within India or by an entity that has a presence in India.
- The paper noted that it may be necessary to make the law applicable to all kinds of processing that the government may have a "legitimate interest in regulating" even though it may not be entirely based in India or may be carried out by non-Indian entities that do not have a presence in India.
- The committee set limits on this extended jurisdiction, though, saying that the law should not be so wide as to constitute an unnecessary interference with the jurisdiction of other countries or have the effect of making it a general law of the Internet.
- For instance, the mere fact that a website (operated from abroad) is accessible from India should not be a reason for subjecting the website to Indian law
- According to the paper the personal data "ought to include any kind of information including opinions or assessments irrespective of their accuracy."

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ECONOMY

1. Direct Tax Law

- Direct tax regime: The government has constituted a new task force to review the country's 56-year old Income Tax law and suggest a new law to replace it.
- The task force is led by Central Board of Direct Taxes Member Arbind Modi to review the Income Tax Act, 1961 and draft a new direct tax law in consonance with economic needs of the country.
- The new legislation will be drafted keeping in mind the direct tax system in other countries, international best practices and the economic needs of the country

The Terms of Reference of the Task Force is to draft an appropriate Direct Tax Legislation keeping in view:

- The direct tax system prevalent in various countries,
- The international best practices.
- The economic needs of the country and
- Any other matter connected thereto

2. Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP)

What is it?

- Ethanol blending is the practice of blending petrol with ethanol

Where is it derived from?

- In India, ethanol is mainly derived by sugarcane molasses, which is a by-product in the conversion of sugar cane juice to sugar.

Laws:

- IEthanol blending first found mention in the Auto fuel policy of 2003. It suggested developing technologies for producing ethanol/ bio fuels from renewable energy sources and introducing vehicles to utilise these bio fuels.
- Later, as per National Policy on Bio-fuels, announced in December 2009, oil companies were required to sell petrol blended with at least 5% of ethanol. It proposed that the blending level be increased to 20% by 2017.
- In order to augment the supply of ethanol, the Government in December, 2014, decided to administer the price of ethanol under EBP Programme.

Advantages:

- Help to reduce vehicle exhaust emissions
  - * The renewable ethanol content, which is a byproduct of the sugar industry, is expected to result in a net reduction in the emission of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide (CO) and hydrocarbons (HC).
  - * Ethanol itself burns cleaner and burns more completely than petrol it is blended into.
- Reduce the import burden on account of crude petroleum from which petrol is produced.
  - * It is estimated that a 5% blending (105 crore litres) can result in replacement of around 1.8 million Barrels of crude oil

3. European Bank for Reconstruction & Development

- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is an international financial institution founded in 1991.
- The EBRD was founded to support countries of the former Eastern Bloc in the process of establishing their private sectors.
- As a multilateral developmental investment bank, the EBRD uses investment as a tool to build market economies.
- Initially focused on the countries of the former Eastern Bloc it expanded to support development in more than 30 countries from central Europe to central Asia.
- Besides Europe, member countries of the EBRD are from five continents (North America, Africa, Asia and Australia, see below), with the biggest shareholder being the United States
- The mandate of the EBRD stipulates that it must only work in countries that are committed to democratic principles. Respect for the environment is part of the strong corporate governance attached to all EBRD investments.
- It does not finance defence-related activities, the tobacco industry, selected alcoholic products, substances banned by international law and stand-alone gambling facilities

Who owns the EBRD?

- The EBRD is owned by 65 countries and two intergovernmental institutions: the European Union and the European Investment Bank (EIB).

Impact:

- Membership of EBRD would enhance India's international profile and promote its economic interests. Access to EBRD's Countries of Operation and sector knowledge.
- India's investment opportunities would get a boost.
- It would increase the scope of cooperation between India and EBRD through co-financing opportunities in manufacturing, services, Information Technology, and Energy.
- EBRD's core operations pertain to private sector development in their countries of operation. The membership would help India leverage the technical assistance and sectoral knowledge of the bank for the benefit of development of private sector.

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- This would contribute to an improved investment climate in the country.
- The membership of EBRD would enhance the competitive strength of the Indian firms, and provide an enhanced access to international markets in terms of business opportunities, procurement activities, consultancy assignments etc.
- This would open up new vistas for Indian professionals on the one hand, and give a fillip to Indian exports on the other.
- Increased economic activities would have the employment generating potential.
- It would also enable Indian nationals to get the employment opportunity in the Bank.

4. FASTags

Context:

- The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has issued a Gazette Notification today according to which all four wheel motor vehicles sold on or after 1st December 2017 will have FASTags fitted on them by the manufacturer of the vehicle or its authorized dealer, as the case may be. In case of vehicles that are sold as drive away chassis without wind screen, FASTag will have to be fitted by the vehicle owner before it is registered.

Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) system

- Electronic toll collection-fuel savings worth Rs 86,000 crore
- With a mission to reduce waiting time and cost of fuel of the vehicle at toll plazas, the Government of India has decided to implement e-tolling system on all the 360 toll plazas all over the country
- The idea to have ETC or E-Toll is to reduce the queues at toll plazas wherein a motorist can just drive the vehicle without having to wait to carry out the physical toll transaction.
- The government had launched India's first ETC programme under the brand name "FASTag".
- The ministry had roped in ICICI bank and Axis bank for providing central clearing house (CCH) services and to distribute RFID (radio-frequency identification)-based "FASTag" through their franchises at points of sales near the toll plazas.
- The first ETC system on Delhi-Mumbai highway was launched

FASTag

- FASTag is a device that employs Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for making toll payments directly from the prepaid account linked to it.
- It is affixed on the windscreen of your vehicle and enables you to drive through toll plazas, without stopping for cash transactions. You will have to use the lanes demarcated for FASTag.
- The tag has a validity of 5 years and after purchasing, you only need to recharge/ top up the tag as per your requirement.
- It is operated by the National Highway Authority of India on electronic Toll Lanes. It allows quick checkout of vehicles from toll lanes
- FASTag is presently operational at Mumbai-Delhi (NH-8). More toll plazas will be brought under the FASTag program in the future.

5. GST

Composition Scheme

- The composition levy is an alternative method of levy of tax designed for small taxpayers whose turnover is up to Rs. 75 lakhs (Rs. 50 lakhs in case of few States).
- The objective of composition scheme is to bring simplicity and to reduce the compliance cost for the small taxpayers. Moreover, it is optional and the eligible person opting to pay tax under this scheme can pay tax at a prescribed percentage of his turnover every quarter, instead of paying tax at normal rate.

The following people cannot opt for the scheme:

- Supplier of services other than restaurant related services
- Manufacturer of ice cream, pan masala, or tobacco
- Casual taxable person or a non-resident taxable person
- Businesses which supply goods through an e-commerce operator

The following conditions must be satisfied in order to opt for composition scheme:

- No Input Tax Credit can be claimed by a dealer opting for composition scheme
- The taxpayer can only make intra-state supply (sell in the same state) i.e. no inter-state supply of goods
- The dealer cannot supply GST exempted goods
- Taxpayer has to pay tax at normal rates for transactions under Reverse Charge Mechanism
- If a taxable person has different segments of businesses (such as textile, electronic accessories, groceries, etc.) under the same PAN, they must register all such businesses under the scheme collectively or opt out of the scheme
- The taxpayer has to mention the words 'composition taxable person' on every notice or signboard displayed prominently at their place of business
- The taxpayer has to mention the words 'composition taxable person' on every notice or signboard displayed prominently at their place of business
- The taxpayer has to mention the words 'composition taxable person' on every bill of supply issued by him.

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The following are the advantages of registering under composition scheme:

- Lesser compliance (returns, maintaining books of record, issuance of invoices)
- Limited tax liability
- High liquidity as taxes are at a lower rate

Only 50 items left in highest GST slab, list slashed three-quarters to ease tax burden

Background

- The highest Goods and Services Tax (GST) bracket was lowered three-quarters with only 50 items being retained in the 28 percent slab.
- It also decided to reduce the tax rate for all restaurants, barring those in luxury hotels, to 5 percent, without any input tax credit
- These measures are expected to cost the exchequer around Rs 20,000 crore

Details

- The tax rate for manufacturers under the composition scheme was also reduced to 1 percent from the earlier rate of 2 percent, bringing it at par with the tax rate for traders
- The composition scheme for restaurants will continue unchanged with a tax rate of 5 percent
- The hike in the threshold for the composition scheme would require an amendment in the CGST Act, there was an agreement to increase it to Rs 2 crore from Rs 1 crore at present.
- Tanks and armored fighting vehicles have been now placed in the 12 percent tax slab instead of the earlier 28 percent
- GST rate on takeaways have also been reduced to 5 percent without input tax credit, while the rate on outdoor catering will continue to be 18 percent with full input tax credit.
- The Council also provided relief to businesses by easing requirements for return filing as well as lowering the penalty for late filing
- As many as 40 percent of the businesses filing returns on GST Network portal have nil tax.
- The Council lowered late return filing fees for businesses

6. International Symposium to Promote Innovation & Research in Energy Efficiency (INSPIRE 2017)

- The first edition of the International Symposium to Promote Innovation & Research in Energy Efficiency (INSPIRE 2017) was kicked off in Jaipur
- The five-day symposium is being organized by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) in partnership with The World Bank, and Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE).

What is it?

- INSPIRE 2017 is an International Conference that brings together various stakeholders such as policy makers, innovators, financiers, influencers to showcase best practices in the sector.
- It provides a platform for energy efficiency community to discuss energy efficiency policies, market transformation strategies, emerging technologies, delivery and business-model driven transformations.
- The event is further designed to provide global and national thought-leaders and implementers to expand perspectives on energy efficiency and spur ideas and solutions that will help leverage the full potential of energy efficiency and bring its multiple co-benefits to the fore.

Participants

- Several global organizations like the Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, International Finance Corporation, The World Bank, International Energy Agency, International Partnership for Energy Efficiency Cooperation, Clean Energy Ministerial, Copenhagen Center on Energy Efficiency, GIZ, will also share their perspectives at INSPIRE.

Mobile App launch

- A mobile app for EESL's various programmes was launched.
- This app will allow consumers to connect with the organisation for its various programmes, lodge complaints and track real time complaint status. Further, citizens can now access the real-time status of Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP) dashboard at state, district and Urban Local Body (ULB) levels across the country.

7. India Road Assessment Programme (IndiaRAP)

- International Road Assessment Programme is a registered charity dedicated to preventing global road deaths by working with development institutions, motoring clubs and road authorities to shape billions of dollars of investment in infrastructure with a focus on safety for all road users.
- On a similar note IndiaRAP programme aims to address the highest risk roads around the country in partnership with national and state agencies.
- IndiaRAP will provide policy, performance tracking and investment tools for governments to measure and manage road safety infrastructure and optimize investments across the country.

Details

- IndiaRAP will seek to eliminate one- and two-star roads that are unsafe to become a leader in promoting the design and construction of five-star smart roads in the country
- The ratings are assigned on the basis of the level of safety which is 'built-in' to a road for vehicle occupants, motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians.

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- IRAP is one of the many tools that can be used to identify high-risk areas from an accident perspective.
- The IndiaRAP programme is being supported by FedEx Express and will be hosted by the Asian Institute of Transport Development, and will work with government agencies as well as investors, researchers and NGOs to assess existing highways and promote the use of better design to make roads safer.

8. PM visits IRRI, Mahaveer Philippine Foundation

- Shri Narendra Modi visited the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), at Los Banos, in Philippines.
- A 'rice field laboratory' named after Prime Minister Modi was also inaugurated by him at the institute.
- He unveiled a plaque marking the inauguration of the Shri Narendra Modi Resilient Rice Field Laboratory.

What is it?

- IRRI is a premier research organisation dedicated to reducing poverty and hunger through rice science; improving the health and welfare of rice farmers and consumers; and protecting the rice growing environment for future generations.
- IRRI aims to improve livelihoods and nutrition, abolishing poverty, hunger and malnutrition among those who depend on rice-based agri-food systems.
- In doing so, IRRI's work protects the health of rice farmers and consumers, and the environmental sustainabilityof rice farming in a world challenged by climate change. IRRI's work promotes the empowerment of women and supports opportunities for youth in an equitable agri-food system.
- IRRI is one of 15 agricultural research centers in the world that form the CGIAR Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers, a global partnership of organizations engaged in research on food security. It is also the largest non-profit agricultural research center in Asia

India and its relationship

- India is also setting up a regional centre of the IRRI in Varanasi, to develop high-yielding rice varieties.
- The IRRI, which has offices in 17 countries, is known for its work in developing rice varieties that contributed to the Green Revolution in 1960s.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi contributed two Indian rice seed varieties to the gene bank of the international rice research centre

9. India moves up one notch to 126 in GDP per capita terms: IMF

- India has moved up one position to 126th in terms of GDP per capita of countries
- The data, which forms part of the latest World Economic Outlook report of the International Monetary Fund, ranks over 200 countries in terms of per capita GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP)

Ranking

- Qatar remains top-ranked with per capita GDP of $1,24,930, followed by Macao at the second position with $1,14,430 and Luxembourg third with $1,09,190.
- Among BRICS countries, India has the lowest per capita GDP. Russia boasts of a GDP per capita of $27,900, while for China, it stood at $16,620, Brazil at $15,500 and South Africa at $13,400.

What is PPP?

- PPP is the rate at which the currency of one country needs to be converted into that of a second country to ensure that a given amount of the first country's currency will purchase the same volume of goods and services in the second country as it does in the first.

10. Draft National Energy Policy

- A draft national energy policy proposing aligning energy prices with international rates will be put up for the approval of the Cabinet.

Impact:

- If approved, energy prices across sectors would become market-driven and subsides would be limited to identified beneficiaries via direct benefit transfer, much on the lines of the LPG subsidy.

NITI Aayog's Draft National Energy Policy (DNEP) key objectives are:

- ensuring access at affordable prices
- improving energy security & reducing dependence on fossil fuels
- Promoting greater sustainability and renewable energy
- Ensuring sustained economic growth.

What are the issues with the draft?

- Coal - It has been estimated that coal-fired power capacity will grow to 330-441 GW by 2040.
  - * This is in direct conflict with the declared twin goals of sustainability and comes ironically at a time when solar and wind tariffs appear to be reaching historic new lows.
  - * The Aayog also forecasts that "'our coal industry will emerge as an exporter of coal" in the backdrop of the shocking drop in demand for coal from most industrialised.
  - * Instead of focusing on phasing out our existing thermal power stations and replacing them with clean energy alternatives, the proposal to geographically locate power plants such that they do not damage air quality in human habitations makes little sense.
- Gas - It suggests that India should try hard to construct the Iran–Pakistan–India (IPI) and Turkmenistan–Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI) gas pipelines.
  - * Promote LNG imports, incentivize shale and conventional gas exploration, replace LPG in urban areas by piped gas and divert LPG to rural areas.

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* All these are great suggestions, but most have been made earlier.
* Transnational gas pipelines like IPI and TAPI have been under discussion for over 20 years. But they have had no success

- Nuclear - The draft's focus on Nuclear energy has been critiqued as they neglect concerns regarding safety & intensive capital investment requirements.

Benefits

- It foresees India's power demand shooting up over four-fold.
- The draft policy has made a case for higher tax on big cars, SUVs and promotion of mass transport system like metro rail to improve air quality.
- The NEP took the sharp decline of crude oil prices, change in solar energy technology, heightened concern of climate change issues and the government's rural electrification agenda into account.

11. National Power Portal (NPP)

What is it?

- NPP is a centralised system for Indian Power Sector which facilitates online data capture/input (daily, monthly, annually) from generation, transmission and distribution utilities in the country and disseminate Power Sector Information (operational, capacity, demand, supply, consumption etc.) through various analysed reports, graphs, statistics for generation, transmission and distribution at all India, region, state level for central, state and private sector.

What does it do?

- The NPP Dashboard has been designed and developed to disseminate analyzed information about the sector through GIS enabled navigation and visualization chart windows on capacity, generation, transmission, distribution at national, state, DISCOM, town, feeder level and scheme based funding to states.
- The system also facilitates various types of statutory reports required to be published regularly
- The Dashboard would also act as the single point interface for all Power Sector Apps launched previously by the Ministry, like TARANG, UJALA, VIDYUT PRAVAH, GARV, URJA, MERIT.

Who implements it?

- The Nodal Agency for implementation of NPP and its operational control is Central Electricity Authority (CEA).
- The system has been conceptualized, designed and developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC).

Significance

- NPP is integrated with associated systems of CEA,Power Finance Corporation(PFC), Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) and other major utilities and would serve as single authentic source of power sector information to apex bodies, utilities for the purpose of analysis, planning, monitoring as well as for public users.
- The system is available 24×7 and ensures effective and timely collection of data
- It standardized data parameters and formats for seamless exchange of data between NPP and respective systems at utilities

12. Nivesh Bandhu

- As global and Indian food companies prepare to explore business opportunities in India at World Food India 2017, MoFPI and FSSAI, the apex Regulatory body for Food Safety in India announced a powerful new tool called 'the Food Regulatory Portal.'
- Planned as a single interface for food businesses to cater to both domestic operations and food imports, this portal would be a game changer for effective and transparent implementation of the food safety laws in the country.
- Aiming to create an enabling environment for businesses to operate, the portal is strategically aligned with Government's mission of One Nation, One Food Law.
- Nivesh Bandhu" will be launched to assist investors to make informed investment decisions.
- The portal would provide information on Central and State Governments' investor friendly policies, agro-producing clusters, infrastructure, and potential areas of investment in the food processing sector.

13. North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS)

- It will provide 100% funding from the Central Government to fill up the gaps in creation of infrastructure in specified sectors till March, 2020.

The news scheme will broadly cover creation of infrasture under following sectors:

- Physical infrastructure relating to water supply, power, connectivity and specially the projects promoting tourism;
- Infrastructure of social sectors of education and health.

Benefits of NESIDS:

- The assets to be created under the new scheme of NESIDS will not only strengthen health care and education facilities in the region but will also encourage tourism thereby the employment opportunities for local youth.
- The scheme will act as a catalyst in overall development of the region in the years to come.

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14. Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana is now RKVY-RAFTAAR

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the continuation of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) as Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana – Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture and Allied sector Rejuvenation (RKVY-RAFTAAR) for three years, 2017-18 to 2019-20.

Objective

- It has the objective of making farming a remunerative economic activity through strengthening the farmers' effort, risk mitigation and promoting agribusiness entrepreneurship
- The financial allocation of the scheme will be Rs. 15,722 crore

Funding

- RKVY-RAFTAAR funds would be provided to the States as 60:40 grants between Centre and States while 90:10 for North Eastern and Himalayan States through various means.

Advantages

- The scheme will incentivise states in enhancing more allocation to agriculture and allied sectors.
- This will also strengthen farmers' efforts through creation of agriculture infrastructure that help in supply of quality inputs, market facilities among other related requirements.
- This will further promote agri-entrepreneurship and support business models that maximise returns to farmers, a Government of India press statement has said.

Background

- RKVY is a continuing scheme under implementation from XI Five Year Plan.
- The scheme provides considerable flexibility and autonomy to States in planning and executing programmes for incentivising investment in agriculture and allied sectors.
- States initiate the process of decentralised planning for agriculture and allied sectors through preparation of District Agriculture Plans (DAPs) and State Agriculture Plan (SAP) based on agro-climatic conditions, availability of appropriate technology and natural resources to ensure accommodation of local needs, cropping pattern, priorities etc.

15. Rasogolla hits sweet spot, gets GI tag

- The Geographical Indication (GI) Registry and Intellectual Property India presented the Geographical Indication Tag status to Banglar Rasogolla of West Bengal and
- Mamallapuram stone sculptures of Tamil Nadu.
    * Tamil Nadu in its application stated that the sculptures from Mamallapuram were known to be carved in stone with characteristics of intricate designing chiselled finely, keeping with the spirit of the surrounding Pallava art and architecture.
    * The description includes cave architecture, rock architecture, structural temples, open sculptures, relief sculptures and painting/portrait sculptures.

History

- West Bengal was involved in a lengthy battle with Odisha, which too had claimed Rasogolla as its invention.
- West Bengal believes that the Rasogolla was invented in Calcutta by confectioner Nabin Chandra Das. West Bengal in its application had provided proof of origin — historical records dating back to 1896.
- Odisha says it was invented in the holy city of Puri in the 13th century.

About GI:

- A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.
- Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.
- Darjeeling tea, Tirupati laddu, Kangra paintings, Nagpur orange and Kashmir pashmina are among the registered GIs in India.
- This tag gave protection to the producer of these genuine products, which commanded premium pricing in the markets, both domestic and international.
- Once the GI protection is granted, no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products. It also provides comfort to customers about the authenticity of that product

Banaganapalle mangoes get GI tag

- The famous Banaganapalle mangoes of Andhra Pradesh and Tulaipanji rice of West Bengal are among the seven commodities that have been granted Geographical Indication (GI) by the Indian patent office.
- The other five products which have received the GI tag this year include Pochampally Ikat of Telangana; Gobindobhog rice of West Bengal; Durgi stone carvings and Etikoppaka toys of Andhra Pradesh; and Chakshesang shawl of Nagaland

16. Sampark, Samanvay, Samvad

- Indian Railways holds special conclave on "Sampark, Samanvay, Samvad" to discuss and deliberate "Vision for New Railway – New India 2022" Conclave aimed at designed to break silos (sampark), improve co-ordination (samanvay) and find solutions (samvad) to the critical issues facing Indian Railways

Details

- Shri Piyush Goyal motivated Railway employees to think out of the box to enable game changing reforms and bring about transformational results

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- Railway Minister Emphasised on no scarcity of resources for good ideas and need to scale up good projects avoiding time lag and delay
- Topics covered included reforms to ensure highest standards of safety, punctuality and passenger comfort; improving the capacity and speed of trains; dynamic pricing including discounts in off peak seasons etc.

17. Capital gains tax relief for foreign origin fund

- Income from sale of securities in India by funds based abroad will be exempt from capital gains tax, the government announced. This exemption will be given only when the India-focused fund is also charged to tax in India.
- The Finance Act of 2012 had amended section 9 of the Income Tax Act to address the ruling given by the Supreme Court in favour of Vodafone.
- Accordingly, gains through indirect transfers were made subject to capital gains tax. The condition being that the Indian assets should exceed Rs 10 crore and represent at least half the value of all assets held by the foreign investor.
- Investors holding less than five per cent of the share capital or voting power of the company were exempt from this.

Tax relief

- Tax exemption will be given only when the India-focused fund is also charged to tax in India
- CBDT said the tax provision on indirect transfer would not apply to this type of income at PE and VC funds
- The issue was a concern among foreign portfolio investors
- On December 21 last year, CBDT issued a circular that offshore vehicles, including FPIs, were subject to indirect transfer provisions
- The move had set alarm bells ringing in fund houses from Hong Kong to New York

18. Economy gets Moody's thumbs up

- Moody's upgrades sovereign rating, expects high growth to continue as a result of ongoing reforms
- Global credit rating agency Moody's Investors Services raised India's sovereign rating for the first time in 13 years, citing the country's high growth potential in the years to come, thanks to economic and institutional reforms.
- Main inference: The continued progress on economic and institutional reforms will, over time, enhance India's high growth potential and its large and stable financing base for government debt, and will likely contribute to a gradual decline in the general government debt burden over the medium term.

Upgrade:

- The Indian government's rating as a local and foreign currency issuer from Baa3 with a positive outlook to Baa2 with a stable outlook.
- Borrowing obligations rated Baa2 are subject to moderate credit risk. They are considered medium grade and as such may possess certain speculative characteristics.
- Baa3, by contrast, was the lowest investment grade rating.

On debt-to-GDP ratio

- Moody's expects India's debt-to-GDP ratio to rise by about one percentage point this fiscal year to 69% of GDP

Other comments by the rating agency

- The rating agency agreed that a lot remains to be done such as fixing the GST's implementation challenges, weak private sector investment and the slow resolution of banking bad loans
- Moody's said it expects at least some of these issues to be addressed over time and will help further improve the Indian government's effectiveness and overall institutional framework

Basic Information:

Moody's Investors Service

- Moody's Investors Service, often referred to as Moody's, is the bond credit rating business of Moody's Corporation, representing the company's traditional line of business and its historical name
- Moody's Investors Service provides international financial research on bonds issued by commercial and government entities
- Moody's, along with Standard & Poor's and Fitch Group, is considered one of the Big Three credit rating agencies
- The company ranks the creditworthiness of borrowers using a standardized ratings scale which measures expected investor loss in the event of default. Moody's Investors Service rates debt securities in several bond market segments
- These include government, municipal and corporate bonds; managed investments such as money market funds and fixed-income funds; financial institutions including banks and non-bank finance companies; and asset classes in structured finance
- In Moody's Investors Service's ratings system, securities are assigned a rating from Aaa to C, with Aaa being the highest quality and C the lowest quality

19. Logistics sector to soon get infrastructure status

- The logistics sector will soon get infrastructure status, a move that will help the industry raise funds at competitive rates and boost India's trade.
- The proposal mooted by the Commerce Ministry has been approved by the Finance Ministry.

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Secretary-level post:

- Realising the importance of the logistics sector to promote trade, the government has created a separate special secretary-level post in the Commerce Ministry to coordinate with all the ministries concerned and departments.
- Earlier, there was no single department or ministry to look at all aspects related to logistics covering various modes of shipment such as sea, roads and railways.
- Exporters, too, have time and again demanded a specific department to deal with the issues related to logistics.

Key point:

- Huge investments are required in the sector to boost the country's trade, and granting infrastructure status would help the industry attract investments.
- Definition of logistics includes industrial parks, warehouses, cold storages and transportation.
- This status would help the sector get credit at competitive rates and on a long-term basis as rising logistics cost impacts the global competitiveness of exporters
- Logistics costs of exports are very high in India and due to this, Indian goods are less competitive in global markets.
- According to a report, about 14 per cent of the total value of goods goes into the logistics cost. On the other hand, in other major economies, this is just 6-8 per cent.
- A strategy paper released in 2010 by the Commerce Ministry had emphasised on the need to invest billions of dollars in improving infrastructure, including logistics, to boost exports.

Main Problems:

- The first obvious problem is that generally this is an industry that is not very regulated, which means that it has become a highly fragmented industry.
- The second problem is that it employs a large number of blue collar workers but there isn't enough infrastructure to train them.
- The e-waybill system — timed at tracking the transport of goods worth Rs 50,000 or more across the country — is probably one of the most critical and contentious points as far as the GST system is concerned.

20. India must integrate with global value chain: ADB

- The manufacturing sector's share in India's GDP has remained stagnant despite the government's efforts to increase it, according to Asian Development Bank, it added that India must do more to integrate with the global value chain in which it currently only plays a small part.
- It said there are problems with the inequality between Indian states, the inadequate investment in the infrastructure sector and the poor planning behind urban development.

What are GVCs?

- Companies used to make things primarily in one country. That has all changed. Today, a single finished product often results from manufacturing and assembly in multiple countries, with each step in the process adding value to the end product.
- Through GVCs, countries trade more than products; they trade know-how, and make things together. Imports of goods and services matter as much as exports to successful GVCs.
- GVCs integrate the know-how of lead firms and suppliers of key components along stages of production and in multiple offshore locations. The international, inter-firm flow of know-how is the key distinguishing feature of GVCs.
- How countries engage with GVCs determines how much they benefit from them.

Why are GVCs important for growth?

- GVCs are a powerful driver of productivity growth, job creation, and increased living standards.
- Countries that embrace them grow faster, import skills and technology, and boost employment.
- With GVC-driven development, countries generate growth by moving to higher-value-added tasks and by embedding more technology and know-how in all their agriculture, manufacturing, and services production. GVCs provide countries the opportunity to leap-frog their development process.

21. Ordinance to amend the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016

- The Ordinance aims at putting in place safeguards to prevent unscrupulous, undesirable persons from misusing or vitiating the provisions of the Code.
- The amendments aim to keep-out such persons who have willfully defaulted, are associated with non-performing assets, or are habitually non-compliant and, therefore, are likely to be a risk to successful resolution of insolvency of a company.
- In addition to putting in place restrictions for such persons to participate in the resolution or liquidation process, the Amendment also provides such check by specifying that the Committee of Creditors ensure the viability and feasibility of the resolution plan before approving it.
- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has also been given additional powers.

What are the key elements of the amendment?

- The amendment has inserted two new sections in the insolvency code — Section 29A, which provides for persons ineligible to be a Resolution Applicant; and Section 235A, which provides for punishment for contravention of the provisions where no specific penalty or punishment is provided.

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Section 29A says those ineligible to be a Resolution

- Wilful defaulters (ie, those associated with non-performing assets, or are habitually non-compliant and, therefore, are likely to be a risk to successful resolution of insolvency of a company);
- Those whose accounts are classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) for one year or more and are unable to settle overdue amounts including interest and charges relating to the account before submission of the Resolution Plan;
- Those who have executed an enforceable guarantee in favour of a creditor, in respect of a corporate debtor undergoing a Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process or Liquidation Process under the Code and others connected to the above, such as promoters or those in management control of the Resolution Applicant, or those who will be promoters or in management control of corporate debtor during the implementation of the Plan, the holding company, subsidiary company, associate company or related party of the above persons.

22. India falls to 108 on World Economic Forum's gender gap index

- Report published by World Economic Forum
- According to the report, the gap between the achievements and well-being of men and women widened in the past year
- At current rates, it will take 100 years before women achieve equality in the four areas measured by the WEF:
  - * Political empowerment
  - * Economic participation
  - * Health
  - * Education

Rankings:

- The US fell to 49th among the 144 countries ranked, down from 45th last year and 23rd just 11 years ago. The country is only 77% of the way to gender parity in economic opportunity, a gap that's been narrowing, but not as quickly as in other countries.
- India, which sank to No. 108 overall, down 10 places from 2006 was the reverse of the US, with high rankings for women's political empowerment but near the bottom in health, education and economic participation. Economics is a particular area of concern, because women do a disproportionate amount of unpaid work, like childcare.
- Ranked 100 overall, China was No. 144—dead last—for gender parity when it came to women's health. One metric was life expectancy: Chinese women outlive men by less than two years on average, compared with a global average of five years. While about 70 percent of Chinese women participate in the work force, they earn only 64% of men's wages.
- Women in No. 1 ranked Iceland, for instance, may soon be equal to men in their contribution to the national economy

23. Telangana leads state-wise ease of doing business ranking

- Telangana is currently atop the yearly state-wise ranking on assessment of implementation of the 'Business Reforms Action Plan' (BRAP) in 2017
- Telangana (with an implementation score of 61.83%) is followed by Haryana (54.03%), Odisha (45.70%), Chhattisgarh (45.43%), and West Bengal (44.35%) — completing the top five. However, the ranking is dynamic and till they are frozen, these positions could change due to intense competition between States.
- Telangana was the joint topper with Andhra Pradesh, in the ranking last year. However, Andhra Pradesh (score of 18.01%) is currently ranked 14th. Gujarat, ranked third last year, is now number eight with a score of 41.94% while Madhya Pradesh, which was fifth last year, is now 22nd with a score of 10.22%.

24. The potential of smart contracts in banking

Context:

- Bankchain is a consortium of 27 banks (22 of them are Indian) of which the State Bank of India (SBI) was the first Indian member
- It is working to devise blockchain-based solutions for banking and, along with the SBI, planning to launch a beta program to use smart contracts next month

About Blockchain and bitcoin

- In late 2008, an unknown person (or group) named Satoshi Nakamoto created a crypto-currency, bitcoin
- Its novelty consists in the fact that its operations are authorized without any trusted third-party carrying out administrative or security tasks
- This minimizes the transaction fees eventually weighing on users and considerably reducing the time for processing the operations
- Centralized networks rely on one or more trusted bodies (for example, banks) to keep a detailed record of transactions and update users' balance
- Bitcoin, on the other hand, decentralizes the administrative activity and lets "miners" process the transactions carried out in the system
- The transparency, accessibility and stability of the transactions' record are ensured by the public broadcasting of the operations throughout the nodes of the network (the computers running the software)
- And their subsequent addition to a shared database containing the complete transaction history for any given bitcoin
- This shared ledger is called the "blockchain", i.e the sequence of all the verified "blocks" of transactions, recorded chronologically—timestamped—one after the other

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Usability:

- ust as bitcoin uses the blockchain to maintain a ledger of a crypto-currency, the blockchain can be used to keep track of the ownership of any asset or data that can be digitized and represented by computer code
- Once the asset is on blockchain, users can compose smart contracts that contain the terms of the agreement, and automatically execute them once certain predetermined conditions are satisfied
- They roughly follow the scheme of an "if-then" function
    * For example, if the smart contract relates to the acquisition of an intellectual property right licence, Party A creates a smart contract to which the licence X is permanently attached, programming that X is to be released upon certain conditions Y, and launches it into a blockchain
    * Whenever Party B wishes to obtain the information/licence, they transfer consideration Y to the protocol
    * Automatically, the smart contract algorithm releases X to party B and delivers Y to Party A, eliminating delays and room for non-compliance
    * Once the obligation is fulfilled on the one side (Y), the computer protocol autonomously performs the other side of the agreement (X)

Disadvantages of traditional contracts:

- Traditional contracts are always subject to a degree of uncertainty with respect to their final outcome
- Smart contracts leave no room for voluntary breaches of the agreement
- By entrusting the network with the performance of the agreed terms, they reduce the likelihood of expensive and time-consuming disputes

Why are banks reluctant to Blockchain?

- Smart contracts on a decentralized, "permission-less" blockchain like bitcoin don't allow any meddling by third parties
- This is because in a permission-less system, any computer can join as a node to run the code and amending the leger will require access to all the nodes
- Banks are uncomfortable with losing control of the system and they prefer "permissioned" blockchains like Bankchain
- Bankchain restricts the access to nodes to other banks, while individual customers can join as users after complying with know your customer (KYC) norms
- Pre-selected nodes allow banks to intervene between transactions, providing the 'emergency entry' into the system whenever interventions are deemed appropriate

Benefits:

- Currently each bank carries out its own KYC process.
- This can be done by one bank and securely uploaded on the blockchain, thereafter shared with the other banks once the trigger is generated by the customer
- Smart contracts can automatically release insurance payments for verifiable claims like delayed flights, motor accidents or death
- This would involve bringing authorized third parties like hospitals and garages to join a single platform with insurers and the insured, and bring process efficiencies
- Most securities have settlement delays of two days or longer that can be brought down to minutes, which will also reduce working capital requirements for collateral
- Other applications include crowdfunding for small businesses, enabling the trading of tokenized equity shares and settlement of syndicated loans between banks

Threats:

- While permissioned blockchains bring many benefits of a decentralized network, they compromise on the promise of immutability by limiting the nodes in the system
- The unlimited nodes in bitcoin make it tamperproof while pre-selected nodes in a permissioned blockchain allow authorities to intervene between transactions and expose the points of vulnerability
- It is quite unsure that banks can provide the same level of data integrity that is guaranteed by permission-less blockchains like bitcoin

Crypto currencies, ICOs under SEBI lens

Context:

- The rising popularity of crypto currencies and the increasing number of entities looking at raising funds through Initial Coin Offerings (ICO).
- The trend has caught the attention of the capital market regulator, which is evaluating whether such instruments and offerings can be brought under its regulatory purview.

In news:

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is mulling whether an ICO can be regulated under the existing legal framework or certain amendments would be required in case the government wants the capital market watchdog to be the regulatory authority for such issuances.

Who should regulate?

- Incidentally, crypto currencies like bitcoin, ethereum and such offerings have been under government radar for long.

- Discussions have been held between various bodies, including SEBI and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), on the possible ways in which this segment can be regulated.
- The central bank is of the view that these instruments are securities and so SEBI should be the regulating body.

About ICO:

- An ICO, like an equity initial public offer (IPO), is an issuance of digital tokens that can be converted into crypto currencies and are mostly used to raise funds by start-up firms dealing in blockchain technology and virtual currencies like bitcoins and ethereum.
- Unlike an IPO, which is governed by SEBI regulations, there is no regulatory body for ICOs in India.

Key Points:

- According to data from UK-based CoinDesk, nearly $2.7 billion has been raised globally through ICOs since 2014.
- "Bitcoins are neither 'commodities derivatives' nor 'securities' under Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956.

25. JPC on land Bill to seek eighth extension

Background of the JPC and the Bill

- The JPC was set up in May 2015 to examine the Bill after it was opposed by many political parties, including allies of the ruling BJP
- The Bill seeks to remove the consent clause for acquiring land for five purposes — industrial corridors, public-private projects, rural infrastructure, affordable housing and defence
- The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the bill
- The JPC on the Land Acquisition Bill, 2015, will seek the eighth extension in the upcoming Parliament session
- Background: The Bill that seeks to alter the 2013 Act brought in by the UPA regime was put on hold in 2015
- According to a committee member, out of 29 clauses, we have achieved unanimity on at least 27. More consultations are required for the remaining clauses

26. Rajnath seeks insurance against bank fraud

- The Home Ministry has asked banks and e-wallet firms to publish statistics of online fraud and theft so that customers can make an "informed choice" before subscribing to the services.
- Home Minister also instructed all concerned to formalize an insurance plan for victims of bank fraud as most banks and insurance firms do not provide any cover for such frauds.
- Mr. Singh reviewed various measures, including strengthening of surveillance and legal frameworks, to deal with financial frauds using bank cards and e-wallets.
- Big data analysis by IIT-Delhi for identification of perpetrators of phone frauds to prevent duplication across e-wallets, and providing additional information through SMS or email alerts to customers from banks or e-wallet companies are some of the key measures being taken by the government.
- As per representational data available with the RBI, the value of prepaid payment instruments, which mainly include e-wallets, increased from Rs 1,320 crore in November 2016 to Rs 2,760 crore in September 2017.
- The customer alert mechanism to include names of beneficiaries of any financial transaction wherever necessary for better traceability and cross-checking on the part of the victim, publishing online statistics depicting the specific incidents, frauds of e-wallet companies and banks along with details including investigation to enable customers to make an informed choice before subscribing to e-wallet services are other initiatives being planned.
- An inter-ministerial committee on phone frauds (IMCPF) has been constituted in the Home Ministry in September last.

27. SC for nationwide ban on furnace oil, pet coke

In News:

- The Supreme Court requested all States and Union Territories to move forward towards a nationwide ban on the use of pet coke and furnace oil to power up industries, in a bid to fight pollution.
- The Environment Bench of the Supreme Court had already ordered a ban on the industrial use of pet coke and furnace oil in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan on October 24.

Why ban?

- This ban specifically came after an Environment Pollution Control Authority Report recommended the ban on sale, distribution and use of furnace oil and pet coke in the National Capital Region (NCR). Their use is already prohibited in Delhi.
- On October 24, the apex court also imposed a fine of Rs 2 lakh on the Ministry of Environment for not fixing any emission standards for industries using pet coke and furnace oil in the NCR

28. More banks may sign MoUs with govt

- The government is planning to ask more public sector banks to enter into an agreement with it if they want more capital, provided banks improve their performance. This was communicated by finance ministry officials to the bankers.
- Earlier, the government had entered into an agreement with 11 banks, and had asked them to submit a turnaround plan and had linked capital infusion with the pace of turnaround.

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Details

- In the earlier round of MoUs, banks were asked to achieve several parameters such as reduction in gross non-performing assets, increase in recovery, restriction of slippages, among others. In other words, capital infusion in these laggard banks were to be linked to their performance.
- Recently, the government had announced a capital infusion of Rs 2.11 lakh crore in public sector banks over two financial years, starting from the current fiscal.
- Of the amount, the government plans to issue recapitalisation bonds worth Rs 1.35 lakh crore and the remaining would come from budgetary provisions and fund raising by banks from the market.
- The ministry had also urged banks to revisit their loans strategy, it had said that all banks need not extend all types of loans.

29. Plotting Social Progress

- The accomplishments of modern India are recognized around the world
- A country that was a symbol of hunger and poverty at the time of Independence and admonished for its Hindu rate of growth during the initial decades has now transformed itself into one of the fastest growing major economies
- These economic achievements are extensive, especially when considering the challenges that arose from following democratic governance after decades of oppressive colonial rule and being a multi-religious secular entity

Economic Growth perspective:

- There have been efforts to track individual social outcomes such as health, education and safety
- The National University of Educational Planning and Administration and the Government of India (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of School Education and Literacy) compute an Educational Development Index for primary and upper primary levels of education that compare States on different aspects on education universalization
- NITI Aayog has rolled out the health, education and water index
- A common measure to quantify the social progress of Indian States that can pinpoint the achievements and the challenges is still missing

Social Progress Index

- A Social Progress Index could bridge this gap
- It would rank States using social and environmental indicators on the basis of their capability to provide for basic needs such as shelter, water, and sanitation, a foundation for well-being
- Along with education, health, and communication facilities
- It would analyze the prejudices that prevail in a region prohibiting people from making their personal decisions
- Also evaluate whether citizens have personal rights and freedom or whether they are susceptible to child labour, human trafficking, corruption, etc

Highlights of a key study results:

- A study was conducted during 2005-2016 to help analyze whether States, especially using social and environmental indicators, are heading in the right direction
- The overall social progress score for the country now stands at 57.03 (on a 0-100 scale), approximately eight points higher than in 2005
- The country performs better in the provision of basic human needs rather than opportunities for its citizens

Inference:

- All the States have climbed the social progress ladder, with the group of States that had the worst performance in 2005
- Tripura, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Bihar are now showing improvement
- This suggests that States with a relatively low level of social progress can improve rapidly
- Also the fact that the States that have achieved a threshold level of social progress, driving improvements becomes more difficult
- Average improvement was the lowest among the group of States that were categorized as "Very High Social Progress" in 2005
- The greatest improvements have been in areas where social progress most often accompanies economic prosperity
- Areas, where performance has declined or stagnated, is where the correlation with economic development is weak
- "Access to Information & Communication and Inclusion" depicts a strong relationship with per capita GDP and are the ones that have improved the most over the years
- "Health and Wellness & Environmental Quality", that are least correlated with economic development, have eroded

Way Forward

- The overall findings show that while the economy is on the right track, there is an urgent need to identify and focus on social parameters. The reliance on the idea that economic development will automatically transform social conditions will hamper further improvements in social progress. Social progress needs to be stimulated by focusing on policies directly targeting social issues

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIA-BANGLADESH

1. Exercise Sampriti

- The Indian and Bangladeshi armies held an intensive combat exercise at the Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School at Vairengte in Mizoram as part of the overall policy to bolster bilateral military ties.
- The aim behind "Exercise Sampriti is to enhance interoperability between the two armies while conducting counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations in a semi-mountainous jungle terrain.

Details

- "Sampriti will include a field training exercise at Vairengte, which will include heli-borne operations and neutralization of IEDs, and a command post exercise called Milap .
- Interestingly, the two armies will also held a joint training capsule on anti-terror operations. The capsule's main aim was to train junior commanders of the Bangladesh Army in effectively handling such operations.
- The Indian armed forces, seeking closer cooperation on the counter-terrorism front, are working towards "building capacity" of the Bangladesh military, which ranges from training and exercises to military supplies and defence technologies.
- Bilateral naval cooperation has been traditionally strong, encompassing a wide span to include operational interactions through training, port calls, passage exercises along with "capability building and capacity augmentation initiatives". The Bangladeshi Navy is also the present chair of the Indian Ocean Symposium (IONS), which is a multilateral maritime cooperation platform launched by the Indian Navy.

2. India and Bangladesh: Transportation system projects

Agartala-Dhaka-Kolkata Bus link

- Service on the 490 km Agartala-Dhaka route began in September 2003, and ran irregularly until January 2015, when it was stopped for security reasons
- Service was restarted in May 2015 on an extended Agartala-Dhaka-Kolkata route (910 km)

Kolkata-Khulna Bandhan Express

- To follow in the tracks of the erstwhile Barisal Express, which was stopped during the 1965 war with Pakistan
- The two countries, especially India's Northeast, stand to gain enormously from closer road and rail links

Kolkata-Dhaka Maitree Express

- In 2008, rail links disrupted by hostility with erstwhile East Pakistan were reestablished, the 375 km route crossing the border at Gede on the Indian side and Darshana on the Bangladesh side

Agartala-Dhaka service

- A 15-km line between Agartala and Akhaura being built by the Indian Railways is set for completion by the end of 2018
- With this, a 37-hour journey that an Agartala-Dhaka-Kolkata train can cover in less than a third of this time

Siliguri-Parbatipur link

- A line links Siliguri in North Bengal to Parbatipur in northern Bangladesh, by which India sent a 42-wagon consignment of high speed diesel manufactured by Numaligarh Refinery in Assam in March 2017
- But there is no regular goods train movement on this route, and passenger services are unlikely soon
- Because of trans-border crimes and infiltration in the North Bengal sector

Kolkata-Dibrugarh waterway

- Kolkata-Dibrugarh waterway through Dhaka and Guwahati, started in 1844 by the East India Company and shut after the 1965 war, was recently reopened
- Heavy machinery and equipment for the Numaligarh refinery and Lower Subansiri hydroelectric project in Arunachal Pradesh have been transported by this route
- In November 2015, seamless road cargo transport between Kolkata and Agartala through Bangladesh was tried out successfully under the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA)
- Regular services are yet to start

Other Details

- The creation of East Pakistan — and subsequently, Bangladesh — significantly increased the distance between the Northeast and the Indian mainland
- Until 1947, a train to Guwahati from Kolkata took hardly 12 hours
- Today, despite increased speeds, the journey takes at least 18 hours by the fastest train, while a normal train — such as the Kamrup Express — takes almost 24 hours through Siliguri or New Jalpaiguri.
- Before Partition, people travelled from Guwahati to Kolkata via Lalmonirhat, in the Bangladesh district close to where the Brahmaputra crosses the border

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- Trains between Assam and Kolkata through East Pakistan stopped in 1947; trains between West Bengal and East Pakistan stopped after the 1965 war

INDIA-CHINA

1. China to induct new long range missile into PLA next year

- The Dongfeng-41 (DF-41, CSS-X-10) is a Chinese three-stage solid-fuelled road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missile.
- It has an operational range between 12,000 km to 15,000 km
- This would make the DF-41 the world's longest range missile, surpassing the range of the US LGM-30 Minuteman which has a reported range of 13,000 km.
- It is believed to have a top speed of Mach 25, and to be capable of MIRV delivery
- The missile can carry up to 10 nuclear warheads, each of which can target separately.

2. Quadrilateral grouping

- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) was an informal strategic dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia and India that was maintained by talks between member countries.
- The dialogue was initiated in 2007 by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, with the support of Vice President Dick Cheney of the US, Prime Minister John Howard of Australia and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India.
- Japan President Shinzo Abe delivered a speech to the Indian Parliament in August 2007, entitled a "confluence of the two seas", a phrase he took from the title of a book written by Mughal prince Dara Shikoh.
- The dialogue was paralleled by joint military exercises of an unprecedented scale, titled Exercise Malabar.
- The diplomatic and military arrangement was widely viewed as a response to increased Chinese economic and military power, and the Chinese government responded to the Quadrilateral dialogue by issuing formal diplomatic protests to its members.

What was the intention?

- The initiation of an American, Japanese, Australian and Indian defense arrangement, modeled on the concept of a Democratic Peace
- The Quadrilateral was supposed to establish an "Asian Arc of Democracy," envisioned to ultimately include countries in central Asia, Mongolia, the Korean peninsula, and other countries in Southeast Asia: "virtually all the countries on China's periphery, except for China itself."

ASEAN meeting

- Convened around the theme of a "free and open Indo-Pacific," the first quadrilateral meeting addressed seven core themes: the rules-based order in Asia, freedom of navigation and overflight in the maritime commons, respect for international law, enhancing connectivity, maritime security, the North Korean threat and nonproliferation, and terrorism

What did the Chinese say?

- China has hoped that a US-brokered quadrilateral meet that includes India, Japan and Australia is not aimed at China and would "comply with the trend of times" which it identified as peace, development, and cooperation.
- The Chinese Foreign Ministry said it has noted the development and hopes that such an arrangement will promote mutual trust among countries in the region and not harm Beijing's interests.

Drawbacks

- The Quadrilateral was viewed as an "Asian NATO;"
- Daniel Twining of the German Marshall Fund of the United States has written that the arrangement "could lead to military conflict," or could instead "lay an enduring foundation for peace" if China becomes a democratic leader in Asia.

3. Post-Doklam, India asserts itself in China's backyard

- India reached out to China's backyard, addressing an array of issues ranging from the tension in the Korean peninsula to freedom of navigation and sought a crackdown on chemical weapons during the ASEAN and the East Asia summits.
- A high-level Indian official told The Hindu that New Delhi has emerged as a more dependable partner for South-East Asia following the Doklam faceoff with China, and indicated that the South-East Asian countries expect New Delhi to be assertive with Beijing.

Issue Area

- India remains concerned about China's manmade structures in the South China Sea that are likely to create navigational problems and international friction
- Southeast Asian region had been facing uncertainties following the exit of President Barack Obama as he took visible interest in the region.
- However, the latest visits by the leaders of the quadrilateral countries, including by the new U.S. President Donald Trump have once again assured support to these countries as they face China's commercial and military domination.

Other issues discussed

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi shared concerns of DPRK's pursuit of missiles and nuclear weapons and called for complete verification and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

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- He also said that North Korea's proliferation links must be investigated and the parties who have supported these unlawful programmes must be made accountable

4. New bipolarity in Asia

- U.S. President Donald Trump makes no secret of the fact that he believes in a world governed by self-interest, with little room for shared responsibility
- In contrast, Chinese President Xi Jinping is projecting himself as a firm believer in globalization and free trade
- It is against this backdrop that there are signs of a new bipolarity taking shape in Asia
- It possibly seeks to replace similar attempts by the U.S. previously — such as the pivot to Asia — to counter China and its aggressive designs in the region
- Implicitly, though not as yet explicitly, it seeks to create a coalition of all those willing to align with the U.S. against China's expanding ambitions and its inexorable march towards dominance in Asia

Anti-China:

- Talks held recently at the level of officials between the U.S., Japan, Australia and India (the Quadrilateral) are seen as an indication of this
- As China's expansionist attitudes intensify, more countries in East and Southeast Asia are expected to align with the Quadrilateral group of countries
- Vietnam could be one such country, but quite a few other countries in the region could follow suit

Attitudinal changes

- The recent Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings provided a further glimpse of attitudinal changes that are in the making
- Mr. Trump and PM Modi made use of this occasion to announce that the two countries were prepared to work together for the future of Asia
- It is a euphemism for what many see as keeping a check on China's aggressive designs in the region
- It is, perhaps, for the first time that India has indicated a resolve to align openly with the U.S. to tackle broader issues in the Indo-Pacific region

China's acceptance:

- The recent 19th Chinese Communist Party Congress placed special emphasis on a strong military "capable of winning wars"
- The deliberations left little room for any adjustment or compromise to accommodate the concerns of other countries of Asia, or for that matter the U.S.
- The deliberations of the Party Congress have further emboldened China to pursue its preferred course of action.

Advantage that China possesses

- Apart from its massive military build-up, China is positioned most advantageously as far as economic aspects are concerned
- It is today the most important trading partner for over 90 countries
- Its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has caught the imagination of the world, including that of Europe
- Most countries of Asia and Europe, including many of India's neighbours, do not seem to have a problem with the BRI

Sustaining bipolarity not going to be easy

- Latent concerns about Chinese expansionism have not prevented several Asian nations from endorsing and backing the BRI
- Most Asian nations also show no inclination or desire to blame China for siding with Pakistan, which continues to shelter high-ranking global terrorists, including Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar
- Even Mr. Trump, during his recent visit to China, seemed to have softened his criticism of China, after China produced some attractive mega deals
- All this only exposes the vulnerabilities of bipolarity in the extant situation today

India emerging as a leader

- In Asia, India, Japan and, to an extent, Vietnam appear willing to endorse the U.S. initiative to build up opposition to China's designs
- India has lately taken up issues well beyond South Asia, such as North Korea and China's actions in the South China Sea
- Currently, India is emerging as one of the countries in the region firmly committed to freedom of navigation and over-flight
- Also, for unimpeded commerce based on the principles of international law, particularly the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea
- This puts it in direct confrontation with China, as also in opposing China's ambitions in the Indian Ocean and the Indo-Pacific.

Way Forward

- As the outlines of a new bipolarity in Asia become clearer, and with the formal setting up of the Quadrilateral, China is certain to regard all this as an attempt to encircle it
- This will pave the way for a new round of turmoil as China might use both force and inducements to win more and more Asian countries to its side.
- The consequences of this could be quite significant for peace and stability in the Asian region.

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5. **India hits out at China's stance, as Beijing blocks UN move against Azhar**
    - China once again blocked an attempt by the U.S., U.K., and France to place Masood Azhar in the list of global terrorists of the Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council citing "no consensus" as a ground for its objection. India hit out at double standards in the war on terrorism, hours after China blocked a move at the United Nations Security Council to place Masood Azhar, the Pakistan-based chief of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, in a list of global terrorists

INDIA-FRANCE

1. **India, France to enhance counter-terror ties**
    - India and France decided to enhance counter- terror cooperation, and asked the international community to oppose those financing, sheltering and providing safe havens to terrorists.
    - On maritime security, the two sides discussed growing cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.
    - Emphasizing the need to designate Pakistani terror mastermind Masood Azhar as a global terrorist under the 1267 counter-terror committee of the UN Security Council, France sought international consensus on countering cross-border terrorism
2. **France wants to work with India in Indo-Pacific**
    - France will like to deepen cooperation with India in the Indo-Pacific bilaterally and not as a part of a multilateral arrangement like the recently convened "quadrilateral" between India, U.S., Japan and Australia.
    - This new cooperation would be discussed as part of the strategic partnership along with cooperation in counter-terrorism, defence hardware, nuclear energy, and space cooperation

Large territory:

- France is the only western country with large territory in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) including the Reunion Islands, that spans about two million square kilometres of an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and it has a population of one million French Citizens in the region, including about 30% of Indian origin.
- The French navy maintains bases in the UAE, Djibouti as well as in Reunion, with a total of 20,000 forces permanently based in the IOR.
- France is India's oldest strategic partner, and has conducted India's first international 'Varuna' joint naval exercises since 1983

INDIA-RUSSIA

1. **India caught in U.S.-Russia tussle**
    - India appears to have been caught in a tussle between Russia and the US
    - Russia's news agencies and major newspaper Kommersant carried a story alleging that the Indian navy gave a U.S. naval delegation access to Russian-purchased aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya and on-lease nuclear attack submarine INS Chakra, calling it an "unfriendly act" by India.
    - According to Kommersant, sources said India committed several "unfriendly acts" towards Russia and they threatened to seriously complicate negotiations, both on the lease of the second nuclear submarine and other projects.
2. **Home Minister Rajnath Singh three-day visit to Moscow.**
    - India and Russia will sign two key pacts for cooperation in tackling all forms of terrorism, and smuggling of narcotics.
    - The pact will reinforce the bilateral relationship between the two nations through the exchange and sharing of information, expertise, and help in curbing terrorism and enhancing security in the region.
    - The proposed pact, which will replace the agreement of October 1993, is a step towards consolidating the benefits accrued in the field of security and seeks to jointly fight new and evolving risks and threats.
    - They also signed deals on disaster management and narcotics smuggling

PRADAL DOSTYK 2017

- A fourteen day joint training exercise "PRABAL DOSTYK – 2017" between the Indian Army and the Kazakhstan Army commenced today with the Opening Ceremony at Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh

Prabal Dostyk

- It is a joint exercise between Indian & Kazakhstan Army.
- The primary aim of the exercise will be to enhance interoperability while undertaking Counter Terrorism & Counter Insurgency Operations in rural & semi-urban environment under the umbrella of United Nation.
- The exercise will be conducted in two stages;
    * first stage will be to familiarize with each other's tactics, drills, weapons & equipment
    * Second stage troops of both the armies will graduate to jointly execute a helicopter-borne operation in a simulated environment. Combat battle drills and physical fitness will be the focal point of the exercise.

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- 'Prabal Dostyk' meaning 'Robust Friendship' will be a significant step towards fostering military as well as diplomatic ties between both countries.

INDIA - SINGAPORE

1. **Singapore offers India logistical base**

- India and Singapore agreed on greater cooperation and activity in the Strait of Malacca and the Andaman Sea even as the two countries concluded a wide ranging naval agreement for maritime cooperation including logistical support.
- Strait of Malacca and Indian Ocean are key sea lanes of communication
- The two countries concluded a bilateral agreement for naval cooperation, which includes maritime security, joint exercises and temporary deployments from the naval facilities of each other and mutual logistical support.
- Early this year, the Indian Navy permanently deployed a frontline warship at the mouth of the strait to keep an eye on the increasing Chinese movements in the Indian Ocean as part of its mission-based deployment.
- The agreement would give the Navy the ability for extended deployments in the region because the strait is considered a critical choke point for global commerce and is seen by China as vulnerability for its energy security. The development is likely to be followed closely by Beijing.
- Singapore has accepted India's proposal to institutionalize naval engagements in the shared maritime space, including setting up maritime exercises with like-minded countries and other ASEAN partners.
- The two countries also agreed to explore joints projects in research and development.

INDIA - SRI LANKA

1. **Clashes of geopolitics, politics and economic interests**

- At the geopolitical level, China and India have competing interests. From being almost invisible within the island to becoming the most-watched district in Sri Lanka, Hambantota's image makeover with 'mega development' more so after Colombo sold majority of its stake in the Hambantota port to China.
- India in turn has offered to run the nearby Mattala airport, famous for its emptiness. ;
    * New Delhi is exploring options of using the airport facility to manage its own surging air traffic and to run a flight school.
- The third clash, which is the least apparent but the most telling, is that between the people of Hambantota, the animals inhabiting the district and the 'development' that is threatening to shake its ecosystem.
    * People are in perpetual fear, worrying when their land might be gazetted for development activity
    * With forest cover diminishing in the wake of development, locals point to an increase in incidence of human-elephant conflict — often leading to destruction of agricultural fields, damage to houses, and, at times, grave injury or death to humans encountering the tusker.

India and Mattala Airport

- An Indian company has emerged with a bold plan for taking over Sri Lanka's struggling Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport (MRIA).
- Being located in a remote area in an under-developed part of the country, Mattala airport has struggled to attract both passengers and airlines. Only one or two flights per day currently stop there and, according to the Sri Lankan government, the 3,000 flights that touched down at the airport in 2014 served just 21,000 passengers -- averaging a mere seven passengers per plane.
- This has led to MRIA being dubbed the "world's emptiest international airport," with its vacant corridors, gates, and tarmac serving as more of an attraction for curious journalists than actual passengers.
- It has become abundantly clear that Mattala International cannot provide the financial sustenance necessary for Sri Lanka to pay back the $190 million of loans that the Exim Bank of China provided to build it anytime soon
- For that reason, Sri Lanka has been looking for other entities to take over Mattala International

Is India trying to use the Mattala airport to counter China?

- India's offer to take over the Mattala airport came barely two weeks after a landmark deal which saw a 70% share of Sri Lanka's Hambantota deep sea port being sold to China for 99 years.
- The port and airport are within a half hour drive of one another, and are part of the same conurbation of development.
- When viewed in this light, it appears as if the timing of India's offer may not have been a coincidence, and could be another move by India intended to counter China's growing presence in the South Asian region -- similar to India's prospective deal to develop Sri Lanka's Trincomalee port or a recent partnership with Japan to engage in large-scale infrastructure development in Asia and Africa.

INDIA AND COMMON WEALTH

- With the upcoming visit of Prince of Wales to India, India and the UK have an opportunity to think afresh about the future of the Commonwealth
- In the past an archaic anti-colonial view has distorted India's view of the commonwealth

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- And it was no surprise then that the Indian leadership stayed away from the last three Commonwealth summits in Malta, Colombo and Perth for one reason or another.
- He is coming to India to invite PM Narendra Modi to attend the Commonwealth Summit in London in April 2018
- The London Summit of the 52-nation forum, formally called the "Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting" is significant for many reasons

Significance of the summit

- Charles is likely to take over from Queen Elizabeth as the head of the organisation
- As the largest country in the Commonwealth, India will have a key role in formalising this transition
- An even more important change is Britain's r impending separation from the European Union
- After the separation, the UK is making a big push to reconnect with its historic partners in the Commonwealth and the Anglosphere
- The UK wants commonwealth should have greater role in resolving contemporary global problems like climate change, urbanisation and sustainable development

India's Concern:

- The political conservatives in India, who dismiss the Commonwealth as a relic from the past, may not find Charles too persuasive
- Delhi's lack of interest in the Commonwealth in recent decades was reinforced by the preoccupation with
- (1) Managing the complex relationships with its immediate neighbours
- (2) Reordering its ties with the major powers
- (3) And becoming part of regional institutions like the Association of the South East

Nehru and Common wealth:

- Despite considerable opposition from the Indian National Congress and many others, Nehru decided to join the Commonwealth.
- Nehru understood that the Commonwealth and British connection gave India a measure of flexibility in a world engulfed by the Cold War
- It allowed him to maintain a substantive political and economic link to the West even as he refused to become part of its alliance system

Importance of Commonwealth for both India and the UK

- For a Britain that is reinventing itself politically after Brexit, the Commonwealth has become an important forum to recalibrate London's international relations
- For a rising India, the Commonwealth is the most natural theatre to demonstrate its credibility as a "leading power"

INDIA PULLS OFF A DIPLOMATIC COUP, WINS PRIZED ICJ SEAT

- India scored a major diplomatic victory as its nominee to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Dalveer Bhandari, was re-elected after the United Kingdom withdrew its candidate, Christopher Greenwood.
- With Justice Dalveer Bhandari's re-election, this will be the first time in the 70-year history of the U.N. that the U.K. will not be on the world judicial body.
- This is the first time that one of the five permanent members of the UNSC lost out to an ordinary member in a race.
- This is also the first time that one sitting member of the ICJ lost to another sitting member.

Background

- UN General Assembly and the Security Council assemble for separate meetings in New York to hold the 12th round of voting to break the stalemate between India's Dalveer Bhandari and Britain's Christopher Greenwood for re-election to the International Court of Justice (ICJ)
- The winning candidate needed to get a majority in both the General Assembly (GA) and the Security Council (SC), but 11 rounds of voting so far ended with India winning in the UN General Assembly and the U.K. winning in the Security Council.
- Historical challenge: It is the first time in UN history that the candidacy of a permanent member of the Security Council is challenged in the way it has been by India, and all five permanent members, the P5, appear to have rallied behind Mr. Greenwood.
- The U.K. has already indicated to members of the SC that it plans to invoke a clause that has never been used to suspend voting and move to a conference mechanism of the GA and the SC if the first round of voting does not yield a clear outcome.
- What is conference mechanism?
    * The conference mechanism involves three members of the GA and three of the SC jointly selecting the winner.
    * India has told member countries that this would amount to bypassing the desire of an overwhelming majority

RAKHINE ISSUE

United States

- The United States labelled the Myanmar military operation against the Rohingya population "ethnic cleansing" and said it would consider targeted sanctions against those responsible.
- The United States supports an independent investigation into what happened in Rakhine State and will pursue actions including possible targeted sanctions.

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China's 3 stage solution for Rohingyas :

- The first stage is to effect a ceasefire on the ground, to return to stability and order, so the people can enjoy peace and no longer be forced to flee.
- According to Chinese official the first phase's aim has already basically been achieved, and the key is to prevent a flare-up.
- Second stage is bilateral dialogue to find a workable solution.
- The third phase should be to work toward a long-term solution based on poverty alleviation as poverty was the root cause of the conflict.

Amnesty

- Amnesty International said that Myanmar's persecution of Rohingya Muslims fits the legal definition of apartheid, a crime against humanity.
- In a report based on a two-year investigation, the group said that Rohingya, a mostly stateless minority from Myanmar's western state of Rakhine, are "trapped in a vicious system of state-sponsored, institutionalized discrimination."
- Amnesty traces the roots of the crisis to systemic discrimination and segregation that has intensified dramatically since 2012, when deadly riots erupted between Buddhists and Muslims in several parts of the state. Buddhists make up the majority in both Rakhine state and in the country at large

ROHINGYAS

- The term "Rohingya" may come from Rakhanga or Roshanga, the words for the state of Arakan. The word Rohingya would then mean "inhabitant of Rohang", which was the early Muslim name for Arakan
- The Rohingya are an ethnic minority in Myanmar. They live predominantly in the western state of Rakhine.
- Rakhine state is home to most of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims, who live largely in abject poverty while facing widespread discrimination not only by the Buddhist-majority but also by the government. They are officially "stateless", because Myanmar's 1982 citizenship act does not consider them citizens.
- Myanmar describes them as immigrants from neighboring Bangladesh although the Rohingya say they have lived in Myanmar for generations.
- They are also restricted from freedom of movement, state education and civil service jobs
- Most Buddhists refer to them as Bengalis because of the belief they sneaked into the country and because they speak the Bengali language and for decades the nation's Buddhist majority has been accused of subjecting them to discrimination and violence
- Described by the United Nations in 2013 as one of the most persecuted minorities in the world
- The legal conditions faced by the Rohingya in Myanmar have been compared with apartheid
- Rohingya campaign groups, notably the Arakan Rohingya National Organization, demand the right to "self-determination within Myanmar"

IMBAX

- The first India-Myanmar bilateral military exercise 2017(IMBAX – 2017) willl be held from November 20 to 25 in Umroi in Meghalaya.
- The joint exercise is the first of its kind military training exercise on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) between India and Myanmar.
- The aim of this bilateral training event is to train the Myanmar delegation for participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations under the UN Flag.
- The Exercise includes participation of 15 officers from Myanmar Army and 16 officers from the Indian Army who shall jointly train for over a period of six days

PAK FACES FLAK OVER TERROR FUNDING

- Pakistan has failed to penalise or curb the activities of any of the terror groups [designated by the UNSC].
- India raised the issue at the International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG) in Argentina. Other countries supported India and now Pakistan has to submit a compliance report during the next session in February 2018.

FATFs' International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG) directives:

- Pakistan has been asked to report again in February on action taken against designated terror groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and its off-shoots Jamaat-ud Dawa and Falah-i-Insaniyat.

About FATF :(in box)

- The Financial Action Task Force (on Money Laundering) (FATF), is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1989 on the initiative of the G7 to develop policies to combat money laundering.
- In 2001 the purpose expanded to act on terrorism financing.
- The 37-member FATF is a voluntary group, without much power to enforce its ruling, it works through "peer pressure" and "naming and shaming" countries into compliance on terror finance by putting them on "grey lists and black lists".

STARING AT AN IRISH CHALLENGE

- Well ahead of the Brexit referendum, politicians across the political spectrum in Britain highlighted the importance of dealing with the impact that leaving the European Union (EU) would have on the island of Ireland.

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- In a joint effort shortly before the referendum, former Prime Ministers Tony Blair and John Major came together to warn that the stability of Northern Ireland and the long-fought-for peace was at stake.
- The Troubles — the period of deep civil and political unrest in Northern Ireland, from the 1960s to the 1990s that pitted largely Protestant Unionists against largely Catholic separatists — are in the past, thanks to rapprochement that culminated in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, though the political situation remains sensitive.
- Membership of the EU has played a significant role in maintaining that environment with strong economic ties between Northern Ireland and the EU state of Ireland, as well as close personal links. Over 35,000 people cross the border between the two each day, while 1,77,000 lorries and 1.85 million cars cross each month.
- With Britain set to leave the EU — and the single market and customs union — the future relationship between Ireland and Northern Ireland was always going to present a challenge.

How could the open border remain while Northern Ireland, as part of the U.K., exited the customs union?

- Unsurprisingly, the issue was put forward as the priority area from Europe along with resolving the issue of citizen's rights (those of EU citizens in Britain and vice-versa) and the so-called divorce bill.
- However, while progress has been made on the other issues, including Britain stepping up its offer of what it is willing to pay the bloc, the Irish question remains as intractable as ever, with the intensity of the debate heating up over the past month.
- Irish Taoiseach (or Prime Minister) Leo Varadkar issued a strong ultimatum to Britain, insisting that Ireland needed written assurances that there would be no hard border — including no physical infrastructure on the border — in Ireland before Brexit negotiations with the remaining 27 member states could move to the so-called second phase, when the crucial future shape of the trade relationship is to be discussed.
- Some sections of the British media have highlighted divisions within Europe, suggesting, for example, that German Chancellor Angela Merkel was pushing a tough line, and that the uncertainty over her political future could be to Britain's advantage.
- Europe, however, has maintained a remarkably unified line on Brexit, including on issues relating to individual nations.
- All signs point to this being the case on Ireland too, including comments by Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney who this week pointed out that Ireland would not have to exercise a veto to block a Brexit deal if its concerns about Brexit were not addressed, because other EU nations were committed to standing by it.

The way forward

- The ratcheting up of tensions over Ireland has overshadowed progress on other issues, particularly around Britain's divorce bill, on which this week significant process appeared to have been made following British concessions.
- While some have suggested that movement on those issues that once seemed intractable suggest that concerns about Ireland are being overblown, that argument misses a crucial difference — the huge political sensitivity around the Irish question.
- As one spokesperson for the Irish government highlighted this week, failure to resolve the issue could lead to a resurgence of violence, and warned that there was a true threat of paramilitary action should a controlled border be reinstated.
- The controversy comes amid yet further blows to Britain. Last week Australia, a country with which a free trade deal was touted as one aspect of the bright future that awaited Brexit Britain, expressed strong objections to plans to share quotas for low-tariff food imports currently imposed by the EU between Britain and the EU.
- This would disadvantage the country by placing greater restrictions on what could be exported.
- India too has been stepping up on the importance it places on the freer movement of professionals in any negotiations on a future trading agreement, a highly political sensitive issue in Britain.
- The issues highlight one of the problems at the heart of Brexit: while the Leave side has from the outset sought to position the process as a U.K.-centric one of taking back control, it has proved anything but that with the collective and individual concerns of other member-states taking centre stage

ZIMBABWE ARMY SEIZES POWER, PRESIDENT ROBERT MUGABE 'CONFINED TO HIS HOME'

In news:

- Zimbabwe's military said it had seized power in a targeted assault on "criminals" around President Robert Mugabe, who were causing social and economic suffering, but came out with an assurance that the 93-year-old leader and his family were "safe and sound".
- The army said today it has the President and his wife in custody and was securing government offices and patrolling the capital's streets following a night of unrest

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Turmoil in Zimbabwe:

- Mr. Mugabe has led Zimbabwe for the last 37 years.
- In contrast to his elevated status on the continent, Mr. Mugabe is reviled in the West as a despot whose disastrous handling of the economy and willingness to resort to violence to maintain power destroyed one of Africa's most promising states.
- In the last year, a chronic absence of dollars has led to long queues outside banks and an economic and financial collapse that many fear will rival the meltdown of 2007-2008, when inflation topped out at 500,000,000,000%.
- Imported goods are running out and economists say that, by some measures, inflation is now at 50% a month.

INDIA SUPPORTS CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE : PM

- In a statement on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented his government's position and said that India will continue to support nation building activities by the Palestinians, and urged for the creation of a Palestinian state that will co-exist 'peacefully' with Israel.
- The special day marks Resolution 181 of the United Nations which called for creation of independent Israeli and Palestinian states and was adopted on this day in 1947.
- The two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is based on this resolution.
- The day is being marked in the backdrop of the ongoing diplomacy to bring the two sides to the negotiation table. "India hopes for early resumption of dialogue between the Palestinian and the Israeli sides to move towards finding a comprehensive negotiated resolution," Mr. Modi said.
- The statement was sent to the United Nations a few days ago through the Permanent Mission of India at the UN.
- Mr. Modi's statement adds India's support to the global push for a negotiated settlement of the longstanding demand for a Palestinian state next to Israel.
- The statement is the first occasion that the Prime Minister has spoken about the need for a viable Palestinian state since his visit to Israel last July.
- However, the India-Israel Joint Statement issued during his visit this year did not mention the need to create a Palestinian state but had mentioned the need for 'mutual recognition' and 'security arrangements' as the basis for a peaceful solution to the issue.
- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is likely to visit India in January reciprocating Mr. Modi's visit.
- The Prime Minister also expressed India's long-term commitment to the Palestinian people and said, "India is an active development partner of Palestine, engaged in extending technical and financial assistance to improve the lives of the Palestinian people. We will continue to support the development and nation-building efforts of Palestine."
- Several events and seminars are expected to be held in India to mark the day of solidarity with the Palestinians.

SOCIAL ISSUES

1. **Gender Vulnerability Index**

- The first ever Gender Vulnerability Index is computed by Plan India, a non-governmental organisation.
- It provides state-wise ranking by analyzing four parameters, namely health, education, poverty and protection/safety from violence.
- The index is topped by Goa followed by Kerala and Mizoram.
- Bihar ranked the lowest in the index particularly women safety and security.
- The composite index has been developed within research for the NGO's "Plan for Every Child campaign".
- It is aimed at comprehensively understanding the dimensions of various problems affecting children, particularly girls, in difficult circumstances.s

2. **Global Entrepreneurship Summit**

- The US and India will co-host the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) in November in Hyderabad, India. GES 2017 will create an environment that empowers innovators, particularly women, to take their ideas to the next leve
- Around 1,500 delegates from over 160 countries will participate. More than 10 countries will be represented by an all-female delegation, including from Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Israel.
- The summit organised annually since 2010, is the eighth edition of the Global Entrepreneurship Summit, the preeminent gathering of entrepreneurs, investors, and supporters from around the world. With the theme of "Women First, Prosperity for All," this will be the first GES in which women are the majority, over 52.5 per cent, of the participants.
- This year marks the first GES held in South Asia, and the event underscores the broad and enduring partnership with India.
- The summit will focus on four key industry sectors: Energy and Infrastructure, Healthcare and Life Sciences, Financial Technology and Digital Economy, and Media and Entertainment.

3. **Incheon Strategy**

- Incheon Strategy has been adopted to achieve the goals mentioned in UN Convention for Rights or Persons with Disabilities.
- The Incheon strategy builds on the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and the Biwako millennium framework for action and Biwako plus five towards an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.
- The Incheon Strategy will enable the Asian and Pacific region to track progress towards improving the quality of life, and the fulfilment of the rights, of the region's 650 million persons with disabilities, most of whom live in poverty.
- The ESCAP secretariat is mandated to report every three years until the end of the Decade in 2022, on progress in the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration and the Incheon Strategy.

Key principles and policy direction

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one's choices, and independence of persons
- Non-discrimination
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
- Equality of opportunity
- Accessibility
- Equality between men and women
- Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities

4. **India Youth Development Index**

- The Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, an Institute of National Importance has come out with Youth Development Index and Report 2017

Objective

- The objective of constructing the India Youth Development Index (YDI) 2017 is to track the trends in Youth Development across the States.
- The Index enables recognizing the high and low performing states, identifies the weak domains and informs the policy makers the priority areas of intervention for youth development in the states.

Criteria

- Constructing Youth Development Index for the year 2017 was done using the latest definition of youth as used in National Youth Policy – 2014 (India) and World Youth Development Report of Commonwealth (15 – 29 years) as well as using the Commonwealth Indicators in order to facilitate Global comparison.

Significance

- This report is of immense value to enable comparisons across geographical areas and categories, as human development index has done in comparing the development situation across regions, nations and localities.

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- The index also measures the achievements made besides serving as an advocacy tool for youth development and facilitates to identify priority areas for development of Policy and Interventions.
- It will enable the policy makers track the national and the regional progress as well setbacks in youth development policies, planning, priority identification and implementation strategies

5. One Stop Centre Scheme

Background

- In India, gender-based violence has many manifestations; from the more universally prevalent forms of domestic and sexual violence including rape, to harmful practices such as, dowry, honour killings, acid attacks, witch – hunting, sexual harassment, child sexual abuse, trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, child marriage, sex-selective abortion, sati etc.
- Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), has formulated a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for setting up One Stop Centre, a subscheme of Umbrella Scheme for National Mission for Empowerment of women including Indira Gandhi Mattritav Sahyaog Yojana.

Objective

- One Stop Centres (OSC) are intended to support women affected by violence, in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace.
- Women facing physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic abuse, irrespective of age, class, caste, education status, marital status, race and culture will be facilitated with support and redressal.
- Aggrieved women facing any kind of violence due to attempted sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, trafficking, honour-related crimes, acid attacks or witch-hunting who have reached out or been referred to the OSC will be provided with specialized services

Target group

- The OSC will support all women including girls below 18 years of age affected by violence, irrespective of caste, class, religion, region, sexual orientation or marital status.

Services offered in OSCs

The Centres will be integrated with a Women Helpline to facilitate access to following services.

- Emergency Response and Rescue Services – OSC will provide rescue and referral services to the women affected by violence. For this, linkages will be developed with existing mechanisms such as National Health Mission (NHM), 108 service, police (PCR Van) so that the woman affected by violence can either be rescued from the location and referred to the nearest medical facility (Public/ Private) or shelter home.
- Medical assistance – Women affected by violence would be referred to the nearest Hospital for medical aid/examination which would be undertaken as per the guidelines and protocols developed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- Assistance to women in lodging FIR /NCR/DIR
- Psychosocial support/ counselling – A skilled counsellor providing psychosocial counselling services would be available on call. This counselling process will give women confidence and support to address violence or to seek justice for the violence perpetuated. Counsellors shall follow a prescribed code of ethics, guidelines and protocols in providing counselling services.
- Legal aid and counselling

Funds

- The Scheme will be funded through Nirbhaya Fund . The Central Government will provide 100% financial assistance to the State Government /UT Administrations under the Scheme.

Context

- mt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi to inaugurate tomorrow the two day National Workshop on Role of Sakhi One Stop Centres in Strengthening Multi-Sectoral Response to Violence

6. Safe City Surveillance scheme

- The Bihar government has launched Safe City Surveillance Scheme for keeping the crimes against women in check.
- The scheme aims to bring all major public places under a strict watch of close-circuit television (CCTV) cameras and improve the overall crime control in the state.

Highlights:

- The scheme has been launched in a phase-wise manner and will commence from the capital city Patna
- The scheme has specially been launched for checking crimes against women such as harassment, eve-teasing and molestation, snatching incidents and roadside scuffles etc.
- It will also help in keeping a track of miscreants
- Under the scheme, all major public places will be under the watch of CCTV cameras, which will be used for traffic management as well as crime control
- Bihar home department will be the nodal agency for implementation of the surveillance scheme
- The network of CCTV cameras will be connected to the control room where they will be monitored by policemen around the clock
- The policemen in the control room will coordinate with their counterparts in field and police stations to alert them about any incidents in the area

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7. Urban Mobility India Conference and Expo

- The Urban Mobility India (UMI) Conference and Expo is an annual flagship event of the Ministry of Urban Development.
- The origin of UMI is the National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP) 2006, of the Government of India which lays a very strong emphasis on building capabilities at the State and city level to address the problems associated with urban mobility and undertakes the task of developing sustainable urban transport systems.
- The primary objective of the event is to disseminate information to the cities, whose officials attend the conference, and to help them remain up-to-date with best urban transport practices.
- The event brings together technology and service providers in urban transport from India and abroad, as well as policy makers, practitioners and officials under one roof.

What is Intelligent Transport Solutions (ITS)?

- Intelligent Transport Solutions (ITS) are advanced ICT based applications for enhancing the efficiency of use of different modes of transport in cities through better coordination and by informing the users to make safe, quick and smarter use of transport networks.
- ITS is used for effective management of traffic and mobility.

8. Against gender rights

- The transgender community and its allies have erupted in anger over the decision of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to re-introduce the original Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 in the winter session of Parliament.

Journey of the Bill

- The transgender community saw the Supreme Court's landmark decision in NALSA v. Union of India as a victory, as it recognised that transgender persons have fundamental rights.
- The judgment was followed by a private member's Bill, the Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2014, which was unanimously passed in the Rajya Sabha.
- Instead of introducing it in the Lok Sabha, the Ministry uploaded its own Bill, the Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2015, on its website in December for public comments.
- The 2015 Bill, which was largely based on the 2014 Bill, did away with the national and State commissions for transgender persons and transgender rights courts.
- The Bill was fairly progressive since it granted a transgender person the right to be identified as a 'man', 'woman' or 'transgender'.
- However, the 2016 Bill, that was finally introduced in the Lok Sabha, came as a shock.
- A highly diluted version, it also pathologised transgender persons by defining them as "partly female or male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male".
- Met with backlash, the Ministry set up an expert standing committee on social justice and empowerment to examine the Bill.

The committee report

- The standing committee invited public comments and thereafter held multiple rounds of consultations.
- Its report criticized the 2016 Bill for its stark deficiencies and recommended re-drafting the definition of a 'transgender person' to make it inclusive and accurate; providing for the definition of discrimination and setting up a grievance redress mechanism to address cases of discrimination; and granting reservations to transgender persons.
- However, its substance lay in its insistence that the law must grant equal civil rights to transgender persons (marriage, divorce and adoption), thus opening the door for the legal system to take steps to undo its oppressive heteronormative (the presumption that heterosexuality is the norm) and cisgendered (the presumption that people's gender identity is aligned with their anatomical sex) foundation.
- The Ministry's decision to re-introduce the 2016 Bill disregards the pre-legislative consultative policy which requires Ministries to grant a minimum of 30 days for public comments and to place a summary of feedback/comments received from the public/other stakeholders on their website.

9. All physical contact not harassment: Delhi HC

Delhi High Court ruling:

- Unwelcome or accidental physical contact without undertones of a sexual nature doesn't amount to sexual harassment.
- Upholding the clean chit given to a former CRRI scientist with regard to a complaint of an ex-colleague against him, the HC said there should be context while defining a physical contact as sexual in nature.
- The woman scientist had challenged the clean chit given by the CRRI internal complaints panel to her colleague, whom she had accused of sexual harassment.
- Undoubtedly, physical contact or advances would constitute sexual harassment provided such physical contact is a part of the sexually determined behaviour.
- Such physical contact must be in the context of a behaviour which is sexually oriented.
- Plainly, a mere accidental physical contact, even though unwelcome, would not amount to sexual harassment.
- Similarly, a physical contact which has no undertone of a sexual nature and is not occasioned by the gender of the complainant may not necessarily amount to sexual harassment.

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About the case:

- Both the scientists were working in the Central Road Research Institute (CRRI) .
- In her complaint, the woman had referred to an incident of April 2005 when the man entered the laboratory where she was working, grabbed her arm, snatched the samples from her hand and threw them on the floor.
- He also pushed her out of the room. She maintained that this was an unwelcome physical contact that would amount to sexual harassment.

10. Making caste slur on SC/STs over phone an offence, says SC

- The Supreme Court has ruled that using casteist remarks over phone in a public place against the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe category amounts to criminal offence, warranting a jail of a maximum five years.
- The apex court refused to stay criminal proceedings and quash an FIR against a person, who allegedly used derogatory casteist remarks over phone to a woman from the the SC/ST category.

11. Haj subsidy to be phased out next year.

- Haj subsidy borne by the government and extended to pilgrims travelling to Saudi Arabia could be phased out as early as 2018.
- Supreme Court order: The subsidy was to be phased out after a Supreme Court order recommended the same to the government in 2012, with 2022 as the outer limit.
- New Alternative plans:
- Government is planning to spend the funds on educational programmes especially for girl children of the minority community.

Reformative measures

- Among the recommendations was reducing the Haj subsidy to nil by 2018, allowing women without a male relative/escort/ mehram to undertake the Haj and to reduce embarkation points for Haj from 22 to nine airports which had flights to Saudi Arabia.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Aditya-L1

Aditya-L1 is the India's first dedicated scientific mission to study the sun.

- The Aditya-1 mission was conceived as a 400kg class satellite carrying one payload, the Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC) and was planned to launch in an 800 km low earth orbit.
- A Satellite placed in the halo orbit around the Lagrangian point 1 (L1) of the Sun-Earth system has the major advantage of continuously viewing the Sun without any occultation/ eclipses. Therefore, the Aditya-1 mission has now been revised to "Aditya-L1 mission" and will be inserted in a halo orbit around the L1, which is 1.5 million km from the Earth.
- The satellite carries additional six payloads with enhanced science scope and objectives.
- Aditya-1 was meant to observe only the solar corona. The outer layers of the Sun, extending to thousands of km above the disc (photosphere) is termed as the corona.
- Aditya L1 has two in situ particle-detection payloads - Aditya Solar wind Particle Experiment (ASPEX) and Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA) will study aspects that affect space weather.
- The origin of solar wind ions, their reaction to coronal mass ejections, the distribution of these in the heliosphere – the space around the sun that extends up to Pluto - and so on. The various payloads in Aditya-L1 will also study space weather.
- The mission is a joint venture between ISRO and physicists from various institutes including Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru; Inter University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, Pune; and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai. The mission costs approximately Rs. 378 crores.

What are Lagrangian points and halo orbit?

- A Lagrange point is a location in space where the combined gravitational forces of two large bodies, such as Earth and the sun or Earth and the moon, equal the centrifugal force felt by a much smaller third body.
- A halo orbit is a periodic three-dimensional orbit near the L1, L2 or L3.
- The first task is to build a few ultra-sensitive instruments to accurately measure minute details about the Sun.
- The bigger challenge is to create an all-aluminium 20-metre-high magnetic test facility near Bengaluru to specially assemble and test the spacecraft and instruments in a magnetically clean manner with "not one electric material, not even a car, being nearby".
- A satellite and a launcher each cost around Rs. 200 crore. Can the nation afford a second spacecraft?

Solar Cycle:

- Like seasonal changes on the earth, the sun experiences approximately eleven-year-long cycles during which sunspots, caused by the sun's magnetic field, start forming, increase in the ascending phase and decrease in the descending phase towards the end of the cycle.

2. Carnivorous plants use CO2 to lure prey, says study

- Carnivorous plants have been known to employ a variety of techniques like nectar, smell, color and ultraviolet florescence to lure and capture prey.
- New findings: scientists at the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Gardens and Research Institute here have come up with evidence that some carnivorous plants use carbon dioxide (CO_2) to attract insects and ants to their prey traps.
- Indian pitcher plant (Nepenthes khasiana) uses the gas, both to attract prey and to aid the digestive process.
- The unopened pitchers of the plant are carbon dioxide-enriched, with a gas concentration of 2,500 to 5,000 ppm (parts per million), approximately 10 times that in the earth's atmosphere.
- The open Nepenthes pitchers were found to emit CO_2 constantly to attract insects
- The high CO_2 environment in the pitchers and the dissolved CO_2 in the pitcher fluids might also act as a tranquilliser for the trapped prey.

3. Cool Subdwarfs

- Astronomers have discovered some of the oldest stars in our Milky Way galaxy by determining their locations and velocities.
- Just like humans, stars have a life span: birth, youth, adulthood, senior and death.
- Scientists at Georgia State University in the U.S. focussed on old or "senior citizen" stars, also known as cool subdwarfs, which are much older and cooler in temperature than the Sun.
- In a study, astronomers conducted a census of our solar neighborhood to identify how many young, adult and old stars are present.
- They targeted stars out to a distance of 200 light years, which is relatively nearby considering the galaxy is more than 1,00,000 light years across.
- A light year is how far light can travel in one year.

4. Space Activities Bill, 2017

What is it?

- It is a proposed Bill to promote and regulate the space activities of India.
- The new Bill encourages the participation of non-governmental/private sector agencies in space activities in India under the guidance and authorisation of the government through the Department of Space.
- According to the draft, as few start-up companies in India have shown interest in space systems activities and as space activities need participation from private sector agencies, "there is an urgent need for a legal environment for orderly performance and growth of space sector."

What does the Bill propose?

- The provisions of this Act shall apply to every citizen of India and to all sectors engaged in any space activity in India or outside India
- A non-transferable license shall be provided by the Central Government to any person carrying out commercial space activity
- The Central Government will formulate the appropriate mechanism for licencing, eligibility criteria, and fees for license.
- The government will maintain a register of all space objects (any object launched or intended to be launched around the earth) and develop more space activity plans for the country
- It will provide professional and technical support for commercial space activity and regulate the procedures for conduct and operation of space activity
- It will ensure safety requirements and supervise the conduct of every space activity of India and investigate any incident or accident in connection with the operation of a space activity.
- It will share details about the pricing of products created by space activity and technology with any person or any agency in a prescribed manner.
- If any person undertakes any commercial space activity without authorisation they shall be punished with imprisonment up to 3 years or fined more than Rs 1 crore or both.

Why such a law is needed?

- Increasing applications of Space-based solutions have meant an increased participation of private sector industry and startups.
- Commercial opportunities in space activities and services, nationally and internationally, demand a higher order of participation by private sector agencies. This situation demands a necessary legal environment for orderly performance and growth of space sector.

Issue area

- It is proposed that all powers to licence private players to launch and operate "space objects" will rest with the Union government (read DoS). And these powers will be quite sweeping. DoS will not only have powers to "grant, transfer, vary, suspend or terminate licence" but also have powers to inspect books of accounts and other documents of licensees and seek all information about partners, directors, etc.
- This is particularly worrying because "space activity" under this proposed law not only covers launch of satellites but also "use of space objects" as well as "operation, guidance and entry of space object into and from outer space and all functions for performing the said activities." This would technically mean even data companies handling satellite imagery or universities operating ground facilities for their microsatellites may also need a licence. If this is going to be so, it is a recipe for a new "licence raj".
- Another disconcerting note is the fact that DoS will be the regulator. This will amount to a grave conflict of interest because DoS through ISRO is also a service provider as well as a commercial operator through Antrix. At present, one person heads three offices — Space Commission chairman, DoS secretary and ISRO chairman. If the bill goes through, the same person will also be India's space regulator.
- The quantum of the licence fee to be charged, time frames for approvals and procedures for inspection of books, etc, are all critical issues.I

5. Particle accelerator for art revs up

- The world's only particle accelerator dedicated to art was switched on at the Louvre in Paris
- It will help experts analyse ancient and precious works

Key Facts:

- The 37-metre AGLAE accelerator housed underneath the huge Paris museum will be now be used for the first time to routinely study and help authenticate paintings and other items made from organic materials
- It can determine the chemical make-up of objects without the need to take samples
- The AGLAE works by speeding up helium and hydrogen nuclei to speeds of between 20,000 to 30,000 km per second and then bombarding the object, which emits radiation that can be captured and analysed

Objects being tested

- Among the first objects to be tested by the newly configured accelerator were Roman votive statues of the household gods
- They were uncovered from the ancient forum of Bavay close to the border with Belgium

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6. Auto fuel from CO2 emissions

Key points:

- Researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) have developed a new system that could potentially be used for converting power plant emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) into useful fuel for cars, trucks and planes.
- The new method, described in a paper in the journal ChemSusChem , is based on a membrane-based system. The membrane made of a compound of lanthanum, calcium, and iron oxide, allows oxygen from a stream of carbon dioxide to migrate through to the other side, leaving carbon monoxide behind.
- Carbon monoxide produced during this process can be used as a fuel by itself or combined with hydrogen and/or water to make many other liquid hydrocarbon fuels as well as chemicals including methanol (used as an automotive fuel)

7. Infusing technology into education

- With emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT) and Big Data Analytics knocking at India's doors, the country needs to sow the learning seeds early — in the classroom — and China and Turkey can show the way, top global Intel executives have said.
- The world has realised what is coming its way in the next 10-20 years and has already begun modernising classrooms at schools to prepare a technology-ready workforce.

Facts

- The Chinese and Turkish authorities have given kids IoT-enabled devices in millions of schools. Every student has a device connected to an intelligent whiteboard at the front of the classroom. There are teacher-controlled devices too. The curriculum is designed for that kind of environment.
- Intel has installed 400,000 IoT-enabled connected devices for schools in Turkey, a million-and-a half in Chinese schools and another million to go in China in the next two years

How will this help?

- Technology can do wonders in providing a great educational experience and create a pool of talent for these disrupting technologies.
- In China, the newest innovation is that there are eight video cameras and a series of microphones in a classroom at certain private schools and colleges. The videos of the classroom activities are recorded daily. Parents can later log on and see the student-teacher interaction
- Intel has also pushed the envelope towards creating a modern workforce in India.
- Intel India has also launched an initiative to strengthen the use of technology in the country's education ecosystem. It is collaborating with leading device manufacturers, education digital content publishers and education solution providers to build end-to-end solutions that promote the use of technology.

What needs to be done?

- India is at the cusp of a technology boom, but needs training and teaching right from the beginning to prepare a future digital workforce

8. Earthworms may grow in Martian soil, says study

- Scientists show that worms crucial to healthy crops can reproduce in Martian soil
- Scientists have successfully grown earthworms in a Mars soil simulant, an advance that points to the possibility of life and future human colonies on the red planet.
- The experiments are crucial in the study that aims to determine whether people can keep themselves alive on the red planet by growing their own crops on Mars soils.
- Researchers observed the growth of rucola plants in Mars soil simulant provided by NASA, and added worms and pig slurry.

Facts

- Worms are very important for a healthy soil, not only on Earth but also in future indoor gardens on Mars or the Moon.
- They thrive on dead organic matter such as old plant remains, which they eat, chew and mix with soil. By digging burrows, the worms also aerate and improve the structure of the soil, making watering the plants more effective.
- However, further research would be required to understand the growth of such life forms in low gravity conditions.

9. India calls for stronger treaties to protect space assets

- Stressing international cooperation in space as in all domains of global commons, India called for strengthening global treaties to protect space-based assets and prevent militarization of outer space

Over 200 treaties

- India had more than 200 international cooperation agreements with more than 40 countries and international organizations
- India is party to all the legally binding instruments on outer space

10. ISRO opens doors to private sector

- In an attempt to increase the number of satellite launches and build the capacity of the private sector, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) issued a Request For Proposal (RFP) tender to the private industry for Assembly, Integration and Testing (AIT) of 30-35 satellites.

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- Under this, 4-5 companies would be selected after evaluation and awarded parallel contracts. They would be responsible for the AIT of satellites at ISRO facilities
- ISRO currently launches 3-4 launches per year but the demand is for 16-18 satellites.
- The private sector already supplies majority of the sub-systems in satellite manufacturing.

INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED

1. **Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (APCERT)**

- The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) under the aegis of Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology organizing the Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (APCERT) Conference in New Delhi
- This is the 15th Conference of APCERT and first ever conference in India and South Asia and is expected to be attended by 21 economies.
- The conference theme is "Building Trust in the Digital Economy".

Vision

- APCERT will work to help create a Safe, Clean and Reliable cyber space in the Asia Pacific Region through global collaboration.

Significance

- This conference would cover contemporary topics around strategies of CERTs, Technology and Instruments for building trust in digitally evolving economies and best practices for handling cyber security in mobile and social media.
- APCERT will maintain a trusted contact network of computer security experts in the Asia Pacific region to improve the region's awareness and competency in relation to computer security incidents
- Promoting collaborative research and development on subjects of interest to its members
- Jointly developing measures to deal with large-scale or regional network security incidents;

2. **Brahmos missile test-fired**

- In a milestone, a BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was fired succesfully for the first time from a Sukhoi-30MKI fighter aircraft of the Indian Air Force.
- Effectiveness: The successful maiden test-firing of Brahmos Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) from Su-30MKI will significantly bolster the IAF's air combat operations capability from stand-off ranges.
- Key Fact: Brahmos ALCM, which weighs 2.5 tonnes, is the heaviest weapon to be deployed on India's Su-30 fighter aircraft. It has a range of 290 km.

Completes tactical cruise missile triad

- Brahmos, the world class weapon with multi-platform, multi-mission role is now capable of being launched from land, sea and air, completing the tactical cruise missile triad for India.
- The land and sea variants of Brahmos are already operational with the Army and the Navy. Recently, the range variants were upgraded from 290 km to 450 km after India joined the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).
- The successful test of the air-launched BrahMos cruise missile greatly enhances India's strike range not just on the borders but across the Indian Ocean

Key Fact

- BrahMos is a joint venture between India and Russia and named after the Brahmaputra and Moscowa rivers.

3. **CATOBAR: Navy to use U.S. aircraft launch system in ship**

- The Navy is likely to go with an advanced catapult-based aircraft launch mechanism (CATOBAR) from the U.S. for its second Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC-II), which is on the drawing board.
- The IAC-II has been envisaged to be around 65,000 tonnes and capable of carrying over 50 aircraft.
- For some time, India has been exploring the possibility of installing the U.S. Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS).

Emails

- While the older generation of CATOBAR was powered by a steam catapult, EMALS uses an electric motor-driven catapult instead, which allows the launch of much heavier aircraft and also reduces the stress on the aircraft.
- EMALS will allow us to operate heavy surveillance aircraft in addition to heavy fighters.

The two countries (India and the US) had set up a Joint Working Group on Aircraft Carrier Technology Cooperation (JWGACTC) under the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative, which held several rounds of discussions.

4. **Defence of Andaman & Nicobar Islands Exercise (DANX-17)**

- The five-day exercise, conducted under the aegis of Andaman and Nicobar Command, India's only operational tri-services command included a plethora of elements such as fighters, special forces, naval ships and heavy-lift transport aircraft.
- The main objective of the exercise was to practice & validate procedures and drills of all the Command forces aimed at defending Andaman & Nicobar Islands

- The highlights of the exercise conducted under the aegis of Andaman & Nicobar Command, were fighter ops, night para jumps at sea, slithering of troops from helicopters and amphibious landings of troops by ships.
- The exercise that began on November 20, is critical against the increased Chinese footprint in Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

5. Draft Rules for Drones

- India on came out with a draft set of guidelines to bring the use of drones and other unmanned aerial vehicles under a legal framework.
- This is likely to encourage the commercial use of such products. In the absence of any guidelines, the amateur use of drones has so far been illegal.

Stats

- E-commerce major Amazon has used a drone to deliver a bag of popcorn to an address in rural England, in the first commercial outing for a technology that is the US group's boldest step towards automating deliveries.
- For the lightest category Nano, a payload of up to 250 grams and flight to a maximum height of 50 feet, a one-time registration for the operating agency is enough.
- However, for an equipment which is more than 2 kg the operator has to get security clearance each time the drone is operated.
- The operator should also have a special permit, which the government has assured will be sanctioned within two to seven days.

Details

- Various restrictions have been proposed to ensure that the drones are used only for valid purposes. For instance, areas under 50 kilometres from the international border would be designated 'no drone zones'.
- India is not the first country to do so. The US tightened its rules on drones after a man was caught trying to fly a drone over the walls of the White House
- Now, drones or unmanned aircraft are being used for several purposes such as mapping, survey and commercial photography, while e-commerce giant Amazon is looking to use them for deliveries to its consumers in the US.

Advantages

- Progressive policy which will increase the ease of doing business for drones

Issue area

- Regulation of drones is a very difficult prospect in a country like India because of security aspect
- However, drones are also viewed as a security risk. The International Air Transport Association has referred to drones as a threat in airspace and called for a greater stakeholder engagement to ensure safety.

6. Futuristic combat vehicle plan a game changer: Army

- The two ambitious projects- Futuristic Infantry Combat vehicle (FICV) and Future Ready Combat Vehicle (FRCV) programmes, to equip the Army with futuristic combat vehicles are a game changer for the Indian industry.
- The FICV is an ambitious effort to indigenously design and manufacture a futuristic infantry vehicle by the private industry by roping in foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers.
- The Army has a requirement for more than 2,600 vehicles.
- On the other hand, the FRCV is a tender for the procurement of futuristic tanks through the Strategic Partnership model.

7. Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC)

- The conclave was aimed at "Addressing Regional Maritime Challenges" wherein the deliberations were focused on emerging maritime threats and force structuring, maritime domain awareness, maritime security architecture, and maritime security challenges in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC) aims to bring together like minded nations to evolve and formulate collective responses to emerging challenges in the maritime domain.
- It would also provide an opportunity to communicate our viewpoints in a forthright manner and collectively shape a favorable maritime environment for all countries in the region

Concerns raised by Defence Minister during the conclave:

- Expressed concern at the increased militarization in the Indian Ocean and the extra-regional nations setting up a "near permanent presence" in the region, in an apparent reference to the expanding Chinese presence in the region.
- Extra-regional nations are creating naval outposts as well as dual-use infrastructure in the region.
- There is an "incremental yet steady" increase in numbers of warships operating in the region. This militarization "increases the complexities for the countries of this region."

Maritime challenges

- China has set up or acquired stakes in a series of infrastructure facilities in the region and has recently opened its first overseas military base at Djibouti in the Horn of Africa.
- The Chinese Navy has also maintained a steady presence of warships and submarines in the Indian Ocean under the garb of anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.

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- To counter this, the Indian Navy has now put in place a new concept of 'mission based deployment' to maintain round the clock surveillance on India's vital areas of interest across the length and breadth of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

India offers to share real-time maritime data

- India has made an offer to share intelligence of maritime movements in the Indian Ocean in real-time with 10 Indian Ocean littoral States.
- This move is intended to counter China's increased presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- The information to be shared includes movement of commercial traffic as well as intelligence.
- The sharing of intelligence will not be much for conventional military purposes but to deal with non-traditional threats arising at see

Co-operative system:

- India already has co-operative arrangements with several countries in the region and this initiative would see that expanding further.
- For instance, white shipping agreements to share commercial shipping data have been signed with 12 countries and more are in the works.

8. Integrated Quarter Master Package (IQMP) Software Application

- IQMP is web based software developed by Army Software Development Centre in association with M/s TCS Ltd.
- The application automates various logistics related functions of an Army Unit.
- The application will replace numerous legacy applications such as 'Vastra' and 'Quarter Master Package'.

What does the package have?

- The package comprises thirteen modules to automate all the logistics functions at unit level.
- The application can be dynamically configured to meet the specific requirements of various types of Army units and is capable of sharing information and data with other software applications in the domain of logistics management.

Advantages

- The software has been developed with the aim of bringing speed, accuracy and transparency in handing logistics aspects in the unit.
- It will help in effective logistics management and decision making, thereby assisting Army units to be battle ready all the time.
- It will also play an important role in achieving automation of Indian Army and prove to be a significant milestone towards 'Digital Army' in consonance with the 'Digital India initiative' of the government

9. 'Joint Training Doctrine' for armed forces

- In a first, the Indian armed forces released a joint training doctrine meant to facilitate joint training and planning.
- Titled 'Joint Training Doctrine Indian Armed Forces – 2017,' it was released by Admiral Sunil Lanba, Navy Chief and Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee, in the presence of other two Service Chiefs.

Aim

- The aim of the doctrine is to promote 'synergy' and 'integration' among the three Services and other stake-holders leading to an enhanced efficiency and optimum utilisation of resources.
- It will also go a long way in 'fostering initiative' and 'stimulating creativity' for promoting 'integration' between the three services in times to come

What is the doctrine about?

- The Doctrine brings out our approach to Joint training at macro-level, Fundamentals, Objectives, Joint Structures, Planning, Organisation amongst other aspects in existence and in use in the Armed Forces which have matured over 15 years of the existence of Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS).
- The concept includes 'Joint Training' as a leverage for promoting 'Diplomacy' and 'Civil – Military interface' issues have also been highlighted in the document.
- It will serve as a 'foundation' and 'knowledge base' from which specific directives and strategies will be derived, from time to time.
- Consequent to consolidation of Joint Training, this maiden Doctrine will be further developed in due course as Doctrines are always 'unfinished products' being 'Evolving in nature', for ready reference as 'Distilled wisdom' and a 'Referral document' for the policy makers, armed forces personnel, academia, etc

10. SAAW (Smart Anti Airfield Weapon)

Context

- India has successfully tested the use of Guided Bombs. Called Smart Anti Airfield Weapon (SAAW), the light weight bombs were flight tested from the Indian Air Force aircraft in the ranges of the ITR, Chandipur, Odisha

What is it?

- SAAW, an indigenously designed and developed 120 kg. class smart weapon, developed by DRDO, is capable of engaging ground targets with high precision up to a range of 100 kms.
- It is designed to destroy ground targets, such as runways, bunkers, aircraft hangers and other reinforced structures
- It can be currently launched from SEPECAT Jaguar and Su-30MKI aircraft. There are plans to integrate the weapon with Dassault Rafale when it is inducted in the Indian Air Force

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- The guided bombs have been developed by the Research Centre Imarat, Hyderabad along with the DARE, Bengaluru; TBRL, Chandigarh and ARDE, Pune all laboratories under the DRDO (Defence Research Development Organisation) and the Indian Air Force.
- There are two variants of the guided bombs- Garuthmaa (winged version with range upto 100 kms) and the Garudaa (non winged with range of 30 kms to scalable upto 100 kms). The latter also has on board navigation and guidance systems.

11. Tejas

- It is an indigenously developed Indian single-seat, single-jet engine, multi-role light fighter designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- India's Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) together with its variants is the smallest and lightest Multi- Role Supersonic Fighter Aircraft of its class which began in the 1980s to replace India's ageing MiG-21 fighters.
- LCA was officially named "Tejas" in 2003, meaning "Radiant" in Sanskrit by the then Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- The improved version of LCA referred to as Mk-1A with four major improvements over the Mk-1 variant has been offered by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) as an interim measure in view of the delay in LCA-MK2.
- The LCA is better than many other foreign fighters. It reacts very smoothly, fly-by-wire, its turn radius is very good, maneuverability is very good
- Two indigenous Tejas Light Combat Aircrafts were recently inducted into the IAF squadron, known as the 'Flying Daggers 45'. The aircraft is equipped to handle air-to-air missiles, air-to-surface missiles, anti-ship missiles, bombs and rockets. It is considered to be the lightest multi-role supersonic aircraft of its class.
- The Tejas has a 'glass cockpit' which displays 'real-time' information to the pilot. The multi-role radar on Tejas – which was developed as Indian–Israeli venture – is meant to facilitate all weather use of a variety of air-to-air and air-to-surface weaponry. It is the primary targeting sensor on the LCA.
- limitation in the sense that
  - it is a light combatant
  - It cannot go into deep penetration…
  - It is mostly good for dogfights in our own sky or to degrade the opponent Army's command posts.
  - IAF remarks: The aircraft is not enough to maintain its combat readiness and it needed to quickly procure a fleet of foreign single engine fighters to deal with any possible security challenges, in the backdrop of the dwindling size of its fighter fleet.

12. Tribal front IPFT to go it alone in Tripura polls

Context:

- The Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) has long been campaigning for a separate Twipraland for tribals by carving out the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council

Tipraland

- It is the name of a proposed state in India, proposed by the Tipra people of Tripura.
- The Twipra Kingdom is a former country which was ruled by 184 Tripuri/Tipra kings. The last king was Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur Debbarma. After his death in 1946, Twipra kingdom joined India as a Union Territory on 15 October 1949 under the name Tripura, and later achieved statehood.
- From that time onwards many Bengali Hindus and Muslims immigrated to Tripura, and slowly took political power from the Tipras. As the political and economic power shifted to the immigrants, the very existence of the Tipra people and their culture was jeopardized.
- The indigenous Tipra people demanded an autonomous district, which they finally achieved on 23 March 1979. However, the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) was unable to protect the rights of the indigenous Tipra and other tribal communities.
- The Tipra people feel it has become clear that without full governmental power, the indigenous Tipra people cannot survive. Thus the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura, a regional political party under the leadership of N.C. Debbarma, has advocated for converting the TTAADC area into a full-fledged state.

13. Centre to distribute solar lamps to youth in Maoist-hit districts

- The home ministry has asked Left Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected states to distribute 15 lakh solar lamps to students in the 35 worst affected districts until all villages are electrified.
- Home Minister Rajnath Singh is learnt to have instructed states to expedite the process of distributing the solar lamps so that students don't suffer for want of electricity.
- The official said though the recruitment by Maoists has seen a declining trend, the government wanted to reach out to the youth in villages.
- Home ministry has also decided to link telecom towers with optical fibres as the mobile towers were unable to bear the load of many calls at one time.

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14. Pakistani terrorists, smugglers may use drones to ship arms, drugs to India

- Terrorists and smugglers from Pakistan may use drones and paragliders to escape detection while dropping arms and contraband items in India from across the border, a multi-agency group has said in a confidential report
- Senior officials representing their respective agencies have elaborated in the report on the threat of use of drones and paragliders from across the border for dropping arms and drugs that can be retrieved later using the GPS coordinates
- The report says some women in border areas are being "trained to lure" officials to make them accomplices in smuggling.
- BSF has observed that drug peddlers and terrorists are found to be actively using social media platforms to communicate among themselves
- The report says Pak-based drug smugglers in the "guise of farmers" are trying to establish contact with innocent Indian farmers during day time while working in the fields.
- Security forces have zeroed in on the Gujjar community living in 'deras' near the border that have long been suspected to be used for "logistic purposes" by terrorists and smugglers

15. Indian Army has launched an independent and fully-integrated Joint Training Node (JTN)

- Planning to host foreign armies in joint exercises, the Indian Army has launched an independent and fully-integrated Joint Training Node (JTN) at Umroi cantonment in Shillong.
- The JTN is the first of its kind in eastern command and is different from other joint training centres in Belgaum, Varangte and Bakloh.
- The Training Node is aimed at hosting foreign armies during joint exercises.

Details

- The Joint Training Node is the first of ¡ts kind in eastern command and is different from other joint training centres located in Belgaum. Varangte and Bakloh.
- The main objective behind its creation is to provide the best possible training environment for visiting armies.
- The centre has been developed at par with training centres of leading armies across the world.
- The training node is ready to host the Bangladesh Army and it would be hosting the Myanmar and Chinese armies next year.
- The Umroi cantonment was chosen for its establishment keeping mind its proximity to the Guwahati and Shillong airports

16. Illegal phone exchanges thriving on SIM boxes Imported hardware serving as backbone for racket

- As technology develops, so does the scope to misuse it.
- The police observed it with Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) facility, which is increasingly used for criminal activities.
- Flashers, devices that can change IMEI (International Mobile Equipment Identity) numbers of handsets, are used to make stolen cell phones untraceable, and SIM boxes enable setting up of illegal telephone exchanges that rake in crores of rupees and cause massive losses to the government.

No international tariff

- "Each SIM box can hold up to 32 SIM cards which route international calls. A person in Dubai can call a local number from Dubai, which will be routed to a number in India and then to the intended call recipient. This way, the caller avoids the international tariff, which causes loss of revenue to the government. Even if operators of SIM box rackets charge 60% of the tariff, they make crores in a month," said a Crime Branch officer who is part of the probe.

Hawala money

- Investigations conducted so far into the two illegal exchanges that were running in Mumbai have indicated that the accused got money from their Dubai counterparts via hawala channels.
- The Dubai-based operators, who were allegedly the masterminds, would take a percentage of the profits, keep some aside for maintenance of equipment and send the rest to their Indian counterparts.
- The entire racket was operating on word of mouth. The Dubai-based operators had spread the word that they had the resources in case anyone wanted to make calls abroad at concessional rates.
- The preliminary estimate of the losses caused to the national exchequer is around Rs 100 crore.

17. Centre to aid start-ups in cybersecurity push

- To encourage development of new technologies in the field of cybersecurity, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology will offer challenge grants of up to Rs 5 crore to start-ups to spur research and development.
- The government is also in process of setting up a centre of excellence for blockchain technology.

18. New J&K surrender policy to target local militants

Fresh surrender policy:

- Earlier, the surrender policy was limited to those who crossed the Line of Control into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in the early 1990s and were stuck there. The new surrender policy is considering provision of "passports and jobs to any local youth who gives up the gun" and "support for his full assimilation into society.

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HEALTH ISSUES

1. Global Clubfoot Conference

Context

- First Global Clubfoot Conference to be held in India, and being organised by CURE International India Trust in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, and other partner institutions.

What is Clubfoot?

- It is a congenital deformity that severely twists the foot both downward and inward, making walking difficult or impossible. It can cause permanent disability if not treated early. This affects the child's mobility and confidence. Inevitably, education and schooling suffer – and the child cannot fulfil his or her potential.

Statistics

- 2 out of every 1000 children are born with clubfoot in every country of the world regardless of race or geographic region.
- Over 2,20,000 children, in the developing world are born each year with clubfoot.
- In India more than 50,000 children are born with Clubfoot every year if not treated all these children will become differently abled.
- There are approximately 8,000,000 adults worldwide who are physically disabled with clubfoot who could have been cured if treated at an early stage.

What causes clubfoot?

- In some cases, clubfoot is just the result of the position of the baby while it is developing in the mother's womb (postural clubfoot).
- But more often clubfoot is caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors that is not well understood

Is it curable?

- Clubfoot is curable.

2. India Hypertension Management Initiative (IHMI)

Aim

- The IHMI aims to reduce disability and death related to cardiovascular disease (CVD), the leading cause of death in India, by improving the control of high blood pressure (hypertension), reducing salt consumption and eliminating artificial trans-fats, leading risk factors for CVD.
- The primary goal of this project is to reduce morbidity and mortality due to CVDs, the leading cause of death in India, by improving the control of high blood pressure, which is a leading risk factor for CVDs among adults in India.

Who will organize it?

- The India Hypertension Management Initiative (IHMI) is a collaborative project of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), State Governments, World Health Organization (WHO), and Resolve to Save Lives initiative of Vital Strategies.

Details

- The IHMI is focused on five essential components of scalable treatment of hypertension.
- It will support the adoption of standardized simplified treatment plans for managing high blood pressure, ensure the regular and uninterrupted supply of quality-assured medications, task sharing so health workers who are accessible to patients can distribute medications already prescribed by the medical officer, and patient-centered services that reduce the barriers to treatment adherence.
- It will focus on strengthening hypertension management and monitoring at the primary health care level, within the existing healthcare system, and is aligned with WHO's Global HEARTS Initiative and National Guidelines.

Statistics

- Around 200 million adults in India have high blood pressure, yet control rates for the condition remain low.
- Studies suggest that in rural areas in India, only one quarter of people with hypertension are aware of their condition, and only around 10 percent have their blood pressure controlled.
- In urban areas, around 40 percent of people with hypertension are aware of their condition, and only around 20 percent have their blood pressure controlled.

3. International Committee of Military Medicine (ICMM)

Context

- The 42nd World Congress of the International Committee of Military Medicine (ICMM) organised by the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) under the aegis of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) began.
- The five-day event is being organized for the first time in India, and is the largest medical conference ever organised by the AFMS.
- The theme of this 42nd World Congress is "Military Medicine in Transition: Looking Ahead."

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- The World Congress is going to provide an excellent opportunity for all participating nations to exchange ideas and experiences, thereby enhancing the collective intellectual assets of Military medicine, which would ultimately facilitate the Member States to face the challenges of a rapidly changing global security environment.

What is ICMM?

- ICMM is an international and intergovernmental organization consisting of more than one hundred states.
- The ICMM was established in 1921, after World War I had revealed the lack of care provided to victims and the need to strengthen cooperation between the health services of the armed forces worldwide.
- Its secretariat is at Brussels in Belgium and currently has 112 nations as members

Objective

- The main objective of the ICMM is to ensure that medical services personnel have the means to work together, using similar practices, in operations involving international cooperation.

4. LaQshya

- Labour Room Quality Improvement Initiative, a Safe Delivery Mobile Application for health workers who manage normal and complicated deliveries in the peripheral areas.
- LaQshya is expected to improve the quality of care that is being provided to the pregnant mother in the Labour Room and Maternity Operation Theatres, thereby preventing the undesirable adverse outcomes associated with childbirth.
- This initiative will be implemented in Government Medical Colleges (MCs) besides District Hospitals (DHs), and high delivery load Sub- District Hospitals (SDHs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs).
- The initiative plans to conduct quality certification of labour rooms and also incentivize facilities achieving the targets outlined.
- The goal of this initiative is to reduce preventable maternal and newborn mortality, morbidity and stillbirths associated with the care around delivery in the Labour room and Maternity OT and ensure respectful maternity care.

5. Society for Nuclear Medicine International Conference (SNMICON)

Society of Nuclear Medicine, India

- The Society of Nuclear Medicine, India (SNM-India) was founded in 1967 with the aim to promote, encourage and help the development and advancement of Nuclear Medicine as a specialty in India.
- All the way through over about 50 years, the society through Annual Conferences, periodic regional meetings through its academic wings (Indian College of Nuclear Medicine and regional chapters) have been providing a great platform to our members for exchange of ideas and sharing experiences amongst scientists, doctors, technologists with active participation of people from industry.

Details

- SNMICON 2017 – is being organized with a vision to integrate basic research and clinical perspectives on various facets of nuclear medicine radiochemistry, preclinical, translational and clinical theranostics.
- The aim of the conference is to pragmatic approach for advancement in precision nuclear medicine for the visualization and treatment of clinical pathologies, the conference will focus on specific and advanced molecular imaging probes towards biochemical imaging of diseases.
- The SNMICON meeting will provide a unique platform for high-level scientific discussions in the exciting field of MOLECULAR IMAGING and TARGETED RADIONUCLIDE THERAPY and bridge the gap between researchers and clinicians.
- This Conference will mark the beginning of production of newer radioisotopes for theranostics in India.

INMAS

- The Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) is a mandated multidisciplinary laboratory of DRDO engaged in R&D activities in the field of Radiation, Imaging Sciences and CBRN technologies.
- INMAS is one of the very few Institutions that can boast of having an enviable contingent of highty skilled Scientists, clinical researchers and biomedical professionals working towards common goals and objectives.

6. Tuberculosis

World Health Organisation report regarding TB cases in India:

- India's domestic budgets for fighting tuberculosis showed a dramatic jump from about Rs 700 crore in 2015 to Rs 2,500 crore last year.
- In 2016, India recorded a 12% dip in the number of TB deaths from the previous year though the incidence dipped marginally by 1%.
- The number of notified cases of drug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) jumped from 79,000 to 84,000 in 2016
- According to a report by the WHO, despite the reduction, India topped the list of seven countries accounting for 64% of the 10.4 million new tuberculosis cases worldwide in 2016
- India along with China and Russia accounted for almost of half of the 490,000, multi drug-resistant TB (MDR- TB) cases registered in 2016

'90-90-90 target' by 2035:

- The government has committed to achieve a '90-90-90 target' by 2035 (90% reductions in incidence, mortality and catastrophic health expenditures due to TB).
- This is premised on improved diagnostics, shorter treatment courses, a better vaccine and comprehensive preventive strategies.

Activist opinions:

- TB is still stigmatized and under-reported — especially from the private sector — and top-line drugs are still inadequate to treat people who suffer from the drug-resistant forms of the disease.

Tuberculosis cases: Govt announces steps to check under reporting

Directions given by the Union health minister:

- The union health ministry has asked private hospitals to notify it all cases of the disease reported in their facilities
- The government is aiming to eliminate tuberculosis (TB) by 2025
- The aim is to check under-reporting of tuberculosis, which has been flagged as a major area of concern by UN health agency World Health Organization (WHO)

Other steps by the government

- The ministry will also set up two 24X7 call centers — in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh — so that patients can avail all information related to the disease by calling up these toll free numbers
- The ministry has also roped in the Indian Medical Association for further sensitization of the health institutions

Moscow declaration

- Health ministers, NGOs, and private sector representatives from 120 countries adopted the Moscow Declaration, committing themselves to eliminating additional deaths from HIV co-infection by 2020 and achieving synergy in coordinated action against TB and non-communicable diseases.
- A co-infection is when a person suffers from two infections at the same time.
- India is among the signatories to the declaration

What is it?

- The Moscow declaration emphasised the need for fixing multisectoral responsibility towards ending TB by 2035, the global target.
- A national inter-ministerial commission will be set up by 2018 to achieve "fast-tracking universal access to health care through all state and non-state care providers by adopting WHO-recommended TB diagnostics, drugs, technologies and standards of care, and ensuring attention to high-risk groups and vulnerable populations such as migrants, refugees and prisoners."

7. World Diabetes Day (WDD)

- It was created in 1991 by IDF and the World Health Organization in response to growing concerns about the escalating health threat posed by diabetes. World Diabetes Day became an official United Nations Day in 2006 with the passage of United Nation Resolution
- WDD is the world's largest diabetes awareness campaign reaching a global audience of over 1 billion people in more than 160 countries

The World Diabetes Day campaign aims to:

- Be the platform to promote IDF advocacy efforts throughout the year.
- Be the global driver to promote the importance of taking coordinated and concerted actions to confront diabetes as a critical global health issue.

Some Facts

- 199 million women with diabetes
- 313 million by 2040
- diabetes is a leading cause of death among women
- 2 out of 5 women with diabetes are in reproductive age
- 1 in 7 births are affected by gestational diabetes

What is Diabetes?

- Diabetes is a disease in which your blood glucose, or blood sugar, levels are too high. Glucose comes from the foods you eat. Insulin is a hormone that helps the glucose get into your cells to give them energy.

Types

- **Type 1 Diabetes and Insulin Dependence**
  - Also known as diabetes mellitus, type 1 diabetes is a chronic health condition traditionally characterized by elevated levels of glucose in your blood, often simply called "high blood sugar."
- **Type 2 Diabetes: Virtually 100 Percent Curable**
  - The far more common form of diabetes is type 2, which affects 90 to 95 percent of diabetics. In this type, your body produces insulin but is unable to recognize and use it properly. It is considered an advanced stage of insulin resistance. Insulin resistance allows glucose in your body to increase and cause a host of complications

8. The superbugs of Hyderabad

- Effluent from pharmaceutical companies contain high concentrations of antibiotics that are turning the Hyderabad city's lakes and sewers into breeding grounds of drug-resistant superbugs
- Since the pharmaceutical industry took root in the city in the 1970s, environmental pollution has threatened agriculture, aquaculture and the health of city residents
- New research in the last few years shows this pollution to be a threat of a larger, more terrifying scale

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Dangerous species:

- The Kazipally well, along with ditches, lakes, and rivers around the pharmaceutical cluster, receives large doses of antibiotics, along with the traditionally monitored pollutants
- When these antibiotics come in contact with pathogenic bacteria (which cause disease in humans), the latter learn to resist the former, making human infections by these pathogens extremely hard to treat
- Antibiotic resistance is arguably the biggest threat to global health in the 21st century
- In 2014, around 700,000 people across the world died due to infections that evaded antibiotics, a number that is estimated to touch 10 million by 2050

New Studies in India:

- It isn't clear how many Indians die from antibiotic-resistant infections each year
- One study from Delhi's Ganga Ram hospital found that between 2002 and 2009, among patients infected by Klebsiella pneumoniae (a pneumonia-causing bacterium), the percentage of these pathogens that were resistant to carbapenems grew from 2% to 52%
- Carbapenems are a class of last-resort antibiotics which doctors use only when others have failed

Antibiotic resistance:

- A big driver of resistance is the overuse of these drugs
- When people take antibiotics they don't need, for a viral flu, for instance, the bacteria in their body learn to tolerate these drugs by acquiring resistance genes
- Resistance genes don't come out of nowhere – some of them have existed for decades in soil and water, helping environmental bacteria fight natural antibiotics
- Studies in Hyderabad's pharmaceutical cluster now show that the large doses of man-made antibiotics in pollution hotspots like Kazipally force these environmental bacteria to evolve by boosting the numbers of resistance genes
- When human pathogens like Staphylococcus aureus (which causes skin and respiratory infections), mix with these environmental bacteria, they borrow these genes freely, making them potential killers

Government regulations:

- As of today, India does not limit antibiotics in pharma waste water
- India's first concrete move to tackle the problem was the 2017 National Action Plan for Antimicrobial Resistance, which talks about imposing limits on antibiotics in industrial waste. But these regulations are at least three years away

Antibiotic resistance leads to:

- The cost of antibiotic resistance will be enormous for both India and the world
- One estimate puts the expense of treating a resistant bloodstream infection at 42,000 more than a susceptible infection
- This could devastate the healthcare system, which today takes antibiotics for granted

Way forward:

- Complying with pollution norms
- The cost of better pollution-control isn't that high
- Complying with pollution norms doesn't need more than 3-4% of the production cost

9. India unlikely to cut malaria burden by half in 2020: WHO

Key Findings:

- India accounted for 6% of global malaria cases and 7% of deaths caused by it in 2016, according to a report released by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- This is in the same ballpark as last year, though the WHO figures also suggest that India is unlikely to reduce its case burden beyond 40% by 2020.
- In contrast, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Kyrgyzstan achieved malaria-free status in 2015 and 2016 respectively.
- There were an estimated 4,45,000 deaths from malaria globally in 2016, compared with 4,46,000 estimated deaths in 2015. About 80% of the deaths were accounted for by 15 countries, namely India and 14 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Challenges

- A key impediment to eliminating malaria is a weak surveillance system. India and Nigeria, two major contributors to the global burden of malaria, were able to detect only 8% and 16% of cases respectively via the system.
- Moreover, 51% of Plasmodium vivax cases — the milder cousin of the P. falciparum— were traced in India. This could at least be partially explained by resistance to chloroquine, the first line treatment to P. vivax infections that has been detected in pockets of the country earlier this decade.
- For a long time, P. falciparum dominated India's case burden and, though its share has decreased, there is a slight increase in malaria cases by other parasites.

Low funding

- Bhutan, Nepal, Thailand, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Indonesia, says the WHO, are among the countries poised to reduce malaria incidence by over 40% by 2020.
- India — due to low funding per person at risk and resistance to certain frontline insecticides — is only expected to achieve a 20%-40% reduction.
- In 2016, an estimated Rs. 13,000 crore was invested in malaria control and elimination efforts globally by governments of malaria endemic countries and their international partners.

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- The majority (74%) of investments in 2016 was spent in the WHO's Africa region, followed by the WHO regions of Southeast Asia (7%), the Eastern Mediterranean and the Americas (each 6%), and the Western Pacific (4%).
- "India has reduced its new malaria cases by one third, and even crossed the malaria mortality targets of 2020," said Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare J.P. Nadda at a high-level round table on 'Accelerating the Elimination of Malaria in the Southeast Asia Region'.
- He further added that with nearly three-fourths of the share of the regional burden, India's successes had significantly contributed to the reduction of the burden of malaria for the entire Southeast Asia region.
- The Union Minister noted that a majority of malaria cases in the country occurred in its bordering districts, forests and tribal areas

Anti-malaria drug could fight Zika virus

- A medication used to prevent and treat malaria has the potential to fight the deadly Zika virus.
- The new study, published in the journal Scientific Reports, showed that the anti-malaria drug, called chloroquine, has the potential to treat Zika infections.

10. WHO releases guidelines on child sex abuse

- In a first, the World Health Organization has formulated clinical guidelines on responding to children and adolescents who have been sexually abused.
- The guidelines put forward recommendations for the frontline health care providers — general practitioners, gynaecologists, paediatricians, nurses and others — who may directly receive a victim of sexual abuse or may identify sexual abuse during the course of diagnosis and treatment.

Opinion by Indian doctors about the new guidelines:

- While Indian doctors have welcomed the new guidelines, they feel that there is more than just guidelines required in the country.
- Ground training of all first line respondents is missing.
- The victims and their families face the worse in terms of investigation and its outcome. It is not adequate to pass on the burden on the healthcare sector. The government needs to adopt a policy that will streamline all the other aspects as well.

Disclosure by child

- The new WHO guidelines focuses on the recommendations and good practice suggestions in terms of disclosure made by the child, obtaining medical history, conducting physical examinations and forensic investigations, documenting findings, offering preventive treatment for HIV post exposure, pregnancy prevention, and other sexually transmitted diseases, psychological and mental health interventions among others.
- The guidelines highlight that child sexual abuse has a short-term as well as long-term mental health impact like lifetime diagnosis of post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, externalising symptoms, eating disorders, problems with relationships, sleep disorders and suicidal and self-harm ideation and behaviours.
- Health consequences of the abuse include the risk of pregnancy, gynaecological disorders such as chronic non-cyclical pelvic pain, menstrual irregularities, painful periods, genital infections and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

Re-traumatisation

- One of the most commonly seen mistakes in handling child sexual abuse cases is re-traumatising the child as well as his parents with questions. Such mistakes can be avoided if those dealing with such cases are well trained.

11. AIIMS chief compares Delhi air pollution to Great Smog of London

- As air pollution hit alarming levels in Delhi, major city hospitals on November 8 experienced a surge in the number of patients complaining of respiratory problems with the AIIMS chief comparing the situation to the killer Great Smog of London in 1952.

Background

- The Great Smog of London, or Great Smog of 1952 sometimes called the Big Smoke, was a severe air-pollution event that affected the British capital of London in December 1952.
- A period of cold weather, combined with an anticyclone and windless conditions, collected airborne pollutants – mostly arising from the use of coal – to form a thick layer of smog over the city.
- It lasted from 5 December to 9 December 1952 and then dispersed quickly when the weather changed.

What did the doctors say?

- The current smog situation in the national capital is same to the post-Diwali situation in 2016 and expressed fear that around 25,000 to 30,000 people may lose their lives in Delhi-NCR due to diseases exacerbated by pollution.

12. One in 10 medicines fake; disease becoming untreatable: WHO

- An estimated one in 10 medical products circulating in low- and middle-income countries like India is either "substandard or falsified", says a new research report from the World Health Organization (WHO).
- According to WHO, these medicines not only fail to treat or prevent diseases but can also cause serious illness or even death.
- Substandard and falsified medicines particularly affect the most vulnerable communities.

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- The report highlighted that since 2013, the WHO has received 1,500 reports of cases of substandard or falsified products. Of these, anti malarial and antibiotics are the most commonly reported.
- Most of such reports (42 per cent) come from the WHO African Region, 21 per cent from the WHO Region of the Americas, and 21 per cent from the WHO European Region.
- The report further says that substandard or falsified medicines promote antimicrobial resistance in people

13. **Indians add more years to their lives**

- 'India State-Level Disease Burden,' has revealed severe inequalities in the disease burden in different States.

Life Expectancy

- Life expectancy at birth in the country improved significantly during 1990 to 2016 — from 59.7 years and 58.3 years for females and males respectively in 1990 to 70.3 years for females and 66.9 years for males in 2016.
- But in a measure of the continuing inequalities, the life expectancy for females in Uttar Pradesh was 66.8 years — below the national average and 12 years less than in Kerala, where it was 78.7 years.
- Again, men in Kerala enjoyed a life expectancy of 73.8 years, but the corresponding figure for men in Assam was 63.6 years.

Under five morality

- The study found that while under-5 mortality was improving in every State, there was a four-fold difference in the rate of improvement among States, which again indicated health inequalities.

Who published the report?

- The report was prepared under the India State-level Disease Burden Initiative, a joint project between the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- The report's findings were published in the journal Lancet.

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) (this can come in box)

- ICMR the apex body for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research
- It is one of the oldest and largest medical research bodies in the world.
- The ICMR is funded by the Government of India through the Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- ICMR's 26 National Institutes address themselves to research on specific health topics like tuberculosis, leprosy, cholera and diarrhoeal diseases, viral diseases
- The Council's research priorities coincide with National health priorities
- The Governing Body of the Council is presided over by the Union Health Minister

Burden of disease shifts to non-communicable ailments

- The 'India State Level Disease Burden' report, prepared as part of the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2016, has found that every State in India has a higher burden from non-communicable diseases and injuries than from infectious diseases.
- The study used multiple data sources to map State-level disease burden from 333 disease conditions and injuries, and 83 risk factors for each State from 1990 to 2016.

Details

- The contribution of non-communicable diseases to health loss — fuelled by unhealthy diets, high blood pressure, and blood sugar — has doubled in India over the past two decades
- Air pollution and tobacco smoking continue to be major contributors to health loss

14. Mass bathing in Ganga aggravates anti-microbial resistance woes

Highlights of the government-commissioned report- "Scoping Report on Antimicrobial Resistance in India":

- Research project: researchers from the Newcastle University in the United Kingdom and the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi sampled water and sediments at seven sites along the Ganga in different seasons.
- Mass-bathing in the Ganga during pilgrimages may be contributing to Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR)
- Such resistance —previously acknowledged to be widespread in India — is said to be the reason for certain key antibiotics becoming ineffective against diseases, including tuberculosis.
- **Findings:**
  * The levels of resistance genes that lead to "superbugs" were found to be about 60 times greater during the pilgrimage months of May and June than at other times of the year.
  * The researchers had then said preventing the spread of resistance-genes that promote life-threatening bacteria could be achieved by improving waste management at key pilgrimage sites.
  * India has some of the highest antibiotic resistance rates among bacteria that commonly cause infections in the community and healthcare facilities.
  * Resistance to the broad-spectrum antibiotics fluoroquinolones and third generation cephalosporin was more than 70% in Acinetobacter baumannii, Escherichia coli, and Klebsiella pneumoniae, and more than 50% in Pseudomonas aeruginosa.

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* Other than 'cultural factors' such as bathing in the Ganga, the drivers of AMR included excessive use of antibiotics in the livestock industry and unchecked discharge of effluents by the pharmaceutical industry.

- Key Fact: In 2014, India was the highest consumer of antibiotics, followed by China and the United States. However, the per-capita consumption of antibiotics in India was much lower than in several other high-income countries.

Basic Information:

- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the ability of a microorganism (like bacteria, viruses, and some parasites) to stop an antimicrobial (such as antibiotics, antivirals and antimalarials) from working against it. As a result, standard treatments become ineffective, infections persist and may spread to others.

ART AND CULTURE

1. **Aadi Mahotsav**

- Ministry of Tribal Affairs along with Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation Ltd (TRIFED), is organizing "AADI MAHOTSAV" a celebration of the spirit of Tribal Culture, Cuisine and Commerce.
- It is going to be held at Dilli Haat New Delhi
- The Theme of the festival: A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Cuisine and Commerce

What does the festival have?

- The festival will feature exhibition-cum-sale of tribal handicrafts, art, paintings, fabric, jewellery and much more through 160 stalls
- A special feature of the festival is Tribal India cuisine, recreated and presented in delectable forms to suit urban tastes by special tribal chefs.

2. **Araku Balloon Festival**

- "Araku Balloon Festival", an international festival organised by Andhra Pradesh Tourism
- The event is aimed at showcasing the Araku Valley – known for its panoramic views of the Eastern Ghats, the coffee plantations, and the waterfalls – as a tourist destination. It has drawn scores of travellers, photography enthusiasts, and media from across the country.
- The festival lit up the sky throughout the day and night on all the three days and enthusiasts would get to witness balloons of different shapes and sizes adorn the sky in the non-ticketed festival.
- Sixteen teams from 13 countries, including the US, Malaysia, Taiwan and Switzerland, are participating in the festival.
- Apart from the colorful and dazzling hot air balloons, para-motoring displays, a hare and hound race and others events will also be a part of the festival itinerary to keep festival-goers hooked on all there days.

3. **Chennai is now part of UNESCO's 'creative cities network'**

- It's a feature Chennai has always flaunted with pride. And now, it has got international recognition. The city has been included in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network for its rich musical tradition.
- A total of 64 cities from 44 countries have joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, the organisation's website said.
- Gastronomy, music, crafts and folk art, media arts, design, film and literature are the seven fields of creativity highlighted by the network, which now has a total of 180 cities in 72 countries.
- Jaipur and Varanasi are the other Indian cities that feature on the list.

Background

- The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.
- The 180 cities which currently make up this network work together towards a common objective: placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level.

4. **Cherry Blossom Festival**

- Cherry Blossom Festival is being held in Shillong which will celebrate the flowering in this International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, with community events such as guided night walks, live music gigs, a beauty pageant, and stalls showcasing the cuisine, wine, arts and craft of the region.
- Cherry Blossom Festivals celebrated in countries like Japan, USA, Switzerland, and Korea have established an "intercontinental friendship", and voiced hope that in a few years, Meghalaya can get international recognition with the active participation of government departments and stakeholders.
- The first cherry blossom festival in Shillong was held in 2016 but this year, the Meghalaya government decided to make it an international event this year.
- The festival is being organised by the Meghalaya government in collaboration with the Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development (IBSD), a national institute under the Department of Biotechnology, and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

What can Travelers experience?

- Travelers can join night walks under illuminated cherry blossoms, led by volunteers at Ward's Lake between 5-8 p.m.
- Alongside, there will be a rock concert, traditional folk music, unplugged western music and dance performances from all over North East India, choir performances, bicycle rallies, storytelling sessions of local and world folktales and a Japan Higher Education Fair.

5. **International Tourism Mart**

- The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in association with the North Eastern States is organising the "International Tourism Mart" (ITM) in Guwahati, Assam from 5-7 December, 2017.

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- The 6th International Tourism Mart, will put the spotlight on India's "Act East Policy", blossoming ties with ASEAN and the larger East Asia region, home to the world's rapidly growing economies and India's emerging tourism markets
- This is the 6th International Tourism Mart and an annual event organised in the North Eastern region with the objective of highlighting the tourism potential of the region in the domestic and international markets. It brings together the tourism business fraternity and entrepreneurs from the eight North Eastern States.
- The International Tourism Marts are organised in the North Eastern States on rotation basis.

6. Kangri or Kanger

- A kanger is an earthen pot woven around with wicker filled with hot embers used by Kashmiris and Himachalis beneath their traditional clothing to keep the chill at bay, which is also regarded as a work of art. In Kashmir, it is normally kept inside the Phiran, the Kashmiri cloak, or inside a blanket. If a person is wearing a jacket, it may be used as a hand warmer.
- It is generally believed that Kashmiris learnt the use of the kangri from the Italians who were in the retinue of the Mughal emperors, and usually visited the Valley during summer. In Italy (where a similar device was known as a scaldino) and Spain, braziers were made in a great variety of shapes and were profusely ornamented.
- Historical data, however, contradicts the claim that kangri came to Kashmir from Italy, but it is known that it was used in the time of the Mughal Empire. Those visiting Kashmir for the first time during the winter season are surprised to find people carrying firepots in their hands or in their laps but every Kashmiri know how to handle the apparatus with care.
- It is a part of Kashmiri tradition and even in modern times it sees a huge demand, and is even used in public or private offices during winters.

7. Manipur Sangai Festival

- Named after Manipur's state animal, the brow-antlered Sangai deer, the Sangai Festival 2017 got underway on November 21
- Dubbed as the grandest festival of Manipur, the Sangai Festival showcases the tourism potential of the state in the field of arts & culture, handloom, handicrafts, indigenous sports, cuisine, music and adventure sports etc.

How is it different from previous editions?

- Unlike the previous editions of the festival, the 2017 edition of the Manipur Sangai Festival will be organized at different locations in Imphal and Bishnupur District.
- For the first time, Keibul Lamjao, a unique 'floating' reserve situated in Manipur in India's Northeast, which is home to the brow-antlered deer, will also play host to the festival.
- Another first-time feature that this year's Sangai fest will introduce will be separate toilets for transgenders.
- Tourism gets a big boost in this edition of the festival with the launch of the Manipur Sangai Festival mobile application. The Android mobile app which is available in Google Play Store for download is aimed to ease visits to the festival providing easy access to information about the festival.
  * The application will also feature exclusive news about the festival, updated on a daily basis.
  * It will act as a personalised guide for visitors at the multiple venues where the festival will be conducted this year.
  * It will also help the locals and other inbound tourists who are new to the city in deciding places to visit while selecting the events they wish to attend.

8. Srirangam temple wins UNESCO award

- The massive renovation and restoration effort at the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple in Srirangam has won the UNESCO Asia Pacific Award of Merit 2017 for cultural heritage conservation.
- The massive project was executed in phases, at a cost of about Rs 25 crore, with contributions from the government as well as donors. The kumbabishekam was performed in two stages — in September and November 2015.

Details

- The Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple or Thiruvarangam is a Hindu temple dedicated to Ranganatha, a reclining form of the Hindu deity Vishnu, located in Srirangam, Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu
- Constructed in the Tamil style of architecture, this temple is glorified in the Thiviya Pirabandham, the early medieval Tamil literature canon of the Alvar saints of Bhakti movement
- It is one of the most illustrious Vaishnava temples in South India rich in legend and history. The temple has played an important role in Vaishnavism history starting with the 11th-century career of Ramanuja and his predecessors Nathamuni and Yamunacharya in Srirangam
- The temple, considered the foremost of the 108 divyadesams, is situated on an islet between the Cauvery and the Coleroon rivers. It has seven prakaras and 21 towers, including the majestic 236-feet-high rajagopuram.

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9. Supreme Court refuses to stay release of film 'Padmavati'

- The Supreme Court refused to entertain a plea seeking a stay on the release of Bollywood movie 'Padmavati', saying the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) considers all aspects before granting certificate to any film.

Central Board of Film Certification (Censor Board)

- It is a statutory censorship and classification body under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- It is tasked with "regulating the public exhibition of films under the provisions of the Cinematograph Act 1952".
- The government at the centre appoints the non-official members and a Chairman who constitute the Board which is headquartered at Mumbai.
- There are a total of nine regional offices for the CBFC which includes Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Thiruvananthapuram, Hyderabad, New Delhi, Cuttack and Guwahati.
- The body's primary function is to assign each film to one of the four categories –
  - U – Unrestricted public exhibition
  - A- Restricted to adults
  - UA –Unrestricted public exhibition (with a word of caution that Parental discretion required for children below 12 years)
  - S – Restricted to any special class of persons (for example: doctors)
- It assigns certifications to films, television shows, television ads, and publications for exhibition, sale or hire in India. Films can be publicly exhibited in India only after they are certified by the Board, including films shown on television.
- The Board is considered to be one of the strictest Censor Boards in the world. One of the most notable guidelines of the Board include: "any scenes which intend to degrade or disintegrate woman in any manner are not presented".
- The Board consists of 25 other non-official members and a Chairperson (all of whom are appointed by Central Government).

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MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

1. Black Rod

- It is a senior officer in the House of Lords. He is responsible for controlling access to and maintaining order within the House and its precincts.
- The Clerk of the Parliaments, to whom Black Rod reports, is in overall charge of the administration of the House, which provides all other services for Members of the Lords.
- The post is most visible at the annual state opening of parliament, when Black Rod is sent from the Lords to the House of Commons to summon MPs to hear the Queen's speech.
- The ceremony involves the door to the Commons being slammed in Black Rod's face. He – as it has been until now – uses his staff to knock three times on the door and gain admittance.
- Black Rod is also officially responsible for royal sections of parliament, such as the robing room and the royal gallery. They report to the clerk of the parliaments, who is in overall charge of the administration of the houses.

Context

- Sarah Clarke becomes first female Black Rod after 669 years

2. China unveils massive island-building vessel j

- China has unveiled a massive ship described as a "magic island maker" that is Asia's largest dredging vessel.
- The boat named Tian Kun Hao is capable of digging 6,000 cubic meters an hour, the equivalent of three standard swimming pools.

What is Dredging?

- Dredging is a digging activity usually carried out underwater, in shallow seas or freshwater areas with the purpose of gathering up bottom sediments and widening.

What is Artificial Islands?

- An artificial island is an island that has been constructed by people rather than formed by natural means.

3. Deen Dayal SPARSH Yojana

- Minister of Communications launched a Pan India scholarship program for school children called DeenDayal SPARSH Yojana to increase the reach of Philately.
- Under the scheme of SPARSH (Scholarship for Promotion of Aptitude & Research in Stamps as a Hobby), it is proposed to award annual scholarships to children of Standard VI to IX having good academic record and also pursuing Philately as a hobby through a competitive selection process in all postal circles.

Criteria

- To avail this scholarship, a child must be a student of a recognized school within India and the concerned school should have a Philately Club and the candidate should be a member of the Club.
- In case the school Philately Club hasn't been established a student having his own Philately Deposit Account will also be considered.

What is philately?

- Philately is the hobby of collection and study of Postage stamps.
- It also entails the collection, appreciation and research activities on stamps and other related philatelic products. The hobby of collecting Stamps includes seeking, locating, acquiring, organizing, cataloguing, displaying, storing, and maintaining the stamps or related products on thematic areas.
- Philately is called the king of hobbies because Stamp collection as a hobby has lot of educational benefits – it teaches a lot about the socio economic political reality of the period in which the stamp is issued or the theme on which it is issued.

4. Indonesia: the world's volcanic hotspot

- The Southeast Asian archipelago is situated on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", a vast zone of geological instability where the collision of tectonic plates causes frequent quakes and major volcanic activity.
- Indonesia, where more than 40,000 people have been evacuated over fears of an imminent volcanic eruption at Mount Agung on Bali, is the world's most volcanic area.
- The Southeast Asian archipelago of more than 17,000 islands and islets – and nearly 130 active volcanoes – is situated on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", a vast zone of geological instability where the collision of tectonic plates causes frequent quakes and major volcanic activity.

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5. Paradise Papers

- Centre reconstitutes the Multi-Agency Group formed in 2016 to investigate disclosures on offshore accounts of 714 Indians

What are the 'Paradise Papers'?

- These are around 13 million leaked files from offshore service providers and company registries obtained by a German newspaper.
- It was made public by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and its media partners.
- They essentially reveal the offshore interests and activities of politicians, world leaders and celebrities, and the tax engineering of more than 100 MNCs, from around 180 countries.
- It also includes details of corporate registries maintained by governments in 19 secrecy jurisdictions often referred to as "tax paradises".
- Notably, a major portion of these files are in relation with a Bermuda firm Appleby and a Singapore-based Asiaciti Trust.
- Unlike the previous leaks, the latest revelations are more about mega corporates than individual players, on their misuse of offshore jurisdictions.
- India ranks 19th in terms of the number of names that feature in the papers.

What is the Multi-Agency Group?

- The latest report comes a few months after a similar 'Panama Papers' disclosure that came in 2016.
- The Panama Papers named several prominent Indian politicians, actors, and businessmen as having offshore undisclosed bank accounts.
- Following this, a Multi-Agency Group (MAG) was constituted.
- The government has now reconstituted this MAG led by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), to investigate cases relating to the 'Paradise Papers' data disclosure.
- This will have representatives from CBDT, Enforcement Directorate, Reserve Bank of India and the Financial Intelligence Unit.

How are offshore companies a concern?

Legality - It is not necessarily illegal to set up offshore companies.

- This is because India has double-taxation avoidance agreements (DTAAs) with several countries with lower tax rates than its own.
- The companies incorporated in such countries can use their tax residency certificates (TRC) to enjoy the tax benefits available legally.

Apprehensions - However, increasingly, companies and bank accounts are created overseas, providing nominee office-bearers and facilitating bank loans or transfer of shares in multiple secrecy jurisdictions.

- This essentially means using or incorporating overseas shell companies to take tax advantages through illegal means.
- **These include:**
  - operating as fake entities and engaging in tax evasion, manipulation of the market, money laundering, parking black money, etc.
  - round tripping i.e. taking untaxed money out of the country through inflated invoices and then bringing it back as investment.
  - instances of assets of Indian companies being used to guarantee loans raised by offshore companies without disclosing it to Indian regulators.
  - changing ownership of offshore companies to actually change the ownership of shares held in Indian companies without paying taxes in India.

Impediment -

A company is generally entitled to arrange its financial affairs in whichever way it wishes, to reduce its tax liability

- The fact that the motive for a particular transaction is to avoid tax does not necessarily invalidate the transaction unless the law of the land specifies so.
- There is a corporate army engaged in imaginative bookkeeping to discover and exploit legal loopholes to evade tax in most cases.
- The burden of justification thus is always on the financial regulators.

Exposures -

The recent disclosures help regulators overcome the obstacle of secrecy, enabling them to investigate instances of financial malpractices.

- The sheer size of the Paradise Papers disclosures and the corporate-centric leads they provide, mark a big step forward.
- Such insight into corporate ingenuity allows regulators to bring in better laws and global tax reforms.

6. Rashtriya Bal Kalyan Award presented to Super-30 founder

- President Ram Nath Kovind awarded this year's "Rashtriya Bal Kalyan Award" to Super 30 founder Anand Kumar for his contributions in the field of teaching and education.

What is super 30?

- Kumar's Super 30 coaching institute has been providing free education, accommodation and food to students coming from the underprivileged section of society to crack the prestigious IIT entrance examination.

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- Over 400 students have cracked IIT-JEE from Super -30 coaching institute since it has started in the year 2002 in Patna. Mr. Kumar now aims to increase the strength of students at Super 30.

Details about award

- The award, launched by the Department of Women and Child Development, carries a citation and Rs. 1 lakh.
- The awardees are selected after shortlisting the entries from all over the country.

7. 'Trump village' gets the biggest toilet pot model

- World's biggest toilet pot model was unveiled at Marora, popularly known as the 'Trump village', in Haryana on the World Toilet Day in a bid to create awareness towards sanitation and use of toilets.
- The nondescript village, with a population of 1,800, in Mewat region was rechristened as 'Trump village' by NGO Sulabh International Social Service Organisation in a gesture to U.S. President Donald Trump ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington.
- A mega pot of toilet made up of iron, fibre, wood and plaster of Paris — measuring 20x10 feet — was unveiled in the hamlet to mark the World Toilet Day, which is observed on November 19 to inspire action to tackle the global sanitation crisis.

8. All Bihar jails to have videoconferencing: Nitish

- Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar announced that all jails in the State would have videoconferencing facility from next year.
- He also inaugurated 56 telephone exchanges at 30 jails, canteen facility for prisoners in 11 jails and laid foundation stones for multipurpose auditoriums at eight Central jails of the State.
- Advantages: All jails in the State will have videoconferencing facility, which would do away with the need for taking under trials to the court for hearing of their cases. This will also ensure speedy dispensation of justice

9. Pak. court frees Hafiz Saeed

- A Pakistani court ordered the release of Hafiz Saeed, the chief of Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and one of the alleged masterminds of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks that killed more than 160 people.
- A review Board of the Lahore High Court overruled the government's request to extend the detention citing that Saeed's release may trigger international sanctions against Pakistan.
- The review board looking into the case has refused to extend his house arrest as the government failed to provide any evidence against the charges.
- **Background information:**

* Saeed, who carries a bounty of $10 million announced by the U.S. for his role in terror activities, has been under house arrest since January this year.

* Last month, authorities had withdrawn terrorism charges against Saeed and the JuD, a front of the terror organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba, and kept him in detention under the Maintenance of Public Order Act, paving the way for his release.

* Saeed's detention was extended four times since January when the government cracked down on the JuD and its charity arm Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation.

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PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Consider the following statements

1. A fiscal deficit occurs when a government's total expenditures exceed the revenue that it generates, excluding money from borrowings
2. Deficit differs from debt, which is an accumulation of yearly deficits
3. John Maynard Keynes believed that deficits help countries climb out of economic recession

Choose the correct statements from the options given below

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

2. Who is the chairman of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affair?

A. Prime Minister
B. Finance Minister
C. Home Minister
D. Lok Sabha speaker

3. Consider the following statements

1. An Initial Coin Offerings (ICO) is an issuance of digital tokens that can be converted into crypto currencies.
2. ICO issuance is regulated by SEBI

Choose the correct statements from the option given below

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

4. The famous Nabakalebara festival belongs to which of the following states?

A. Rajasthan
B. Odisha
C. West Bengal
D. Bihar

5. The Coriolis force is maximum at __?

A. Poles
B. Equator
C. Tropics
D. Mountain peaks

6. Consider the following statements

1. Carnivorous plants employ a variety of techniques like nectar, smell, colour and ultraviolet florescence to lure and capture prey.
2. Indian pitcher plant (Nepenthes khasiana) uses the gas, only to attract prey.

Choose the incorrect statements from the options given below

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

7. Consider the following statements

1. Fossil fuels and cement production are the major contributors of greenhouse gases.
2. Green house gas like methane is witnessing a raising trend.

Choose the correct statements from the options given below

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

8. Kiagali Amendment, often seen in news is related to

A. Montreal Protocol
B. Paris Accord
C. Kyoto Protocol
D. Vienna Convention

9. China has set up its first overseas military base at

A. Hambantota
B. Maro
C. Lamu
D. Djibouti

10. Identify the correct statement

A. A person, on conviction, is debarred from contesting any elections for the period of his or her prison sentence and six years thereafter.

B. A person, on conviction, is debarred from contesting only in Lok Sabha elections for the period of his or her prison sentence and six years thereafter.

C. A person, on conviction, is debarred from contesting only in Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies elections for the period of his or her prison sentence and six years thereafter.

D. A person, on conviction, is debarred from contesting any elections for the period of his or her prison sentence only

11. The world's largest monolith "Uluru", is located in

A. Australia

B. Madagascar

C. New Zealand

D. China

12. The Global Gender Gap Report is published by

A. World Economic Forum

B. World Bank

C. IMF

D. International Labour Organisation

13. 13. Cereal(s) grown by the people of the Harappan Civilisation was/were

A. Wheat

B. Rice

C. Millet

D. All the above

14. Identify the correct sequence of passing a Budget in the Parliament

A. Vote on Account-Finance Bill-Appropriation Bill-Discussion on Budget

B. Finance Bill- Appropriation. Bill Discussion on Budget-Vote on Accounts

C. Discussion on Budget-Vote on Account-Finance Bill-Appropriation Bill

D. Discussion on Budget-Appropriation Bill-Finance Bill-Vote on Account

15. The Reserve Bank of India issues:

A. All the currency notes

B. All the currency notes except the one rupee note

C. All the currency notes except the hundred rupee note

D. Only notes of Rs. 10 and above

16. 'Repo rate' is the rate at which:

A. The Reserve Bank of India lends to State Government

B. The international aid agencies lend to Reserve Bank of India

C. The Reserve Bank of India lends to banks

D. The banks lend to Reserve Bank of India

17. Consider the following statements

1. The Financial Action Task Force (on Money Laundering) (FATF), is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1989 on the initiative of the G7..
2. The main aim of FATF is to develop policies to combat money laundering.

Choose the correct statement from the options given below

A. 1 only

B. 2 only

C. Both 1 and 2

D. Neither 1 nor 2

18. Consider the following statements

1. Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana is a comprehensive package which will result in creation of modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management from farm gate to retail outlet.
2. Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana will be implemented by Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI).

Choose the correct statements from the options given below

A. 1 only

B. 2 only

C. Both 1 and 2

D. Neither 1 nor 2

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19. The Gangotri National Park (GNP) is located in which state?

A. Chhattisgarh
B. Bihar
C. Uttrakhand
D. West Bengal

20. Jorwe culture, a Chalcolithic culture, was first discovered in which of the following states of India?

A. Maharashtra
B. Rajasthan
C. Gujarat
D. Jammu & Kashmir

21. Silver Tanka" and "Copper Jital" coins were introduced by:

A. Iltutmish
B. Abu Bakr Shah
C. Firuz Shah Tughlaq
D. Sikander Lodi

22. Shaphee Lanphee, a traditional textile fabric, is a GI product from which of the following states?

A. Assam
B. Manipur
C. Jammu & Kashmir
D. Andhra Pradesh

23. The states in India which require Inner Line permit are:

A. Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland
B. Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and J & K
C. Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Tripura
D. Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Assam

24. The Indra Exercise is a join military exercise between India and

A. Japan
B. Sri Lanka
C. Mauritius
D. Russia

25. India's first micro forest will be built in which state?

A. Madhya Pradesh
B. West Bengal
C. Uttar Pradesh
D. Chattisgarh

26. Which fish has been officially declared as one of the rarest species of fish in the world by the Marine Living Resources Department of Andhra University?

A. Rohu
B. Rayichapalu
C. Catla
D. Tengra

27. In India, which one of the following states has the largest inland saline wetland?

A. Gujarat.
B. Haryana
C. Madhya Pradesh
D. Rajasthan

28. The river most mentioned in early Vedic literature is:

A. Sindhu
B. Sutudri
C. Sarasvati
D. Ganga

29. The balance of payments of a country is a systematic record of

A. All import and export transactions of a country during a given period of time, normally a year
B. Goods exported from a country during a year
C. Economic transaction between the government of one country to another
D. Capital movements from one country to another

30. Which of the following constitute Capital Account?

1. Foreign Loans
2. Foreign Direct Investment
3. Private Remittances
4. Portfolio Investment

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

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

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31. Consider the following statement with reference to Cartosat-2 series satellite, which was launched recently by ISRO

1. Cartosat-2 is a remote sensing satellite.
2. Cartosat-2 will be used for Land Information Systems (LIS) and Geographical Information System (GIS) applications.
3. Cartosat-2 is a weather forecasting satellite.

Identify the correct statement

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

32. Consider the statements about classification MSME sector.

1. n manufacturing, investments not exceeding Rs.25.00 Lakhs are considered as small enterprise..
2. In services, investments not exceeding Rs.10.00 Lakhs are considered as small enterprise.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

33. Consider the following statement with reference to Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsava

1. Held at Arunachal Pradesh
2. Main aim is to promote traditional folkdance and music

Choose the correct answer

A. Only A
B. Only B
C. Both A and B
D. Neither A nor B

34. Which ministry is responsible for implementation of Foreign Contribution of Regulation Act

A. Ministry of Finance
B. Ministry of Home affairs
C. Ministry of Corporate affairs
D. None of the above.

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

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

36. Consider the statements :

1. Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) is a for-profit organisation formed to create a platform for all the concerned parties
2. The portal will be accessible to the central government which will track down every transaction on its end.

Which of the following statements is/are correct ?

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

37. The Constituent Assembly arrived at decisions on the various provisions of the constitution:

A. By a majority vote
B. By a two-thirds majority
C. By consensus
D. Unanimously

38. Under the Constitution, the power to raise and disburse public funds:

A. has been vested in Union Government
B. has been divided between the Union and State Governments
C. has been given to the Finance Commission
D. has not been given to anyone

39. Jharkhand does not share boundary with:

A. West Bengal
B. Orissa
C. Chhattisgarh
D. Madhya Pradesh

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40. On October 16, 1905, when the partition of Bengal was enforced, the great poet Rabindranath Tagore, to emphasise the unity of Bengal, Suggested the programme of

A. Singing Bande Mataram
B. Tying of Rakhi on each other's wrists
C. Composing of patriotic songs
D. Establishing national educational institutions

41. Temperate grasslands in Argentina is popularly known as

A. Pamaps
B. Prairie
C. Veld
D. Steppe

42. The Vindhyan system of rocks is important for the production of

A. Precious stones and building materials
B. Iron ore and manganese
C. Bauxite and mica
D. Copper and uranium

43. The primary purpose of constructing the Farakka barrage is to: [CDS 1999]

A. Preserve and maintain navigation
B. Supply drinking water
C. Meet the chronic power shortage
D. Bring additional areas into irrigation

44. Which of the following is called a 'banker's cheque' ?

A. Demand draft
B. Debit card
C. Pay order
D. Fixed deposit

45. Who was the author of Kitab-ul-Hind?

A. Abu Said
B. Abul Fazl
C. Firadausi
D. Al-Beruni

46. Sunderbans delta is facing potential threats due to

1. Global warming induced sea level rise leading to coastal erosion
2. Freshwater flows from Brahmaputra and Meghna

Which of the above is/are correct?

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

47. Rate of growth of an economy is measured in terms of:

A. Per capita income
B. Industrial development
C. Number of people who have been lifted above the poverty line
D. National income

48. Which one among the following is not a component of fiscal policy?

A. Taxation policy
B. Public debt policy
C. Trade policy
D. Public expenditure policy

49. Which is not correct statement? The Supreme Court:

A. Is a watch-dog of citizen's liberty
B. Interprets the Constitution
C. Protects the Directive Principles of State Policy
D. Settles electoral disputes of the President and Vice-President of India

50. A person of mixed European and Indian blood in Latin America is called a

A. Mulatto
B. Mestizo
C. Meiji
D. Mau Mau

51. The Laccadives are an example of

A. Islands resulting from submarine earthquakes
B. Volcanic Islands
C. Coral Islands
D. None of the above

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52. Look at the following statements about Border Area Development Programme

1. It is a scheme by NDA govt to fulfill obligation under Pradhan Mantri Gram sadak Yojana
2. It is extended to states in and around Pakistan and Bangladesh Only.
3. It is a lapsable central assistance

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

53. With respect to the Puggie Community, consider the following statements

1. Puggies are people with traditional knowledge of reading camel footprints
2. They are present in Kutch and Banaskantha in Rajasthan.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

54. Which of the security groups is not correctly matched?

1. Border Security Force (BSF)- Pakistan and Myanmar
2. Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)- Riots and Naxals
3. Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)- China
4. Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).- Nepal only

Choose the correct match

A. Only 1
B. Only 3 and 4
C. Only 1 and 4
D. Only 2 and 3

55. Read the following statements carefully and choose the incorrect answer by using the codes given below:

1. Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) is airspace over land or water in which the identification, location, and control of civil aircraft is performed
2. The concept of an ADIZ is defined in Tokyo Convention
3. It covers only that country's territory

Choose the correct statements

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

56. Consider the following statements

1. Green-Water Navies are restricted to those operating in coastal and regional areas such as littoral zones.
2. Brown Water Navy is defined as maritime forces operating in littoral zone to 200 nautical miles
3. Blue Water Navy means the navy which is capable of operating in Blue-water (high seas) naval capability.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

57. With reference to the Indian Infosec Consortium (IIC), consider the following statements

1. It is a group of nation's leading Economists assisting PM in economic related matters
2. It is a non-for-profit Section-25 organization.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

58. Look at the following statements about Sukanya Samridhi Yojana

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

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

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

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

Choose the correct statements

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

60. With respect to Project Masoom, consider the following statements

1. It is an initiated by Govt of India to fight Child Labor in collaboration with Satyarthi Foundation
2. The project will also be introduced in schools to educate the parents, teachers and children about the issue.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

61. Which of the following is not part of money supply in the economy?

1. Money lying with the government
2. Deposits of commercial banks with other commercial banks
3. Money lying with the Central bank
4. Deposits of pubic with commercial banks

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. 1 & 2 only
D. 1, 2 & 3 only

62. Consider the following statements

1. Payment Portal – MSME Samadhaan was lanched for empowering micro and small entrepreneurs across the country.
2. MSME Samadhaan directly register their cases relating to delayed payments by Central Ministries/ Departments/CPSEs/State Governments.

Select the correct statements

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

63. Consider the following statements.

1. Global Wildlife Conference to be held in Manila, Philippines in October 2017
2. India will host next Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Species of Wild Animals (CMS) Conference of Parties 13 (CMS COP13) in year 2020(also known as Global Wildlife conference).

Select the correct statements

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

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64. Consider the following statements

1. "An incentive cum penalty" framework scheme initiated by GOI is to transform Indian Railways truly into a world class, safe and modern transporter.
2. Main objective is to bring green power project developers and other stakeholders on a common platform for making Indian Railways (IR) an efficient and Greener mode of transport.

Select the correct statements

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

65. A Turtle sanctuary in Allahabad along with a River Biodiversity Park at Sangam have been approved under the:

A. Namami Gange programme
B. Ganga Rejuvenation programme
C. Wild Life Protection Act
D. Star Turtle Conservation and Protection Act.

66. Consider the following statements:

1. Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) is a joint venture of NTPC Limited, Power Finance Corporation, Rural Electrification Corporation and POWERGRID.
2. Recently, EESL has decided to procure 10,000 electric vehicles from Tata motors.

Which of the following statements are correct?

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

67. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 35 A is an original feature of Indian Constitution.
2. It enables J&K State legislature to decide the permanent residents of the state.

Which of the above statements are true?

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

68. Consider the following statements about Public Finance Management Scheme:

1. PFMS has been made mandatory for all central sector schemes.
2. PFMS is an electronic fund that gives real time information on all government schemes.

Which of the above statements are true?

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

69. Consider the following statements about Bharat Net:

1. It is a rural internet connectivity programme.
2. It uses Optical Fibre technology and is being funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).

Which of the above statements are true?

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

70. Consider the following statements about MSME Samadhaan:

1. MSME Samadhaan was launched for empowering micro and small entrepreneurs across the country to directly register their cases relating to delayed payments by Central Ministries
2. The portal will greatly facilitate the monitoring of the delayed payment in a more effective manner.

Which of the above statements are true?

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

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71. Consider the following statements with respect to the disease "Kala-azar"

1. Article 35 A is an original feature of Indian Constitution.
2. It belongs to Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD) family.
3. It is the first largest parasitic killer in the world.
4. India accounts for half the global burden of Kala-azar disease.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are CORRECT

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

72. Consider the following statements:

1. Dawn is the only mission ever to orbit two extra-terrestrial targets.
2. The Dawn mission orbited giant asteroid Vesta and now continues to orbit Ceres.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are INCORRECT

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

73. Kanger Ghati National Park is in

A. Chattisgarh
B. Orissa
C. Gujarath
D. Tripura

74. Which of the following air pollutants are considered for determining the Air Quality Index

1. Ozone
2. Carbon dioxide
3. Sulphur dioxide
4. Nitrogen dioxide
5. Carbon monoxide
6. Particulate Matter

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

75. Consider the following about Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

1. CMS is an international treaty concluded under aegis of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
2. Its headquarters are in Bonn, Germany
3. It is for second time that the summit is being hosted in India.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are INCORRECT

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

76. Consider the following statements about Global Passport Power Rank 2017:

1. India's passport was ranked 75th among 94 countries
2. The Global Passport Power Rank is released by Canada

Which of the above statements are true?

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

77. Consider the following statements about Sagar Mala project:

1. Sagar Mala project is an initiative of the Government of India to modernize India's Ports
2. Coastal Berth Scheme is a part of SagarMala project.

Which of the above statements are true?

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

78. Consider the following statements:

1. Indian Railway's First set of Solar Power Plant was launched on roof tops of New Delhi Railway station.
2. It was part of National Solar Mission..

Which of the above statements are true?

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

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79. Consider the following statements about Integrity Index:

1. It is being developed by CVC.
2. The Integrity Index will bring out annual scores and rankings of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).

Which of the above statements are true?

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

80. Consider the following statements about Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI)

1. Every child under two years of age and all those pregnant women who have been left uncovered under the routine immunization programme.
2. To ensure full immunization to more than 90% by December 2018

Which of the above statements are true?

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

81. Among the following who are the Agaria Community?

A. A traditional toddy tappers community of Andhra Pradesh
B. A traditional fishing community of Maharashtra.
C. A traditional silk-weaving community of Karnataka
D. A traditional salt-pan workers community of Gujarat.

82. In which State is the Buddhist site Tabo Monastery located?

A. Arunachal Pradesh
B. Himachal Pradesh
C. Sikkim
D. Uttrakhand

83. In which one of the following States has India's largest private sector sea port has been commissioned recently?

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

84. An increase in the Bank Rate generally indicates that the

A. Market rate of interest is likely to fall.
B. Central Bank is no longer making loans to commercial banks
C. Central Bank is following an easy money policyIT rebates.
D. Central Bank is following a tight money policy

85. If Panchayats are dissolved, elections are to be held within

A. 1 month
B. 3 months
C. 6 months
D. 1 year

86. The National Mission on Cultural Mapping of India intends to

1. Create repository of information about cultural assets
2. Launch massive cultural awareness campaigns
3. Open a direct channel of communication of artists with the Government
4. Hold talent hunt competitions from Block level to National level

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

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

87. Identify the correct statement with reference to Connshing syndrome

A. Connshing syndrome is related to Hypertension
B. Connshing syndrome is related to Hypotension.
C. Connshing syndrome is linked to over production of stress hormone cortisol
D. Both A and C.

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88. Consider the following statements

1. Higher aerosol loading results in delayed but more rainfall over Central and Northern India.
2. Higher aerosol loading results in earlier but less rainfall over Central and Northern India.
3. Aerosol has no effect on the monsoon

Choose the correct options

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

89. Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. There is a time limit of 30 days to file a Curative petition.
2. The Curative petition is circulated among three senior most judges.

Choose the correct answer

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

90. Lingaraja Temple is built on which architectural style

A. Kalinga Architecture
B. Dravida Architecture
C. Nagara Architecture
D. Vasera Architecture

91. Consider the following statement with reference to Swadesh Darshan Scheme

1. It is completely funded by Central government
2. Ministry of tourism is the implementing agency
3. It has two components – PRASAD and Swadeshi Darshan under its ambit.

Choose the correct statement

A. Only 1
B. Only2
C. 1 and 3
D. All are correct

92. Consider the following statements

1. Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary is present in Greater Andaman region.
2. It is very famous for its nesting beach for olive ridley sea turtles. It is the one of world's most important nesting beach for turtles

Select the incorrect option/s

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

93. The Mrugavani National Park (MNP) is located in which state?

A. Chattisgarh
B. Karnataka
C. Tamil Nadu
D. Telangana

94. Exercise EKUVERIN is a joint military exercise between which countries?

A. India and Sri Lanka
B. Sri Lanka and Maldives
C. India and Seychelles
D. India and Maldives

95. Consider the following statement with reference to Mission Kakatiya ,which was in news recently:

1. It is a flagship programme of Andhra Pradesh State government.
2. It is a poverty eradication programme..

Choose the correct statement.

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

96. Mahamastakabhisheka, a great religious event, is associated with and done for who of the following?

A. Bahubali
B. Buddha
C. Nataraja
D. Mahavir

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97. Consider the following statements about Quasi-Zenith Satellite System (QZSS)

1. QZSS constellation of 18 satellites.
2. QZSS is Japanese version of GPS and is dubbed as Michibiki system.

Which of the following option/s is/are INCORRECT?

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

98. Consider the following with respect to India's first Hyperloop project.

1. India's first Hyperloop project will come up in the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed corridor.
2. will use a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model with funding primarily from private investors.
3. Hyperloop Technology is brainchild idea of technology entrepreneur Elon Musk who dubs it as fifth mode of transportation.

Select the INCORRECT statement/s:

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

99. Which of the following is/are the factors influencing the World Climatic regions?

1. Latitude and its influence on solar radiation received.
2. Air mass influences.
3. Location of global high and low pressure zones.
4. Heat exchange from ocean currents.
5. Distribution of mountain barriers.
6. Altitude.

A. 1, 2, 3 only
B. 3, 4, 5, 6 only
C. 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 only
D. All the above

100. Which of the following is not correctly matched?

A. Mudrarakshasa – Vishakhadatta
B. Ratnavali – Harshavardhan
C. Kalidasa – Malavikagnimitra
D. None of the above

101. Consider the following statements:

1. The eight core industries comprise 60% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP)
2. The current base year of IIP is 2011-2012.

Choose the correct statements from the option given below

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

102. Consider the following statements:

1. ELEVATE 100, is an initiative of the Department of Information Technology and Biotechnology, Government of Kerala.
2. Elevate 100 aims to provide a comprehensive entrepreneurship platform for startups.
3. The top 100 technology based startups chosen through a rigorous hunt across State will tap into a whopping sum of Rs.400 Cr of Government funds.

Choose the correct statements from the option given below.

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

103. Consider the following statements about unemployment

1. Cyclical unemployment occurs when there is not enough aggregate demand in the economy to provide jobs for everyone who wants to work.
2. Frictional unemployment occurs when people change from one to another and remain unemployed during this interval period.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. Only 1
B. Only 2
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

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104. Consider the following statements about Index of industrial production

1. It measures the growth of industrial production and GDP growth of industries in INDIA.
2. IIP is released by The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM).
3. IIP is released on monthly basis.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

105. Consider the following statements:

1. The Southeast Asian archipelago is situated on the Pacific "Ring of Fire",
2. Mount Agung in Bali is the world's most volcanic area

Which of the above statements are true?

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

106. Consider the following statements:

1. Zaranj-Delaram highway in Afghanistan was laid down by India.
2. Chabahar port will be connected to Afghanistan via Rail and to Russia by the 7,200-km International North-South Transport Corridor .

Which of the above statements are true?

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

107. Consider the following statements:

1. Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) 2017 was held in Hyderabad.
2. The theme of GES, co-hosted by the US and Indian governments was 'Women First, Prosperity for All'.
3. More than 50% delegates were women.

Which of the above statements are true?

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

108. Consider the following statements:

1. National Anti-profiteering Authority (NAA), which is tasked with ensuring the benefits of the Goods and Services Tax are passed on to consumers
2. B.N. Sharma has been appointed as the first Chairman of the National Anti-profiteering Authority (NAA)

Which of the above statements are true?

A. Only 1
B. Only 2
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2.

109. Consider the following statements:

1. Development agenda' (to improve the developing countries' trading prospects) of the talks, which began in Doha in 2001
2. Ministerial Conference is the highest decision making body of WTO.

Which of the above statements are true?

A. Only 1
B. Only 2
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

110. In International news, Consider the following statements with respect to "Double Freeze" :

1. It refers to the strategy to ease the tensions in Korean peninsula.
2. It is proposed by China and US.

Which of the above statements are correct?

A. Only 1
B. Only 2
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

111. Consider the following statements about Regenerative Breaking:

1. It is a concept related to the breaking system of Electric Cars.
2. It enables an electric car to generate power and charge its own battery.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

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112. Consider the following statements :

1. Diesel engines are less powerful than petrol engines.
2. Diesel engines are more polluting than petrol engines.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

113. Consider the following statements about Malaria:

1. Malaria is a mosquito-borne infectious disease caused by parasitic protozoans belonging to the Plasmodium type
2. Most deaths are caused by P. falciparum

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

114. Consider the following statements about TRAI(Telecom Regulatory Authority of India):

1. TRAI is a statutory body established in 1997.
2. TRAI is an advisory body with no regulatory powers.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

115. India has: [CDS 1992]

A. Socialistic economy
B. Gandhian economy
C. Mixed economy
D. Free economy

116. The salaries of the Judges of the Supreme Court of India:

A. Can never be reduced under any circumstances
B. Can be reduced during their term of office
C. Cannot be reduced during the term of their office except during a financial emergency
D. Are fixed by President of India.

117. During the Mughal rule the finance minister was known as

A. Vakil
B. Diwan
C. Kotwal
D. Amin

118. The latitude of a place expresses its angular position relative to the plane of

A. Axis of the Earth
B. Wquator
C. North pole
D. South pole

119. The constitution of India is republican because it

A. Provides for an elected Parliament
B. Provides for adult franchise
C. Contains a bill of rights
D. Has no hereditary elements

120. Consider the following statements with respect to stubble burning.

1. Stubble burning is the deliberate setting fire of the straw stubble that remains after wheat and other grains have been harvested.
2. It kills weeds, including those resistant to herbicide.

Select the correct option/s

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

121. Consider the following statements

1. Atmospheric aerosol particles, also known as atmospheric particulate matter, particulate matter (PM), particulates, or suspended particulate matter (SPM) are microscopic solid or liquid matter suspended in Earth's atmosphere
2. The term aerosol commonly refers to the particulate/air mixture, as opposed to the particulate matter alone

Select the correct option/s

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

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122. Consider the following statements

1. 23rd Conference of Parties (COP-23) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) countries will gather at Bonn..
2. The meeting will primarily concentrate on various aspects associated with the implementation of the Paris Agreement

Select the correct option/s

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

123. Consider the following statements

1. National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) will establish a turtle sanctuary in Allahabad
2. Part of efforts to protect the rich aquatic biodiversity of river Ganga from "escalating anthropogenic pressures"

Select the correct option/s

A. Only 1
B. Only 2
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

124. Which of the following articles in the Indian Constitution deal specifically with Jammu & Kashmir?

1. Article 368
2. Article 370
3. Article 352
4. Article 35A

Choose the right option from the below given codes.

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

125. Which of the following make the components of India's forex reserves?

1. Reverse tranche of World Bank
2. Gold
3. Special drawing Rights
4. Foreign currencies
5. Select the correct options.

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

126. Which of the following satellites is used by ISRO for monitoring crop acreage?

A. IRNSS
B. RISAT
C. Resourcesat-2A
D. Megha-Tropiques

127. Consider the following statements with reference to Bele-II experiment which was in news recently:

1. Belle-II is designed to study violations of the Standard Model of particle physics.
2. Belle-II experiment is being conducted at IISC ,Bangalore

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

128. The area domination sometime in news is related to

A. Construction of roads and sewage prior to occurrence of floods
B. A cybercrime search operation to lure ISIS propagandists
C. Deprive ground to anti-state elements and instill a sense of security in the local population
D. Presence of CRPF in Naxalite hit area

129. Consider the following statements.

1. Payment Portal – MSME Samadhaan was lanched for empowering micro and small entrepreneurs across the country.
2. MSME Samadhaan directly register their cases relating to delayed payments by Central Ministries/ Departments/CPSEs/State Governments.

Select the correct statements

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

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130. If India is experiencing economic growth, then which of the following statements must hold true

1. Real GDP is increasing
2. Nominal GDP is increasing
3. Rate of growth of real GDP increasing
4. Rate of growth of nominal is increasing

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

131. Consider the following about Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

1. CMS is an international treaty concluded under aegis of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
2. Its headquarters are in Bonn, Germany..
3. It is for second time that the summit is being hosted in India.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are INCORRECT?

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

132. INS Chakra

1. is an indigenously constructed ballistic missile submarine.
2. is a nuclear propelled, hunter-killer submarine.
3. is an Akula class Submarine and is to provide escort to INS Arihant.
4. is a Russian made ballistic missile submarine.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are INCORRECT?

A. 1 only
B. 4 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 3 and 4 only

133. Look at the following statements about Sukanya Samridhi Yojana

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

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

134. Which among the following agency monitors the anti–money laundering activities?

1. Financial Intelligence unit
2. Enforcement Directorate
3. Central Bureau of Intelligence
4. Reserve Bank of India

Select the correct option/s.

A. 1
B. 2
C. 3
D. 4

135. As per the Constitutional Allocation of Powers, who has the jurisdiction to impose tax on agricultural income?

A. Union government
B. State government
C. Local government
D. Both Union as well as State government

136. Consider the following statement with reference to Gasification process:

1. Gasification is a process that converts organic or fossil fuel based carbonaceous materials into carbon monoxide, hydrogen and carbon dioxide.
2. It produces a gas known as Syngas.

Choose the correct statement.

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

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137. Consider the following statements:

1. The Guitar fish is native to coastal waters of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
2. The Ganges Shark is native to Arabian Sea.
3. Both Guitar fish and Ganges shark falls under Critically Endangered species category.

Choose the correct answer

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

138. The Arabian Seas Region covers the waters of

A. Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman, and the Persian Gulf
B. Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and Sea of Oman
C. Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman, and the Persian Gulf
D. None of the above

139. Consider the following statements

1. Carbon nanotubes have been used in planes for their strength – they are stronger than steel and their ability to conduct heat
2. Carbon nanotubes can stay stable at temperatures up to 400 degrees Celsius.
3. Boron nitride nanotubes (BNNTs) are also able to handle high amounts of stress and are extremely lightweight, which can also be made use of in planes.

Choose the correct answer:

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

140. Consider the following statements with reference to The marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR)

1. It refers to the minimum interest rate of a bank below which it cannot lend, except in some cases allowed by the RBI.
2. It refers to the maximum interest rate of a bank above which it cannot lend, except in some cases allowed by the RBI.
3. MCLR describes the method by which the minimum interest rate for loans is determined by a bank.
4. MCLR actually describes the method by which the maximum interest rate for loans is determined by a bank.

Choose the correct statements from the options given below

A. 1 and 4
B. 1 and 3
C. 2 and 4
D. 1 and 4

141. Consider the following statements with reference to Faster Relations is the Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India

1. The scheme is formulated by Department of Heavy Industry
2. he scheme is one of the green initiatives of the Government of India
3. The scheme is intended to support the hybrid/ electric vehicles market development and its manufacturing eco-system to achieve self-sustenance

Choose the correct statements from the options given below

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

142. Which among the following temples of India is known as Black Pagoda?

A. Sun Temple, Konark
B. Brihadeeswara Temple, Tanjore
C. Lord Jagannath Temple, Puri
D. Meenakshi Temple, Madurai

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ANSWER KEYS

Question No	Answer Keys
1.	D
2.	A
3.	A
4.	B
5.	A
6.	B
7.	C
8.	A
9.	D
10.	A
11.	A
12.	A
13.	D
14.	D
15.	B
16.	C
17.	C
18.	C
19.	C
20.	A
21.	A
22.	B
23.	A
24.	D
25.	D

Question No	Answer Keys
26.	B
27.	D
28.	A
29.	A
30.	B
31.	D
32.	D
33.	D
34.	B
35.	C
36.	B
37.	C
38.	B
39.	C
40.	C
41.	A
42.	A
43.	A
44.	A
45.	D
46.	A
47.	D
48.	C
49.	C
50.	B

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Question No	Answer Keys
51.	C
52.	D
53.	A
54.	C
55.	B
56.	D
57.	B
58.	C
59.	C
60.	B
61.	D
62.	C
63.	C
64.	C
65.	A
66.	C
67.	C
68.	C
69.	C
70.	C
71.	B
72.	D
73.	A
74.	B
75.	B

Question No	Answer Keys
76.	C
77.	C
78.	C
79.	C
80.	C
81.	D
82.	B
83.	A
84.	D
85.	C
86.	D
87.	D
88.	A
89.	B
90.	A
91.	D
92.	A
93.	D
94.	D
95.	D
96.	A
97.	A
98.	A
99.	D
100.	D

Question No	Answer Keys
101.	B
102.	B
103.	C
104.	C
105.	C
106.	C
107.	C
108.	C
109.	C
110.	A
111.	C
112.	B
113.	C
114.	A
115.	C
116.	C
117.	B
118.	B
119.	D
120.	C
121.	C
122.	C
123.	C
124.	C
125.	B

Question No	Answer Keys
126.	C
127.	A
128.	C
129.	C
130.	A
131.	B
132.	A
133.	C
134.	A
135.	B
136.	C
137.	D
138.	A
139.	D
140.	B
141.	D
142.	A

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Paper- 1

Topic: Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

1. How do you justify the view that the level of excellence of the Gupta numismatic art is not at all noticeable in later times?
2. Indianness is not confined to the sectarian prejudices of some of the self-appointed guardians of Indian culture. Illustrate with examples.

Topic: Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present- significant events, personalities, issues.

3. Clarify how mid-eighteenth century India was beset with the spectre of a fragmented polity. (2017)

Topic: Impact of globalization on Indian Society

4. Discuss impact of globalization on higher education in India

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

5. "The growth of cities as I.T. hubs has opened up new avenues of employment, but has also created new problems". Substantiate this statement with examples (2017)
6. The new report show India's seriousness and implementation level of environment protection programmes, which is comparatively better than developed countries. Despite such reports the Delhi government suffers with severe pollution levels. What policy changes are required to address the urban pollution?

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

7. Account for variations in oceanic salinity and discuss its multi-dimensional effects.

Topic: Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.

8. How do the Indian debates on Secularism differ from the debates in the West?

Topic: World History

9. What is Glasnost and perestroika? Did it help the Russian Transformation? Why did USSR collapse?

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Paper- 2

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

1. "The local self government system in India has not proved to be effective instrument of governance". Critically examine the statement and give your views to improve the situation.
2. What is Conference of Governors? What is its importance?
3. To enhance the quality of democracy in India the Election Commission of India has proposed electoral reforms in 2016. What are the suggested reforms and how far are they significant to make democracy successful?

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

4. Critically examine the Supreme Court's judgement on 'National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014' with reference to appointment of judges of higher judiciary in India.
5. Why does Constitution of India provide different forms of Oaths for the President, the Ministers, the legislators and the member of the judiciary? Discuss their significance.

Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.

6. Hard power without soft power stirs up resentments and enmities; soft power without hard power is a confession of weakness. Critically Analyze.
7. The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyze India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian Countries.
8. India-Russia-China Strategic Co-Operation: Myth or Reality? Critically Comment.
9. Briefly analyse the role of India in South Asian regional infrastructural development. Also discuss about the possible benefits to India's underdeveloped region
10. Discuss the significance of India-Iran-Afghanisthan Trialteral .
11. Briefly discuss the developments in the geopolitics of the Middle East and its effects on India
12. Multilateral alliance has become an important means for India to counter the threat of Chinese dominance in South Asia. Critically analyse.
13. With respect to the recent TPP deal analyse its effects on India and world.

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

14. Under the Indian Constitutional and Legal framework, what constitutes Hate speech? How does it violate Fundamental Right to Equality enshrined under Article 14?

Topic: Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

15. Hunger and Poverty are the biggest challenges for good governance in India still today. Evaluate how far successive governments have progressed in dealing with these humongous problems. Suggest measures for improvement.

Topic: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

16. Critically evaluate the focus and performance of Centre's Swachh Bharat Mission.
17. Briefly discuss on the effects of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and

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Resettlement (RFCTLARR) Act, 2013

18. Does the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 ensure effective mechanism for empowerment and inclusion of the intended beneficiaries in the society? Discuss
19. Net Neutrality is important in the current era of digital world. Explain the constitutional dimensions of Net neutrality.
20. Aadhaar based Biometric Authentication is one of the ways to check corruption in the provision of Public services . Comment.

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Paper- 3

Topic: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment..

1. Among several factors for India's potential growth, savings rate is the most effective one. Do you agree? What are the other factors available for growth potential?
2. Why RBI intervenes in the Foreign Market?
3. What steps the government should take to further improve India's ranking in the World Bank's Ease of doing Business?

Topic: Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

4. "Gender equality has to be looked at in a holistic way" Discuss.
5. What are the salient features of 'inclusive growth'? Has India been experiencing such a growth process? Analyze and suggest measures for inclusive growth.

Topic: Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

6. Discuss India's achievements in the field of Space Science and Technology. How the application of this technology has helped India in its socio-economic development?
7. India has achieved remarkable successes in unmanned space missions including the Chandrayaan and Mars Orbitter Mission, but has not ventured into manned space mission, both in terms of technology and logistics? Explain critically

Topic: Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country

8. What are the major reasons for declining rice and wheat yield in the cropping system? How crop diversification is helpful to stabilize the yield of the crop in the system?

Topic: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

9. Stem cell therapy is gaining popularity in India to treat a wide variety of medical conditions including leukaemia, Thallessemia, damaged sornea and several burns. Describe briefly what stem cell therapy is and what advantages it has over other treatments?
10. In the light of emerging technologies such as Internet of things and Artificial intelligence, discuss the need for changes to be adopted in education and learning.
11. Discuss the challenges associated with bringing in alternative technologies such as Electric cars as a solution to the problem of pollution in developing countries like India.
12. Discuss the futuristic applications of Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

Topic: Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention

13. Discuss the potential threats of Cyber attack and the security framework to prevent it.
14. "Digital space should not become a playground for the dark forces of terrorism and radicalization" Comment. (250 words)

Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

15. 'Climate Change' is a global problem. How India will be affected by climate change? How Himalayan and coastal states of India will be affected by climate change? (Mains - 2017)
16. The Bonn Climate conference carries the spirit of Paris agreement. Discuss the challenges faced in the implementation of Paris agreement.
17. Considering the Mexico's pollution mitigation strategy briefly suggest suitable model to overcome the environmental crisis in India's capital region.

Topic: Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System-objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security;

18. Discuss the practical solutions that can plug loopholes in Public Distribution System..

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We are the largest Education Technology (Learning) company in India that is re-inventing the learning system for students with its cutting-edge **"Learning App"**.

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Education Company Of The Year 2016

Winner of SuperBrands SuperStartUps 2017

Winner of Deloitte Technology Fast 50 India and Top 500 Asia Award (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016)

ET Now Education Excellence Award (2013)

Winner of Established Education App of the Year (2017)

Winner of Google Play's "Best Self Improvement" app in India 2016

Winner of ASSOCHAM SMEs Excellence Award for Start-up of the Year 2016

Winner of CNBC TV18 Young Turks of the year award

GMA Summit Award 2016

Reimagine Education Award 2016
Overall Ed Tech winner
Gold Award for Best Educational App